

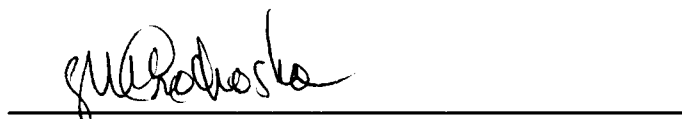
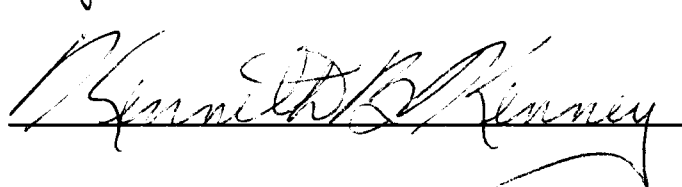
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MAIN STREET REVITALIZATION: A CASE STUDY OF HELEN, GEORGIA

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science in Planning

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David Edman Petersen

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Credit for this thesis must also go to the people of Helen, Georgia and those involved with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. Over 20 personal interviews were conducted and in every case information was generously given. Finally, I would like to thank the members of my family in Knoxville, Tennessee, David and Janet Crossen, for their help and support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to research the strategy used in Helen, Georgia to revitalize its downtown. In 1969 Helen residents and businessmen developed their Main Street into a major tourist destination by adopting a Bavarian theme. The Main Street approach, initiated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, was used as a basis for comparison with the approach emphasized in Helen. Other revitalization strategies were also used in the comparison.

The method of study consisted of personal interviews with those involved with the revitalization of Helen. Research questions included: What was done, who was involved, problems encountered, strategies employed, organizations associated, and actions taken to revitalize Helen. Other details concerning government controls regulating growth, promotion, economic impacts and land use effects derived from tourism, and matters pertaining to Helen's success and its future were also examined.

Many similarities were found among the approaches used in Helen and other revitalization strategies. However, major differences concerning organization and design were also evident.

The final chapter furnishes recommendations, based on the approach used in Helen, Georgia, for communities considering downtown revitalization. Strong leadership is necessary for

Main Street revitalization. Good design can help promote visitation and provide a theme for property owners to follow. Regulations may be needed to insure theme compliance. Good timing, appropriate financial support, a diversity of activities, regional location and necessary infrastructure to support growth are other essential elements for revitalization. Community size on the other hand does not appear to be a significant factor. Downtown revitalization may not happen instantly. Often it is a process characterized by incremental improvements over time, the sum total of which can equal large scale change.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this thesis is small town Main Street revitalization. A study of a successful community revitalization is relevant for many cities with static or declining commercial areas. This thesis examines the approach Helen, Georgia, a tourism community, used to revitalize its Main Street. The study provides planning and decision making information for communities interested in revitalization development and/or tourism development.

The Setting

Helen is a small town, nestled in the mountains of Northeast Georgia, with a 1990 population of 300. Located at the northern end of White County (pop. 12,000--1990), Helen is only 70 minutes from Atlanta by car (Clements, "Discover Alpine Helen, Georgia," 1991), (See Figures 1 and 2). Traditionally, since the mid-1800's, the economy of White County was based on timber and mining (Anderson, pamphlet p. 1). However, After World War II tourism became the predominate industry.

Helen, situated on the Chattahoochee river, is near many natural attractions. There are more than 21 waterfalls, including Georgia's most visited waterfall--Anna Ruby. The

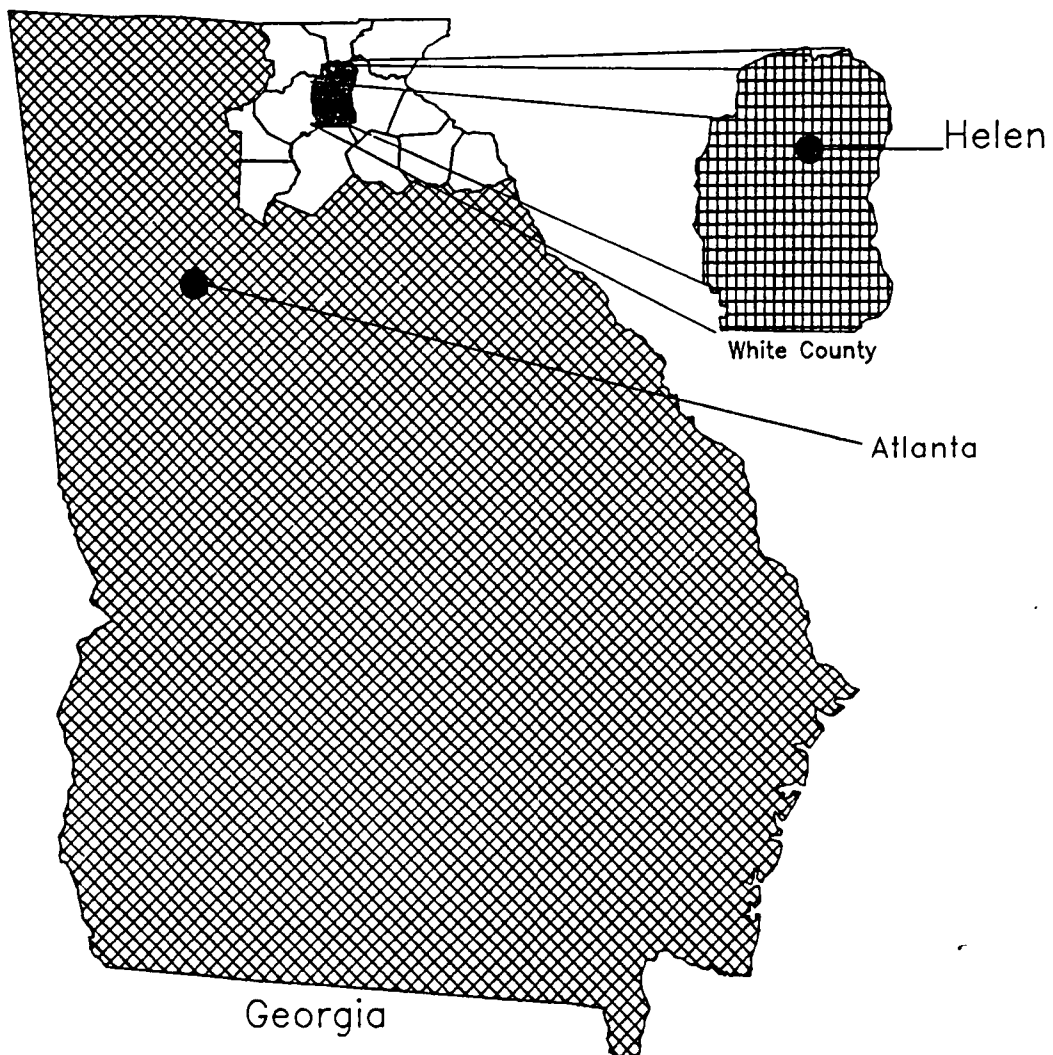


Figure 1 - Location of Helen, Georgia
Source: Georgia Mountains APDC

Chattahooche National Forest, as well as Brasstown Bald (elev. 4,784 ft), Georgia's highest mountain, are near Helen. Unicoi State Park adjoins Helen and offers a white sand beach with swimming along a 53-acre mountain lake. The 2,000-mile long Appalachian trail also starts near Helen (Clements, "Discover Alpine Helen," Correspondence, 1991).

Over twenty years ago those involved with the City of Helen began to transform their community into an Alpine village. In the late 1960's there were only nine businesses located in downtown, now Helen has over 200 enterprises. Each establishment architecturally appears to be part of a Bavarian village (See Figure 3).

The Alpine Village idea began when several local businessmen gathered at a riverside restaurant, looked out a window and envisioned their bleak hometown with its dull, dreary row of block structures reborn! . . . it was decided that something should be done to clean up the town . . . (Greater Helen Area Chamber of Commerce, Correspondence, 1991, p. 6).

Initial efforts to adopt Bavarian architecture were voluntary. Today, Helen has detailed ordinances which regulate the appearance of buildings and signs. Helen, also has a comprehensive plan to guide future growth. The public sector is very much involved with the private sector in promoting Helen as a tourist destination (Whitford, 1992). This thesis investigates the strategies and actions involved in the revitalization of Helen, Georgia.



Alpine Helen, Georgia 1989

Figure 3 - Helen, Georgia 1969 and 1989
Source: Helen Chamber of Commerce

Helen, Georgia 1969



Figure 3 - continued

The Problem

The decline of central business districts (CBD) is well documented (Exline, 1982, p. 107, Rhyan, 1988, p. 1). Many factors such as escalating taxes, consumer preferences and changing building technology, have contributed to the problems of CBD's in small cities and towns. Perhaps the one factor having the greatest impact on the character of communities of all sizes has been the automobile. Downtowns have lost business to shopping centers which serve auto-oriented customers. Suburban shopping centers locate on less expensive land situated on the outlying edges of communities.

Many American "main streets" and central business districts are culturally and historically significant. Rifkind (1977) noted that "Main Street was always familiar, always recognizable as the heart and soul of village, town or city. It was . . . a powerful symbol of shared experience, of common memory, of the challenge and the struggle of building a civilization (p. xi)." Relph (1976) said, "To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and to know your place (p. 1)." To many Main Street is a special place. Even Walt Disney recognized the appeal and attraction of Main Street. It is home, it is familiar, it is nostalgic.

There have been many attempts to revitalize Main Streets across America. Most approaches recognize that a key ingredient to successful revitalization is to create a sense

of place. For example, during the mid-1970's, distressed with the fact that many downtowns were losing or had lost historic buildings to demolition and facade cover-ups, the National Trust for Historic Preservation launched a pilot program--the Main Street Project. The National Trust or "Main Street" approach emphasizes the key to revitalization is to retain and enhance, in a comprehensive manner, those qualities which made Main Street a familiar place (Glisson, 1984, p. 6).

Since 1977 the National Trust Main Street Program has grown in size serving hundreds of communities. The Main Street Program is perhaps the widest known response to downtown renewal in small town and rural America (Murtagh, 1990, p. 145). Alan S. Boyd, past Chairman of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, gave this challenge: "try to think about ways you can build on the proven Main Street Approach to improve your community, whatever its size (Glisson, 1984, p. 4)."

Evaluation of alternatives is an important phase in the planning process (Chapin and Kaiser, 1979, pp. 602-646). Many communities are dissimilar and have different needs. What works for one city may not do well in another municipality. Civic leaders appreciate making decisions based on a wide variety of choices instead of only having a few options (Faludi, 1973, pp. 277-282).

What are the alternative approaches to town center revitalization? Which have been successful? How do they

compare conceptually with the approach advanced by the National Trust for Historic Preservation?

This thesis explores the approach and techniques used by Helen, Georgia, to effectively revitalize their downtown. The Main Street Approach serves as a model to compare the approach used in Helen, Georgia. The primary research question is: How does the approach used in Helen to revitalize its Main Street compare to the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street approach?

The secondary research questions are:

1. What was done, Who was involved, problems encountered, strategies employed, organizations associated and actions taken to revitalize Helen?
2. Is there "a conscious government program intended to influence the rate, amount, type, and location, . . . of future development within [the] local jurisdiction (Callies, 1988, p. 797)?" What forms did this government intervention take?
3. How does the community market itself as a desirable place to visit?
4. What has been the economic impact of tourism to the immediate area, and the surrounding region?
5. What has been the effect of tourism on land use and development in the immediate area and along major highways leading to Helen?

Research Methodology

Data gathered and analyzed in this study was qualitative and descriptive in nature and not definitive or conclusive. A case study, which is a good means to examine smaller scale "societies" such as small towns, villages and neighborhoods (Babbie, 1989, p. 262, 286), was the methodology employed. Data collection techniques included a literature review and personal interviews.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

A review of applicable books, journal articles, magazines and other information sources was conducted. By examining relevant material a better understanding of how other communities revitalized commercial districts was obtained. Many of the questions used in the personal interviews were derived from the library research.

Persons to be interviewed consisted of representatives from Helen and The National Main Street Center. Recommendations for people to be interviewed was sought from leaders of the respective groups. Individuals selected were actively involved or had a good knowledge of past and present organization, planning, promotion and implementation processes. Nineteen interviews were conducted. With exception of one telephone discussion, all interviews were conducted face-to-face. Interviews were not taped, but thorough notes were taken.

Personal interviews were chosen as a means of obtaining more in-depth information. Babbie (1989) said, "An unstructured interview is an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in a particular order (p. 270)." Open-ended questions were used to allow for flexible and spontaneous reactions.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapters II and III are a literature review discussing downtown revitalization. These chapters enumerate alternative approaches and strategies to downtown revitalization including the Main Street Approach advocated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Chapter IV discusses Helen Main Street activity and revitalization efforts from 1968 to the present. It also provides information on the physical and economic effects of tourism development in Helen and the surrounding area. Chapter V is an analysis of findings. Chapter VI, is a conclusion and offers recommendations to communities contemplating a theme development type of revitalization program.

CHAPTER II

THE MAIN STREET PROGRAM

This chapter explains the role of the National Main Street Center. The center was established in 1980 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to administer the Main Street Program. The second part of the chapter describes the Main Street Approach. It consists of four elements: design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring.

The National Main Street Center

The National Main Street Center (NMSC), is a non-profit organization which contracts with State Main Street Programs to provide technical assistance and expertise. Occasionally where State Main Street Programs are non-existent NMSC benefits are rendered directly to individual communities (West, 1992). NMSC services include such things as marketing and design assistance, the National Main Street Network program, conferences, products and training. Thus far, 31 states have participated with the program (The National Trust, Correspondence, "Facts About the National Trust's National Main Street Center," 1992).

Because the National Trust and State main street programs have limited resources, communities desiring to participate must pass through an application process prior to acceptance.

The NMSC has developed guidelines (Smith, 1992) which include:

1. Proper demographic characteristics: populations must be between 1,500 and 50,000 based on the 1980 census (however a few exceptions have been made).
2. Absolute financial support from the public and private sector.
3. A commitment to participate in the program for at least three years. A full-time project manager to oversee the process is a requisite.
4. Some history of economic development activity, even if endeavors have proven unsuccessful.
5. Communities must demonstrate they cannot revitalize their Main Streets on their own.
6. An identifiable core of downtown buildings which are historic for the community.

The states develop and choose the criteria for application approval. Normally, as in the case of Georgia, states follow NMSC policy (Bevin, 1992).

In 1991 the NMSC conducted a survey of all new and renewing members (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91). There were 169 returned surveys. The total membership count for the year (1991) was 580. Thus, the response rate was 27%. The respondents were asked to describe organizations and list economic development tools used for downtown/neighborhood revitalization, specify projects and activities the organization had been involved in,

and answer general questions concerning services rendered by the NMSC. Much of the information displayed in this chapter is from the NMSC Network Membership Survey, FY'91 (a copy of the survey form can be found in Appendix A).

From its inception the Main Street Program has been concerned with smaller towns under 50,000 in population (Glisson, 1984, p. 8). These often are "the communities hardest hit by the dynamics of contemporary socioeconomic change (Skelcher, 1990, p. 5)." NMSC communities range in size from less than 5,000 to over 100,000 in population with 58% having between 5,000 and 20,000 people (see Table 1).

Examples of towns which exhibited a strong commitment to participate in the Main Street Program include Grand Junction Colorado (pop. 30,000) and Viroqua, Wisconsin (pop. 3,700). Grand Junction citizens approved the issuance of up to \$10 million in bonds for parking and road improvements and the private sector organized a \$500,000 loan pool (Glisson, 1984, p. 39). Viroqua Main Street merchants raised \$180,000 to win a grant sponsored by the NMSC, and \$300,000 to help fund the project. Meanwhile, the Viroqua City council provided matching funds for public improvements (Ukens, 1991, p. 12).

Galesburg, Illinois (pop. 36,000) is a NMSC town with a demonstrated history of economic activity. In the mid-1960's, to increase retail activity downtown, Galesburg Main Street businesses remodeled their buildings in an attempt to appear

TABLE 1
NMSC NETWORK MEMBER SIZE--1991*

Population	Number of Communities
Less than 5,000	18
5,000-10,000	23
10,000-20,000	35
20,000-30,000	18
30,000-40,000	6
40,000-50,000	8
50,000-60,000	2
60,000-70,000	3
70,000-80,000	0
80,000-90,000	4
90,000-100,000	1
Over 100,000	15**

* Source: NMSC Network Membership Survey Statistics, FY'91

** May be skewed by state programs reporting their populations

Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey

modern. A decade later the town spent \$2.3 million on an unsuccessful downtown beatification project (Skelcher, 1990, p. 5).

The 1991 NMSC Network Survey identified various economic development tools utilized by NMSC members (West). Low-interest loan programs, community development block grants (CDBG) and tax increment financing were the most common finance methods used (See Table 2).

The National Preservation Loan Fund (NPLF) is an example of an low-interest loan program (Collins, 1988, p. 1-2). The NPLF awards below market-rate loans, loan guaranties and lines of credit. NPLF funds can be used for such things as rehabilitation projects, reviving a farmers' market, starting a loan pool (with the help of local financial institutions) and beginning a revolving loan fund. However, "all lending programs established with NPLF funds must be targeted to properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing part of an historic district (Collins, 1988, p. 2)."

Some states have instituted special low-interest loan programs. For instance, North Carolina has established a Main Street Financial Incentive Fund to encourage private investment. Money will be available to communities through grants and loans to be used in their downtowns (Swink, 1990, p. 8-9). In Virginia tax abatements are provided for up to 10 years if the property owner invests 60 percent of a

TABLE 2
MAIN STREET NETWORK
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR
DOWNTOWN/NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION IN EACH COMMUNITY--1991

Percentage of Communities Involved	Economic Development Tools
48%	Low-Interest Loan Programs
42%	Community Development Block Grants
30%	Tax Increment Financing
25%	Special Assessment District (property tax)
22%	Property Tax Abatements
19%	Incentive Grants
16%	Downtown Development Corporation
15%	Job Training
14%	Urban Development Block Grants, or UDAG paybacks
14%	State Income Tax Credits
12%	Certified Local Government Funds
11%	HUD Programs for downtown rehab and construction projects
10%	Enterprise Zone
9%	Other
8%	Facade Easements
7%	Commercial Development Corporation
7%	Special Assessment District (business tax)
7%	Job Credits

Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey Results

commercial structure's assessed value in building improvements (Burns, 1986, p. 4).

Federal Community Development Block Grant funds are available for economic development projects including loans to businesses. Any unit of government is eligible to apply but communities of under 50,000 people compete for funds under the "Small Cities Program." Larger municipalities are "designated" recipients. The process for awarding funds differs from state to state (Cole and Miller, 1988, p. 24).

The first step to Tax Increment Financing (TIF) is establishing a district (a geographic area). "Once adopted the increase in property tax revenues generated within the district is available to the municipality to retire debt or pay for costs incurred under a redevelopment plan (ICMA, 1988, p. 314)." Each state has different rules and regulations detailing the use of TIF.

The 1981 federal Economic Recovery Tax Act provided a 25 percent tax incentive for investors which owned and rehabilitated historic buildings. The federal tax reform act of 1986 reduced the tax credits for building improvements to 20 percent for historic buildings and 10 percent for non-residential buildings constructed before 1936 (Murtagh, 1990, p. 112).

Along with obtaining financial resources, the presence of a full-time project manager is an essential ingredient to the NMSC strategy (Smith, 1992). Training for project managers is

furnished by the NMSC. In Georgia (one of the six original states which participated in the Main Street Program), revitalization was more successful for communities which employed a full-time project manager than those who tried volunteer or part-time managers (Glisson, 1984, p. 43 and Bevin, 1992).

The NMSC also provides design assistance for member communities. Proper store facade design is an essential element for creating an appropriate atmosphere (DePalma, 1989, B1(2)). A community must have a group of commercial buildings which are historic for that municipality. For example, one Florida community lost its original downtown buildings to a fire prior to World War II. Although its current Main Street building are less than 50 years old they are still historic for the community (Smith, 1992).

Tourism can be an effective tool for downtown revitalization (Lew, 1988, p. 122). The NMSC has published a few articles and training materials pertaining to tourism (Horowitz, 1986; Radow, 1985; National Trust, Video, 1989). In a 1991 survey of NMSC communities, 18% of the local main street organizations initiated tourism promotion activities for their downtowns (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91). Kennedy Smith (1992) director on the NMSC said, "tourism strategy development will receive more attention from the NMSC in the next few years".

