FERAL CITIES

ALABAMA'S SHRINKING SMALL TOWNS

JAKE STEHR

FERAL TOWNS
ALABAMA'S SHRINKING SMALL TOWNS

JAKE STEHR
GRADUATE THESIS
MASTERS OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
AUBURN UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

DEDICATED TO TIFFANY AND TUCKER

ABSTRACT

The 21st century has created a feral condition in many small towns in Alabama. This feral condition has resulted in social, ecological, and spatial changes that require new forms of civic spaces, and understanding.

IN MAURILIA, THE TRAVELER IS INVITED TO VISIT THE CITY AND AT THE SAME TIME, TO EXAMINE SOME OLD POST CARDS THAT SHOW IT AS IT USED TO BE: THE SAME IDENTICAL SQUARE WITH A HEN IN PLACE OF THE BUS STATION, A BANDSTAND IN THE PLACE OF THE OVERPASS, TWO YOUNG LADIES WITH WHITE PARASOLS IN THE PLACE OF THE MUNITIONS FACTORY. IF THE TRAVELER DOES NOT WISH TO DISAPPOINT THE INHABITANTS, HE MUST PRAISE THE POSTCARD CITY AND PREFER IT TO THE PRESENT ONE, THOUGH HE MUST BE CAREFUL TO CONTAIN HIS REGRET AT THE CHANGES WITHIN DEFINITE LIMITS: ADMITTING THAT THE MAGNIFICENCE AND PROSPERITY OF THE METROPOLIS MAURILIA, WHEN COMPARED TO THE OLD, PROVINCIAL MAURILIA, CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR A CERTAIN LOST GRACE, WHICH HOWEVER, CAN BE APPRECIATED ONLY NOW IN THE OLD POST CARDS, WHEREAS BEFORE, WHEN THAT PROVINCIAL MAURILIA WAS BEFORE ONE'S EYES, ONE SAW ABSOLUTELY NOTHING GRACEFUL AND WOULD SEE IT EVEN LESS TODAY, IF MAURILIA HAD REMAINED UNCHANGED; AND IN ANY CASE THE METROPOLIS HAS THE ADDED ATTRACTION THAT, THROUGH WHAT IT HAS BECOME, ONE CAN LOOK BACK WITH NOSTALGIA AT WHAT IT WAS.

BEWARE OF SAYING TO THEM THAT SOMETIMES DIFFERENT CITIES FOLLOW ONE ANOTHER ON THE SAME SITE AND UNDER THE SAME NAME, BORN AND DYING WITHOUT KNOWING ONE ANOTHER, WITHOUT COMMUNICATION AMONG THEMSELVES. AT TIMES EVEN THE NAMES OF THE INHABITANTS REMAIN THE SAME AND THEIR VOICES' ACCENTS, AND ALSO THE FEATURES OF THE FACES; BUT THE GODS WHO LIVE BENEATH AND ABOVE PLACES HAVE GONE OFF WITHOUT A WORD AND OUTSIDERS HAVE SETTLED IN THEIR PLACE. IT IS POINTLESS TO ASK WHETHER THE NEW ONES ARE BETTER OR WORSE THAN THE OLD ONES, SINCE THERE IS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM, JUST AS THE OLD POST CARDS DO NOT DEPICT MAURILIA AS IT WAS, BUT A DIFFERENT CITY WHICH, BY CHANCE, WAS CALLED MAURILIA, LIKE THIS ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lafayette, Alabama is a city that repeats itself across the American landscape. The figure and form of small towns is the white noise of civilization finding itself repeated along highways and roads forgotten across the American landscape. As a culture we have allowed these places to blend into one set of ideals and understandings.

These dusty roads and even dustier downtowns with their old goods and barber shops have found themselves facing a new condition a cultural imperative that they are not prepared to face. The waning hours of the 20th century brought with it the view that many small towns across America were in a state of decline, and there were those who believed that these towns would fade away, and into our cultural memory.

This slow fade has not occurred, and decline has fallen to the way side, and an understanding of shrinking cities has resulted in a more robust and fruitful understanding of the World and the conditions that will continue to challenge the traditional

roles of the designers. The UN predicts that global population will level off around 2070 around 9 billion people.[1] This shift from population growth to dynamic shifts in population centers will bring about a balance between growing and shrinking conditions.

These new conditions will bring about the need for new ways of understanding the social, political, and economic structures of cities, towns, and regions. These changes will challenge the role that landscape architects and planners in these cities.

The challenge for these locations is not that there is no hope, but with a decrease in funding and capital that new forms of creating and understanding projects must take place. The challenge will not be the types of projects that take place, but the way in which communities are activated and new relationships and partnerships are formed between all interested parties. The country has enjoyed

1 Kunzig, Robert, National Geographic PUBLISHED September 19, and 2014. 2015. "A World With 11 Billion People? New Population Projections Shatter Earlier Estimates." National Geographic News. Accessed April 25. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/09/140918-population-global-united-nations-2100-boom-africa.

ALASKA   HAWAII

watching the media frenzy about the changes happening in legacy cites. One only has to have followed the evacuation of Detroit, and celebrated the hopeful heros. Time Magazine did a year long study of Detroit entitled, Assignment Detroit. This fetishism of large urban areas has detracted from the ability to provide a healthy dialogue on the shrinking condition which permeates cities and towns alike. However, as a profession we must begin to understand the opportunity to exploit the feral conditions of shrinking small towns.

STATE OF THE UNION

As a culture the United States has become very interesting in the shift from cities declining to cities in a condition of shrinking. "The term shrinking city points to a specific phenomenon defined by loss of overall population, tax revenues, political representation, and federal dollars that are occurring within the defined jurisdictional boundary of a city."[1] The ability to understand that this condition is one that does not just cover the 48 cities that have been studied by the Legacy City Design project, nor the fascination that the news has had with the decline of Detroit. America has turned to this condition as it is covered by NPR and the New York Times. The study of this shrinking condition on Urban locations was even discussed in length through the study sponsored by the German Federal Cultural Foundation, *Shrinking Cities Volume 1 & 2*.

The shrinking cities condition in the United States comes about as the economy has evolved from an industrial based system to a service based industry. These evolutions have resulted in changes in the way cities shift and develop. The South Eastern region has found itself in a long process of change which has drastically altered the way life works and operates in this area. In the South Eastern region there are three urban areas which have felt the effects of population shifts and elevated vacancy. Birmingham, New Orleans, and Macon, all of these cities are suffering from 15% vacancy. This change is the result of population and jobs shifting out of city centers and to newly Urbanized areas. In a study of 213 urbanized areas done by, Ralph E. Heimlich and William D. Anderson, noted that between 1960 and 1990 the population increased by 47% while the total agricultural land developed increased by 107%.[2]

The draining of city centers has resulted in many location developing because of their close proximity to urbanized areas and highways and interstates. This has shaped the growth pattern of many locations, and Alabama is not exempt from these shifting conditions. The city in Alabama that has found itself at the center of discussion

1Desimini, Jill. 2014. "From Planned Shrinkage to Formerly Urban: Staking Landscape Architecture's Claim in the Shrinking City Debate." Landscape Journal 33 (1): 17

Ralph E. Heimlich and William D. Anderson, "Development at the Urban Fringe and Beyond: Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Land," Agricultural Economic Report No. AER803 (Washington DC: Resource Economics Decision, Economic Research Service, USDA)
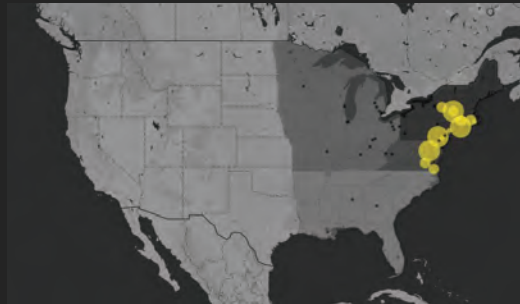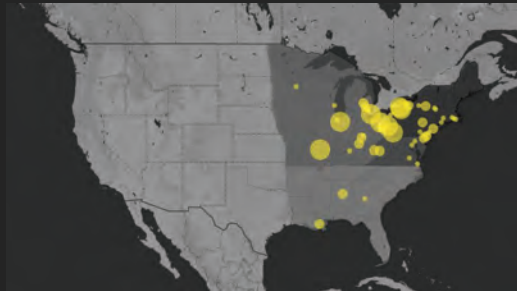
CITIES BY SQUARE MILE
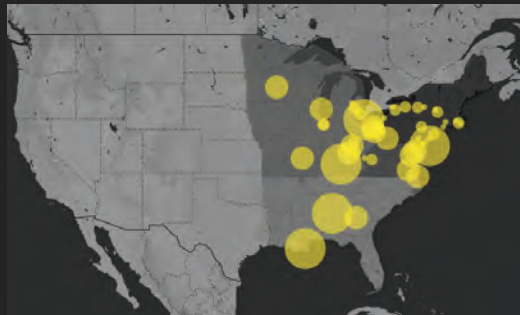
CITIES STILL IN DECLINE
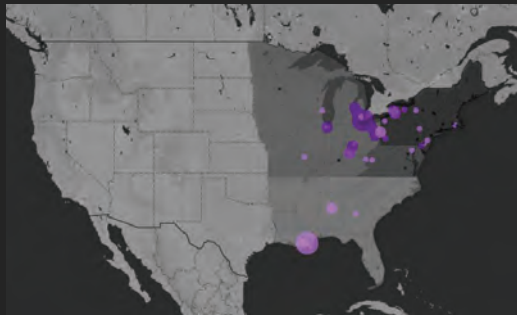
CITIES GROWING

POPULATION PEAK

HYPOTHESES ON URBAN SHRINKING IN THE 21ST CENTURY BY PHILIPP OSWALT

1. IN THE 21ST CENTURY, THE HISTORICALLY UNIQUE EPOCH OF GROWTH THAT BEGAN WITH INDUSTRIALIZATION 200 YEARS AGO WILL COME TO AN END AT THE END OF THE 21ST CENTURY. PROCESSES OF URBAN SHRINKING AND OF GROWTH WILL BE IN EQUILIBRIUM - AS THEY WERE BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL EPOCH.

2. THE CONCEPT OF GROWTH HAS DOMINATED THINKING IN MODERN SOCIETIES; SHRINKAGE AS BEEN VIEWED AS AN ACCIDENT AND EXCEPTION. IN FUTURE, HOWEVER, A CULTURE OF SHRINKAGE IS SET TO DEVELOP.

3. IN THE 20TH CENTURY, INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS AND MID- AND HIGH-DENSITY HOUSING WERE AFFECTED BY ABANDONMENT AND VACANCY; IN THE 21ST CENTURY, DE URBANIZATION WILL INCREASINGLY AFFECT SUBURBS AND OFFICE DISTRICTS.

4. THE EXHAUSTION OF OIL WELLS AND OTHER FOSSIL ENERGY SOURCES, AS WELL AS CLIMATE CHANGE, WILL DECISIVELY INFLUENCE GLOBAL SETTLEMENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

5. SHRINKING PROCESSES LEAD TO DUAL SOCIETIES: URBAN DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, LIFESTYLES, AND MUCH MORE DIFFER FUNDAMENTALLY BETWEEN THE ZONES OF GROWTH AND OF SHRINKING.

6. URBAN PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE IN SHRINKING CITIES FACE NEW TASKS. WHEREAS UNTIL NOW CONSTRUCTION HAS BEEN SEEN AS THE GOAL OF ARCHITECTURAL/ URBAN PLANNING ACTION, HERE IT IS THE STARTING POINT.

on the shrinking cities phenomenon is Birmingham, AL.