In the future the NMSC hopes to expand their research division (Smith, 1992) to answer such questions as "what problems does a community face after years in the program and how does it solve them?" (Keister, 1990, p. 83). Communities in Canada, New Zealand, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico have received assistance from the NMSC (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91). Eventually all 50 states will have communities which are members of the National Main Street Network (Smith, 1992)

The Main Street Approach

The Main Street approach is comprehensive. It addresses all the areas in which revitalization actions must take place (Smith, 1991, p. 1). The Main Street approach to downtown revitalization is based on four points:

Organization: Building consensus and cooperation among the many groups and individuals who have a role in the revitalization process.

Design: Enhancing the physical appearance of the commercial district by rehabilitating historic buildings, encouraging supportive new construction, and developing sensitive design management systems.

Promotion: Marketing the historic commercial district's assets to customers, potential investors, new businesses, local citizens and visitors.

Economic Restructuring: Strengthening the district's existing economic base while finding ways to expand it to meet new opportunities ("Facts About the National Trust's National Main Street Center," 1992).

An underlying purpose of the Main Street approach is to "Instill an awareness among residents that they [can] regain control of their economic destinies and conserve their communities without state or federal interference (Skelcher, 1990, p. 4)."

Organization

A long-term goal of the National Trust is to foster cooperation among diverse community groups so that the refurbished Main Street will remain vital over the years (Hoffer, 1989, p. 40). Glisson and Dane (1985) said, "Only through careful coordination of the players, consensus building and conflict resolution can revitalization occur." The Trust understands that a public-private partnership is necessary for downtown revitalization (Noyes, 1989, p. 1).

A strong organization with good leadership, positively influences all other aspects of the Main Street approach. For example, financing building improvements is important, particularly since businesses are often asked to spend their own funds. Facade programs which work take "more than money" notes Burns (1986). Some devices used by effective Main Street organizations include: a simple educational brochure, workshops, and presentations. Furthermore, some organizations arrange inexpensive design assistance which can sometimes be found locally or through a State Main Street office (Burns, 1986, 1-5).

Main Street programs are initiated and managed by a variety of entities. Most organizations are a local Main Street Program affiliated with a state program which function as independent non-profit revitalization groups. Tables 3 and 4 represent a percentage breakdown of the type of organizational structure and characteristics of community main street programs using the Main Street Approach.

Design

The design goal is to produce visible results that enhance the quality of the downtown commercial district (Hoffer, 1989, p. 40). The initial objective of a good design program is to inform the consumer that something positive is occurring downtown. Another intent, which is longer range, is the development of an image that portrays downtown as a special place.

A common building design problem involves weak relationships between many shop fronts and the buildings in which they are placed. "This can result in the whole upper part of the facade above the shop being covered by a new material which is completely foreign to the rest of the street (Michelle, 1986, p. 19)." Other problems include filling in display windows and other openings, improper color schemes and using inappropriate materials (Smith, 1991).

Several methods of formulating and implementing design plans have been developed. For example, in Metuchen, New

TABLE 3*
GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF
MAIN STREET PROGRAMS--1991

Percentage of Communities Surveyed	Organization Structure
52%	Local Main Street Program affiliated with state program
21%	City office/agency
11%	Self-initiated Main Street Program
7%	Other downtown revitalization organization
7%	State Main Street Program
4%	Other
2%	Chamber of Commerce
1%	College or University
1%	Consultant
1%	Developer
0	Product manufacturer/Representative

TABLE 4*
ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF DOWNTOWN
REVITALIZATION MEMBERS--1991

Percentage of Communities Surveyed**	Organizational Characteristics
46%	Independent non-profit revitalization organization
20%	City Office/Department
15%	Downtown Development Corporation
5%	Other
2%	Chamber of Commerce Committee/Corporation
2%	Merchants' Association
1%	County Office/Department
0	Independent for-profit revitalization organization

* Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey Design

** Nine percent of the communities surveyed did not respond to this question.

Jersey local citizens looked at over 300 slides of "everything from front stoops to backs of buildings." A consensus was formed when residents rated each picture from very unfavorable to very favorable (Depalma, 1989, p. B1).

In Pullman, Washington a design survey was administered to each business owner and randomly selected customers. Respondents were asked to remark on the appearance of specific buildings and the district as a whole. Those questioned were also directed to make written comments on photographs of the street scene (Ryder, 1988). Ronald Fleming consultant for the project noted:

In our work with downtown planners, merchants, architects and property owners, five factors are significant in evaluating a store front renovation project: (1) The sensibilities of the owner and his commitment to the renovation project. (2) The construction and design quality of the original facade. (3) The size of the budget. (4) The resources available, including design advice, materials and skilled artisans. (5) The relationship between owner and tenant (Ryder, 1988, p. 10).

Each owner may have his or her own agenda which will influence the design quality of the final project.

Public improvements, which may be needed to make an area more attractive, should not overshadow the functions of the retail district (Smith, 1986, p. 4). Planning for public improvements involves inventory of existing conditions, analysis of impacts, costs and responsibilities, establishing goals and objectives, and adopting an implementation program (Smith, 1986, pp. 3-6).

Parking and transportation strategies are a primary public improvement issue. Present older retail districts face the continual conflict of balancing the needs (perceived or real) of the automobile in a place designed for the pedestrian. Burnett (1985), suggests that perhaps main street shops should do as the malls do and offer "no store front parking (p. 1)." Burnett (1985) stated:

Although most downtowns do have problems with their parking situations, the problem is rarely a simple matter of too few spaces. In most cases, distribution of the parking spaces and the way they are managed are significant parts of the problem (p.1).

To improve the parking situation in Athens, Georgia, one hour parking meters were installed in a two hour parking zone; a small fine was given for an expired meter and a large fine for extended overtime parking. Other strategies used in Athens included: development of several off-street parking lots, management of off-street lots by the Athens Downtown Development, and implementation of a wheel-lock device to encourage a higher percentage of paid fines (Burnett, 1985, p. 2). Athens improved their parking management and added more off-street parking.

In an up-to-date survey of communities involved in the Main Street Program (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91), it was discovered that 93% of all cities initiated a building improvement program. Communities also developed or began planting/landscaping projects, sign

improvement programs, parking management schemes and public infrastructure improvements (see Table 5).

TABLE 5
MAIN STREET NETWORK DESIGN PROGRAMS--1991*

Percentage of Communities Involved	Program Used
57%	Facade Improvement Program
44%	Plantings/Landscaping
40%	Banners
36%	Building Improvement-Program (other than facade-only)
34%	Window Displays
31%	Sign Improvement Program
31%	Public Infrastructure Improvements
22%	Parking Management
17%	Underground Utilities
17%	Improvement of Rear Entrances
10%	Murals

* Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey

Regulation and enforcement are also key elements which typify a good design program. Volumes have been written about appearance control and land use law. "According to Professor Norman Williams in his American Land Planning Law, there is no clearer land-use legal trend than that of judicial acceptance of aesthetic-based land use regulations (Duerkesen, 1986, p. 1)." The merits (good or bad) of specific land use regulations which regulate appearance will not be discussed. Nonetheless, Main Street Program cities utilize a variety of regulations to control design standards (See Table 6). However, fewer cities enacted compliance and enforcement mechanisms when compared with the number of communities which have design programs.

Promotion

Promotion is crucial to the success of a retail district. and is "broad in scope (Finley, 1989, p. 1)." Improving the appearance of buildings downtown, a good newsletter for public relation purposes, as well as retail and special events are examples of promotional activities found in NMSC communities. The main purpose of a promotional program is to "Market the downtown as a place with lots to offer" (Finely, 1989, p. 2).

Many of the same techniques used by the shopping malls are adaptable to downtown. In Pawhuska, Oklahoma, the Main Street organized a Back-to-school sidewalk sale which featured

TABLE 6

MAIN STREET NETWORK DESIGN CONTROLS AND
ENFORCEMENT REGULATIONS--1991*

Percentage of Communities Involved	Mechanism Used
20%	Design Review Ordinance
18%	Public Sign Guidelines/Redesign
16%	Sign Ordinance
16%	Local Historic District Nomination
13%	Zoning Code Revision
11%	National Historic District Nomination
9%	Parking Ordinance
9%	State Historic District Nomination
8%	Building Code Revision
7%	Building Code Compliance Program

* Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey

a pep rally to "kick off" the Pawhuska High School football season (Finely, 1989, p. 4). Other promotional devices initiated by Main Street Programs can be found in Table 7.

TABLE 7
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES
INITIATED BY MAIN STREET NETWORK COMMUNITIES--1991

Percentage of Communities involved	Promotional Activities
59%	Newsletter Production
58%	Logo Development
54%	Special Events and Festivals
48%	Newspaper Columns on Revitalization
44%	Coordinated Retail Promotion
37%	Locating Corporate Sponsors for Promotional Events or Programs
34%	Radio/TV Shows on Downtown Revitalization
24%	Retail Sales Calendar

Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey

Economic Restructuring

Because of the competition from suburban shopping malls, most Downtown areas realize they will not regain their former share of the local market. In many cases downtown merchants must restructure their business practices or find new or different market niches. Smith (1991) explained the role of the Main Street Program in economic restructuring is to be a generator of ideas serving as a catalyst for change, and a source of information for such things as building and business inventories, demographics and consumer trends. Business recruitment and retention and market analyses are activities carried out by a large percentage of communities participating in the Main Street Program (See Table 8).

In Viroqua, Wisconsin, Langhus Health Mart Pharmacy competes against Wal-mart by offering free delivery, longer hours, mail delivery for rural customers, and purchasing products in volume to keep prices down. The Viroqua Main Street manager conducts workshops to help retailers improve their business skills (Ukens, 1991, p. 15).

Many Main Street communities have found a new commercial niche. New London, Connecticut turned to tourism. Hanapepe, Hawaii built on its artistic community. Vista, California developed a weekly outdoor Farmers Market/Crafts Fair/Festival night. Galax, Virginia successfully increased housing downtown (Keister, 1990, p. 49).

As Main Streets progress into the 1990's they will change merchandising techniques, work smarter, and continue to look for different ways to serve the market. "Rebuilding the downtown's economic vitality--economic restructuring--is the ultimate goal of all Main Street Programs (Smith, 1991)."

TABLE 8
ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING ACTIVITIES
INITIATED BY MAIN STREET PROGRAMS--1991

Percentage of Communities Involved	Economic Restructuring Activities
56%	Business Recruitment
46%	Retail Market Analysis
34%	Business Improvement Seminars
33%	Business Retention
23%	Business Expansion Program
21%	Farmers' Market
17%	Upper Floor Development
17%	Unified Business Hours
11%	Office Development (rehabilitation)
11%	Housing Development (rehabilitation)
8%	Centralized Retail Management
7%	Business Incubators
7%	Waterfront Development
7%	Office Development (new construction)
5%	Housing Development (new construction)

Source: FY'91 Network Membership Survey

Summary

The Main Street Program has developed a proven strategy for downtown revitalization--the Main Street Approach. The National Main Street Center administers the program by providing assistance to participating states and communities. Management of a retail district is a continuous long range process. The time following the initial commitment (typically two to three years), is usually a period of economic transition. At this time local Main Street programs should have a mechanism for long-term economic activity in place, a clear sense of role within the region, design management which works well for the community, and begin to look strategically at long-term issues and not so much at brush fires (Smith, 1992). In the future, the Main Street Program will continue to be a widely used Main Street revitalization resource for new and long-time program members as well as others.

CHAPTER III

ALTERNATIVE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

The Main Street Program, which is adaptive to a variety of situations, represents one approach to downtown revitalization. This chapter will review seven additional revitalization approaches and strategies. They include: developing downtown malls, the catalyst strategy and incremental approach, managing by district, centralized retail management, thematic approaches, tourism and residential development.

The Downtown Mall

In an effort to compete with outlying shopping centers many central city retail areas emulated their suburban counterparts by developing malls for downtown. There are primarily two types of downtown malls: open-air pedestrian malls and enclosed malls. "In many respects, the [pedestrian] malls did what they were supposed to do. Their most important benefit was the way they transformed plain old streets into something new, different, and occasionally distinctive (Houstoun, 1990, p. 4).

To free pedestrians from the annoyance of downtown traffic, some communities closed streets to automobiles. It was hoped that this would attract consumers downtown. For

many central business districts, pedestrian malls provided a temporary solution to downtown revitalization. Nonetheless, in the June, 1990 edition of Planning, Houstoun reports: "The latest panacea for downtown retailing is to bulldoze the pedestrian malls created 10 to 20 years ago and put cars and trucks back on the street (p. 4)." Thus, in many instances pedestrian malls have proven to be a long term ineffective downtown retail strategy.

The best examples of enclosed malls are found in large central business districts. Eaton Centre, in Toronto, The Gallery, in Philadelphia and The Grand Avenue, in Milwaukee are examples of major downtown malls (Black, 1983). They provide ample parking (multi-level parking garages) and furnish the same shopping environment with fountains, background music, etc., as large suburban malls do. Few small towns have enclosed malls.

In many cities both large and small, the downtown pedestrian and enclosed malls, were unable to halt the flight of stores and customers from the central retail district (Davies and Lundin, 1987, Houstoun, 1990). However, some downtown malls have also been financially successful (McGrath, 1990). A discussion of the pros and cons of specific strategies concerning downtown mall development is not within the scope of this thesis. It is sufficient to say that creating a mall is a downtown revitalization strategy which has been successful for some communities but not for others.

The Catalyst Strategy and The Incremental Approach

In the late 1980's the NMSC and the Urban Institute conducted a study of revitalization efforts in 200 cities ranging in size from 2,500 to 500,000 inhabitants. Two distinct types of strategies were identified: The catalyst strategy and the incremental approach (Wagner, 1989). The first strategy, which has been successful in cities with "strong economies", uses a major new or rehabilitated development project (ie. convention center/hotel/festival market place), as a catalyst for revitalization. The incremental approach stresses "Small-scale, long-term investment in buildings, public improvements and business (Wagner, 1989, p. 12)."

Palmer Square in Princeton, New Jersey, is an example of a catalyst. The project sits on a 7.7 acre site across from the main entrance of Princeton University and features a village square. Since its redevelopment in 1981, 107 rental apartments above retail spaces have been converted to condominiums, a 673 space parking garage has been completed, 143,602 square feet of office space has been developed, and several stores have opened as well as a new five-story wing of a hotel (Bookout, 1991, pp. 16-20). Palmer Square brought vitality and people to Princeton's center retail district.

Festival market places, such as Faneuil Hall in Boston, and Pike Place in Seattle, have been successful. However, the size of a city's population may be a factor in the success of

festival market places (Achs, 1991, p. 75). The NMSC and Urban Institute study found that the incremental approach works well in communities with "weaker economies". A good Incremental Approach example is the Main Street Program advocated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Wagner, 1989, p. 12).

As part of the study nine elements hypothesized to influence the success of downtown revitalization programs were tested. The success of a downtown revitalization program was measured by two criteria: dollars invested and jobs created. The study period was from 1976 to 1986. Both NMSC communities and cities which developed their own programs were surveyed.

The NMSC and The Urban Institute came to several conclusions which were found significant to economic success (Wagner, 1989). First, the economic base of the community is important. Agriculture communities perform poorly. Second, programs with appointed boards of directors are more influential than those with elected boards or those with no boards at all. Third, the size of the operating budget is not significant. Fourth, programs funded through local public and/or private sources are more successful than those funded by public and outside sources. Fifth, most revitalization efforts overcame obstacles to success. Sixth, long-term direct incentives to business are important. Seventh, the presence of land use controls was a key consideration. Finally, programs which comprehensively addressed both

physical and economic issues, as well as promotional functions, are more effective than programs which do not thoroughly deal with these areas.

Managing By District

Atkinson and Williams (1990) recognized, "No Downtown is a single, homogeneous entity (p. 2)." The consumer market is the force which determines the identity of the district.

The nodal character of downtowns allows the problem of "fixing" a declining downtown to be segmented. An apparently overwhelming challenge can be approached in small, manageable portions. Such a piecemeal approach is far preferable to large-scale schemes, which usually never get off the ground. Massive downtown revitalization schemes [which] usually require enormous, unrequited infrastructure expenditures for the pacesetting project, are too large to manage, take too little account of market demand, and fail to enlist individual investors because these investors cannot see where they might fit into the scheme (Atkinson and Williams, 1990, p. 2).

Eight types of districts were identified. These include: the business district, mainstream shopping area, avant-garde arts district, cultural and entertainment district, visitor district, upscale retail district, low-end retail district and ethnic districts. Some large downtowns may contain all district types (Atkinson and Williams, 1990, p. 2-3).

Some districts serve the same market. If such districts are near each other they can both benefit and possibly expand their business. Moreover, when two districts which cater to different markets, such as a tourist district and a business district, are adjacent to one another this situation can be

detrimental for both districts involved (Atkinson and Williams, 1990, p. 3).

Atkinson and Williams (1990) claim understanding district characteristics will enable the public sector to better plan for infrastructure and other programs. In Norfolk, Virginia, for example, the mainstream shopping district was unable to take advantage of tourists who patronize the visitor district near the waterfront. The two districts were cut off from each other by a "wide traffic artery, a parking garage, and the business district (p. 5)." Rather than embarking on a total redevelopment program, Norfolk is strengthening the mainstream commercial district by encouraging office and hotel development which serves tourists, business travelers and conference attendees, to locate there (Atkinson and Williams, 1990, p. 5).

Although revitalization by district is more applicable to cities with over 50,000 persons, the downtowns of almost all cities have at least one district with its own special character (Atkinson and Williams, 1990, p. 2). Whatever the size of the community, knowledge of the consumer is fundamental to managing downtown revitalization by district.

Centralized Retail Management

Suburban shopping centers characterized by centralized management techniques are fierce competitors to downtown retail areas with numerous uncoordinated individual

businesses. Centralized Retail Management (CRM), is a coordinated approach which can provide effective strategies for downtown revitalization (Stokvis, 1991, p. 7). Many CRM strategies mirror shopping center merchandising and store operation techniques. Some CRM elements include:

1. Security programs which are sensitive to the hours of store operation;
2. Common Area Maintenance (CAM);
3. Special Events;
4. Advocacy, which means "Promoting a positive image and assuring that retail interests are represented;"
5. Market analysis and merchandising plans;
6. Cooperative Advertising;
7. Program Evaluations;
8. Business development and retention;
9. Common Covenants;
10. Review of Proposed Retail Uses (Stokvis, 1991, p. 9-10).

CRM was developed by HUD, the U.S. Department of Mass Transportation (UMTA), and the International Downtown Association to provide technical assistance to cities in the U.S. (Stokvis, 1991, p. 7). Some National Main Street Center communities have initiated CRM Strategies (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91). Although problems with organizational control, holdouts, incompatible

tenant mixes and business hour conflicts, accompany CRM, it has been effective in many communities of various sizes (Stokvis, 1991).

Thematic Approach

Lew (1983) was interested in finding the major purposes for retail revitalization of communities which used a thematic approach. Theme was defined as "An easily identifiable concept or image which provides unity to the manner in which a given entity is presented (Lew, 1983, p. 156)."

Recently, a number of cities have taken the initiative to preserve an existing design theme, foster the further development of a rudimentary theme, or in the extreme, adopt and impose a theme totally foreign to the existing nature of the retail district. In Washington, Oregon, and Northern California alone, communities which have turned their older retail districts into thematic tourist attractions grew from only five in 1960 to well over 50 by 1983, and the number continues to rise (Lew, 1989, p. 15).

Key words like "historic", "re-created", "authentic", or "re-live", as well as names or logos such as "Bavarian", "Western", and "Old Town" were used to identify a sample and survey 52 theme places in the Pacific Northwest and Northern California (p. 8).

Three major purposes for using a thematic approach were found: Tourism, historic preservation, and retail development (Lew, 1983, p. 5). Attributes which describe the three purposes were discovered. Some characteristics, such as concern for inadequate parking, were common among all three

groups (Lew, 1989, p. 20). Table 9 represents attributes which are common to one, or shared by only two classifications. For example, communities which are committed to historic preservation are more likely to mandate design guidelines by ordinance, whereas tourism and retail development purpose cities are more likely to dictate design guidelines through peer pressure. It is interesting to note that both Main Street and European themes are attributes of retail development.

Lew (1983) stated, "Tourism, Historic Preservation, and Retail Development are not exclusive of one another Just over a quarter of the districts responding . . . listed all three as primary purposes for their theme development." All three purposes are concerned with the creation of a new image for a declining retail district. "What this image is, and how it is achieved are often at the center of major conflicts" (p. 127). Lew (1983) concluded, "The most pleasing and successful theme efforts are those which the residents of the community enjoy as much as the visitors (p. 158)."

Table 9: Thematic Purpose Attributes*

Tourism	Historic Preservation	Retail Development
- Waterfront or Western Theme	- Based on the quality of the existing architecture	- Main Street or European theme
- Introduced by the private sector	- Introduced by a citizens group	- Introduced by business community or public agency
- Design control through peer pressure, rather than ordinance	- Mandatory by design ordinance	- Design control more likely through peer pressure than city ordinance
- Large market area	- Multiple-city or multiple-county market area	- Community or multiple-city market area
- Tourists as a major customer group	- Families are a major customer group	- Broad range of customer types
- Low involvement of civic pride	- Concern for local civic pride	- Availability of financing for revitalization
- Importance of community history	- Legally designated historic district	- Use of consultants
- Importance of location, and the surrounding environment	- High rates of theme adoption	- Moderate rates of theme adoption, theme adopted in the mid 1970's
- Low public sector involvement	- Positive impact on business growth	- redevelopment program
- Strong retail associations with group advertising	- Strong leadership, organization and community participation	- Strong retail organization and group advertising
- some tourism related industry existed prior to the theme development		- Tourism is an important secondary purpose

* Source: Lew, 1983

Tourism

Gunn (1979) said, "Attractions provide the power for the tourism system--the lure to travel and the things to see and do (p. 71)." Because all downtowns try to attract people, tourism can be an element of any revitalization approach. This includes the Main Street Program, catalyst strategies, managing by district, centralized retail management, and certainly thematic approaches. In 1991, 30 National Main Street Center Communities initiated tourism programs (The National Trust, Document, Network Membership Survey, FY'91).

The benefits of tourism, which has "outstripped the Nation's gross national product since 1876", are many. Tourism is different from other industries, such as the auto industry, because there is no tangible visible product. It can be a very clean and environmentally desirable industry. And unlike many other industries, the customer receives the product where it is actually produced (Mathieson, 1982, p. 38). Table 10 shows the estimated economic impact of 100 additional tourists per day (all other things being equal), on the average U.S. community in 1979. These figures are derived from a model developed by the U.S. Travel Data Center.

It goes without saying that transportation systems are essential in getting tourists to their destinations or attractions (Gunn, 1979, p. 109). State Route 66 in East Tennessee has become a major highway for tourists on their way

to the Smoky Mountains. Hundreds of businesses have gathered along this major road to capture the tourist market. Gross business receipts for Pigeon Forge, a linear community

Table 10

ESTIMATED TOURISM IMPACTS
ON A LOCAL ECONOMY

IMPACT OF 100 ADDITIONAL TOURISTS PER DAY ON THE AVERAGE
U.S.COMMUNITY, 1979

Direct Impact	Total Impact
- \$876,000 in retail and service industry sales	- \$1,664,000 in business receipts
- \$188,000 in payroll income	- \$438,000 in payroll income
- 30 new travel industry jobs	- 48 new jobs
- \$59,600 in state and local tax receipts, enough to support 31 school children	- \$98,900 in state and local tax revenue, enough to support 51 school children
- Increase in population of 70	- Increase in population of 112
- 25 new households	- 41 new households
- \$71,000 increase in bank deposits	- \$89,000 increase in bank deposits
- Nearly four more retail and service establishments	- Seven more business establishments

* Includes direct, indirect, and induced impact.
Source: U.S. Travel Data Center

situated along the highway, increased 142.53% from a 1984 total \$99,427,156.00 to a 1988 total of \$241,150,600.00 (Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism, 1990).

Tourism is not always a good thing. Tourism can be similar to a small town finding a tax base sufficient enough to provide services for a large migrant student population of a major university. An article from the Practice of Local Government Planning (ICMA, 1988) portrays this concept vividly:

In small rural towns, increased economic activity can be as much of a problem as poverty or decline. Wildwood, New Jersey, near Atlantic City and home of the largest beaches on the Jersey shore, in the summer cites "on any given day" an influx of nearly 245,000 visitors (compared with a fixed population of 5,000). Wildwood does not have the benefit of deriving much property tax from the visitors. Most of the burden falls on the permanent residents. In 1987 the 525 seasonal employees hired to help out the regular staff of 245 cost \$882,000 (p. 9).

Murphy (1983) surveyed three classes of people from major tourist centers in England "Likely to experience the additional pressures brought on by new market conditions (p. 9)," The results demonstrated "significant difference in the attitudes and perceptions of local tourism development exist for the business sector, administration [government], and residents (p. 8)." "The major difference within the communities [was] the issue of facility development, as viewed by different occupational groups (p. 12)." Residents were skeptical that tourism development brought additional amenities for local people. However, it was found that the

three groups are "not too far apart and possess sufficient overlap to suggest the possibility of trade-offs and compromise in future tourism development planning (Murphy, 1983, p. 8)."

Good economic planning is needed to help maximize the benefits derived from the tourist trade, and reduce the drawbacks of overdevelopment.

Destinations should be planned to take advantage of natural settings and natural resources without destroying them. One major goal of tourism planning should be for man to enhance the natural beauty in the area (Gee, 1984, p. 97).

Kaiser (1978) adds, "Sacrificing any part for short-range tourism gain can lead to the long-range degradation of attraction for tourists, thus initiating a self-defeating cycle (p. 18)."

Tourism can be an element of any downtown revitalization program. The economic benefits as well as the drawbacks from tourism are well documented. Large seasonal variations in the numbers of visitors associated with tourist towns can place a financial strain on a community. If not properly planned for, tourism can damage the environment and social fabric of the community. Nonetheless, tourism will continue to be a viable Main Street revitalization strategy for many communities.

Residential Development

Before the introduction of the automobile many more people found it necessary to live, shop and work downtown.

The automobile made it possible for people to live farther from retail centers and places of work. Thus, today many downtowns are ghost towns when the workday is over (Serrao, 1991, p. 255). Black (1983) said, "Make residential development an element of retail strategy in downtowns where close-in residential population has eroded in numbers and purchasing power (p. 21)."

Just providing more housing will not guarantee people living downtown. Serro (1991), identified three success factors. First, "the building must look attractive and stylish . . . and offer residents a pleasant and secure environment." Second, the surrounding neighborhood must be safe, and have available services and amenities and sense of community. Third, downtown apartments must be affordable (p. 256-257).

Jane Jacobs (1961), in Death and Life of Great American Cities, explains diversity of uses will help keep a city vital. In addition to local residents, four conditions for city diversity were given:

1. The district must serve more than one primary function;
2. Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent;
3. The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones;

4. The district must have a sufficiently dense concentration of people, for whatever purpose they may be there, this includes people there because of residence.

Although Jacobs analyzed large cities many of her concepts are applicable to small communities as well.

Vacant upper-story spaces in downtown building cost merchants and property owners money. Occupied floor space provides needed revenue to help offset mortgage payments and allows the merchant to be more competitive. Furthermore, downtown residents provide another market. In Athens, Georgia professional offices, expanding retail businesses, restaurants, modern apartments, artist studios, galleries and art supply shops commonly locate in downtown second-story space (Dane, 1987, p. 7). This has helped revitalize Athens' Main Street by bringing more people downtown.

Summary

Seven retail district revitalization approaches and strategies were discussed. The Mall strategy emphasizes the creation of an environment similar to the suburban shopping center or mall. The catalyst strategy underscores the need for a major project to serve as a stimulus for downtown development. Understanding the market and characteristics of the commercial area is fundamental to managing revitalization by district. Proponents of centralized retail management

maintain shopping center techniques are transferable to downtown situations. Thematic revitalization approaches have become more popular in recent years. Finally, tourism and residential development can provide opportunities and new markets for downtowns areas.

The four points--design, organization, promotion, and economic restructuring--stressed in the Main Street Program, are shared by most all downtown revitalization strategies. Unique to the Main Street Approach is the emphasis placed on a need for a core of older historic buildings and places under 50,000 in population.

No approach or strategy will guarantee revitalization success. It is important that the needs and assets of a place as well as the nature of the market, are understood before a community decides which approach or combination of approaches is best.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY OF HELEN, GEORGIA

This chapter describes the events, organizations and people involved in the revitalization of Helen, Georgia. A review of strategies employed and steps taken to reinforce, direct and assure growth during the formative and recent years of Alpine Helen's history will also be discussed. The latter part of the chapter will discuss details concerning planning efforts in the community, the economic benefits derived from tourism, and the commercial growth on highways leading to Helen.

Early Years

This part of the chapter discusses the events of the early years of revitalization and what inspired citizens to change their town into an Alpine village. Local government and other organizations had small budgets and few members. However, the quality of design was very high, finance mechanisms were adequate, promotion was effective and merchants were able to capitalize on the tourist market.

Organization

There was not a chamber of commerce or any other organization when Helen started adopting a Bavarian theme (Bob

Fowler, 1992). Local government was very small. "In 1969 the town budget was around \$30,000--all that was needed to take care of the small water system and the Chevrolet patrol car that the town's sole policeman used to patrol up and down Georgia 17, Helen's Main Street (Rogers, 1991, p. 4)." The revitalization of downtown Helen was instigated by the actions of three individuals--Jim Wilkins founder of Orbit Manufacturing (a Helen based maker of women's apparel), Bob Fowler an executive of Orbit, and Pete Hodkinson III, a businessman and entrepreneur.

Pete Hodkinson assisted Orbit Manufacturing in the development and location of outlet stores. He sold franchises to prospective buyers. Prior to meeting Jim Wilkins, Mr. Hodkinson had developed and sold several small commercial enterprises. Eventually he became the primary developer of Alpine Helen.

Orbit owned one of the outlet stores in Helen and other outlet stores in small towns throughout northeast Georgia. While visiting an orbit outlet store in Pine Mountain, GA, Bob Fowler and Pete Hodkinson were impressed with the appearance of another downtown store located nearby. The owner, with little cost, "tastefully" improved her building by adding new shingles, fresh paint and a lantern. Later that year Bob Fowler read about a small Georgia community closing shops early, one day a week, to clean and spruce up downtown

buildings. The story told how members in the community volunteered and pitched in.

The three men decided that something must be done to clean up Helen's downtown. On December 21, 1968 Pete Hodkinson said he had a friend, John Kollock, an artist, with some good ideas. Kollock provided a Bavarian theme. They accepted the idea and Jim Wilkins' Orbit outlet store was the first to have an alpine motif.

Pete Hodkinson sold the Bavarian Theme idea to individual property owners. Often Bavarian style buildings on either side of an hesitant property owner helped convince him or her into adopting the alpine theme. "If something works people will tailgate behind" (Kollock, 1992). Furthermore, Mr. Kollock sometimes created fine water color paintings of various buildings to help Pete Hodkinson sell the idea. Kollock said, "You tell them . . . tell them . . . show them . . . then let them get the idea for themselves".

"Pete [Hodkinson] was always reading on how things were done elsewhere . . . He had a lot of 'crazy' ideas." For example, he subdivided the land by the Wurst Hause (a German restaurant), into small 40' X 20' lots and then "went and sold the thing" (Kollock, 1992). He had a concept to make Helen an international village. In addition to Bavaria, other nations such as Italy, France and Sweden, would also be represented (Hawthorne, 1992).

A Chamber of Commerce was organized in 1973 but was not fully recognized until 1975 (Loveland, 1992). Thus, for the first 6 years of the revitalization process, with the exception of local government, no organization existed. Pete Hodkinson, sometimes referred to as "Mr. Helen" (May 19, 1976--Atlanta Journal), was the primary promoter and developer.

Unfortunately, on July 18, 1976, Pete Hodkinson died in a balloon accident. After his death "more fingers got into the pie". Kollock, who furnished the design for all of the original downtown buildings, said, "my whole power to do things was through Pete". After Pete Hodkinson passed away, John Kollock did only one other major project--The Castle Inn. The quality of design changed after Kollock stopped work. Old timers speak of Pete Hodkinson in endearing terms. John Kollock (1992) said, "Pete made it fun." Roy Sims (1992) said, "Pete was a pusher, but loved people like a brother."

Design

John Kollock served a year in the military service in Bavaria, had a degree in theatrical design and was the son of an architect. Between December 21, 1968 and January 2, 1969 he took pictures "of every building--from every angle--in the business section." John Kollock remembered:

Back in the studio I spread out the photographs and then dug back in my files for my snapshots of Bavaria, along with every postcard and book I had collected. . . . A week later I took a folder of drawings matched up with the views of the buildings as they existed, and journeyed back to Helen. The

most I expected was a polite 'thank you,' and regrets that it was too expensive and impossible to attempt (Scruggs, 1991, p. 7).

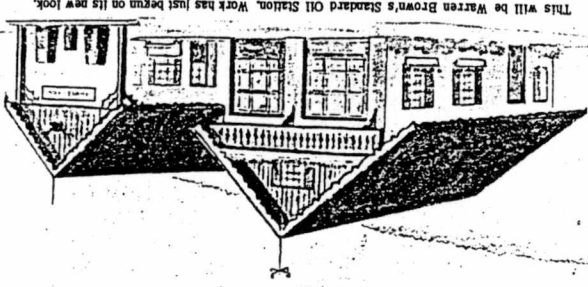
Bob Fowler said, "basically what was in the sketches is what is there now." Figure 4 is a copy of the front page of the White County News. This was the first story the media did about Helen. It illustrates what some of the early Kollock sketches looked like.

John Kollock's first sketches were of the whole town. Subsequent sketches were drawn in a purposeful manner so buildings could interlock and fit well with adjacent buildings. Mr. Kollock's intent was to provide a setting which provided plenty of opportunities for taking photographs. He would usually bring sketches in on Saturday morning and work with building owners and guide contractors on what should be done. He charged \$100 a sketch, and donated hours of free time (Kollock, 1992).

At first all the construction work was done by two local builders--Roy Sims and J.S. Chastain. Roy Sims (1992) said, "There were no tradesman, we did all the plumbing, electrical . . . everything." All of the craftsmanship was handmade or handcut by local carpenters (Jonathan Sims, 1992).

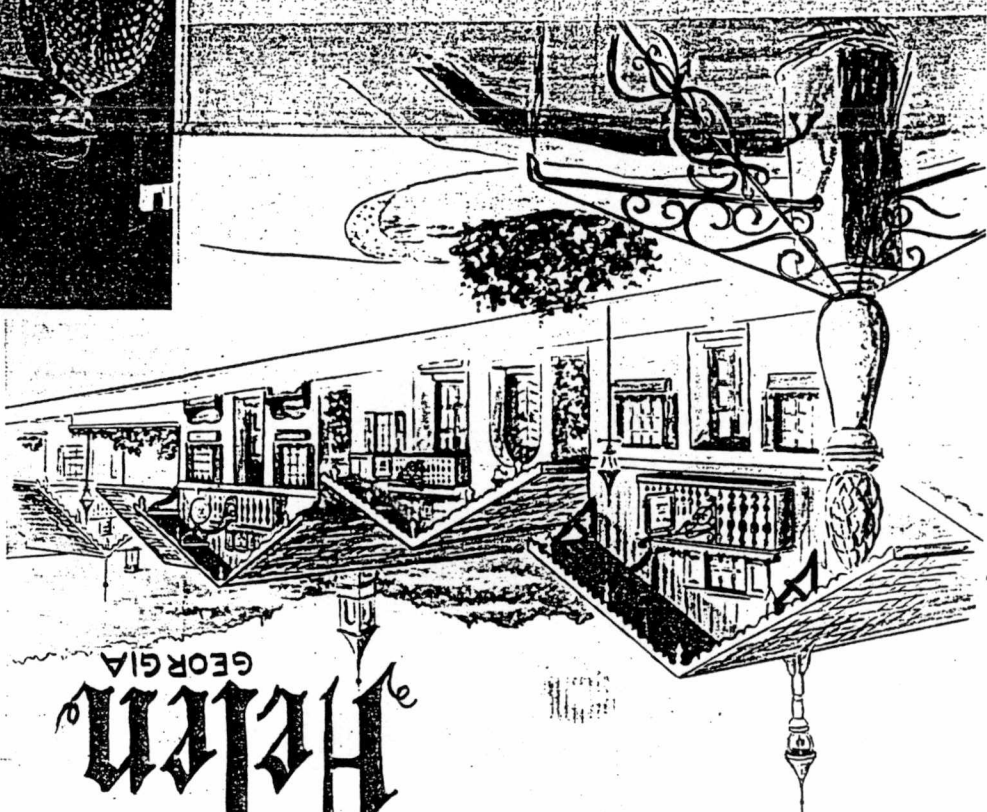
Renovation and face-lifting work began in the off season for most construction businesses. Moreover, the local economy had taken a downturn at the time and labor was inexpensive and in abundant supply (Roy Sims paid his workers \$1.50 to \$2.00 an hour). Consequently, work progressed very rapidly. For

SAMPLE



This will be Warren Brown's Standard Oil Station. Work has just begun on its new look.

Helen, Georgia is rapidly becoming a Bavaria in the Blue Ridge Mountains. The little village has begun to sparkle like a jewel with many colored facets.

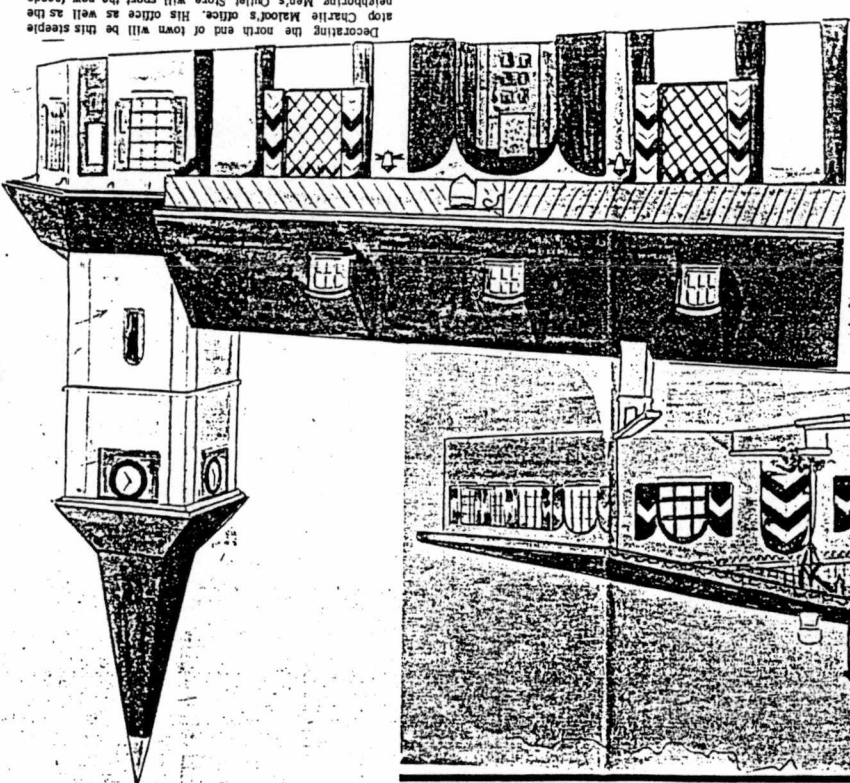


Welcome to Helen Georgia

The new look for Helen. A Bavarian village in the Blue Ridge Mountains. These shops look exactly like the artist, John Kollock's drawing as shown here.



Discussing drawing are (L-R) Roy Sims, builder; John Kollock, artist; and J. S. Chastain, builder. No blueprints are used. The local builders go by John Kollock's drawings.



Decorating the north end of town will be this steeply sloping Men's Outlet Store. His office as well as the shop, Charlie Maloot's, will sport the new facade as shown above.

The town of Helen, Georgia is getting an entirely new facade. Drawings done by artist John Kollock are taking shape in the form of quality little shops that when completed will give Helen the look of a Bavarian or Alpine village. Artist Kollock, well known in north Georgia and the south, designed the new facade for Helen because he loves the mountains. Mr. Kollock was stationed in Bavaria and he says, "That is the only other area I've ever carried away with. I've wanted to bring north Georgia and Europe together for about 18 years." And bringing it together he is. As you talk to the people of Helen, they stress one thing above all else: This is a community effort. Cooperation is 100% and enthusiasm abounds. No one even wants his name mentioned because of being unfair to all of the others. That this project is being done entirely by local people. Each store owner finances his own building and local craftsmen do the work. The craftsmen J. S. Chastain are doing the building and it is something to see. Mr. Kollock says that upon seeing the quality of craftsmanship these men were capable of, he knew the town would be built well. There are no blueprints and no specifications. The builders go by Kollock's drawings, some of which are reproduced here. The finished product always looks exactly like the drawing. Many of the buildings are being reproduced here. As the Bavaria of the Blue Ridge catches on, it is almost certain that local housing will adopt the style and this is what the people of Helen want.

Why don't you drive up to Helen this weekend and be pleasantly surprised at the Bavarian village in the Blue Ridge.

You'd never recognize this as the Ice Burg, but that's exactly what it is. When completed the building will look like this drawing by Kollock. One of the builders, J. S. Chastain, is the owner.