Birmingham has been designated a legacy city by Legacy City Design, a non for profit organization entitled Legacy City Design."Legacy City Design (LCD) is a network that shares innovative design practices happening in Legacy Cities - U.S. cities that have experienced a continuous loss of population and jobs since their peak. LCD connects professionals working in Legacy Cities, shares information about how projects are successfully designed and implemented, hosts conventions, advocates for innovative design solutions, and develops new practice solutions through design research and pilot project collaborations."[3]

The shrinking condition in Birmingham has resulted in a; 38% reduction in population since 1960, 13% unemployment rate, 21% poverty rate, and 18% vacancy.[4] These changes have resulted in challenging issues for the city in how they are dealing with vacant property, and what many in the city would consider urban blight. Landscape architecture has attempted to change this condition through the addition of an award winning park. Railroad Park was sited in context to one of the larger remaining partners the Birmingham had in the University of Alabama Birmingham. The park was designed by Tom Leader

"LegacyCityDesign." About. N.p., n.d. 2015.

Studio. The project won the 2012 ULI Open Space Award. The park cost $17.5 million,"[5] and it has created vast opportunities for developers to develop housing.

The small towns of America have been over looked in the face of these urban areas, and that is to the
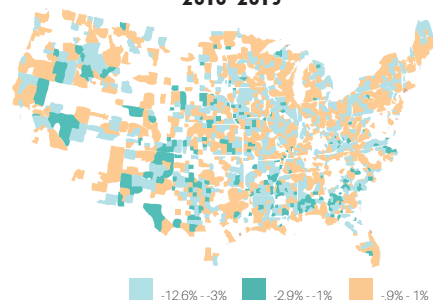
3. "LegacyCityDesign." About. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Apr. 2015.
4. ibid.

5. "Railroad Park." Tom Leader Studio. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Apr. 2015.

**USDA POPULATION CHANGE RATE
2010-2013**

-12.6% - -3%	-2.9% - -1%	-.9% - 1%

detriment of our country as a whole. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates looks at the issue on a county bases. This allows for broader generalizations about the types of individuals who might live in shrinking counties without a metropolitan influence. "The number of people living in non metropolitan counties stood at 46.2 million in 2015 nearly 15 percent of U.S. residents spread across 72 percent of the Nation's land area."[6] The scope and scale of the area covered by this condition is one that challenges the profession in way greater than any urban condition, and this has left the field to approach it with broad generalizing strokes.

It should be understood that the rural communities are loosing very little population. "...since 2010, as a group of declining by over 500,000. At the same time, just under 700 non metro counties gained population, together adding over 400,000 residents."[7] The shift in population begins to point towards the division between areas that are growing and developing vs. those that are facing a declining situation. This is one of the conditions

6 "USDA Economic Research Service - Population & Migra-tion." N.p., n.d. Web. 1 May 2015.
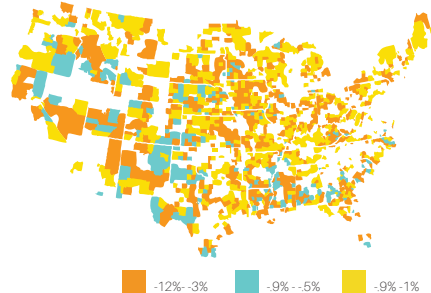7 *ibid.*

**USDA NATURAL POPULATION CHANGE
2010-2013**

-3.4% - -1%	-.9% - -.5%	.6%- 2
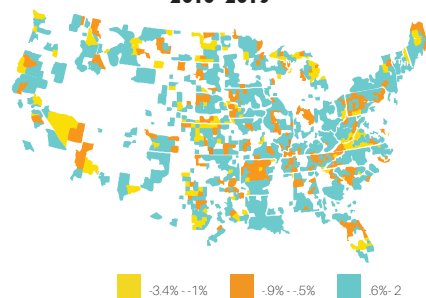
**USDA NET MIGRATION RATE
2010-2013**

-12%- -3%	-.9% - -.5%	-.9% -1%

that Philipp Oswalt begins to discuss in his *Hypotheses on urban shrinking in the 21st century.* The vast shifting of population has resulted in a dual society, which is understood as being one of the key qualifiers of a shrinking city. An example of this happening now is the shifting of rural population because of the oil boom happening in North Dakota. "In growing ... regions, the principle of the entrepreneurial city can develop remarkable dynamics of development; but shrinking regions are increasingly characterized by disinvestment — by capitalism without capital."[8]

8"Shrinkingcities : Hypothesen." Shrinkingcities : Hypoth-

The investment in growing regions has allowed for a shift in the previous population loss of North Dakota through migration. The other benefits include, "economic development, partnerships with oil companies, decrease in traditional social welfare and cash assistance programs, and the potential for building long-term community capacity."[9] This change has also resulted in North Dakota having one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.
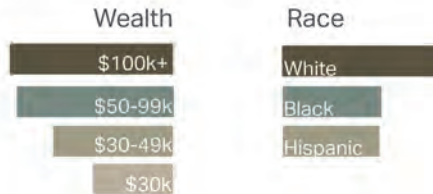
esen. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2015.
9 Weber, Bret A., Julia Geigle, and Carenlee Barkdull. "Rural North Dakota's Oil Boom and Its Impact on Social Services." Social Work 59.1 (2014): 68
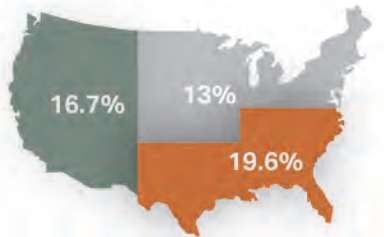
The other aspect of the dual condition is many of the rural communities in Alabama. Many Counties in Alabama currently find themselves dealing with the changes of the shrinking condition. This condition comes with changes in community forms, economic structures, and population decline. However, we can not paint Alabama with a general stroke that views all small town communities as shrinking "Generalizations about small towns, even when those towns are all located in the United States in the twenty-first century, bump unsteadily into bothersome exceptions almost as soon as they are made."[10]

Even within the state of Alabama there is a dualism that is presenting itself through patterns of growth and those of shrinking. Within the state there are areas which are feeling the benefits of growth. The small towns that find themselves facing a future of development are those located along Alabama's highways and interstates. These cities have become the sites of Alabama's industrial growth

10 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. p. 341.Print.

SHRINKING COUNTIES AND HIGHWAYS SYSTEM
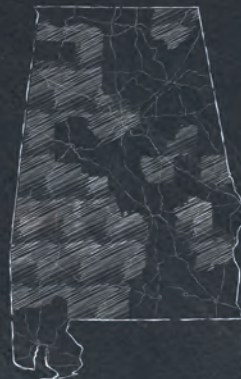
SHRINKING COUNTIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS
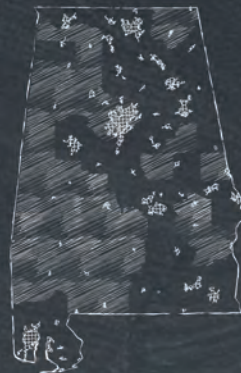
URBAN AREAS AND HIGHWAY SYSTEM

Population Change based of U.S.
Census From 2000-2013

which has added 38,000 new jobs since 2011.[11]

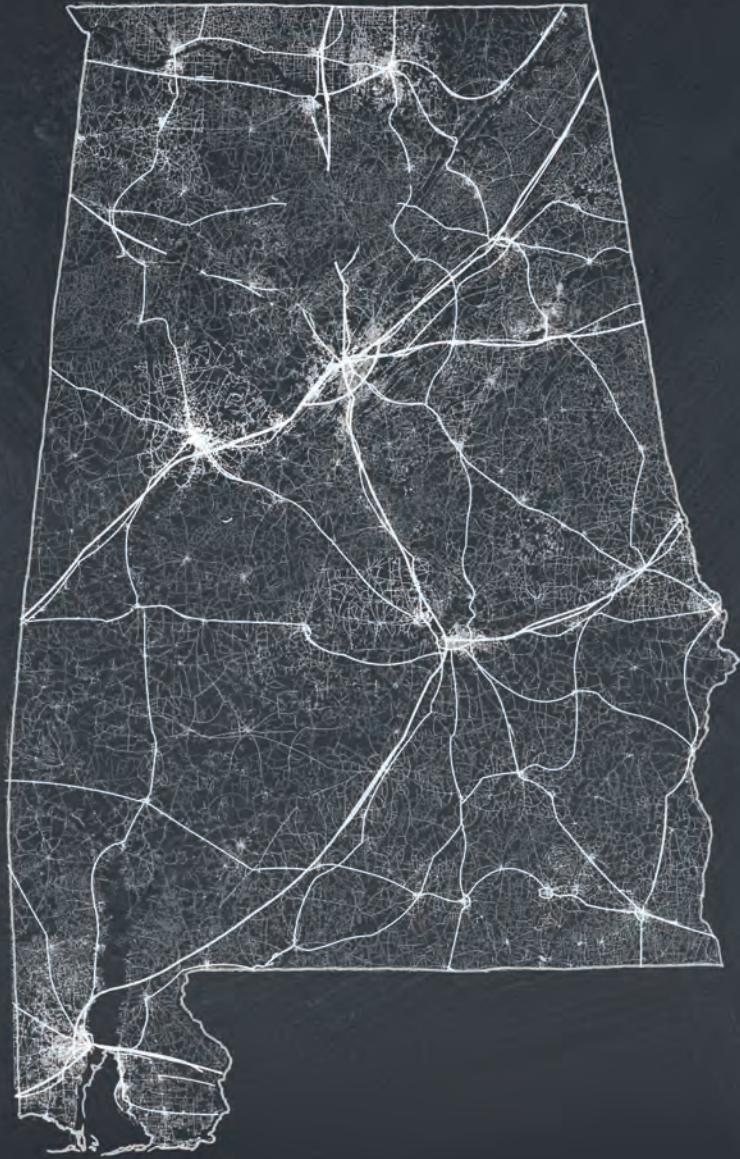The other locations that are developing around the state are the small towns and communities that are following the course of the last 30 years, and find themselves dealing with the conditions of urban sprawl outside the larger metropolitan regions.

The towns that are declining are found in a condition that is distinctly different than those areas that have a strong entrepreneurial development. The clean lines and distinctions of a developing region are juxtaposed against those of the shrinking small towns.

The conditions within these small towns are different than their urban counter parts. There is a tension that has developed with the wid spaces outside the city limits. These small towns have always had a contention with the wild, and as communities have began to shrink resources and money have resulted in a feral condition, which blurs the lines between wild and tamed.

The spaces that are under the most scrutiny are those that were once tamed gardens or yards. These feral spaces have adapted to the site specific conditions. This transition has made the definable lines between what is the city and what is the wild blurry.

As these spaces develop within the city they have created a condition of weak urbanism that can be capitalized to create an alternate way of understanding the form and function of a town.

11 "Manufacture Alabama STARTPAGE." Manufacture Alabama STARTPAGE. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2015.

LAFAYETTE, ALABAMA

SITE REASONING

The opportunities to study the shrinking small towns of Alabama is large. "The proportions of people who live in these small non urban towns (out of all those who live in any town or city) is highest in Alabama, Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire,..."[1]   The conditions that I

1 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. p.9

used to filter out communities across the state were first they had to fall with a population under 25,000 people. This condition was set up by the sociological study by Robert Wuthnow in his book *Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future.* This definition of small towns allows for a clean distinction in the size and scale of the communities to be studied. This also

Alabama Urban Area
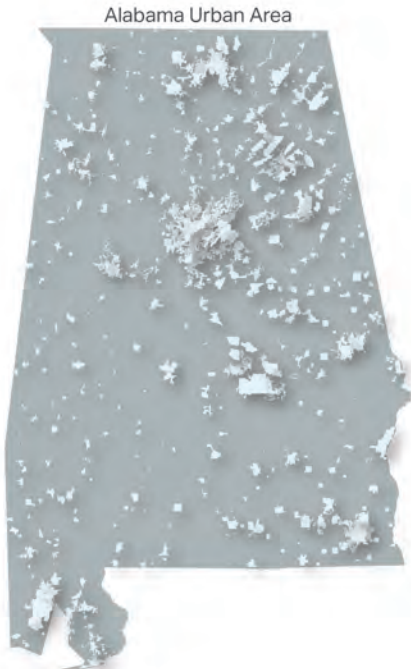
Alabama Population
Total: 4,833,722

69%
Metro
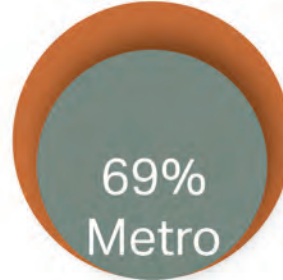
Alabama Rural Area
Total:53,423mi^2

95%
Rural
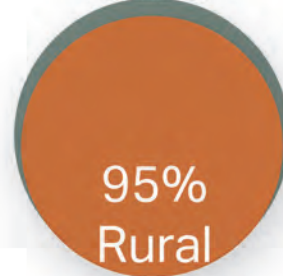
allowed for me to draw upon a larger sociological study of communities and small towns.

The other criteria that I set up in order to further study the shrinking condition was that the town needed to have felt the effects of a population decrease for the past decade. When these parameters were set into place the number of shrinking towns was around 461 municipalities. [2] To further understand the way in which a community operated I desired to be a part of the life of the community.

It is for this reason I decided to focus my studies in the town of LaFayette, Alabama. The trip from my doorstep to the center of town takes thirty minutes along AL-1N. The location of LaFayette allowed for me to spend time there during the year walking around downtown, getting haircuts, and going to community celebrations.

LAFAYETTE

2. Brendan Kirby |. "New Census Data Show Fastest-Growing Cities in Expanding Metro Areas; Search Your City." AL.com. N.p., 5–22 2014. Web. 2 May 2015.
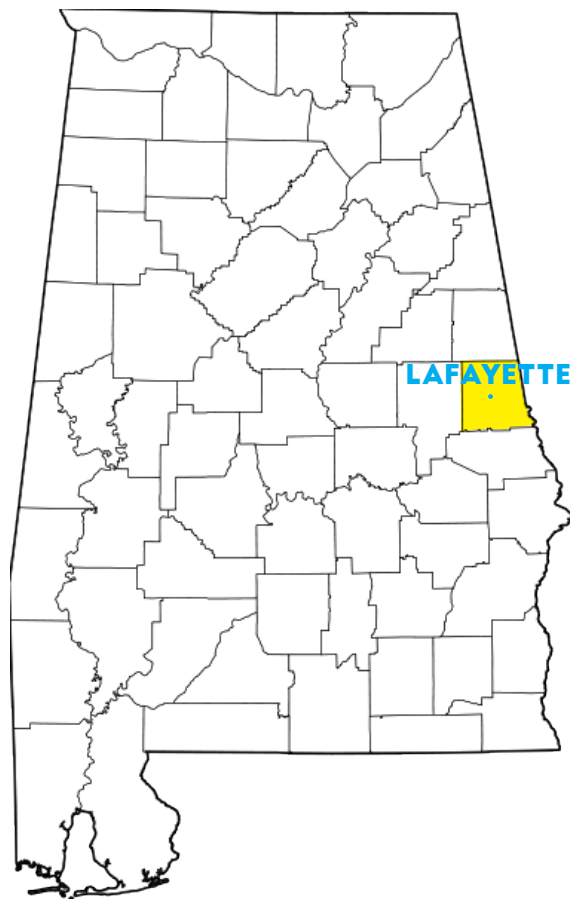
JOSH

I met Josh while walking around downtown Lafayette. He pulled flagged me down as I was walking out of the creek by the museum. He asked me about when the museum was open, so he could ask a question about a mill stone he found in the woods around his house. Josh had married his wife who was raised in LaFayette, and he was lucky enough to get a good job with the Power company as a lineman. He enjoys the small town experience, and can't imagine raising his kids anywhere else.

He is concerned with the way in which people maintain their lots, and believes that the city should do more to keep houses and yards from being filled with old cars, junk, and tall grass.

He, however, was willing to look over these sights, because of the relationships and sense of security he had in the town. The example that Josh provided as an example of his trip to the gas station when his father was in town. When they drove in to fill up gas they noticed that the owner was not at the register. Josh knew this wasn't an issue so he continued to fill up his truck, because he knew he could tell the owner how much he got and make good on his bill at a later time with no problem. This level of trust and the knowledge of your neighbor was something that he saw as a dying character and quality, however, it was still strong in LaFayette.

LUH-FAY-ET HISTORY

In 1832 the Cusseta Treaty removed the Creek Indians from Chambers county. The next year LaFayette was settled when it was determined to be the ideal location for the county seat. The founding story of LaFayette starts out in the high point of the forest. The first emigrants came from the coast and built the framework of the city before the forest was even cleared.

The history of LaFayette follows the typical agrarian models of many Southern towns. "The early settlers produced corn, wheat, cattle, hogs, wool, and cotton for their own consumption."[1] As economics began to change Lafayette's agrarian production grew into a heavily cotton based economy. Cotton was primarily produced through the plantation method which was heavily dependant upon the use of slaves.

With the end of the Civil War the larger plantations were broken up and the land passed to a tenant farming system. This transition

[1]"City of LaFayette Master Plan." City of Lafayete, 2010
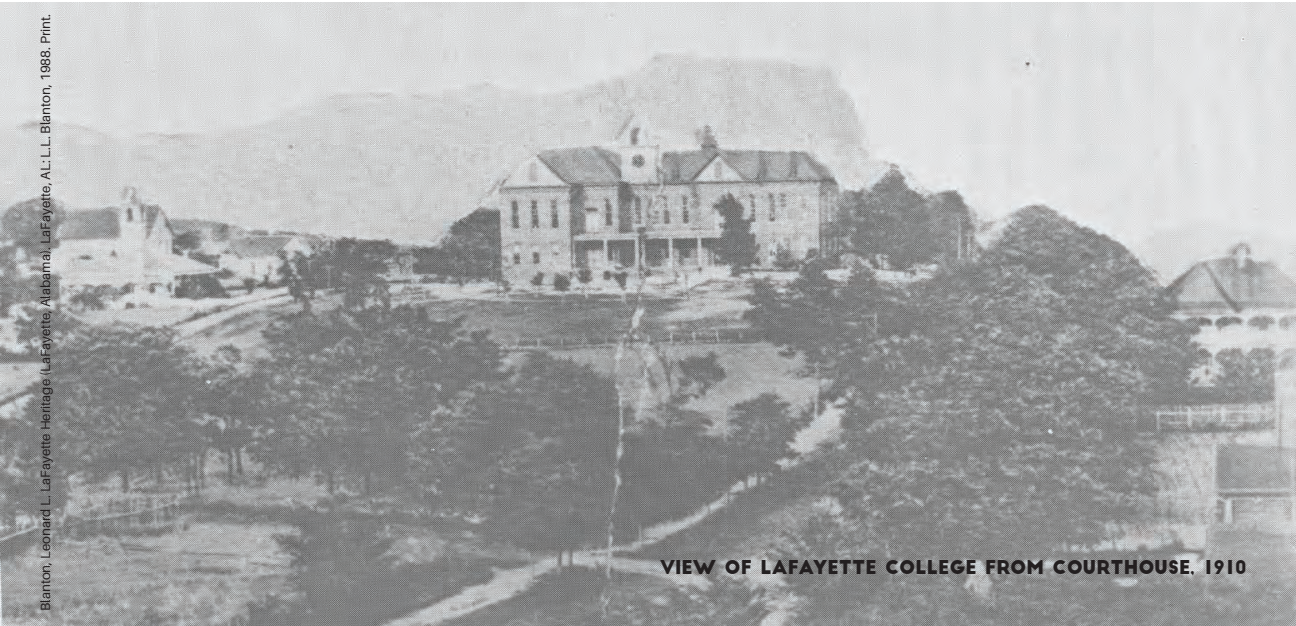
VIEW OF LAFAYETTE COLLEGE FROM COURTHOUSE, 1910

SAM BURCH

Waiting to sit in Sam Burch's barber chair was one of the most telling experiences about the important events that were happening in town every week. Sam spends time during the week cutting hair outside of Atlanta, and then drives into LaFayette to cut hair all weekend. His daughter lived in town while she was attending Auburn, and he fell in love with the city and saw the need for a barber after the previous barber closed shop.

Sam's love for Lafayette is demonstrated through his remodeling of the Hightower building downtown. Sam and his wife live upstairs during the weekend, and rent the bottom floors out to the beauty shop, and other hopeful entrepreneurs.

Sitting in Sam's shop you can overhear conversation ranging from how jobs are going to the championship basketball team. The conversation that meant the most with Sam was when he talked about why he drives the 80 mile trip to open his shop every Friday night. He talked about the role the Barber shop plays as a forum for telling the stories of Lafayette. Though these stories get repeated every week the importance of them in affirming the lore that makes up Lafayette's identity. This lore tended to talk about the local high school sports teams, and businesses that have gone away. One of the local favorites was about the previous barber who created the local community identity by giving everyone the same haircut. These ability to provide centralized services is an important aspect of community life, and service businesses close locations of affirmation become the realm of religious and social institutions.

occurred during the industrialization of the cotton industry in Alabama. LaFayette's access to rail and mill industry brought about the one of the first population booms in Chambers County.[2] LaFayette's population, "increased steadily from 1880 to 1920. The smallest rate of increase (.9%) occurred between 1930-40 and the largest rate of increase occurred between 1960-1970."[3]

The population shift coincides with the greater shift in the labor force of the city. Between 1987 and 1997 Chambers County lost over 10% of its labor force. The main physical scars of this in Lafayette were Avondale Mills and Rawlings, both companies had manufacturing sites within the community. Avondale Mills shutdown, while Rawlings' moved their production over seas.

The Rawlings structure is still located within the city limits, however, Avondale Mills has been dismantled and the materials have been sold to contractors and collectors throughout the state. The changes have further exacerbated the issues that have resulted in a recession of Identity. One of the ways in which the city has gone about trying to reaffirm their identity is the use of false store fronts. These fonts attempt to link to the past uses for these abandoned downtown spaces with a nostalgic understanding of today. The city has allowed false fronts to be placed on these buildings and for them to be painted in ways that resemble the idealistic shops that were there 20-30 years ago.

LaFayette has also seen changes in the housing conditions of

2 *Ibid.*
3 *Ibid.*
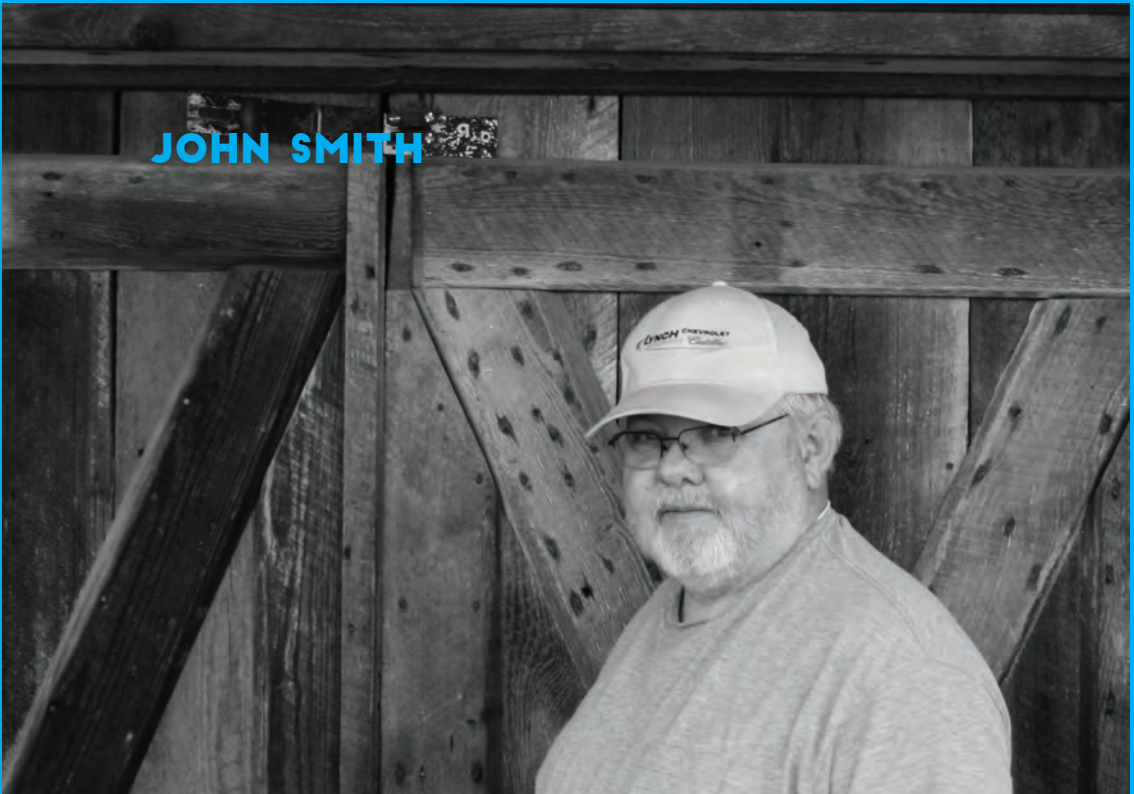
JOHN SMITH

Lafayette Local John Smith moved back to town after working in the big city of Opelika, Alabama. He and his wife built their dream home just outside of the city limits. Upon moving back to town he began to volunteer at the Chambers County Museum. In the beginning he and other volunteers constructed a stage in one of the old cotton silos in hopes of attracting visitors and musical acts to the museum. However, the remaining walls of the cotton barns were threatening to collapse so the space has become unused. John and other volunteers at the museum no longer hold regular hours and you must call the phone numbers posted on the door to schedule a meeting. The museum is now most often used as a place for the volunteers to get together and play board games once a month.