Figure 4 - White County News Story Article Credit: John Kollock

example, builders transformed two of the downtown building into an eight shop mall in two months (Roy Sims, 1992).

Initially not everyone was convinced that using smaller "shop-like" signs made good business sense. Workshops were held to discuss signage techniques. Slide shows were presented to illustrate good and bad signage. Merchants were reminded that visitors take pictures of small, quaint looking signs, not big and long signs. A sign review board was in place during the first year of revitalization (Kollock, 1992).

Landscaping was stressed. Pretty flowers leave a lasting impression and are another thing people like to photograph (Kollock, 1992). Figure 5 provides examples of signage and landscaping found in Helen during the winter of 1992.

Finance

"To finance the Bavarian theme each owner put up his own money. There was no federal money, no state money, no grants of any type" (Rogers, 1991, p. 4). In March of 1969, Bob Harrell of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution wanted to do a story on Helen. Mr Harrell mentioned UPI and AP might be interested in the story because "When a community improves themselves without government help, it is national news" (Fowler, 1992).

Jeff Ash (1992), President of White County Bank, Helen city commissioner and former mayor, acknowledged, "Owners sought the least costly method to improve their buildings. A

Bavarian motif was found to be just as inexpensive as other ways". John Wilkins had the outside of his outlet store redesigned for \$9,000.00. A complete renovation of Ola Adams Masters' (1992) store was done for \$16,000 in 1969. She later building for \$168,000.00 in 1982 and wished she had held on to it for a little longer.

Much of Helen's revitalization can be attributed to the "deep pockets" of Jim Wilkins. He owned a large amount of real estate and financially backed Pete Hodkinson on several development and promotional schemes (Larry Fowler, 1992).

In 1972 Pete Hodkinson organized a group of investors and formed Alpine Valley Investment Corporation. The Helendorf Inn was developed by this corporation. The organization also purchased numerous parcels of land with the intent to develop the area just east of downtown. A moat and castle-like wall were features of this development. The group had further plans for a golf course and a condominium development adjacent to Helen (This plan later became a reality). With the death of Pete Hodkinson, his corporation eventually disbanded.

By the mid-1970's government had become an important component (Rogers, 1991, p. 4). Bob Fowler became Mayor in 1974 and during his tenure Helen acquired its first sewer system. The system was an absolute necessity. Larry Fowler (1992), the city's attorney, said, "The town could not hope to grow without it." The sewer system was funded in part through a state grant. The telephone and power companies also helped



Figure 5 - Signage and Landscaping (Winter 1992)

the city by agreeing to bury their lines underground in the central business area.

At first, Helen's property taxes were minimal and most of the town's money came from a tax on the sale of beer. White County, which Helen is a part of, refused to issue alcohol permits (they still refuse to this day). Thus, Helen was an oasis for surrounding residents and travelers desiring to purchase alcohol. During the early 1970's a referendum allowing the sale of mixed drinks was passed. Some say this is credited to Pete Hodkinson who convinced several people to vote for the resolution (Larry Fowler, 1992)."

Promotion

Because of the mountains and streams, the White County area has long been a tourist destination. People realized that travelers passed through Helen, but throughout the face-lifting process the word tourism was never mentioned. Furthermore, for the first three months Helen downtown changes were not publicized. Bob Fowler (1992) indicated, "We did not want the publicity. Things were not ready yet. We did not want people coming up here expecting to see something and then not seeing it."

On March 27, 1969, three-and-a-half months after revitalization efforts began, a local press report concerning Helen ran in the White County News. About that same time other stories appeared in major newspapers throughout Georgia

(Bob Fowler, 1992). Helen businessmen effectively used the press to promote their city. For example, Pete Hodkinson had a proposal to develop a trolley system which would transport tourists to Unicoi State Park from Helen. He acquired two trolleys and a few feet of track. Then he invited the newspapers to come and write about the idea. The system was never completed and the two trolleys can still be seen in Helen today (Hawthorne, 1992).

After the first four months an active effort to promote tourism was undertaken. In April of 1969, the city began preparations to enter the "Stay and See" contest. The contest, sponsored by the State of Georgia, was a means of giving recognition to communities working to improve themselves. In November of 1969 it was announced than Helen had won the "Stay and See" contest in the small city division (White County News, Nov. 6, 1969).

Major events initiated during the early years included the Trout Festival in May of 1969, Oktoberfest on October 23, 1971, The Sound of Music which opened at the new Helen Theater on April 5, 1973, and balloon races in May of 1974.

During the revitalization process, Helen's main street shifted from a local serving district to a tourism attraction.

Later Years

The mid-1970's were a time of transition which set the stage for more growth during the 1980's. The first sewer

system was completed (1976). Pete Hodkinson died (1976), and John Kollock had all but finished his sketch work. Outside people started to come in and set up shop (Fowler, 1992). Helen's first comprehensive plan was adopted (1975). The Chamber of Commerce grew from a handful of businesses in 1970 to 66 in 1975 (White County News, May 12, 1977). Economic activity continued to increase.

Helen experienced large influxes of visitors in the late 1970's. During the height of the summer season Helen could expect to receive 5,000 to 20,000 visitors a day. Building activity increased and between 1980 and 1990 the real estate market boomed. For instance, in 1987, 44 building permits were issued resulting in \$6,487,000.00 in new construction--see Figure 6 (Paul, 1992).

Figure 7 illustrates commercial growth patterns from 1969 to 1983 and from 1983 to the present. As late as 1983 commercial development remained clustered where State Highway 75 crosses the Chatahoochee River near the center of town. From 1983 to 1991 growth occurred primarily south of downtown along the Highway.

Despite increased economic activity, the population of Helen remained small, only reaching 300 by 1990 (See Figure 8). Helen is small in area--only 1,316 acres in 1988 (Georgia Mountain APDC, 1988, p. 14). Prime developable land is usually used for commercial purposes. Remaining land in characterized by steep slopes often unsuitable for residential

Helen Building Construction Cost

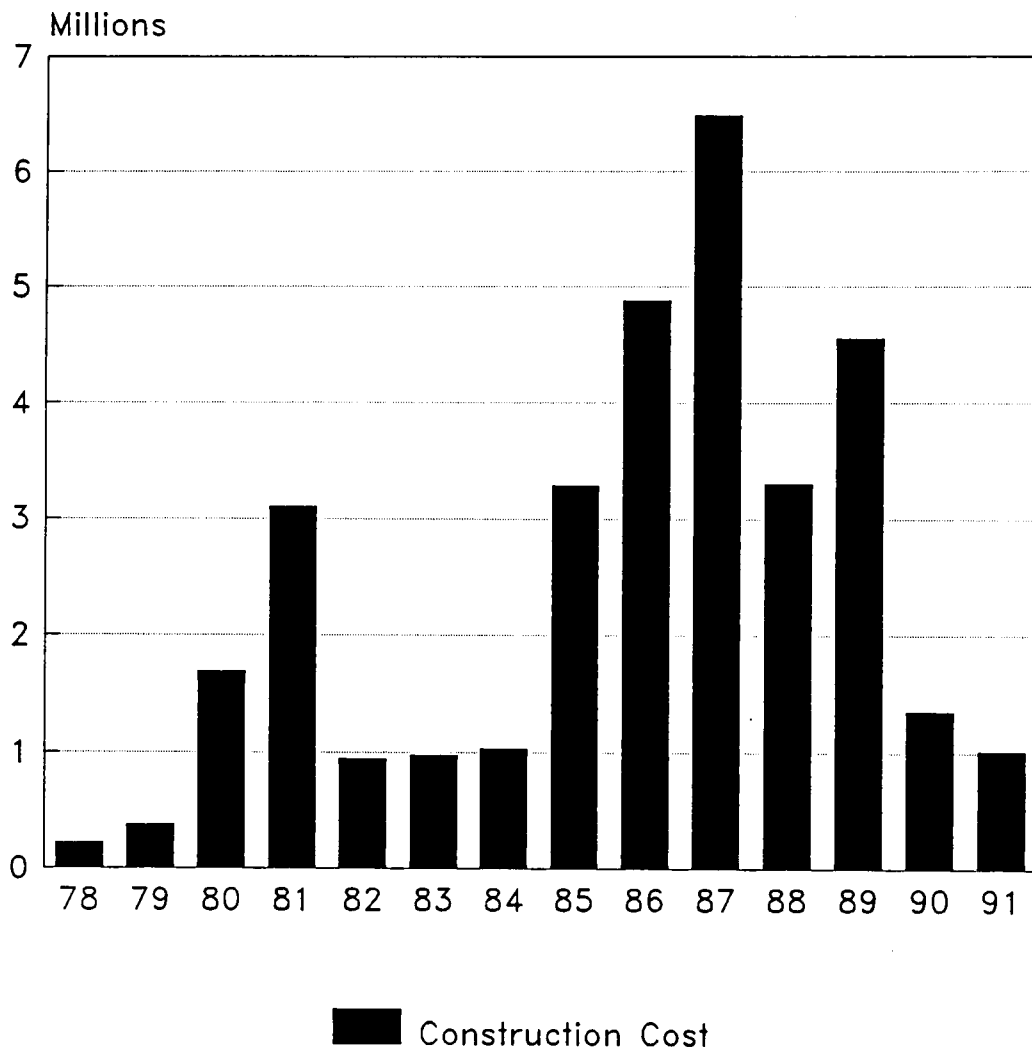


Figure 6 - Helen Building Activity 1977 to 1991
Source: Helen Planning/Building Department

Helen, Georgia

Existing Roads & Highways (1988)

Existing Roads & Highways (1988)

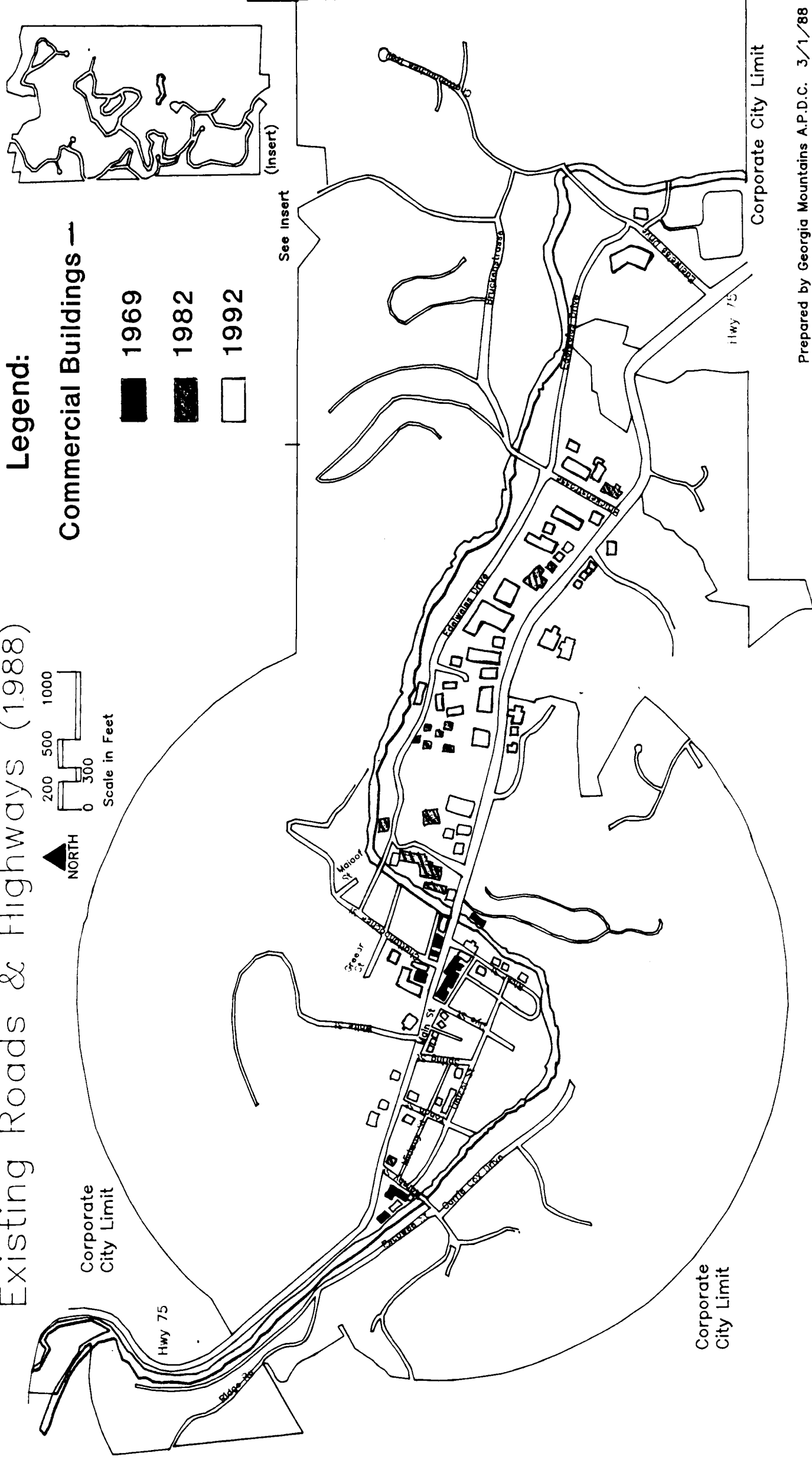


Figure 7 - Map Depicting Helen's Commercial Growth (1969 to 1992)
Source: Bob Fowler, Gilbert Paul and Student Survey

Prepared by Georgia Mountains A.P.D.C. 3/1/88

Existing Roads and Highways

Population Changes in Helen (1920-1990)

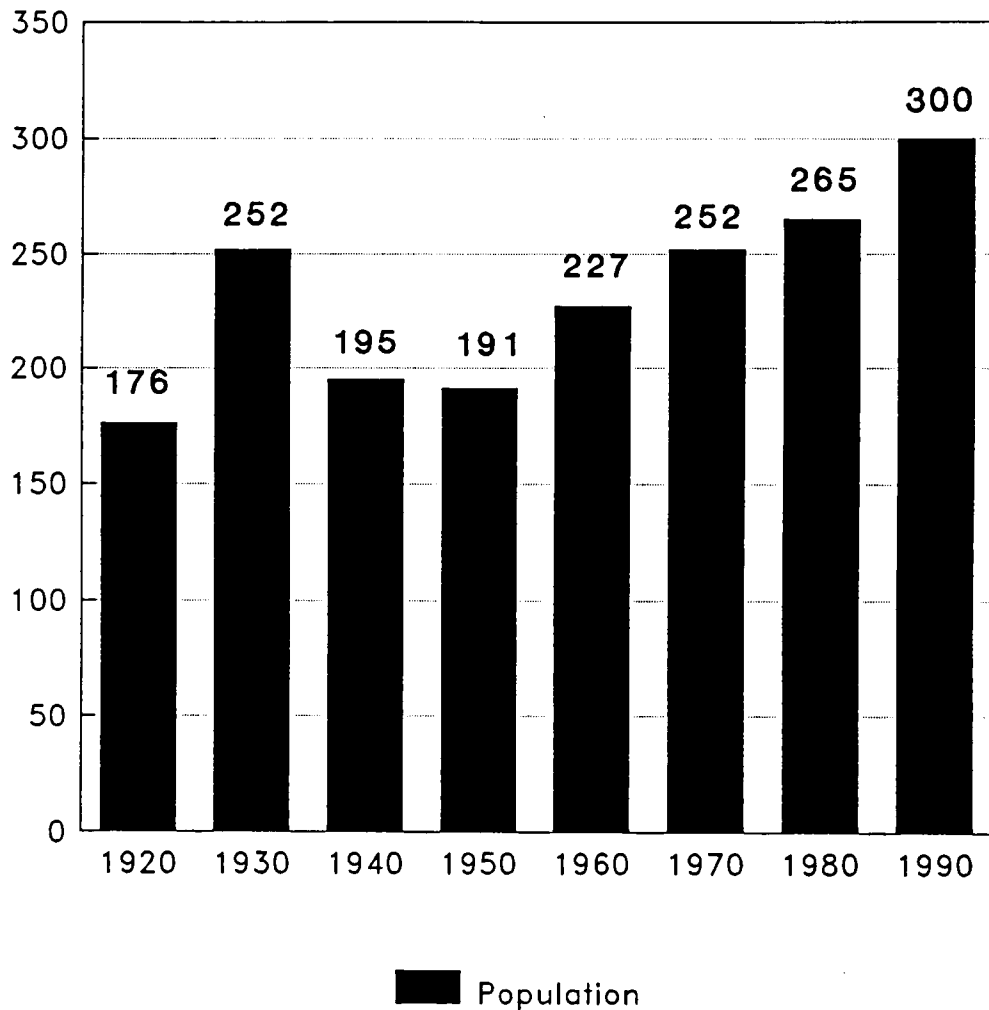


Figure 8 - Helen Population Chart
Source: Georgia Mountain APDC

development. However, while Helen experienced little population growth, White County's population increased 55 percent between 1970 and 1990 from 7,742 persons to 12,000 (Georgia Mountain APDC, 1988, p. 25).

In 1988, there were 184 primary residential structures occupying 194 acres of land. Meanwhile, secondary residential dwelling units (condominiums, time-share units, fractional ownerships and vacation homes) comprised 347 acres of land¹ (Georgia Mountain APDC, 1988, p. 12).

Organizations

Local Government is the principal organization that exists in Helen today. It has grown in size and complexity and provides up-to-date services to meet the demands of a growing economy. Other organizations which provide important services to the community, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Business and Merchants Association will also be discussed.

Local Government: Jim Whitford (1992), the current city manager, said, "The purpose of government in Helen is to provide the infrastructure to enable continued development. Local government is the largest provider of goods and services and is the major organization which functions to ensure the economic success of Main Street and the Community.

¹ Total secondary dwelling unit figures were unobtainable

In 1986, the form of government in Helen changed from a mayor/city council structure to a commission/city manager form. The change was an absolute necessity (Bob Fowler, 1992). Prior to this time, the city ran into financial difficulties by over-expanding public infrastructure improvements. Government must have the ability to provide the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate growth (Ash, 1992). The part time mayor and city council did not have the time nor the experience to handle the problems associated with high seasonal growth. Helen became a small town with big city problems, and it required professional and experienced city management.

Because of Helen's size many of its residents are simultaneously key participants in both the private sector and the public sector. Therefore, the private sector quickly realizes when government is not sensitive to their needs. Likewise, the public sector is aware of what is going on and what must be done to better serve the private sector.

Jim Whitford (1992) stated, "Helen cannot function like a regular municipality. This place has to operate like a shopping center." City employees work to maintain the appearance of Helen as well as fulfill regular government duties. The local government maintains landscaped areas and three public rest rooms. City staff work reports presented to City Council on February 13, 1992 contained such things as cleaning, sweeping and edging all City side streets and Main

Street, sandblasting all rock in common areas of Downtown Mall, and replacing rotted railroad ties in flower box on Main Street.

Helen is a very progressive community. The city has an array of regulations and ordinances to guide growth. To administer these controls, Helen has various commissions and boards which include the City Commission, Planning Commission, Architectural and Design Review Board, and the Board of Appeals. Each commission or board is comprised of 5 members.

The Planning Commission is empowered to prepare a master plan and subdivision regulations and to make recommendations on such things as zoning issues. The Architecture and Design Review Board reviews and approves or disapproves all building plans and sign applications for compliance with design and landscape standards. The Board of Appeals is responsible for administrative review and hearing and deciding variances to the zoning ordinance (Mayes, Sudderth & Etheredge, Inc., 1990, p. 2-5, 56-57).

Chamber of Commerce: the Chamber's role in Helen is to help establish and reinforce the community's identity. In 1991, the Chamber had 270 members with 220 from Helen and the other 50 from the surrounding counties. Only 80% of Helen's businesses belong to the Chamber. However, it is the largest and most active Chamber in the area (Loveland, 1992).

The Chamber of Commerce runs Oktoberfest and other festivals and operates the festhall. It also promotes its

activities locally and in the Atlanta area. The operating budget is derived from dues, proceeds from festivals and weekly Bingo at the festhall (Bingo accounts for 80% of the budget), (Loveland, 1992).

Convention and Visitor Bureau (CVB): the CVB's sole responsibility is to promote Helen. Prior to 1989 the Chamber of Commerce was in charge of the Helen's welcome center and destination advertising. During the 1980's the Chambers workload became unmanageable. Thus, in 1989, the CVB was created to be the marketing organization for Helen.

The CVB receives an operating budget of \$186,000. The budget is comprised of funds from the Hotel and Motel Tax (40%), \$200 of every \$450 required for a business license (30%), a portion of the sales tax and funds from the City of Helen when needed (30%), (Hawthorne, 1992 and Clements, 1992). The CVB also receives a small grant from the State of Georgia to help run the welcome center.

Currently there are no convention facilities in Helen. Helen is investigating the possibility of developing a professionally run Conference Center (Whitford, 1992).

The Business and Merchant Association: this organization was formed by the private sector to better meet the needs of local merchants and restaurant owners. Over the years the association has gone through periods of inactivity only to be revived when merchants perceive a need to improve the business climate. B.J. Beall (1992), President of the association

said, "Most people when they come to town think they're going to make a million bucks. Starting and running a business is risky venture, even in Helen. Turnover is higher than one might imagine, especially during the winter months."

Goals of the 55 member Merchant and Business Association include improving the merchandising techniques of local merchants, develop a program for Mayfest and encouraging businesses to maintain a good appearance by starting a business of the month program to recognize exceptional establishments. The association would also like to see more standard store hours and more downtown employees wearing traditional Bavarian clothes (Beall, 1992).

Design

Helen has diligently acted to maintain its alpine character through the use of government regulations. Design Boards have been in existence since 1969 (Kollock, 1992). Design regulations became more explicit as more architects and contractors became involved (Fowler, 1992). Most merchants agree that design guidelines are good (Beall, 1992). The first official design ordinance was adopted in the Mid-1970's (Larry Fowler, 1992). Helen design guidelines consist of sign and design requirements, a tree ordinance, and parking regulations.

Sign Regulations: sign permits are required to erect any type of exterior sign in the city of Helen. Sign restrictions

involve "no lighted sign of any type. . . . Examples of lighted signs include those which are internally lit or those composed of lighted elements." Furthermore, all signs must be constructed of approved metal, wood, or suitable substitute material. Signs must also "compliment [sic] the Alpine motif intended to govern commercial development" (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 1987, p. 203).

Certain standards govern the size of the sign. Signs are classified by five different criteria. The size requirements are dependant on sign classification and whether the sign is in a walking, driving or residential area (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 1987, p. 202).

Helen rigorously enforces their sign ordinance. For example, in 1990, McDonalds considered locating in Helen and decided not to. McDonald's unwillingness to abide by the provisions of the sign ordinance may have been a factor in their decision (Paul, 1992). Since that time both Wendy's and Kentucky Fried Chicken opened restaurants in Helen.

Design Standards: all development within the City of Helen must go through a design review process which requires a site analysis, a comprehensive site plan, and an architectural design plan. Design standards consist of:

1. Roof pitch regulations.
2. Exterior and interior trim to match alpine design motif.
3. Glass window surface as a percentage to total exposed wall surface for each building elevation.

4. Building Scale.
5. Building Contiguity--the applicant must show a proposed design for the physical connection of the proposed building to any other building.
6. Lighting Standards--exterior lights may be of any type except neon.
7. Building Colors--the exterior colors of buildings shall be combinations of red, white, blue, black brown or green to complement the alpine design motif.
8. Window and door design standards.
9. Roof overhang, balcony overhang and portico standards.
10. HVAC equipment and utility meter criteria.
11. handicapped accessibility construction standards.
12. Water conservation standards.
13. General Motif--commercial developments must be of alpine design (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 1987, pp. 117-119).

Tree Ordinance: the City of Helen Tree Ordinance mandates, "All trees . . . with a caliper of six inches or larger shall be protected and retained. If a tree must be removed to accommodate development, another tree of the same variety shall be planted on the site (Mayes, Sudderth & Etheredge, Inc., 1990, p. 2-5, 56-57)." The Tree ordinance provides an approved plant list (see appendix). Furthermore, a landscaping plan must be submitted during the design review

process (Carl Vinson Institute of Government, 1987, pp. 117-119).

Parking regulations: The Parking Ordinance details paving, workmanship, material and space standards to be used for all parking areas. A list of 20 uses with particular minimum space requirements is also given.

A variety of opinions exist about the parking situation in Helen. Some think that space is sufficient but is too spread out and should be consolidated (Beall, 1992). For others, a big concern is whether or not to charge for parking and if so, how much (Mann, 1992). Many people think parking is a problem but no one said there was a shortage of parking space.

Jim Whitford stated, "We only have a shortage of parking during the 10 days of Oktoberfest". The city owns two lots and has a verbal lease on another. Mr. Whitford wished the city never got into the parking business. He explained, "The yearly payment for our parking lots is \$62,000 and they sit empty most of the year. We showed the private sector it was possible to make money on parking. They picked up on the idea, attracted customers, and now are more successful than us."

Most lots are privately owned including two of the largest lots. In 1983, space for parking was removed along Main Street and replaced with a landscaped plaza furnished with a bandstand and places for people to sit. This helped to

reduce traffic congestion and to make a more pleasing environment for the pedestrian.

Finances

The public and private sector in Helen rely on a variety of financial tools to meet their basic economic needs. There is an understanding between businesses, the banks, and government to work together and do what is best for Helen (Ash, 1992).

Private Sector: White County Bank issues more business loans in Helen than any other institution. Jeff Ash (1992), President of White County Bank stated, "A loan to a typical merchant in Helen is not as risky as other commercial loans because there is not as much [investment] associated with the business all under one roof. I lost more in 1991 on one car dealership in White County than I've lost in Helen in 20 years."

Mr. Ash stated, "The SBA (Small Business Administration) built Helen." "The Small Business Administration's business loan guarantee program is an attempt by the federal government to increase the access of small business to credit and in so doing to stimulate growth in the small business sector (Rhyne, 1988, p. 1)." The SBA's 7(a) program is the most used in Helen. Rhyne (1988) explains:

Under the 7(a) business loan guarantee program, the SBA offers to guarantee loans made to eligible businesses by commercial banks and certain other lenders. Until 1986, the guarantee usually covered

90 percent of principle and all interest, though for loans of over \$100,000 the coverage was permitted to fall to 70 percent (but very rarely did). In 1986, the 90 percent guarantee was made mandatory for loans up to \$155,000, while larger loans were given a range of 70 to 85% Any business that meets SBA's definition of small, which differs from industry to industry, may be eligible for an SBA guaranteed loan The main further qualification is that banks must certify that the business would not qualify for credit on reasonable terms without the guarantee and that prospects for repayment are sound. The loans range in size to an upper limit of \$500,000 (guaranteed portion). The average size in 1984 was \$167,000 (full principle; average guaranteed portion was \$145,000), (p. 2).

"About \$15 million in SBA-guaranteed lending has been placed over the past two decades. . . . Over the past 15 years, Helen has seen more than \$60 million in new development" (Hightower, 1991, p. 4).

Public Sector: Helen's first sewer system was obsolete the day it came on line in 1976. It was only designed for a population of 300 - 500 people, not a tourist population of 10,000 (Larry Fowler, 1992). Moreover, the city is not permitted to take water out or put effluent in the Chattahoochee River (a major source of water for Atlanta).

City fathers immediately searched for a solution. At a very high cost (\$2,000,000 for just the waste-water treatment plant), effluent is piped underneath the Chattahoochee to five alternating 12 acre spray fields in Unicoi State Park and sprayed into the forest. The system fully came on line in 1986 and should meet the needs of the city to the year 2020 (Larry Fowler, Whitford, 1992).

The city issued a revenue bond to pay for the waste facility. State and Federal grants were also used to fund the project. The local government has never issued a general obligation bond, and with the exception of small grants for the sewer system the city has received no State or Federal funds (Whitford, 1992).

A special assessment district was considered to help develop a certain part of Helen but property owners in that area did not want it (Whitford, 1992). In the near future a low interest loan program may start for facade improvements and other items (Ash, 1992).

Promotion

Promoting the alpine theme is the top marketing priority in Helen followed closely by advertising outdoor activity (Hawthorne, 1992). Various tools and techniques are used to attract visitors. Print is the primary advertising medium. Brochures are sent to welcome centers throughout Georgia and the surrounding states. Radio is used occasionally to advertise local events. T.V. advertising is non-existent (Hawthorne, 1992).

Co-op advertising is done from time to time with the Outlet Mall, the Chamber of Commerce in Cleveland, and the Helen Chamber of Commerce. David Hawthorne (1992) said, "Without co-op advertising we would be unable to get into most

major publications such as Georgia On My Mind and Southern Living.

Special events attract visitors and media coverage. All of the annual major events started during the early 1970's have grown in size and popularity. Oktoberfest, Helen's largest event, runs from the Thursday after Labor Day to the last weekend in October and attracts an estimated 300,000 visitors (Clement, 1991). Other events include a national motorcycle rally held every June, the Annual Appalachian Music Festival in July, and Fasching Karnival held in January (Clement, 1991).

Helen's primary market for tourists is Atlanta. David Hawthorne (1992) said, "What is good for Atlanta is good for us in relation to regional advertising". Most tourists come to Helen from Georgia (39% in 1990) and Florida (21%), (See table 11).

As tourists arrive in Helen advertising continues to be important. Visitors desire knowledge on what to see and do. The Welcome Center is the first stop for many travelers. It is manned by 2 full-time and 3 part-time staff members. Table 12 depicts monthly Welcome Center statistics for the years 1988 to 1991.

Visitor yearly totals steadily increased. October had the highest visitation rates followed by the summer months. Advertising is done in local publications and "freebies" distributed at hotels and motels and news stands. Helen also

Table 11
Where Tourists Come From 1990*

State	Percentage of Total Tourists
Georgia	39.0%
Florida	21.2%
Alabama	10.6%
Other	10.6%
Tennessee	6.7%
South Carolina . .	6.6%
North Carolina . .	5.3%

* Source: Helen Chamber of Commerce

Table 12
Helen Welcome Center
Visitor Statistics 1988-91*

By Month Visitors/ Telephone Inquiries	1988	1989	1990	1991
	V. / T.	V. / T.	V. / T.	V. / T.
January	1391 / 1142	1480 / 1305	2153 / 1227	2066 /1065
February	1872 / 1059	1359 / 1021	2797 / 1166	3173 /1255
March	2284 / 823	3208 / 2194	5163 / 1632	5979 /1270
April	4665 / 1059	4076 / 1656	6706 / 1447	10512/1314
May	3551 / 1952	4495 / 2279	6652 / 1827	7242 /1290
June	4632 / 1970	5861 / 2291	9182 / 2081	9920 /1710
July	6743 / 2265	7479 / 2630	10499/ 2536	11561/2663
August	5316 / 523	7659 / 3910	9577 / 3262	11885/3847
September	5014 / 4429	5717 / 4512	7488 / 4737	10433/4412
October	9868 / 5280	10946/ 5209	14505/ 4578	19324/4385
November	2649 / 2062	4542 / 2145	7405 / 1582	5505 /1371
December	1372 / 1216	2177 / 1429	2961 / 1041	3318 /1072
Total	49357/23780	58999/30581	85038/27116	100918/25654

* Source: Helen CVB

has an entertainment channel advertising local places, events and activities. It runs continuously on televisions sets in hotels and motels and a few restaurants.

Coordinated retail promotions happen several times a year. For example, during the Christmas season, at agreed upon time periods, merchants mark prices down on selected merchandise (Hawthorne, 1992).

Planning

The City of Helen does not have a planner. However they have had a full-time building inspector since 1984 and a planning commission since the mid-1970's (Paul, 1992, Larry Fowler, 1992). Both the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance explained in the following text were prepared by outside groups.

Comprehensive Plan

A three volume comprehensive plan was prepared for Helen, in February of 1975, by the Georgia Mountains Area Planning and Development Commission (a State regional planning agency). The plan dealt with a survey and analysis of existing resources, research concerning developmental constraints and pressures, and a future land use development plan. Twenty of the twenty-five objectives set forth in the plan had been met by 1988 (Georgia Mountains APDC, 1988, p. 4-5), (See Appendix C).

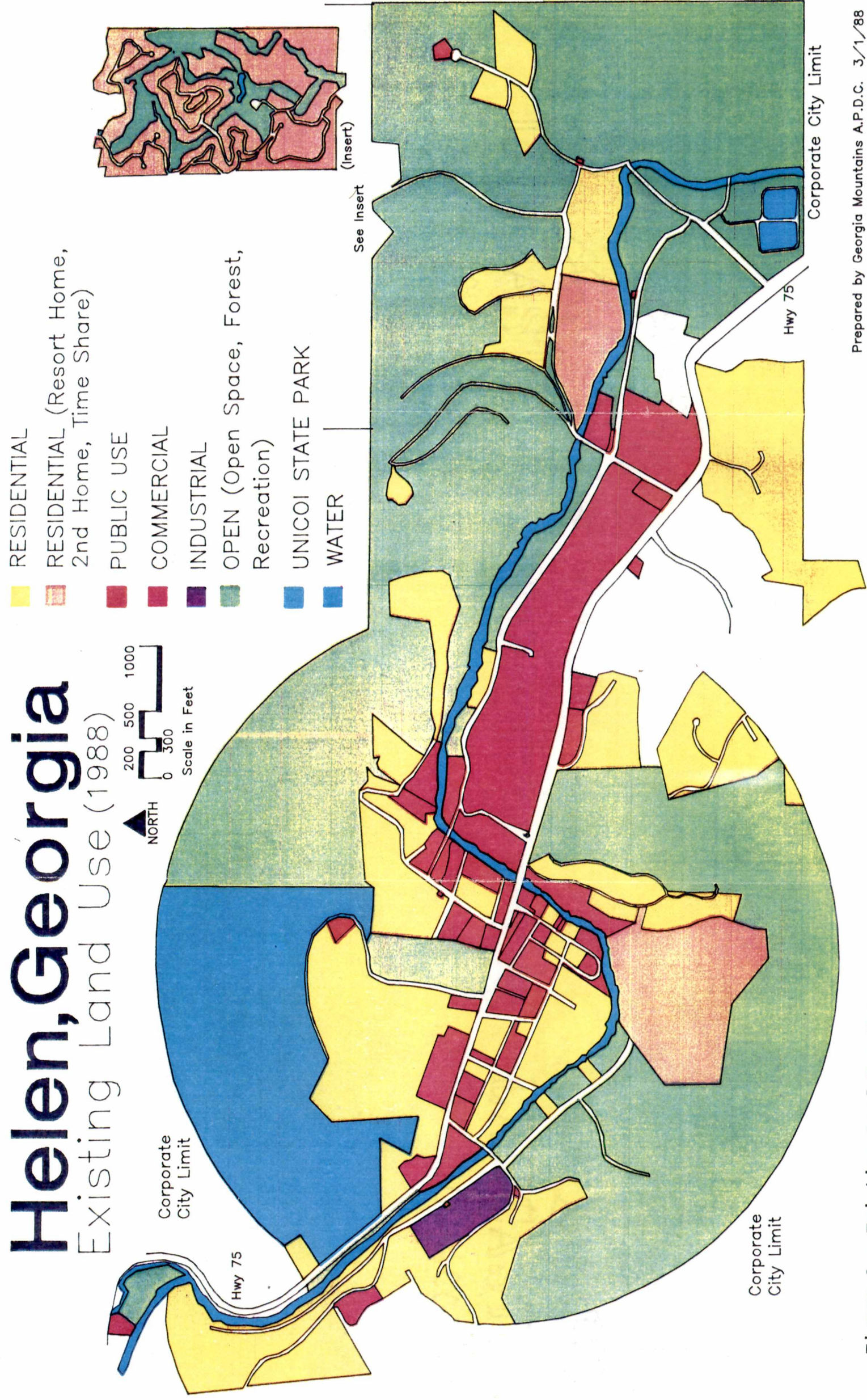
An updated plan was adopted by the City of Helen on November 15, 1988. The Georgia planning act of 1989 requires all local governments to have a comprehensive plan. Helen was the second municipality in the State to fulfill the requirements of the new law (Sparks, 1992). The 1988 plan provided a map and inventory of existing land use (See Figure 9), a demographic analysis, population trends and projections, past and present economic information, and future land use goals and objectives.

Some of the planning objectives scheduled to be completed by 1993 include the following:

- Explore methods of creating business license fee structured on sliding scale rather than a flat fee.
- Encourage retail businesses to establish uniform late closings (9:00 p.m.).
- Explore possibilities for creation of separation between pedestrian and vehicular traffic in downtown area (pedestrian bridge, rerouting of non-through traffic, etc.).
- transition from groundwater to surface treatment to provide for year 2000 potable needs (approximately 550,000 g.p.d.).
- Continue to look for potential bus or trolley service from Cleveland to Helen and Unicoi.
- Upgrade pedestrian walkway under the Chattahoochee River bridge.

Helen, Georgia

Existing Land Use (1988)



Prepared by Georgia Mountains A.P.D.C. 3/1/88

Figure 9 - Existing Land Use Map

Existing Land Use

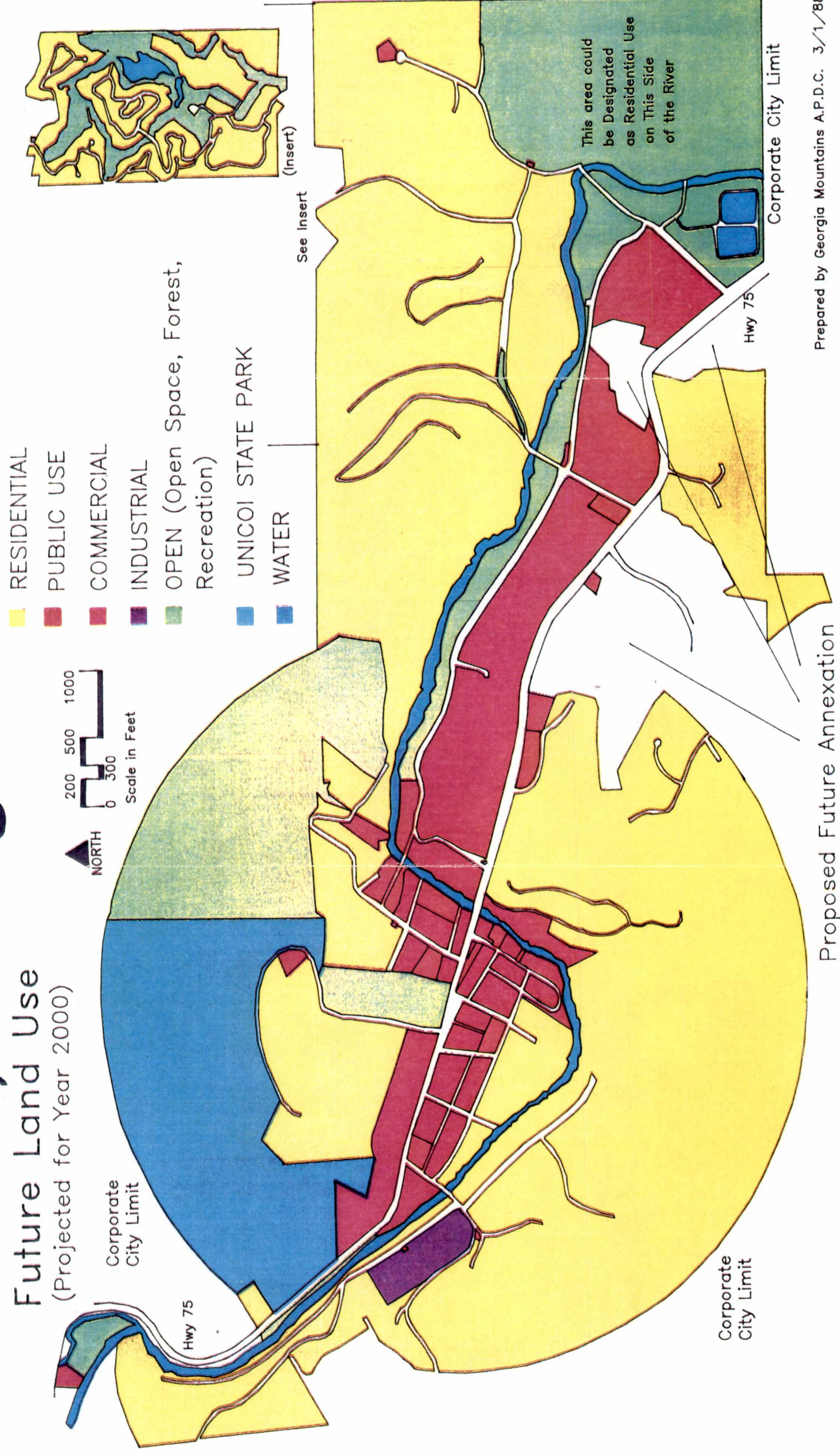
- Explore alternative parking solutions for handling increased traffic during peak seasons.
- Continue construction of a system of recreational trails between Helen and Unicoi.

Along with objectives and goals, the plan furnished a map illustrating future land use patterns to the year 2000 (See Figure 10). The City of Helen refers to the plan regularly when land use decisions are being made. Objectives are slowly being met (Whitford, 1992).