While talking with John it was evident that he loved living in LaFayette, Al . John talked about the game nights that were help between the museum volunteers once a month and how he enjoyed the sense of community. However, John was voiced concern with the changes in LaFayette, and enjoyed discussing the past more than he did the future of the city.

John also mentioned that as he and his wifed have aged that Lafayette is proving harder to live in as he has to drive to Opelika to visit his doctor more often these days. He mentioned that he imagines he and his wife will eventually move back to Opelika because of their health.

LaFayette. The condition of property has felt the impacts of population loss as well as the economic hardships the community has fallen under. In 2000 over 10% of the housing stock in LaFayette sat vacant.[4] This number has slowly increased since then with the last estimate coming in 2013 with 17% of the housing stock lying in a state of vacancy.[5] This has further resulted in a sense of decline as areas that were full of human activity have shifted, and traditional visual understanding of lawn and garden have began to transition into wilder forms.

The other change that is happening in LaFayette is the changing demographics. The population has transitioned from being a younger city to one that is having to deal with an increasing elderly population. "Since 1980, LaFayette has lost almost one-third of its school-aged population compared to the overall population decrease of only 11.3%. Meanwhile, the number of residents between the ages of 25 and 64 rose 5.3% during the two decades."[6]

4 "City of LaFayette Master Plan." City of Lafayetre, 2010
5 "Percentage of Vacancy." Map. Social Explorer. Social Explorer, n.d. Web. Mar 2015 . (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau)
6. "City of LaFayette Master Plan." City of Lafayete,

1897

1909
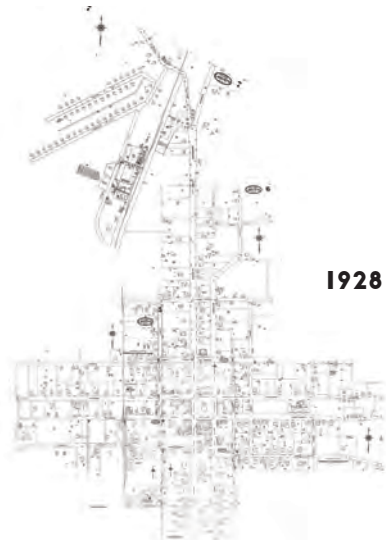
1928

This has resulted in the median age increasing from 31.3 in 1980[7] to the current median age of 37.7.[8] This has changed the ability of the volunteer base of the city, and also alters the needs of the larger tax paying base.

LaFayette also has to deal with the difficult aspects of a shrinking condition and poverty rates that hinder the role in which the community can operate and function. These poverty rates demonstrate the change in LaFayette in comparison with Chambers County and the State Average. Poverty should be understood as a sign of a shrinking condition, and also an indicator to the possibility of designing with, "capitalism without capital."

2010
7 *ibid.*
8 "Median Age." Map. Social Explorer. Social Explorer, n.d. Web. Mar 2015 . (based on data from U.S. Census reau)

LAFAYETTE POVERTY RATES

	Lafayette	Chambers County	Alabama
Families	25.1%	14.3%	12.5%
Female Household	43.9%	34.7%	35.6%
Individuals	28.4%	17.0%	16.1%
Related Children Under 18	40.8%	22.5%	21.2%
65 and Over	20.2%	18.2%	15.5%

United States Census, 2000 `

LA FAYETTE POPULATION
POPULATION: 3,003
-7.1% REDUCTION
2000-2010

POPULATION

300
275
250
225
200
175
150
125
100
75
50
25
0

0 - 4   5 - 9   10 - 14   15 - 19   20 - 24   25 - 29   30 - 34   35 - 39   40 - 44   45 - 49   50 - 54   55 - 59   60 - 64   65 - 69   70 - 74   75 +

AGE

POPULATION

350
325
300
275
250
225
200
175
150
125
100
75
50
25
0

0 - 4   5 - 9   10 - 14   15 - 19   20 - 24   25 - 29   30 - 34   35 - 39   40 - 44   45 - 49   50 - 54   55 - 59   60 - 64   65 - 69   70 - 74   75 +

AGE

POPULATION CHANGE

60
40
20
0
-20
-40
-60
-80

0 - 4   5 - 9   10 - 14   15 -1 9   20 - 24   25 - 29   30 - 34   35 - 39   40 - 44   45 - 49   50 - 54   55 - 59   60 - 64   65 - 69   70 - 74   75 +

AGE

ASIAN
WHITE
TWO OR MORE
AFRICAN AMERICAN

Partial Birds-eye View East.   LAFAYETTE, Ala.

BUILDING BLOCKS

BUILDING BLOCKS OF COMMUNITY

- SOCIAL NETWORK
- TERRITORY
- MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA
- LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE
- SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY
- INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK
- RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS
- MYTH OF COMMUNITY
- A BELIEF SYSTEM
- CULTURAL VALUES
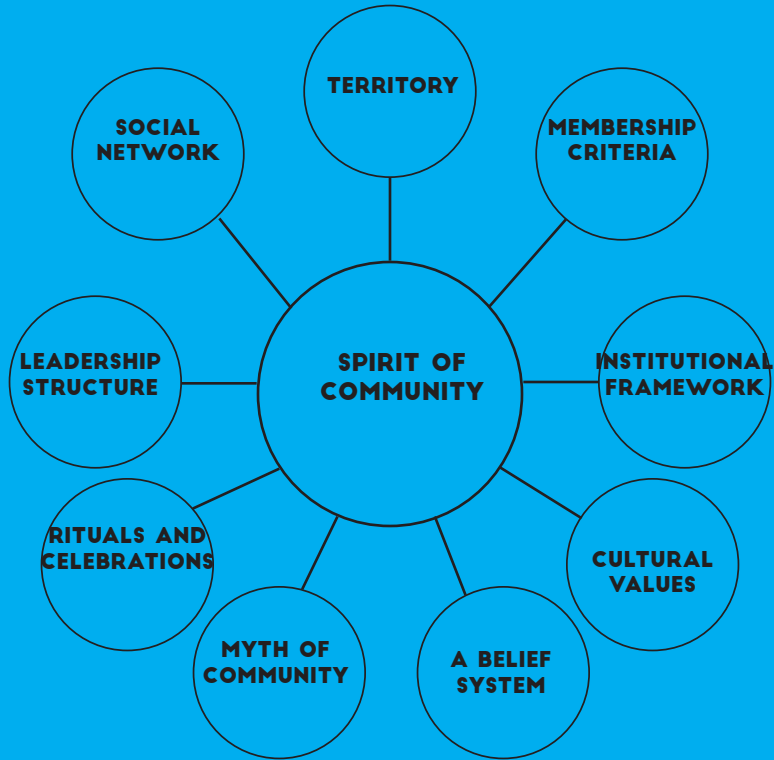
The design test are an attempt to design within and harness the feral cities condition as an advantage to change the way a community sees and understands the process of change. The ability to understand and help orchestrate change within the community is a long-term process. One that is dependent upon the ability to develop and build upon the principle of "capitalism without capital."[1] The projects will develop upon the ability of LaFayette to develop excitement and harness community support to an alternate image of their community.

To understand and critique these design test they have been theoretically tested against and targeted towards certain aspects of Suzanne Keller's components of community. This criteria provides an advantage when talking about a specific small town, because "about the only generalization that can safely be venture about small towns, it might seem, is that they are indeed small compared with most cities and suburbs."[2]

Small towns have variables that change the way in which people conceive, understand, and define them. Community is a common thread the ties people together. The language that individuals use to define their own experiences within community, finds similarity when community is discussed.

Keller argued that community could not be reduced to these connections, but a series of building blocks

Wuthnow defines the 10 building blocks as:

> •*Territory or turf, Keller argues, Figuratively, if not also literally, the bedrock of community, serving as the bounded site in which it exists, and providing it with a spatial signature, physical identity, and perhaps sense of security and closure.*

1 Capitalism without capital is an understanding that in shrinking regions areas that have formerly known government spending, and will have to depend upon the strong social networks they form within the community. Financing will come from micro enterprises within the community.
2 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. p. 341.

•Membership criteria specify who belongs to the community and who does not belong. These are the stated and unstated symbolic boundaries as well as cognitive classifications that distinguish "us" from "them," "insiders" from "outsiders," and constitute a rational for inclusion or exclusion.

•An institutional framework consists of the formalized laws along with informal rules and sanctions that govern in routine circumstances, and maintain order in response to crisis and conflicts.

•Cultural values that particularly facilitate the social cohesion of the community emphasize cooperation, mutual responsibility, and sharing. These values undergird the prevailing local consensus about priorities and goals.

•A belief system offers justifications and explanations for the demands that a community may place on its members, and suggests the ways in which they should behave to attain their goals.

•Myth of community tells how it originated, who founded it, and the reasons why, and weaves together its stories about progress, failure, hard times, and notable events.

•Rituals and celebrations bring people together, punctuating the daily rhythms of their collective life with times for emotional expression, remembrance, and joy.

•Leadership structure serves vitally to guide and govern. It consists of not only individual leaders but also the expectations that reward them with respect and command loyalty from those they lead.

•Social networks are the actual relationships that tie people together in bonds of family and friendship, and radiate to include neighborly behavior along with acts of charity, benevolence, and community service.

•Spirit of community,..., is that sense of interdependence that arises from all the foregoing, and ultimately transcends individual interests so that people identify with and willingly assume responsibility for their community. [1]

1 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. p. 342-343

With this understanding community understandings and ideals can be leveraged and used in an attempt to alter the course in which community members currently perceive their situation. When using these building blocks the designer, with a knowledge of the community, can work within the feral condition to design alternative understandings of shifting situations.

The ability to understand the identity of a community is partially based in the past. With an understanding of the history of a place we can design into the myth of the community in ways that do not look into the past, but can begin to project a future that has a positive view of the towns current shrinking condition. This means that history can not be used only for nostalgic gains, or as a simplistic way for communities to create anticipation for a new statue of a local hero, but as an intimate way of understanding spatial and community development.

The ability to have history inform design, but not dictate its form or function will allow small towns and communities to embrace alternative forms and to propel their ideas and sense of community into the reality of the 21st century. Philipp Oswalt says, "The necessity to develop new "tools" of planning and building is comparable to the situation of Classical Modernism. The "New Construction" of the 1920s would have been inconceivable without the development of an entire arsenal of new tools for the realization of urban planning and architecture: the formation of communities and cooperatives as new construction clients..."[1]

The other important aspect of design implementation in the small towns is the scale and type of project. The scale and scope of these projects must be designed in a way that failure is a designed reality. The need to allow failure creates an environment of innovation. In this environment the stress of construction and design upon the community must not hinder the social connections.

1"Shrinkingcities : Hypothesen." Shrinkingcities

DESIGN STRATEGIES

43

PUBLIC PAINT

The front porch has played an important role in the southern community. It has played an important role as the gray area between the public and private. The southern porch not only provides reprieve from the hot days and nights, but the threshold from which lives transition from the private realm to the public sphere. Porch is derived from the Old English root "port" which means "portal, door, gate, entrance," however, it also can mean "harbor or haven," it roughly translates into, "place of refuge, asylum."[1]

The physical form of the porch creates a space in connection with the lawn, and further connected to the public realm of the road. De Certeau talks about the "gestures" of everyday life, and how these actions reflect the true archive or memory of a culture and civilization. The space of the porch and the lawn provide physical spaces between the public and private where, belief systems, community, and social networks are developed and supported.

The lawn and porch have the ability to reaffirm and develop new

beliefs, social networks, and aid in further defining shifting community. When community space is understood it become important for the designer to find ways to activate these spaces. The Public Paint attempts to allow for the activation of these spaces through the claiming of roads for alternative uses. This is only possible because of the decreased car use on permanent infrastructure.

Pedestrians at slower speeds allow for prolonged human interaction between individuals walking, biking, or driving on the now shared roads. Though this activity is already happening in LaFayette it is important to allow for individuals and the community to create and build something and claim the roads as pedestrian sphere. This claiming process allows for the community to develop a desire for new activity and space, the imagination of something new, and the realization of a product achieved.[2] The process of dreaming, developing, and realizing a common vision and goal is critical to developing and maintaining a positive view of the future for communities.

1"Online Etymology Dictionary." Online Etymology Dictionary. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

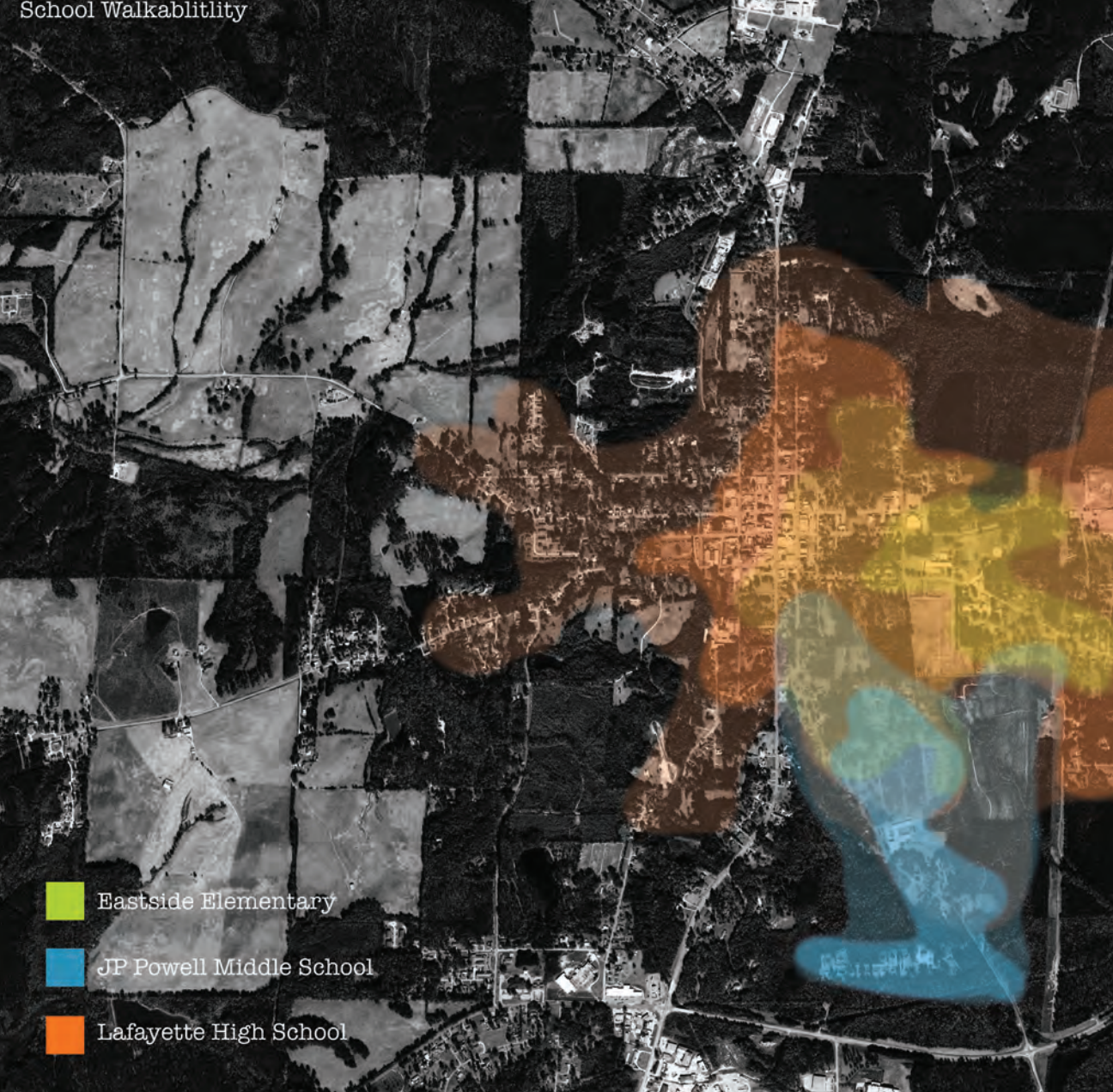2"Shrinkingcities : Hypotheses." Shrinkingcities : Hypotheses. N.p., n.d. Web. 02 May 2015.

Mapping of LaFayette Based On Porch Activity. Darker shades of gray represent signs of healthier areas.

School Walkablitlity

Eastside Elementary

JP Powell Middle School

Lafayette High School

Because of the decreased vehicular activity that is a result in population decline, and the traffic patterns in and out of the city. It becomes possible to leverage the streets as a shared public space. Because the city does not have sidewalks throughout the town pedestrians have already commandeered the space to push strollers, ride bikes, walk, and play basketball.

This type of activity should be encouraged by the city as an activity that allows for streets to preform multiple purposes. By allowing streets to become social the community space has been extended from the front porch onto a shared public investment.

The initial communities to be targeted by this design scheme would be those that find themselves within walking range of the school (pictured to your left), and with the healthiest porch activity.

As neighborhoods buy into the concept of painting roads it allows for the excitement and the ability of community identity to develop at multiple scales. The initial scale is that of the street, and then as momentum builds the scale of the neighborhood, and then

PAINT SCHEME ON
AVE A

that of the city.

If this painting scheme becomes successful in the community it has the ability to further expand throughout the city to create a larger identity that can further distinguish LaFayette from the other communities in the area.

If the project is successful, in energizing the already important porch culture of LaFayette, then the opportunity arises for the community to further increase the activity of individuals within the community through the introduction of a small greenway. The greenway takes advantage of the sewer right of way as well as the maintained power line cuts.

Applying the same color of painting process to the trail makes an easy navigational marker for those who are traveling along LaFayette's greenway. This new infrastructure increase the ability to travel around the community.

NEIGHBORHOOD PAINT
&
GREENWAY
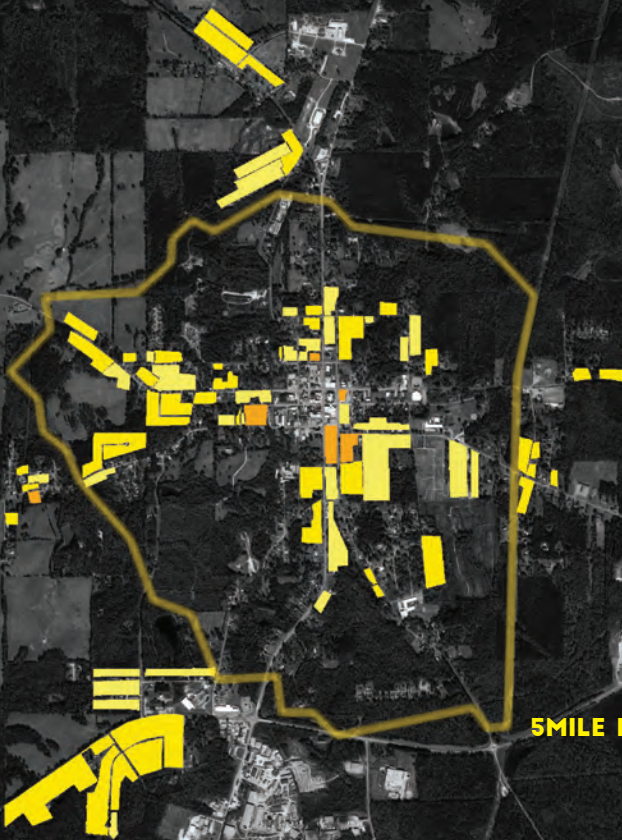
5MILE LOOP

GREENWAY WITH
PAINT SCHEME

FERAL GARDEN

Feral city refers to the changes that have occurred within the shrinking condition of Lafayette. This has effected how member of the community feel about the areas within their town that are going through changes. When talking with residents of the community it was evident that they were not comfortable with the changes that have happened in the vacant areas and on the fringes of their town.

The process of a city shifting to a feral city is one of visible and spatial change. These changes are temporal and ephemeral, and add an alternative reality to a shrinking small town, like LaFayette. The feral spaces are ever changing at different rates and scale, they very based upon hydrology, and react to the human environment around them.

Gilles Clement refers to these landscapes as "Third Landscapes," these spaces , "designates the sum of the space left over by man to landscape evolution - to nature alone."[1] These spaces play a vitally important role to the preservation of the genetic diversity of our planet.

The difference between the "third landscape," and the feral landscape is that feral focuses upon transition and the process of developing and harnessing a landscape of change and shift. This landscape no longer allows for clean delineation of man made boundaries as the feral and wild creeps into towns and takes up residence. These process allow for an understanding of the landscape which provides form and order to the site specific qualities of an area.

The characteristics of a feral landscape are in direct conflict with the vernacular understanding of a home lawn and garden, and even within a small town the view of parks and public space requires maintenance régimes which fight change and time. The garden is a space of contained growth or a flat plinth of grass upon which a house is built. These spaces are meant to maintain this quality while only the tree increase in size at a desired rate and distance from the house.

If the lawn or garden is understood as a space where change is allowed to happen then it can begin to allow the feral condition to flow through it. In LaFayette this means that a new

1 Clement, Gilles. "The Third Landscape." The Third Landscape. N.p., 2003. Web. 03 May 2015.

vernacular is allowed to form. This vernacular is one that takes ownership of the feral condition that is changing the ecological dynamics within the city, and with the region. Lafayette then not only becomes the political hub of the county but one of ecological connection and importance. The boundaries of fences no longer matter to the movement of plants, and the city has the opportunity to develop a new culture of gardeners. If members of the community become gardener they begin to curate the feral and to shape these wild conditions into

Credit: Will Nix

their own shape and form.
        The home garden is the
location where every citizen can become
and environmentalist and connect
to the larger regional landscape. The
the arrangement of the feral space to
connect across fences and lot lines
allows for community wide connections.
This connection allows for community
to become the pillar at which ecological
and feral events swirl around

FERAL GARDEN GUIDE

**Feral Zone: of, relating to, or resembling a wild beast.**

By allowing succession to develop in the large majority of residential yards we can develop a more ecologically and site sensitive landscape that relies more on the concepts of gardening than lawn care. Careful selection and tending of plants through the seasons can allow for a pleasant and diverse experience that has the ability to look outside of the traditional boundaries of the lawn.

Play Zone: devoted to the pleasures and necessity of inhabitants.

This zone allows residents to enjoy the traditional desires and wants with the ability to reach into the other zones through different maintenance regimes.

Porch Zone: relating to the gray area that separates the public and private lives of inhabitants.