Natural features and property ownership characteristics influence Helen's growth. The city is land-locked. The mountains surrounding Helen control outward growth. Extensive strip development cannot occur for some distance along highway 75 south towards Cleveland and Atlanta. Several thousand acres on the east side of the highway are controlled by the Hardman estate and are part of the Nacoochee Valley Historic District (it is on the National Register of Historic Places). The Hardmans are committed to rural preservation and conserving the land from commercial development. Charlie Smithgall, a multi-millionaire, has accumulated 7,000 acres on the west side of the highway for a nature preserve (Larry Fowler, 1992), (See Figure 11).

Helen, Georgia

Future Land Use (Projected for Year 2000)



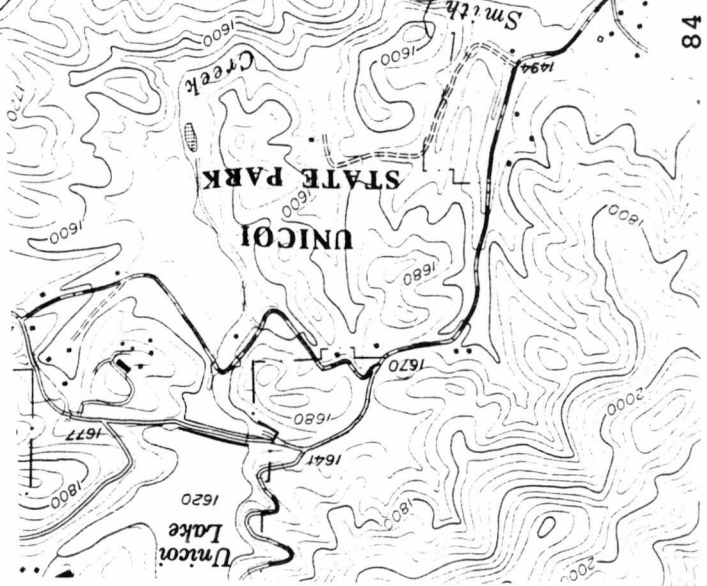
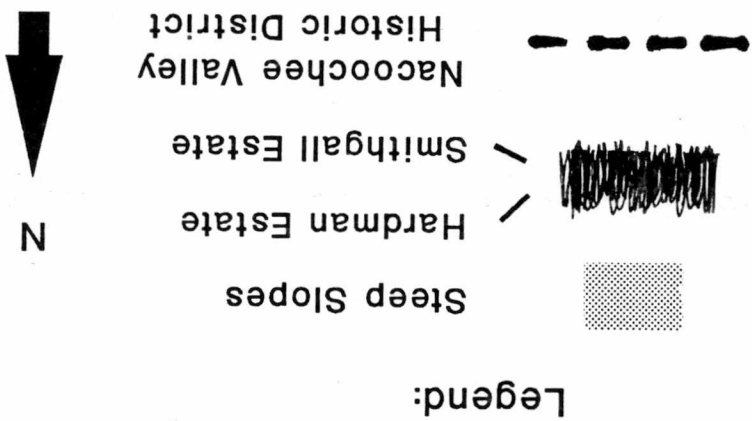
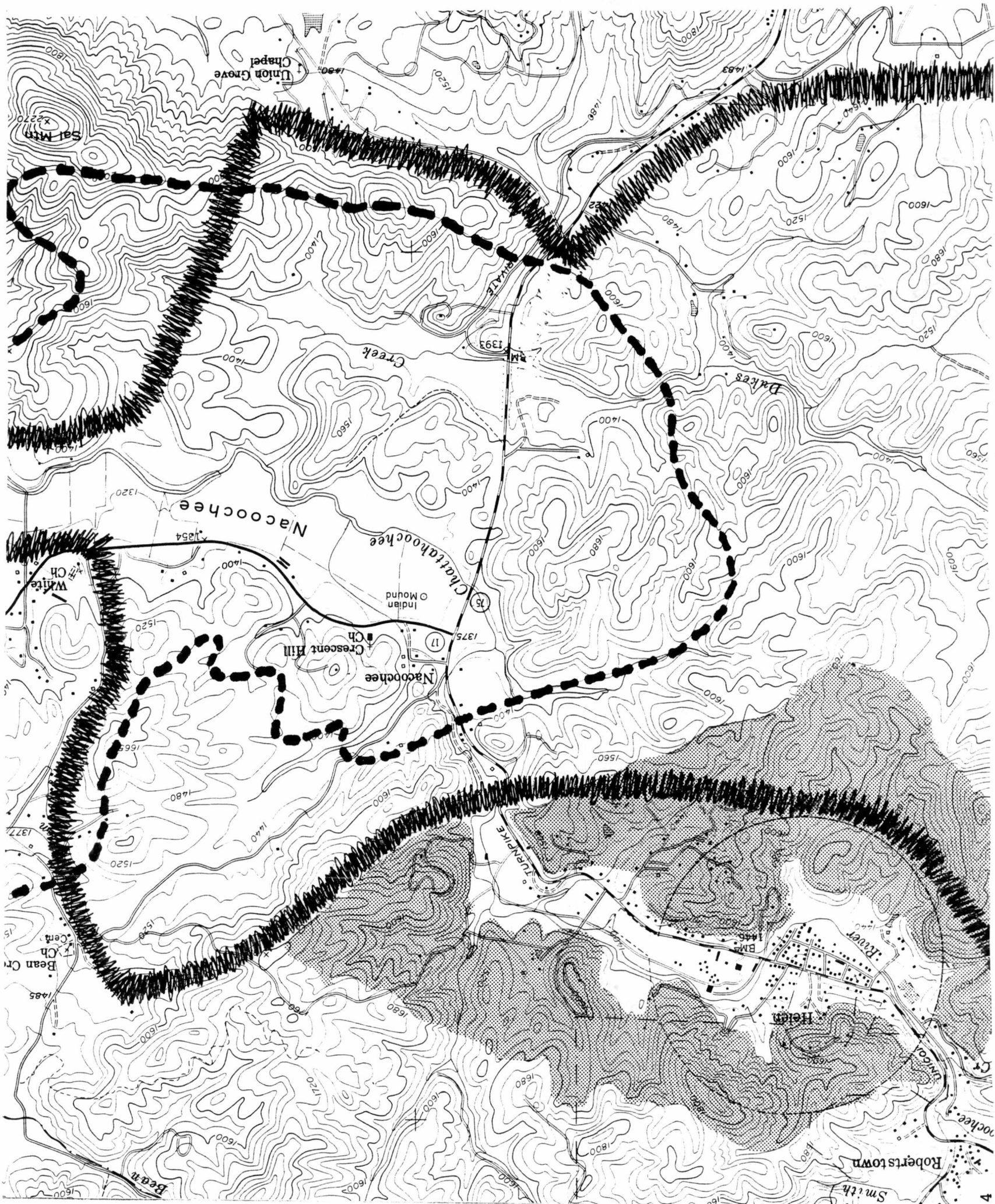
Proposed Future Annexation

Prepared by Georgia Mountains A.P.D.C. 3/1/88

Figure 10 - Future Land Use Map

Future Land Use

Figure 11 - Helen Commercial Development Constraints
 Source: Larry Fowler and the Sautee-Nacoochee Community Association



Zoning Ordinance

Helen's first zoning ordinance was enacted June 19, 1990 and became effective October 1, 1990 (Mayes, Sudderth & Etheredge, Inc., 1990). In an effort to ensure a quality zoning ordinance the City hired a private firm to work with the community (Whitford, 1992). More than 25 public meetings were held before an acceptable ordinance was agreed upon. The consultant and the citizens worked together with little government input. Some believe this allowed for community-wide acceptance of the new ordinance. Government officials were pleased with the final product (Ash, 1992). Throughout the approval process only three people requested their property be zoned something else (Paul, 1992). No person in the community voiced disapproval of the new zoning ordinance (Ash, 1992). Figure 12 is a copy of the official zoning map of the City of Helen.

Parcels zoned Planned Unit Development (PUD) comprise an area equal in size to the remainder of Helen. This is because Insbruck Golf Course is zoned PUD. To be expected, the C-1 Pedestrian Zone can only be found Downtown (See Map 6). The ordinance is new and has not been significantly tested. Thus, many people have not formed an opinion regarding the effectiveness of the zoning ordinance (Holzclaw, 1992).

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Economic Impact

The economic impact of downtown revitalization has been tremendous. Jeff Ash (1992) said, "On a scale from 0 to 100 Helen was a 5 during the 1960's." Today it is closer to a 100. In 1968, along with a few vacant buildings, Helen's Main Street primarily consisted of a drive-in, restaurant, laundry, service station, beer store, dress shop and two outlet stores (Fowler, 1992). In 1992, Helen has over 250 businesses, 20 restaurants, a championship golf course and numerous rental properties (Ash, 1992).

In 1969 there was \$0 worth of infrastructure in place now there is over \$2.5 million. The sewage system has the ability to quadruple its capacity. The city had one police officer then, now the town has seven sworn officers and 4 dispatchers (Whitford, 1992).

Property taxes collected from Helen property owners are responsible for a third of White County's yearly tax budget. Helen accounts for half the GNP of White County, and tourism is paying 50 cents on the dollar for the county's sewer system. The State collects \$5 million in sales tax, hotel and motel tax, and beer tax. The economic benefits enjoyed by local, County, State, governments prior to Helen revitalization were minimal (Ash, 1992).

In 1990, Helen ranked third on a list of most visited Georgia destinations compiled by the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism (See Table 13).

Table 13
Georgia's Top 15 Destinations--1990*

Destination	Visitors
1. State Parks	13,496,264
2. Stone Mountain	9,434,970
3. Chattahoochee/ Oconee Forest	3,000,000
4. Helen	3,000,000
5. Six Flags	2,473,131
6. Kennesaw	2,257,953
7. Chickamauga	1,766,260
8. Jekyll Island	1,300,000
9. Lake Lanier	1,297,983
10. Martin Luther King Center	1,000,000
11. Callaway Gardens	650,000
12. Rock City	410,000
13. Fort Pulaski	408,000
14. Okefenokee Swamp	82,000
15. State Capitol	75,000

* Source: Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism

In 1969, Helen's Main Street employed 20 employees. Now there are over 1,000. Citizens 65 and older represent 21 percent of Helen's total population (300). This percentage is much higher than the State average of 10 percent (Georgia Mountains APDC, 1988, p. 28). Because of the limited supply of labor within the city limits, a large number of people from White County and surrounding counties find work in Helen. In 1987, White County had an unemployment rate of 4.3%, well below the State average of 5.5% for that same year (Georgia Mountains APDC, 1988, p. 50). Estimated Helen median family income for 1990 was \$50,000 (Whitford, 1992).

Highway Commercial Growth

In 1986 there were only three businesses and no billboards from Cleveland to Helen on highway 75. Today there are 28 businesses and nine billboards. Traffic counts on major roads leading to Helen have increased dramatically since 1981. Highway 75 from Cleveland to Helen is one of the busiest roads in White County. Between 1981 and 1991 the average daily traffic count for Highway 75 increased 126 percent from 3,233 to 7,328. Other roads leading to Helen also experienced sizable increases in daily traffic. For further details see Figure 13 and 14 and appendix D.

It is difficult to say how much of this growth is attributable to Helen and not Unicoi State Park or some other factor. Some businesses along the Highway have adopted a

Figure 13 - Highway 75 Commercial Development and Selected White County Traffic Counts

Source: Georgia DOT, Jim Whitford, and Student Survey

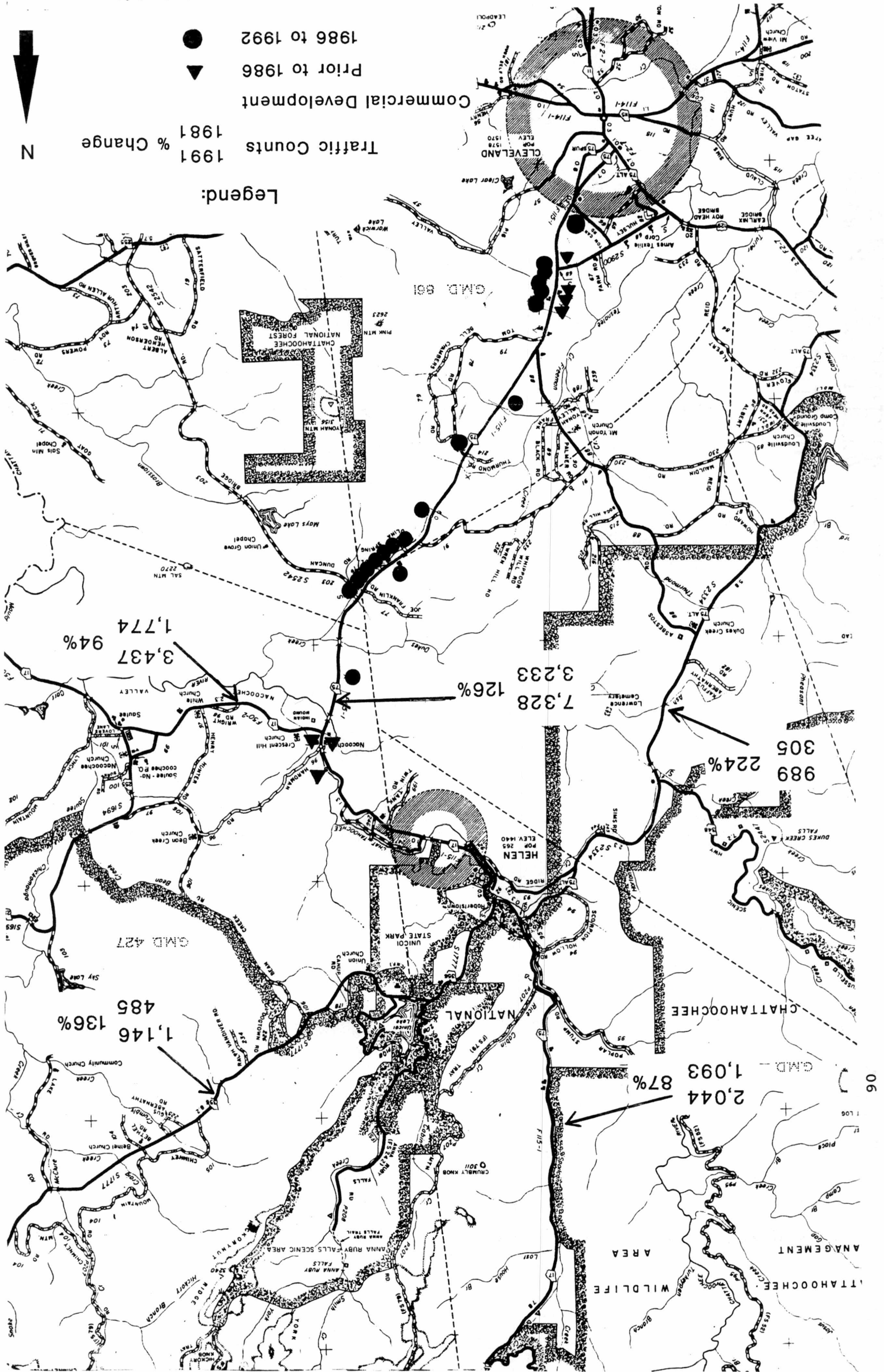




Figure 14 - Examples of Highway 75 Bavarian Theme Development (1992)

Bavarian theme and every billboard advertises something located in Helen. Development along the roads leading to Helen has multiplied in recent years (Whitford, 1992).

Summary

From an initial clean-up effort, Helen became one of Georgia's Top tourist attractions. Helen's unique image--a Bavarian village--provided the basis for success. Although no organization existed at the time of Helen's revitalization to promote the theme, over the years a number of groups with varying responsibilities have been formed. The private sector was the first to make investments in the community. After a short time local government started to make capital improvements to support growth. For a small town, Helen has a professionally managed government and numerous regulations, ordinances and commissions to direct growth and to enforce the alpine theme.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The analysis will compare and contrast the approach Helen used to revitalize its downtown to the Main Street approach developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Helen approach will also be compared to other revitalization strategies discussed in the literature review. This chapter further contains a section on historic preservation and image development. Those involved with Helen have explicit opinions concerning why the community has been successful and many expressed thoughts about the city's future. These views are discussed in the final section.

The Helen Approach vs. Other Approaches

The approach used by Helen, Georgia to revitalize its downtown and the Main Street Approach, have many similarities and differences. Some Helen public and private finance techniques, promotion tactics, economic restructuring activities, management plans, organization characteristics and design procedures relate well to the Main Street approach and other revitalization strategies. Nevertheless, differences exist especially with regards to organization and design.

Before comparisons are made it should be noted Helen may not have been accepted as a member of the Main Street

Network had the National Main Street Center (NMSC) existed in 1969. Any city is welcome to use the Main Street approach but not every community can become a member of the National Main Street Network. Helen (pop. 300) is much smaller than a typical Network community. Usually, to be considered for membership, a city must be between 1,500 and 50,000 in population.

Network communities must demonstrate commitment prior to being selected. Implementing the Main Street approach is usually a pre-determined move on the part of the private and/or public sector. Pledges from interested parties to organize, promote, adhere to general design guidelines, invest time and money, hire a full-time project manager to oversee the program, and restructure the economy of downtown are all pre-requisites to National Main Street Network membership.

In January of 1969, organization and promotion were not even considered in Helen, Georgia. Only one property owner-- Jim Wilkins--was initially committed to changing the design of his building. Residents of Helen did not designate a full-time project manager. Helen merchants had no intention of restructuring the economy of their downtown. They just wanted a clean and attractive main street.

Finally, National Main Street Network communities must have an identifiable core of downtown buildings which are historic in the community. Helen had an identifiable core of downtown buildings but they were not historic. Neither were

they architecturally, archaeology or culturally significant. The structures were not associated with any historical persons or events. They did not embody any distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. The buildings had no artistic value and did not represent the works of a master (Murtagh, 1988, p. 181). In brief, commercial buildings in Helen, Georgia prior to 1969 would not have qualified for the National Register of Historic Places.

Similarities

Of the available economic development tools for downtown revitalization identified by the FY'91 NMSC Network Membership survey (See Chapter II), Helen used only government grants for the construction of their sewer system. The City of Helen does not and has not participated in government sponsored financial programs to the extent many NMSC communities have. However, financing sources, programs and funds, such as private loans, personal savings, group fund raising, Small Business Administration programs and bonds, are extensively used by both Helen and many NMSC cities (Lew, 1989, p. 20). The financial strategies used by Helen's private and public sector would work well within the Main Street approach.

Methods used to promote Helen as a desirable place to visit mirror techniques suggested by the National Main Street Center and others. A variety of events held throughout the year plus marketing programs to attract visitors are good for

any downtown. Whereas Helen relies on the tourist market more than most communities, tourism is not an uncommon revitalization strategy.

Helen businessmen and residents successfully restructured their economy from a local serving highway commercial base to a major regional tourist attraction. In Helen the tourist market helped determine the identity of the retail district. Goods and services are displayed and merchandised to appeal to the tourist. The private sector is structured to take advantage of this market. The local government is managed to meet the needs of businesses and residents.

Business recruitment, retention, expansion and improvement programs have never been used in Helen. However, the Chamber of Commerce from time to time hires a consultant to do a marketing study and some centralized retail management techniques are used in Helen. For instance, the city has security programs which are sensitive to the hours of store operation and it works hard to promote a positive image assuring retail interests are represented. Cooperative advertising is pursued by several groups such as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce, and the outlet mall.

Smith (1991) identified 10 principles of organization which a Main Street program must have. These include:

1. Widespread community support;

2. Broad-based community representation in an advisory capacity;
3. A distinct constituency;
4. A clear, shared sense of mission and a well-defined set of goals and objectives;
5. Committed, dependable funding;
6. Working committees;
7. Full-time management;
8. A well-thought-out work plan based on the four points of the Main Street approach: design, organization, promotion and economic restructuring;
9. A commitment to work and succeed, over time;
10. Strong public-private partnerships.

In 1969, with the exception of working committees, broad based community representation in an advisory capacity, a well defined set of goals and objectives, and a plan based on the four point approach, revitalization activities in Helen were characterized by all of the above principles outlined by Smith.

Strong leadership is a key element shared by all approaches. Pete Hodkinson initiated the process. But leaders such as Bob Fowler, president of Orbit Manufacturing, and three time city mayor, and Jeff Ash president of White County Bank and also a former mayor, guided the city through financially difficult times. Bob Fowler instigated both sewer system developments and the reformation of city government

from a mayor/city council form to a commission/city manager arrangement (Larry Fowler, 1992, Whitford, 1992). As a banker, Ash was involved with the financial aspects of many Helen businesses.

Lew (1983) identified three major purposes for developing a theme for older retail districts--tourism, historic preservation and retail development (p. 20). In January of 1969, tourism was a secondary inducement for theme development--city beautification was the initial motivation. Within a few months tourism became the primary factor. Helen has attributes in common with all development types specified by Lew (See Table 9, in Chapter III). Tourism is a major impetus for the Bavarian theme because tourists are the principle market group.

The Main Street Program design goals of enhancing the downtown commercial district and developing an image that portrays downtown as a special place are shared by all approaches--especially Helen's. Similar to design fundamentals used elsewhere, great care was taken to ensure a strong relationship between shop fronts and the building in which they are set. Workshops were held to educate Helen merchants on the virtues of good design.

Government ordinances and regulations typify Helen's design program. Although most NMSC community design programs are implemented on a voluntary basis, a sizable number of Main

Street programs have design controls instituted by regulatory means.

Differences

Coordination of downtown revitalization by a strong organization is a key element of the Main Street approach. Organization is needed throughout the early as well as the later years of the process. Helen has never had an organization with a specific charge to orchestrate downtown revitalization. During the formative years, Pete Hodkinson informally directed many, but not all, revitalization efforts. Ad hoc groups organized by others also sponsored some promotional events, while government and business owners kept downtown clean and well landscaped. The transformation of Helen occurred without a formal organizational structure responsible for overseeing the revitalization process.

A Main Street program led by a developer is atypical. In 1991, one Main Street program out of 154 responding to the National Network Membership Survey was directed by a developer (West, 1991). Pete Hodkinson was the primary developer of Alpine Helen. Without him Helen may never have become a major tourist attraction.

Working committees and a well-defined plan with goals and objectives are characteristics of the Main Street organizational strategy. Bob Fowler (1992) credits some of Helen's initial success to the lack of committees. Fowler

said, "You can't revitalize a community with committees. They over analyze things, chop ideas up and talk them to death. Decide on a plan and implement the plan."

The plan that Helen implemented was not written and goals and objectives were not well defined for all parties involved. The plan was in the minds of two individuals--John Kollock and Pete Hodkinson. Kollock said, "Only I understood what the town would look like and how the buildings would relate to each other." Pete Hodkinson, also a visionary man had numerous development concepts and projects. He worked hard to develop his and Kollock's ideas.

Pete Hodkinson's flamboyant, persistent and caring style gained widespread support and dependable funding. In many ways he unintentionally fulfilled the role of a full-time Main Street project manager. Although a defined set of goals and objectives were never established, Hodkinson provided the community with a clear sense of mission. John Kollock explained:

With Helen you are dealing with a freaky situation. First, you had a person with lots of ideas [Pete Hutchinson] working long hard hours (many 12 hour days), trying to promote a concept and convince others to develop. Second, you had an artist [John Kollock] willing to work for not much. Third, you had someone with money [Jim Wilkins].

Helen had no working plan for revitalization. Members of the community just went and did it.

A long-term goal of the National Trust is to foster cooperation among diverse community groups so that the

refurbished main street will remain vital over the years (Hoffer, 1989, p. 40). Again, the City of Helen achieved this goal without any one single organization coordinating overall community cooperation.

Government expanded its role as the community began to grow. New organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the planning Commission, the Architecture Design and Review Board, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau were formed to address narrowly defined areas involving the city and its downtown. In Helen, the burden of maintaining a successful Main Street is shared by all. If Helen's downtown remains viable everyone prospers. This arrangement fosters good communication and cooperation among all downtown constituents.

Helen's size also fosters cooperation. The community is very close and tight knit. Everyone knew what everyone else is doing. With respect to the Main Street approach Pat Noyes (1989) said:

A revitalization program is best sustained and achieves maximum results when it has its own identity and the ability to make responsible decisions . . . a downtown program needs to be self-managing. There are exceptions to this principle, as in communities with population under 5,000 or in downtown districts with fewer than 50 businesses . . . Human and financial resources being more limited in such circumstances, it can make sense to house a downtown program within the chamber or city hall (p. 4).

However, Helen did not even have a downtown organization to coordinate activities. Revitalization occurred without it.

In 1969, Helen contained few second home developments. Today, there are numerous rental properties and second homes. Along Helen's Main Street, second floor space is devoted to residential as well as transient purposes. Hotels and inns help provide a more diverse downtown. There are no second floor vacancies.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the Helen and the Main Street approach relates to design. Covering the facade of a building with new material completely different to what existed previously is contrary to all Main Street Program design principles. This is essentially what Helen property owners did--they covered main street buildings with a Bavarian motif.

Historic Preservation and Image Development

Preservation of commercial architecture is a fundamental concern of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Glisson, 1984, p. 4). The Trust understands that the historic buildings along America's Main Streets can only be saved by finding economically viable uses for them (Dane, 1988, p. 5). Consequently, the Trust is interested in main streets for primarily two reasons: architecture and economic revitalization (Glisson, 1984, p. 4).

Glisson and Dane (1985) identified image as "the most important factor in the revitalization of a commercial center," and "the cornerstone of the Main Street approach."

Image is a term often used in conjunction with "identity" or "sense of place" (Bunnell, 1978). Stipe (1972) noted, "We save our physical heritage partly because we live in an age of frightening communication and other technological abilities, as well as in an era of increasing cultural homogeneity. In such a situation we subconsciously reach out for any opportunity to maintain difference and uniqueness (p. 59)."

For a particular Main Street to attract customers something "unique must be provided" (Black, 1983, p. 9). Sometimes the appropriate image is not enough to counter "major sectoral and geographic shifts that are still playing out in downtowns today (Houstoun, 1990, p. 4)." Hence, a good image will not guarantee prosperity, but revitalization cannot occur without it.

The word "preservation" assumes different meanings for a variety people. The Secretary of the Interior (Murtagh, 1990, p. 19) defines the word "preservation" as:

the act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a building or structure, and the existing form and vegetative cover of a site.

To the preservation purist the Main Street Center is not preservation because the buildings are usually not maintained in their original setting. For example, rarely are older commercial main street buildings stripped of modern air-conditioning and heating devices, and situated on unpaved streets typical of the 19th century.

Two other words with special meaning and importance are "restoration" and "reconstruction." The preservationist (Murtagh, 1990, p. 20) defines these word as follows:

Restoration--the act or process of accurately recovering the form and details of a property and its setting as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of later work or by the replacement of missing earlier work.

Reconstruction--the act or process of reproducing by new construction the exact form and detail of a vanished building, structure or object, or a part thereof, as it appeared at a specific period of time.

Common Main Street Program revitalization efforts do not adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's stringent definition of preservation. Nevertheless, removal of later work, such as aluminum siding and replacement of missing earlier work, are standard practices. Most Main Street historic preservation activities are a form of restoration or reconstruction or a combination of both.

A familiar preservation maxim originated by A.N. Didron, a French archaeologist states, "It is better to preserve than to restore and better to restore than to reconstruct (Murtaugh, 1990, p.18)." Helen applied none of these techniques. Instead the city adopted a new architecture style completely foreign to what existed previously. Preservationists abhor this practice (Smith, 1992; Bevin, 1992). In addition to architecture, a Bavarian tradition, completely unfamiliar to northeast Georgia, was introduced. Imposing an alien culture is contrary to historic preservation principals (Stipe, 1972).

John Kollock (1992) never professed to be an architect. He said, "It [Helen design] was not architecture, it was face-lifting." What exists in Helen are artist's renderings. Kollock's background was theatrical design. The theater leaves many details to the imagination. Kollock stated, "Some say it is fake, it's a theatrical thing, it is supposed to be fake--you're feeling a feeling." John Kollock created an image.

John Kollock gave two reasons for selecting the theme. First, "I had seen it work; it was logical." Second, a typical Georgia mountain scene provides a very bleak setting during the winter months. A Bavarian them furnishes cheerful colors year round.

Lew (1989) proposed that the greatest retail development authenticity is reflected in districts which have evolved unconsciously and spontaneously over a long period of time (p. 17). Both the Helen and Main Street approaches are examples of conscious efforts to dictate specific architecture styles. Helen imposed a new style and the NMSC recommends renovating buildings to their original style. Still, Lew submitted that the Main Street approach is more authentic than strategies similar to Helen's.

Despite design differences, both a typical NMSC community and Helen, Georgia use architecture as an economic development tool. Design is one of the basic elements of the Main Street approach. To different degrees, through the use of building

styles which help create an image, both situations attempt to attract visitors and tourists.

In a recent brochure advertising Helen, the local Chamber of Commerce (1991) invites tourists to come and "discover a small village . . . with quaint cobblestone alleyways, unique shops, [and] Alpine architecture." Meanwhile, in Georgia on My Mind (a state travel guide), 29 Georgia Main Street communities ask travelers to come and see "historic squares, majestic courthouses and diverse architectural styles (Georgia Travel Publications, Inc., et. al., 1991, p. 6)."

From an historic preservation perspective, there are extreme differences in design philosophies, which characterize the Main Street and Helen approaches. However, from an economic development viewpoint, architecture for both approaches is a means to image creation and main street revitalization.

Why is Helen Successful?

Some people interviewed were asked, "Why is Helen successful?" The following responses were given:

"It [Helen] was run by good people with vision, there was high cooperation and a majority of people have been around for some time (Larry Fowler, 1992)."

"Love of community is a key ingredient (Hawthorne, 1992)."

"Helen is a success because cooperation of community, and 26 people own 95% of the downtown property (It has been that way since the beginning (Roy Sims, 1992))."

"Property in Helen, Georgia, was worth nothing 25 years ago (Wright)."

"Revitalization projects often forget services. There is a lag time between services and businesses. Fortunately, Helen grew slow enough. Planning is very important . . . we had nothing. Planning goes hand in hand with promoting your community (Hawthorne, 1992)."

"The town was sitting in the path of Unicoi State Park (Kollock, 1992)."

"It was a unique idea. Helen is in a gorgeous location and a lot of interesting people live here (Dupree, 1992)."

"They [the city fathers] dared to be different (Loveland, 1992)."

"Helen is a jewel in a beautiful environment. It is unique (Whitford, 1992)."

In the early part of 1970, merchants of Cleveland, Georgia (the seat of White County located 9 miles southeast of Helen), announced they were going to transform their downtown into a Colonial village. The merchants, led by Dr. Warner Fusselle of local Truett McConnell College, received support from property owners and local government officials. The Governor of the State of Georgia also pledged \$25,000 to help restore the historic courthouse situated in the middle of town. An architect was commissioned and a plan drafted. However, the project never got started.

Bob Fowler said, "July 4th was to be the day to kick it [Colonial Cleveland] off. However, a few days before, one owner who needed to fix up his building and do a major facelift, decided to do it his way and not colonial." The Colonial Cleveland idea lost support and faded away.

To successfully adopt a new theme John Kollock said, "Everyone must play the game. Helen's Bavarian theme had strong community support. Projects worthy of mention include the gas station and the garage. When owners of these difficult to design buildings decided to adopt the Bavarian theme, Bob Fowler said, "We knew we had something."

Timing is very important. Many communities attempting to implement a new theme promote the idea before anything has been done. Kollock said, "Don't let it out [the idea] until you have done something." He felt a major weakness with the Cleveland strategy was the early publicity.

In summary, key elements which residents feel contribute to the success of Helen, Georgia include: strong leadership, financial backing, community cooperation, consistency and longevity of property ownership, civic pride, low initial revitalization costs, the pace of growth was not too fast, good geographic location, unique idea and the timing was right.

Future of Helen

Citizens and merchants in Helen are very positive about their town. Millie Clements, director of the Welcome Center, said, "It [Helen] is going to boom." Most people are very upbeat about the community for the same reasons given for its success--location, theme of the town and progressive leadership.

During the 1980's, development in east Helen became less dense. With the coming of the outlet mall and the miniature golf course some areas have not retained the qualities that made Helen unique. These parts do not provide the picture taking opportunities of Kollock's and Hodkinson's pedestrian oriented Helen. The Kentucky Fried Chicken (constructed in February of 1992) has a quaint looking sign, but the restaurant's overall appearance is similar to other such establishments found elsewhere. Without exception, every person asked was concerned with the quality of design and the lower density of some of the newer development. Figure 15, illustrates recent Helen commercial development contrasted with past development.

The mayor said, "If we had a master plan and kept updating it that would be good (Mann, 1992)." Bob Fowler (1992) stated, "If elected officials keep doing a good job we will be alright. There are enough regulations, we need to enforce the ones we have." John Kollock (1992) explained, "If more people get right with the plan, Helen has a good future. If more people continue to support the theme, like some of the restaurants which serve German food, that would be good."

People are also concerned with all the "trash" (some businesses and billboards) collecting along major roads leading into town. Sometimes, tourists must travel past visually unpleasing development prior to arriving in Helen. The character of some of these areas may detract from Helen's

Early 1970's

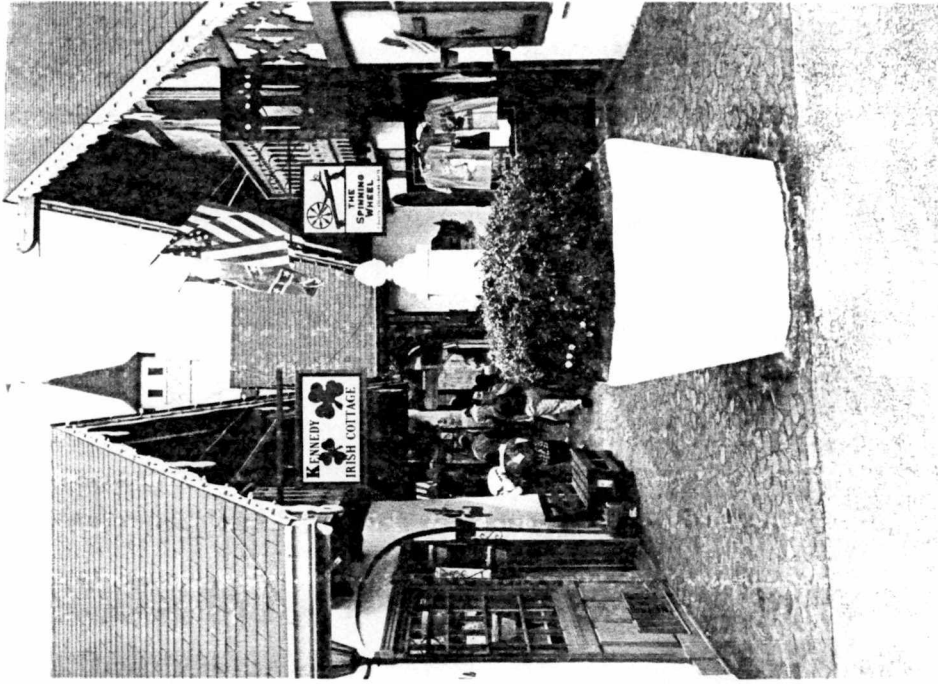
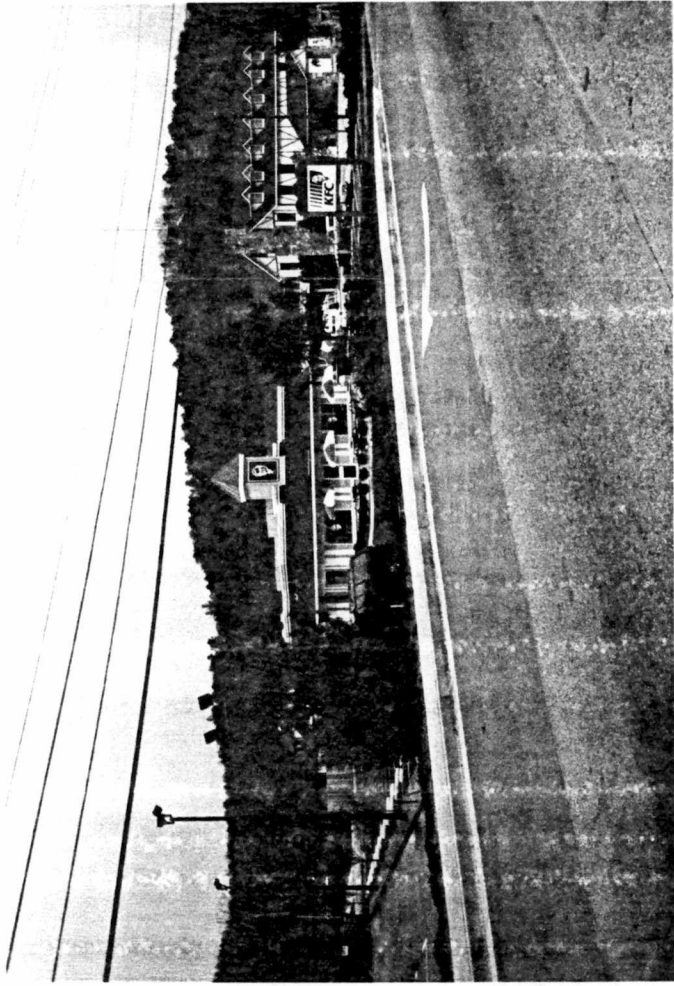


Figure 15 - Helen Commercial Development Contrasts



1986 - 1992

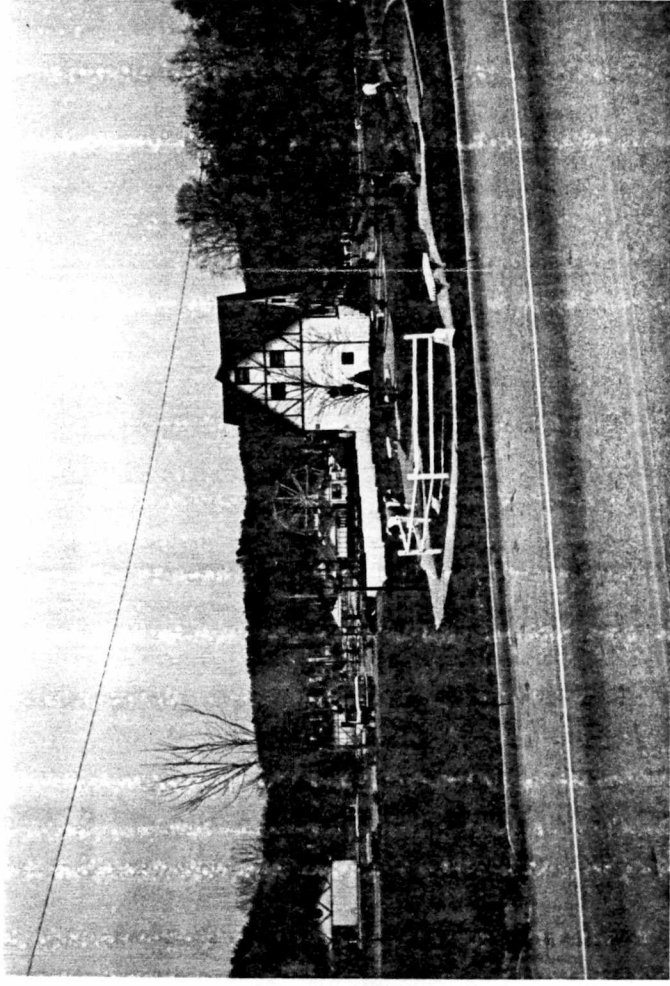
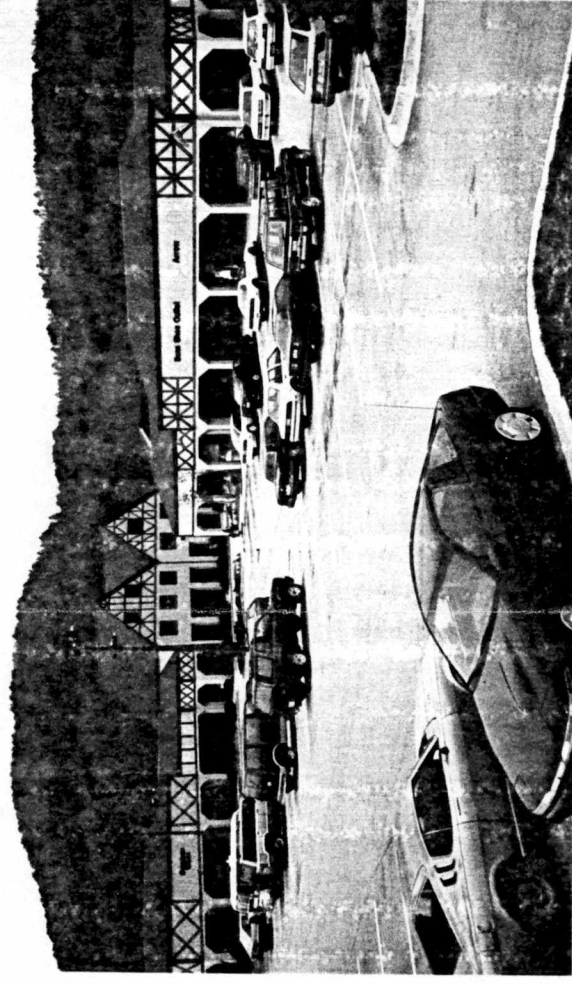


Figure 15 - Continued

rural setting. The county has no established land use controls regulating commercial growth.