This zone plays one of the most important roles of the homestead in the social wellbeing of a community. The ability to see people passing, and allow those who pass to see the inhabitants is important to social understanding and the balancing of societal pressures within small communities.
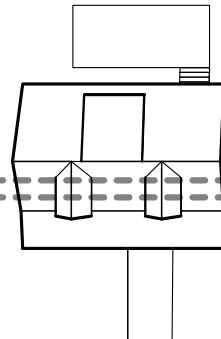
LOT SUCCESSION

YEAR 0
Crabgrass Dominated

YEAR 1
Horseweed Dominated

YEAR 2
Aster Dominated
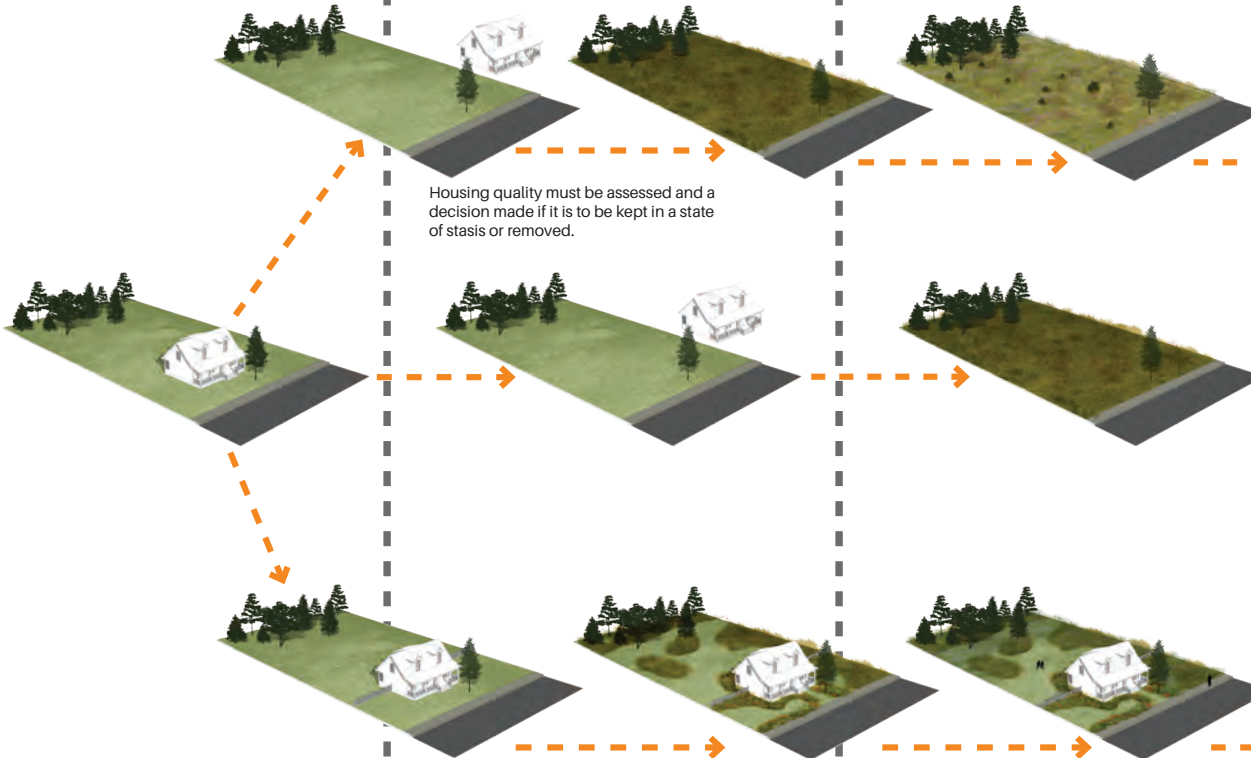
Housing quality must be assessed and a decision made if it is to be kept in a state of stasis or removed.

Plants

Crabgrass	Queen Anne's Lace	Horseweed		Aster	Ragweed	Cudweed	Ground Cher
			Rabbit Tobacco				
Ragweed	Ambrosia	Pine Weed	Thistles	Fleabane	Horseweed	Nightshade	Milkwe

Animals

Cutworms	Cankerworms	Bees	Wasps	Soldier Beatles	Net-Winged Beatles		Marsh Hawk	
Grasshoppers	Crickets	Shining Flower Beatles	**60**		Upland Chorus Frog	Whites	Orange Tips	Tiger Swallowtail
Warbler	Bobwhite	Butterfly	Lightningbug				Black Swallowtail	
		Snakes	Moths		Monarchs	Brush Footed Butterfly	Assassin Bugs	
						Yellowthroat		

YEAR 3-4
Broomsedge Dominated

YEAR 5-50
Pine Dominated

Allow for lots to transition into a pine dominated landscape if located next to existing forest that is being harvested.

At this point the decision must be made to whether a lot is to be developed, or allow succession to continue.

Broomsedge   Goldenrod

Honeysuckle   Greenbriar

Aster   Rabbit Tobacco   Berry Briars

Wood Hawk

Rats   Voles   Red Fox

Cardinals   Mice   Gray Fox

Shortleaf Pine   Loblolly Pine

Pitch Pine   Sumac   Black Haw

Trumpet Creeper   Poison Ivy

Pine Vole   Bats

Golden Mouse   Garter Snake

Wood Warbler   Blue Jay

Ticks

rry

eed

DESIGN TESTS

CIVIC MIRROR

Small towns are often contained by their perceived identity. This identity is informed by the context on which they draw their and understand their similarities and differences to the rest of the world. The biggest distinctions coming from the way in which they view their community in context of larger metropolitan ares. These distinctions can both be positive and negative association.

Small towns have all attempted to physically represent their identity through the preservation of sites of perceived historic importance. As you drive through the state you see the historic markers doting the landscape which signify the importance of a house or church that was one of the earlier structures in the city. Lafayette is no different in this regard and because of its importance to the history of Chambers County has found itself valuing these historic sites with more fervor and vigor.

As the demographic and population has change these sites do not carry the same importance to the collective memory of the town. The signs once demonstrated by these signs in context to the civil war graveyard and train station has changed. The few who remember can no longer fix the holes in the roof, or paint the gazebo the passion has faded in the younger generation, and the shift in the racial make up of the city has changed the meaning of historic event to the city.

As this condition repeats itself in many towns across Alabama as designers we are given the opportunity to allow communities to redefine themselves in productive ways. Communities will naturally do this themselves, but the visual and physical reminder of this has the ability to empower member or the community and, hopefully, decrease the opportunity for towns like Lafayette to define themselves by the perceived negatives comparisons of their community.

When a small town's understanding of self become static it can have physical ramifications on the ability of cities to be flexible and adapt to its changing conditions. It becomes an opportunity for the designer to understand this condition and create new physical forms and design alternative

Civic Mirror is an attempt to change the image that the Lafayette sees when it looks at its civic core. It attempts to project and harness the power of imagery, and the advantages of the physical form of

downtown to create a space that understands the role that history plays in the formation of identity in a small town, but also projects the positive aspects of a community grounded in the present while projecting a positive view of the future.

The images that are to be used to achieve these outcomes are to be reflected through a digital LED screen that is affixed to the façade of the abandoned movie theater on Alabama Avenue. This location also means that it is within a half mile radius of the High School, Middle School, Library, and Museum. The site is also directly adjacent to the County Courthouse which affords the site daily activity and a sense of business that is not felt in many of the other locations in the city.

The screen is meant to act in a similar fashion to the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, France. The placement of these mirrors along the hall reflect the ornate windows and natural light. These mirrors were constructed out of an economic philosophy know as Mercantilism, which focused on keeping the wealth of France inside of France, all while attracting wealth from outside the country. The grandeur and beauty of The Hall of Mirrors provided a space for diplomatic interactions to happen, and many foreign diplomats were received here, and the opportunity for many diplomatic and

social interactions, and the hall provided the location where the Treaty of Versailles was signed in 1919. The hall, "measures 239.5 feet by 34.4 feet, with soaring forty-foot ceilings."[1] The Civic Mirror in LaFayette is intended to function in a similar fashion, but on a smaller more scale to work at the level of the

1PBS, PBS, n.d, Web, 15 Nov, 2014

individual.

Civic mirror is also supposed to alter the way in which the image is interpreted, not just reflect the world that is directly in front of it. The Hal of Mirrors was the inspiration for the first house of mirrors. These carnival attractions allow for the endless creation of

"Hall of Mirrors, Petrin Hill, Prague. 1998." AHI: United States. N.p., 21 Aug. 2012. Web. 03 May 2015.

image loops, which create a distortion of spacial understand that confuse the visitant. The ability of fun house mirrors to distort the reflection of reality allows for novelty and intrigue to unarm the recipient of the image and to transport them from their present state of mind in preparation for their future experiences.

The Civic Mirrors project attempts to use the same principles of spatial distortion to allow participants to shed their previous baggage and understanding of LaFayette, in hopes that an open and new understanding is allowed to seed.

The screens attempt use an understanding of the, " elements that must be present for a community to achieve something close to a workable and sustainable ideal."[2] When the elements that allow for healthy community and identity are targeted it allows for a framework of what should be shown, or how aspects of the community can be reflected and distorted to provide new meanings and spatial understanding of Lafayette.

The advantage of using a LED

2 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. Print. pg. 343.

touch screen is that it allows for images to move and further attract the attention of those who are passing by. The other positive advantage is the opportunity to interact and explore images of such a large scale and proportion. This allows the viewer/subject to participate in the process discovering new

aspects of LaFayette.

CIVIC MIRROR
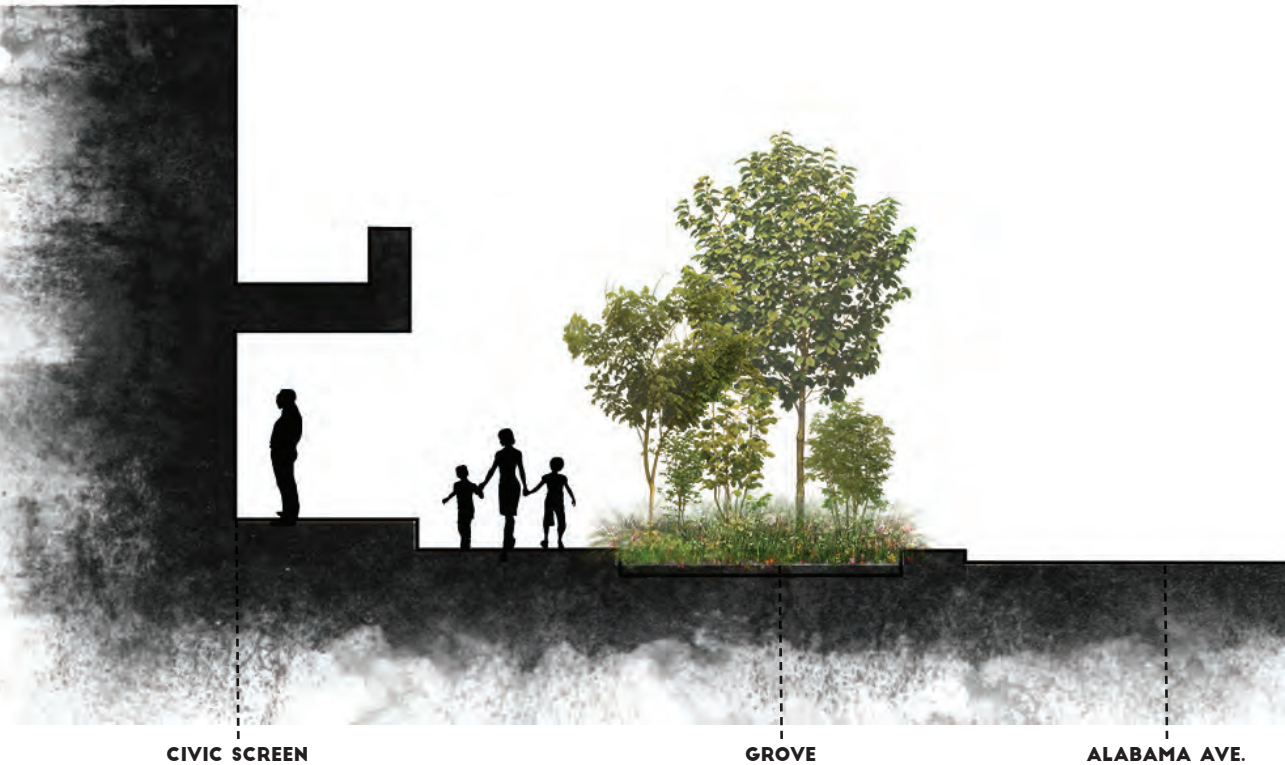
CIVIC SCREEN

GROVE

ALABAMA AVE.