Future Helen commercial growth can only happen within the current city boundaries. Bavarian villages are characterized by narrow winding roads and alleys amidst concentrated development. Thus, geographic and other growth restraints may foster a village atmosphere, and help maintain the alpine theme. Land values will increase and planning for future development may continue to be an important task.

With the slow down of building activity in the 1990's alpine Helen has reached another development plateau. Many of the same attributes, such as strong leadership, community cooperation, and ingenuity, which helped establish Alpine Helen may be needed if the quality of the Bavarian theme is to be maintained and improved.

Planning was a priority for all those interviewed. Helen residents and businessmen have a high level of civic pride. Generally, people were very optimistic about Helen's future.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The goal of this thesis was to research the strategies and actions involved in the revitalization of Helen, Georgia. The primary research question was: How does the approach used in Helen to revitalize its downtown compare to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street approach? Other revitalization strategies were also used as a basis for comparison.

In order to answer the research questions a literature review was conducted and personal interviews were held with persons involved with the development, promotion and management of Helen. Research questions included: What was done, who was involved, problems encountered, strategies employed, organizations associated, and actions taken to revitalize Helen? In addition other questions were asked such as: Are there government controls regulating growth, how does the community market itself, what has been the economic impact of tourism and the effect of tourism on land use and development? Attitudes and viewpoints of the persons interviewed concerning Helen's success and future were also identified.

Conclusions

In 1969 Helen's small commercial district began to take the appearance of a Bavarian village. Today Helen is a major tourist attraction. Helen's unique alpine theme and mountainous location near a major metropolitan area (Atlanta), contribute to the town's success.

The revitalization was initiated by the actions of Jim Wilkins, a principal downtown property owner with financial resources; Pete Hodkinson, an entrepreneur and developer; Bob Fowler (who later became mayor); and John Kollock, an artist who furnished the theme. They provided strong leadership and their ideas eventually gained community-wide support. Pete Hodkinson was a major advocate of the concept. He promoted the idea to residents, property owners, retailers and tourists.

Pete Hodkinson deserves most of credit for the development of Alpine Helen. Arguably, without his vision and drive Helen may still have been a typical Northeast Georgia community. An important message that can be gained from the Helen revitalization experience is that given the right circumstance and enough time one or a few people can make a significant difference. Leadership is necessary.

As the Bavarian concept matured and Helen began to attract tourists planning and city management practices also changed and developed to better meet the demands of increased activity. Often main street revitalization efforts are well

planned and enthusiastically started but long term commitment and programs are given little thought. Leadership and vision are needed during the early as well as the later years of the revitalization process. In Helen, Georgia, Pete Hodgkinson provided initial leadership and individuals such as Bob Fowler, Jeff Ash and Jim Whitford furnished management expertise to guide Helen through later years of development.

The Main Street approach is based on four points--organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring. Helen's revitalization strategy has some differences in relation to design and organization. Although Helen economic restructuring processes are not emphasized by the Main Street Program, promotion techniques are similar for both approaches.

The Main Street Program calls for an organization to coordinate revitalization efforts: a full time project manager, working committees, and a well-defined set of goals and objectives. Helen had none of these. A developer and others coordinated downtown revitalization endeavors. A clear, shared sense of mission was obtained without well-defined goals and objectives.

The Main Street Program and the National Main Street Center which administers the program were developed by The National Trust for Historic Preservation to provide a means whereby historic commercial buildings could be saved. Main Street Program design practices are based on historic preservation standards. Helen property owners covered their

buildings with a Bavarian facade. This is contrary to historic preservation principles. Nevertheless, both approaches use design to create an image and a sense of place.

Helen's commercial economy changed from a local and highway serving base to a tourism economy driven by a regional market. Main Street economic restructuring activities are characterized by a conscious effort to retain, recruit and train merchants. None of these activities have taken place in Helen.

The National Main Street Center provides technical assistance and training to member communities. Because resources are limited not every community desiring to implement the Main Street Approach can become a member of the National Main Street Center. Cities such as Helen are too small and lack a core of historic buildings prerequisites for membership.

Problems Helen encountered involved theme compliance and the inability of government to deliver needed goods and services. At first, theme adoption was achieved through persuasion and by others following the example of individuals like Jim Wilkins. Workshops were conducted to educate people about the strengths of proper design and signage. Eventually government ordinances and regulations were passed to enforce theme compliance. Presently the City of Helen uses sign regulations, a tree ordinance, a zoning ordinance,

architecture and design guidelines and a comprehensive plan to control and direct growth.

In 1969 Helen's waste water needs were exclusively met through the use of septic tanks. The first sewer system was in place in 1976. It was not designed to handle Helen's rapidly growing tourist market and was obsolete the day it came on line. However, the second sewer system, completed in 1986, is able to meet Helens needs to the year 2010. It was financed through taxes, a revenue bond, and State and Federal grants.

As tourism activity increased, Helen became a small city with big city problems. Providing the necessary services made it increasingly difficult for local government to balance its budget. In 1986, a city manager/city commission form of government replaced a part-time mayor/city council arrangement. The change has been beneficial. Today Helen has a well managed government with an annual budget of \$2.25 million. It effectively meets the needs of citizens, business people and the two million tourists visiting annually ("A Salute To Imaginative Economic Development," 1991).

Government grants and funds have never been used to finance building improvements or to provide economic development assistance. Commercial needs were financed through the use of private loans, personal savings, group fundraising and Small Business Administration programs.

Active Helen organizations formed to address the demands of commercial establishments include the Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and the Business and Merchants Association. The Chamber hosts events and the CVB markets Helen using the news media, brochures and statewide and regional publications.

The economic impact of tourism has been great. Helen business activity accounts for half of White County's tax base (Ash, 1992). In 1969, Helen had only eight retail establishments. Today, the community has over 260 retail enterprises. Commercial development is also gradually growing along the major roads leading to Helen.

Helen retailers, property owners and residents are very positive about the city's future. All agreed enforcing the alpine theme and maintaining Helen's uniqueness are necessary to insure a successful future.

Recommendations

Helen revitalized its downtown by creating a tourist attraction. An image was developed through the use of architecture and design. Helen is a unique place people desire to visit. The following recommendations and suggestions may apply for communities interested in revitalizing their downtowns based on the approach used in Helen:

1. Strong leadership is absolutely essential. Leadership is more important than the presence of an organization.
2. Having a developer committed to downtown is an effective means to revitalization.
3. A majority of property owners is needed for theme development. It requires eventual participation from everyone to work. One non-conforming establishment reduces the forcefulness of the theme.
4. "A picture is worth a thousand words." Good graphics can be used to convince others and promote theme adoption.
5. Regulations may be needed to insure theme compliance. Particularly as the city develops and attracts new businesses.
6. Good design is imperative. However, creating a sense of place through the use of design is more important than the style of design itself.
7. Building improvements need not be costly to be effective.
8. Timing is crucial. Great care should be taken to not prematurely raise the expectations of visitors to the community or those involved in the revitalization process.
9. Promotion is indispensable.
10. Creating a new image and attracting visitors is not enough. Activities must be provided for people once they arrive.

11. Location is important. Helen's beautiful setting and accessible location insured greater financial success.
12. Community size is not a factor for revitalization. Furthermore, it may be easier to gain broad-based support in less populated communities.
13. Available liquor and alcohol is significant for success.
14. A city manager/commission arrangement is a viable alternative form of government. Especially if the community is experiencing large influxes of visitors.
15. Infrastructure to support growth is needed. Growth cannot occur without it.
16. Downtown revitalization is a process often characterized by incremental improvements over time, the sum total of which can equal a large scale change.

Planners for communities considering theme development must have a knowledge of past and present market conditions and be able to make forecasts concerning the future. Is the city's location suitable for tourism? What can be done to attract tourists? How many tourists are currently visiting the community? Moreover, theme development requires eventual community-wide support. A planner must demonstrate patience as property owners are persuaded to adopt the theme. A planner must also have a thorough understanding of economic tools available, such as Small Business Administration loans, for downtown revitalization. This will enable the planner to help others to follow the plan.

After a community selects a revitalization plan implementation strategies become important. The proper timing of capital improvements is vital to the success of the program. Furthermore, regulations and ordinances dealing with theme compliance may be necessary. Despite the enactment and enforcement of mechanisms designed to guide growth, many people in Helen were dissatisfied with the quality of recent development. Given a certain situation, a planner must understand which controls will provide the best results.

Further research dealing with downtown revitalization, theme development, leadership, and tourism would be useful for communities implementing central business district improvements. Over time, strategies changed in Helen as more people became involved. With the exception of downtown malls, none of the other approaches discussed long-term revitalization issues. For example, the Main Street approach only details what should be done during the first three years of activity. Meanwhile, some National Main Street Center communities have been with the program for 15 years.

This lack of information leaves many unanswered questions. For instance, have government controls regulating design and growth become more important over time? How do organization characteristics change? A thorough study of various revitalization approaches investigating these and other long range issues would be useful.

Lew (1989) studied other communities doing similar things to what was done in Helen. He found, "A number of communities have taken the initiative to . . . adopt and impose a theme totally foreign to the existing nature of the retail district (p. 15)." Notwithstanding Lew's efforts, very little is written about cities and theme development. More research could be conducted in this area.

Strong leadership epitomized Helen's revitalization efforts. What qualities must an effective leader have? How can a city planner or local government official better utilize community leadership concerning main street revitalization? What can be done to influence developers to concentrate resources downtown?

Many communities have used tourism to revitalize their central business areas. Helen businessmen indicated competition for the tourist dollar has increased in recent years. Additional study of successful and unsuccessful tourism programs would be beneficial.

The Helen revitalization experience provides an excellent model for other municipalities to follow. Jim Whitford (1992) said, "We get phone calls all the time from communities desiring to do what we have done. Any city can do it." Businessmen and residents creatively and with little cost used local resources and ideas to renovate their downtown. They started the venture with no expectations of developing a major tourist attraction. They achieved small goals one step at a

time. Furthermore, those involved with Helen realized individual desires (such as personal tastes regarding signage), must sometimes be compromised for the improvement of the whole. Thus, community participation and civic pride are very high in Helen. Perhaps Carroll Procter Scruggs (1991) described Helen best when he said, "[It is] A remarkable and admirable story of community spirit and cooperation (p. 6).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

National Main Street Center

Network Membership Survey Form, FY'91

NETWORK MEMBER SURVEY



PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ATTACH ANY ADDITIONAL SHEETS FOR COMMENTS

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

1. Approximate city pop. _____ Approximate county pop. _____

Organizational Structure:

2. How long has your organization been in existence? _____

3. Which of the following describes your organization?
- a. ☐ Local Main Street program affiliated with state program
 - b. ☐ Self-initiated Main Street program
 - c. ☐ Other downtown revitalization organization
 - d. ☐ City office/agency
 - e. ☐ Chamber of Commerce
- [If you checked a, b, c, d or e, please go to Question #4]

- f. ☐ State Main Street program
 - g. ☐ College or university
 - h. ☐ Consultant
 - i. ☐ Developer
 - j. ☐ Product manufacturer/representative
 - k. ☐ Other (describe: _____)
- [If you checked f, g, h, i, j or k, please go to Question #6]

4. If your organization is a local downtown revitalization program (or includes one), which of the following best describes it?
- ☐ Merchants' association
 - ☐ Downtown development corporation
 - ☐ City office/department
 - ☐ County office/department
 - ☐ Chamber of Commerce committee/corporation
 - ☐ Independent non-profit revitalization organization
 - ☐ Independent for-profit revitalization organization
 - ☐ Other (describe: _____)



National Trust for Historic Preservation

Economic Development Tools:

5. Which of the following economic development tools are available in your community for downtown/neighborhood revitalization?
- ☐ Special assessment district (property tax)
 - ☐ Special assessment district (business tax)
 - ☐ Tax increment financing
 - ☐ Enterprise zone
 - ☐ Downtown development corporation
 - ☐ Commercial development corporation
 - ☐ Community Development Block Grants
 - ☐ Urban Development Block Grants, or UDAG paybacks
 - ☐ Property tax abatements
 - ☐ State income tax credits
 - ☐ Job credits
 - ☐ Job training
 - ☐ Incentive grants
 - ☐ Low-interest loan programs
 - ☐ Certified Local Government funds
 - ☐ Facade easements
 - ☐ HUD programs (Sec. 8, Sec. 515, etc.) for downtown rehab and construction projects
 - ☐ Other(_____)
 - ☐ Other(_____)

Projects and Activities

6. With which of the following projects and activities has your organization (or other local organizations) been involved?

YOUR ORGANIZATION:		OTHER	PROJECT/ACTIVITY
Initiated	Assisted	ORGANIZATIONS:	
_____	_____	_____	Facade improvement program
_____	_____	_____	Building improvement program (other than facade-only)
_____	_____	_____	Sign improvement program
_____	_____	_____	Theater rehabilitation/reuse
_____	_____	_____	Warehouse rehabilitation/reuse
_____	_____	_____	Public building rehab/reuse
_____	_____	_____	Train depot rehabilitation/reuse
_____	_____	_____	Hotel rehabilitation/reuse
_____	_____	_____	Parking management
_____	_____	_____	Parking ordinance
_____	_____	_____	Parking garage construction
_____	_____	_____	Window displays
_____	_____	_____	Certified Local Government
_____	_____	_____	Public transportation systems
_____	_____	_____	Trolleys
_____	_____	_____	Pedestrian mall construction
_____	_____	_____	Pedestrian mall removal
_____	_____	_____	Energy conservation program
_____	_____	_____	Public infrastructure improvements
_____	_____	_____	Plantings/landscaping
_____	_____	_____	Banners
_____	_____	_____	Murals
_____	_____	_____	Local historic district nomination

Initiated:	Assisted:	Other Org:	
			State historic district nomination
			National historic district nomination
			Undergrounding utilities
			Building code revision
			Building code compliance program
			Zoning code revision
			Sign ordinance
			Public sign guidelines/redesign
			Design review ordinance
			Waterfront development
			Improvement of rear entrances
			Business expansion program
			Business recruitment
			Business retention
			Business incubators
			Unified business hours
			Centralized retail management
			Retail market analysis
			Upper floor development
			Office development (new construct.)
			Office development (rehabilitation)
			Housing development (new construct.)
			Housing development (rehabilitation)
			Minority business development
			Women's business development
			Business improvement seminars
			Comprehensive plan development with provisions for downtown revitalization
			Facade easements
			Downtown credit cards
			Preservation education
			Tourism promotion
			Coordinated retail promotion
			Special events and festivals
			Radio/TV shows on downtown revit.
			Newspaper columns on revitalization
			Newsletter production
			Farmers' market
			Logo development
			Retail sales calendar
			Locating corporate sponsors for promotional events or programs
			Direct mail advertising/promotion
			Annual work plan development
			Non profit incorporation:
			501(c)(3)
			501(c)(4)
			501(c)(6)
			Bylaws
			Volunteer training
			Formal board orientation process
			Annual fundraising drive
			Paid memberships/subscriptions to the downtown revitalization program

The National Main Street Network:

We would appreciate any suggestions you might have about ways we can improve the National Main Street Network.

1. **MAIN STREET NEWS:** What topics would you like to have covered in future Main Street News articles?

2. **THE NETWORK EXCHANGE** (formerly the **HOTLINE**): Have you ever called the exchange? If YES, did the response you received meet your needs?

3. **INSURANCE PROGRAMS:** Have you used the insurance programs available through the Network? If YES, do the programs meet your needs?

4. **HISTORIC PRESERVATION, PRESERVATION NEWS, AND PRESERVATION FORUM:** How helpful and informative do you find these publications?

5. **CONFERENCES:** Have you ever attended a National Main Street Center conference? _____
If YES, which one(s)? _____

Which subjects would you like future conferences to address?

6. **PRODUCTS:** Have you ever purchased any products (slide shows, videotapes, reports, handbooks, etc.) from the National Main Street Center? _____ If YES, which one(s)? _____

APPENDIX B

City of Helen Building Information 1978 - 1991

Selected Helen Building Information
1978 to 1991*

Year	Permits Issued	Construction Dollar amount
1978	5	\$219,900
1979	3	\$382,000
1980	31	\$1,696,000
1981	51	\$3,106,000
1982	19	\$950,000
1983	17	\$978,500
1984	16	\$1,035,000
1985	24	\$3,286,000
1986	40	\$4,880,000
1987	44	\$6,487,000
1988	35	\$3,313,000
1989	33	\$4,560,000
1990	22	\$1,354,000
1991	26	\$1,016,000

*Source: Helen Planning and Building Department

APPENDIX C

The City of Helen Planning Objectives (1975)

Objectives set forth in the City of Helen 1975 Community Growth Plan are as follows:

Objectives Met By 1988:

1. Appoint Helen Planning Commission
2. Adopt Community Growth Plan
3. Create and adopt land development standards
4. Enter Federal Flood Insurance Program
5. Obtain services of a building inspector
6. Update and amend adopted building codes to fit current needs
7. Initiate housing code enforcement program
8. Start a program for downtown redevelopment
9. Initiate plans for development of a pedestrian mall on Main Street
10. Install sewerage system
11. Upgrade fire protection
12. Construction of community park on Unicoi Hill
13. Development of community recreation area and multipurpose center
14. Attract a physician to Helen
15. Explore bus or trolley service from Cleveland to Helen and Unicoi
16. Construct recommended parking lot
17. Construction of pedestrian walkways and defining of existing walkways
18. Construction of privately developed and owned dual-level parking facility
19. Construction of recreation trails connecting Helen and Unicoi
20. Eliminate on-street parking in front of Main Street Shops

Objectives Not Met By 1988:

1. Explore possibility of attracting small industry
2. Establish contractual arrangement with White County to extend Helen's zoning jurisdiction along Hwy. 75 to Nacoochee Valley
3. Approach Georgia Department of Transportation about feasibility of constructing highway bypass route
- 4**. Appoint an Architectural Design Committee to approve structural designs for all future buildings in Helen
- 5**. Create and adopt a zoning ordinance

* Source: Georgian Mountain APDC

** Objectives had been completed by 1990.

APPENDIX D

Highway 75 Commercial Establishment Descriptions (1992)

Commercial establishments located on Georgia State Highway 75 between Cleveland and Helen in 1992 are as follows:

1. Cleveland Decorating Center (Home Improvement Store)
2. Cleveland Post and Pole (A lumber yard)
3. Driver Improvement School
4. Katie's Flowers and Gifts
5. Mountain Produce
6. A Mobile Home Sales Lot
7. Sports Shop
8. Mountain Sports
9. Yonah Hardware
10. Yonah Burger
11. Military Surplus
12. House of Tyrol (Imported European merchandise)
13. Gabby's Mine Shaft (Gold panning place)
14. Yonah Mountain Campground
15. Country Crafts
16. The Lodge Bed and Breakfast
17. Thomas Turner Used Cars (only five used cars)
18. Alpine Petting Zoo
19. Castle of Dolls (Souvenir Shop)
20. Mountain Marine Service Station
21. A Stone's Throw Antiques and Collectibles
22. Riverside R.V. Camping
23. Drive-in
24. Seymors Kountry Village Gas Station

25. Real Estate Office
26. P-Nuts (Roasted peanut stand)
27. Gem Panning
28. Nachooche Station (Gift shop)
29. Dilcimer Shop (Gift Shop)
30. Nora Mills Store (Historic Mill)

VITA

David Edman Petersen was born on December 27, 1962 in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was raised in Bountiful, Utah and graduated from Viewmont High School in 1981. In September of the same year, he began studies at the University of Utah. In 1982 and 1983 Mr. Petersen postponed education plans to serve a full-time mission in Birmingham, England, for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Following his mission he graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business, with a major in Marketing, in 1986. After four years spent working, he accepted a graduate assistantship from the Graduate School of Planning at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. In May, 1992, he received a Master of Science in Planning Degree.

While in graduate school Mr. Petersen completed internships for the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Commission and the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. He was primarily involved with the formation of the Chattanooga Landscape Ordinance and the development of the Knoxville-Knox County Population Report and General Plan. He plans to pursue a career in planning and community development.

Mr. Petersen was married to Rosalie Bergeson on July 1, 1987. They are the parents of two children--Stuart and Elaine.