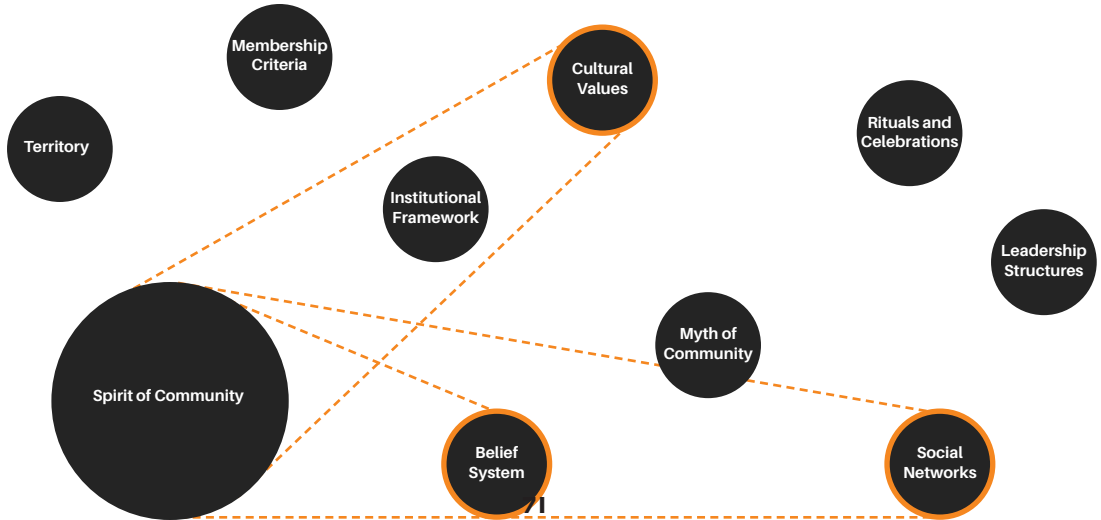Feral Forest is a video that depicts the relationship of LaFayette and its new found surroundings. LaFayette has made the transition from being a cotton based agricultural region to one dominated by pine plantations. This transitions has taken terraced cotton fields and transitioned them from places of economy to vibrant sites of ecological life, and environmental benefits.

This screen attempts to use a live feed to quantify the positive aspect of this change in way other than the benefit of jobs. The feed allows for the identification of plants and animals that pass through the field of view. It also talks about the ability of the new found pine forest to sequester carbon and opposes that with the daily car count that passes through LaFayette on HWY 431.

This is an attempt to alter the way in which LaFayette understands the new landscape in which they inhabit. That they can begin to be proud of the environmental changes and resources that they are providing on a regional scale.

CHAMBERS COUNTY MUSEUM

```
COMMAND ( ver ) - DOS in a BOX
but WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY;   without even the implied warranty of
MERCHANTABILITY  or  FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. See the file
/usr/share/doc/dosemu/copyright for more details.
Use  this  program  at  your  own  risk!

Continue to confirm, or enter EXITEMU or press Ctrl-Alt-PgDn to exit DOSEMU.

Your DOS drives are set up as follows:
  A: floppy drive (if it exists)
  C: points to the Linux directory "~/.dosemu/drive_c
  D: points to your Linux home directory
  E: points to your CD-ROM drive, if it is mounted at /media/cdrom
  Z: points to the read-only DOSEMU and FreeDOS commands directory
Use the LREDIR DOSEMU command to adjust these settings, or edit
/etc/dosemu/dosemu.conf, ~/.dosemurc, or c:\config.sys, or c:\autoexec.bat,
or change the symbolic links in ~/.dosemu/drives.

To re-install a DOS, exit and then restart DOSEMU using dosemu -i.
Enter HELP for more information on DOS and DOSEMU commands.
Keys: Ctrl-Alt-..., F=fullscreen, K=grab keyboard, Home=grab mouse, Del=reboot
      Ctrl-Alt-PgDn=exit; Ctrl-^: use special keys on terminals
C:\>ver

FreeCom version 0.84-preZ XMS_Swap [Aug 28 2006 00:29:00]
C:\>
```
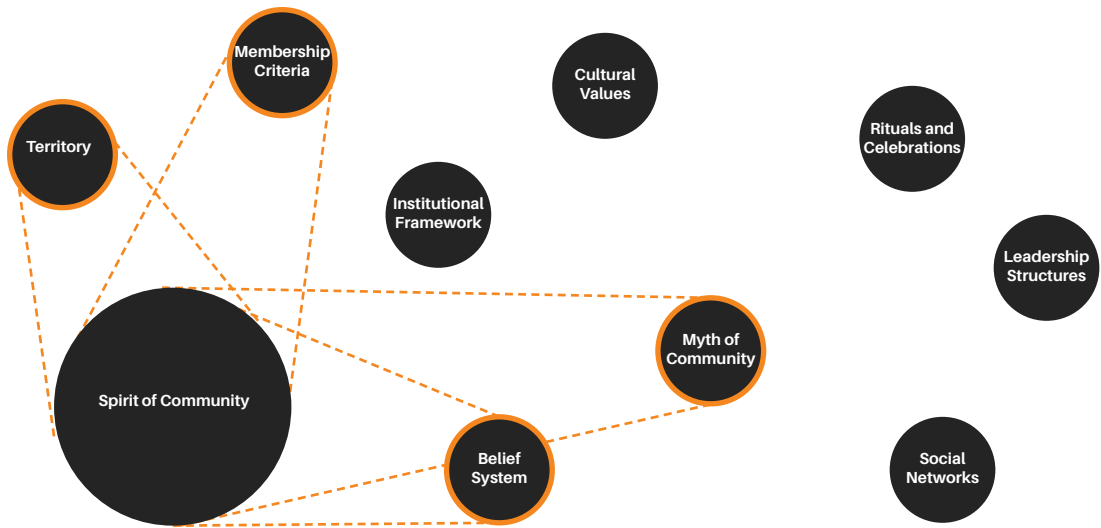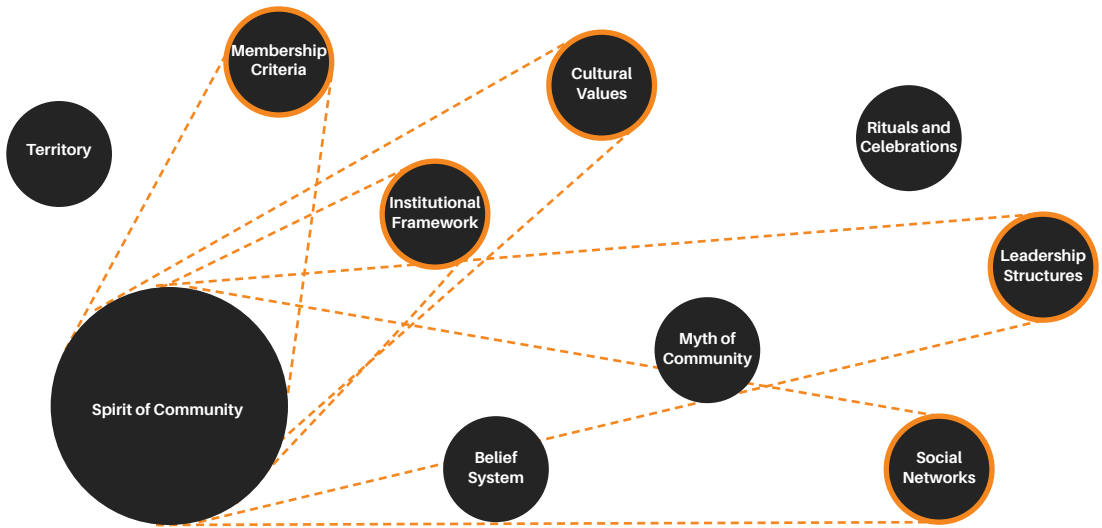
The second screen attempts to take the history that is typically hidden in the museum, and present it to the community in an interactive way that allows for the participant to explore history physically. This is in juxtaposition to the museum, which visitors must arrange to view weeks in advance. It also changes the ways that viewers are allowed to interact with the objects, because of the screens interactive features viewers are able to swipe, scroll, and touch the virtual representations of the museum's objects and the towns unique history.

The ability to cultivate and curate is an important aspect of this screen. The act of curating LaFayette's history is an attempt to understand and represent the past of Lafayette in a way that alters an understanding of the future.

THE BULLDOGS ESTABLISHED MOMENTUM EARLY AND NEVER LET UP, EARNING THEIR FIRST WIN BY A SCORE OF 73-62. THE START OF THE GAME WAS PLAGUED BY OFFENSIVE STRUGGLES FOR BOTH TEAMS AND WITH 2:15 TO PLAY IN THE FIRST QUARTER, THE PANTHERS HELD ON TO A 7-6 LEAD. BUT THEN LAFAYETTE GOT HOT AND ENDED THE QUARTER ON AN 11-3 RUN TO TAKE AN 18-10 LEAD. THEY WOULD NEVER LOSE THE LEAD THE REST OF THE NIGHT.

THE BULLDOGS CONTINUED THEIR RED-HOT SHOOTING AND STEPPED UP THE DEFENSE IN THE SECOND QUARTER, AND WITH 4:30 TO PLAY UNTIL HALFTIME, LED 26-10.

SMITHS STATION DIDN'T THROWN IN THE TOWEL, THOUGH, AND AFTER A TIMEOUT, MADE A RUN OF THEIR OWN. THEY WOULD OUTSCORE LAFAYETTE 12-1 OVER THE NEXT TWO MINUTES AND CLOSED THEIR DEFICIT TO SEVEN POINTS.

THE TEAMS EXCHANGED BASKETS OVER THE FINAL TWO MINUTES OF THE HALF, AND AT THE BREAK, THE DOGS LED 32-25. DESPITE THE LATE SMITHS STATION RUN, LAFAYETTE MAINTAINED THEIR COMPOSURE COMING OUT OF THE BREAK AND HAD THEIR MOST PRODUCTIVE OFFENSIVE QUARTER IN THE THIRD. LED BY THE PLAY OF SENIOR TREVOND

This screen represents the ability to harness social media as a way of communicating current events and activities in the town. The newspaper plays an important role in the in dispersing information and stories that reaffirm LaFayette's identity. The newspaper also allows for a public forum through the letter's to the editor that give those who might not otherwise have a voice within the city a public forum.

The other role that makes this screen powerful is the ease of access to types of information that the *LaFayette Sun,* already uses to reach a large number of people within the community.

The most recent zip code analysis for the *LaFayette Sun* put the total number of papers delivered at around 3220.[1] The ability to leverage and combine with a already important organization for community identity provides an important resource for encouraging community interaction with the Civic Mirror.

1. Numbers provided by Chris Busby from inter office file from the LaFayette Sun.
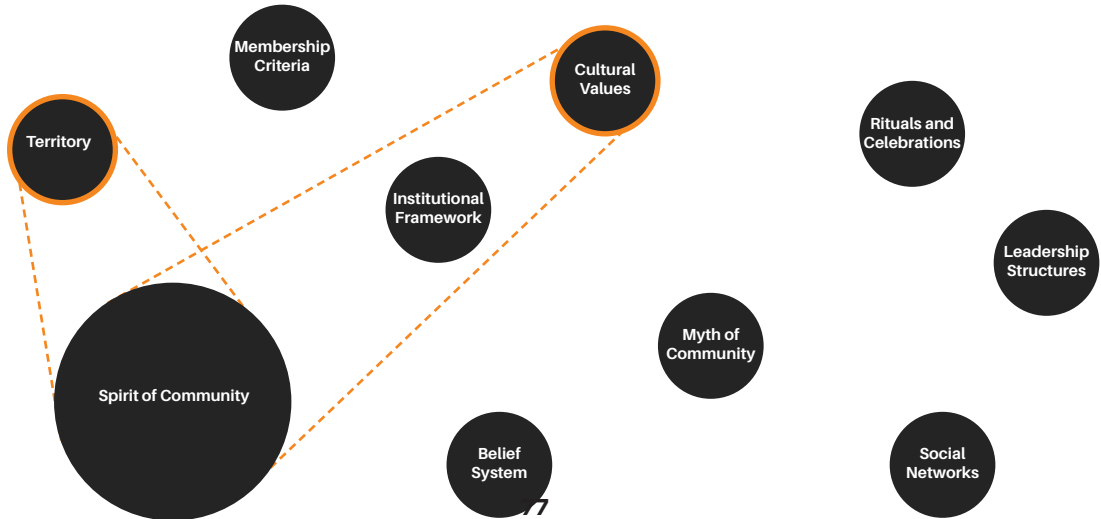
The final screen test, attempts to understand the prospects of vacant lots and their feral state. The advantages and disadvantages that leavening homes in certain states provides for the community. This screen specifically projects the material value of what is left in the houses, and implies the opportunity that is contained within the physical structure of the homes themselves.

This screen attempts to harness the values of hard work and drive that is evident in many of the individuals whom I talked to as I made my way through LaFayette. Many of the people talked about the hope of starting a business, or finding additional work. If these energies can be directed towards the feral lots and the houses that inhabit them then the prospect of living in a feral city becomes more feasible, and even one of opportunity.
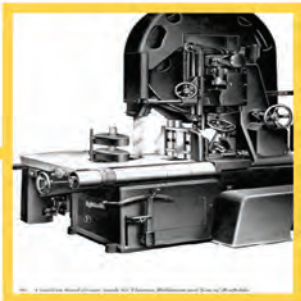
Membership Criteria

Cultural Values

Territory

Rituals and Celebrations

Institutional Framework

Leadership Structures

Spirit of Community

Myth of Community

Belief System

Social Networks

The most interesting prospect about the screens is the ability to source the programing and designing within the community. The tradition of making and building has always been an important part to the educational system within LaFayette. If the traditional forms of shop class and vocational schools can be redirected in LaFayette then this allows for design and programing to be a skill that are developed in the public school system.

As economies begin to transition, the requirements for an alternately educated labor force will challenge the traditional educational systems. The ability of educators to teach these new skills pulls students into a world of possibilities. This change allows for LaFayette to challenge the future and to create a work force that is well educated and prepared to attract new employers in the future.

STUDIO H

Studio H is, "an in-school design/build class for 6th-12th grade students. First launched in Bertie County, NC."[1] Studio H took on the challenge of working in a rural community in North Carolina. Through their time there they allowed the students to apply math, science, and creativity through a design based education. The results of their program where amazing. The students became a force for change in the community building and creating structures that provided jobs and opportunities for the inhabitants of the community. The Windsor Super Market (pictured above) created 2 new business and 15 new jobs within the community.[2] These projects demonstrate the positive outcome that can arise from students who are given the tools ad permission to design within their community.

1 "Studio H « Project H." Studio H « Project H. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 May 2015.

2 ibid.

CIVIC GROVE

The final design test attempts to re-align the political spaces that are at the core of LaFayette, and reclaim them for social and civic uses. The political structure and function of the court house dominates the downtown of LaFayette. The vernacular of this space has resulted in a non-human centered area that attempts to keep individuals moving through the center of town. The historic canopy of downtown has also been removed. The removal of canopy has resulted in a landscape without shade, or spaces that encourage social gathering.

1950

Blanton, Leonard L. LaFayette Heritage (LaFayette, Alabama). LaFayette, AL: L.L. Blanton, 1988. Print.

0   25   75

CITY
HALL

POST

CIVIC
SCREEN

POST GROVE

COURT HOUSE

Alabama Ave E

LIBRARY

The places selected to establish groves play important roles in the everyday life of the community. The post office and city hall have large numbers of inhabitants that arrive there daily. The groves attempt to give a physical presence to these places that create a specific scope and scale, in hopes to increase the time spent lingering while greeting neighbors and saying hello.

The re-establishment of canopy, also, facilitates one of the more important celebrations that happens in LaFayette every year. LaFayette Days is a community festival that occurs in April

CIVIC SCREEN
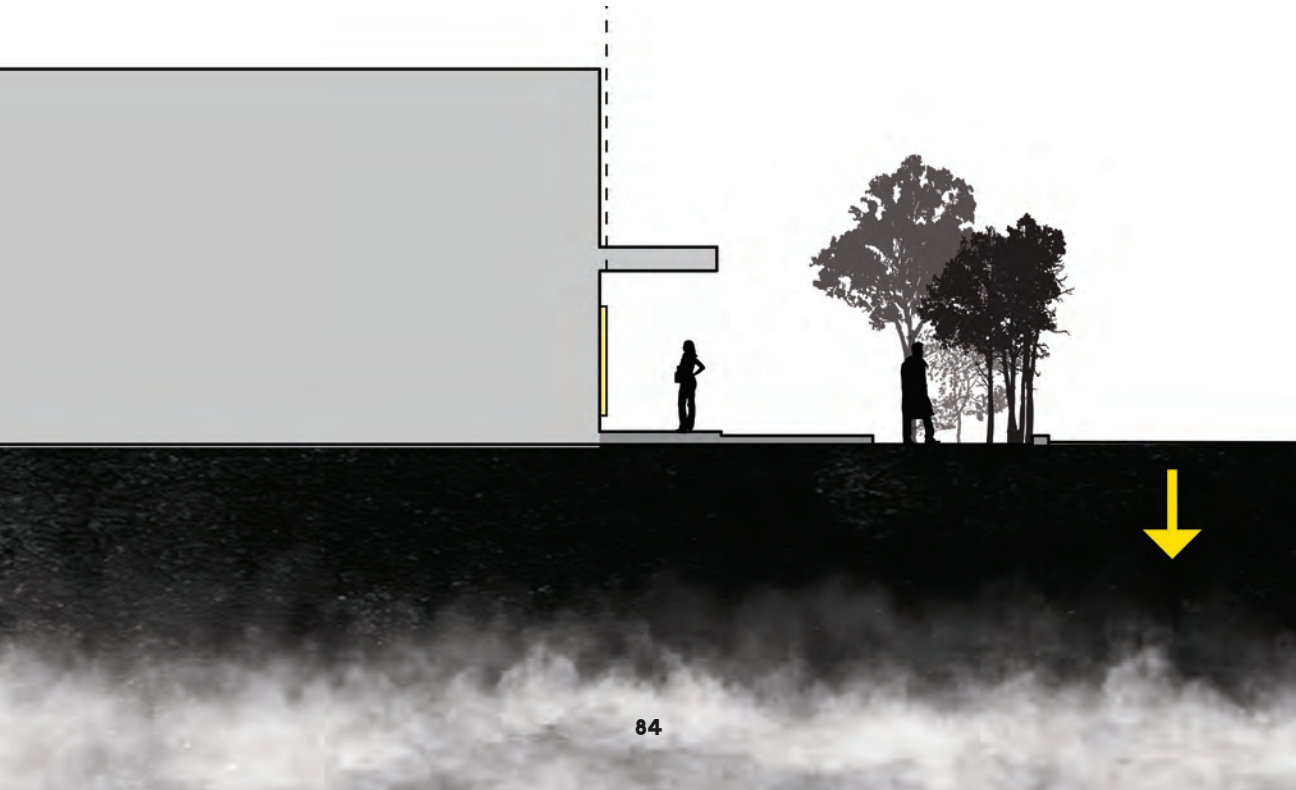
every year. This festival is held down town and wraps from the north side of the courthouse all the way past the library. The festival is an important spring event in the community which allows for every demographic to gather together and celebrate a shared identity. Vendors from the community fill the streets with the smell of cooking sausage sand barbecue. The stage fills downtown with the sounds of country and gospel. This act of celebration become important to the formation of community and maintenance of community spirit. "In small towns, this meaning of community spirit is perhaps most easily seen in the

ALABAMA AVE.

LAFAYETTE GROVE

expectation that a good member of the community will contribute time and energy to the collective well-being by, say, participating in community projects or at least being self-sufficient so as not to burden the community."[1] LaFayette Days also allows for a very formal ritual that helps define the community and its members through the entire process of arranging a festival, singing shared songs, and celebrating local heros.

The groves will be planted and installed by volunteers. This process allows for further community investment and activation. Because trees will be installed by volunteers they will be planted as whips to save money for the larger planting schemes. Because of this the trees will be staked with colorful stakes that will create figure in the landscape as the trees grow and develop. The stakes also allow for a distinction to occur between the increasing feral transition happening other places in the town.

As the groves develop they create social spaces for the expansion of festival activities. The canopy of the trees create gathering spaces, and shelter from the . The sense of security and enclosure that they provide is important to the continued success of LaFayette Days.

1 Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. pg. 358.

TREE STAKES BY D.I.R.T. STUDIO

Images Credit David Hill

That as the grove is paired with a painting scheme that celebrate the physical and spatial characteristics of Lafayette Days it serves to act as the visual reminder of the temporal act of ritual and celebration that brings the community together.

VIEW OF LAFAYETTE DAYS WITH INSTALLED GROVE AND STAKES.

VIEW OF LAFAYETTE DAYS
STAGE WITH SUPPORTING
RAISED BEDS AND PAINTING
SCHEME.

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS

The changes that are happening within LaFayette present challenging opportunities for the landscape architect .The vernacular landscape is strongly ingrained in the community, and if these designs are to be implemented there would need to be a strong relationship between the landscape architect and the citizens of the community. This relationship is contradictory to the traditional relationship between the design profession and clients. Studio H is a well known organizations that has attempted to work continually within the small town environment. They moved out of North Carolina and back to Berkley. The reality of the condition on the ground is not one that should be taken lightly by those who are charged with designing within these feral towns.

The ability to work within static political structures and social conditions will challenge the perseverance of those who are working to change the perception and in design standards within these communities.

These design tests when presented to the community have to be accepted by the inhabitants of the place. There is no possibility of developing a space or concept within these feral towns that does not have community buy in.

Issues that have arisen from this study of feral towns is the replicability of design implementations to other towns. Though this seems like a highly plausible option, caution should be used because the identity of a small town is something personal to a specific set of physical conditions, as well as historical understandings. Though a communities understanding of history and location are bound to change it is still unique to that specific condition. The way a designer approaches these conditions can be repeated based upon location. It is important for within these feral cities to leverage the past to create a new way of understanding the present and future. This importance is what challenges the large brush strokes that the profession currently understands small towns through.

The idea of the feral city is a concept that is still relatively young, and has not been explored at a larger scale than the scope of LaFayette. I hope to begin to explore the effects of feral landscapes in weak urbanism, and how landscape architecture can

begin to understand this process on multiple scales. The ability to take on multiple scales of understanding is one that the profession of landscape architecture is prepared to understand, and as the culture of shrinking towns and cities becomes more open to the feral conditions with it they will demand designers who understand and are prepared to work within these specific processes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Alabama City Populations, 2010-2013." Tableau Software. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.

---. Tableau Software. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Nov. 2014.

"Bibliography." N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Mar. 2015.
bkirby@al.com, Brendan Kirby |. "New Census Data Show Fastest-Growing Cities in Expanding Metro Areas; Search Your City." AL.com. N.p., 22 May 2014. Web. 2 May 2015.

---. "New Census Estimates Show Continuation of Alabama's Population Haves and Have-Nots." AL.com. N.p., 27 Mar. 2014. Web. 16 Mar. 2015.

Blanton, Leonard L. LaFayette Heritage. L.L. Blanton, 1988. Print.

---. LaFayette Heritage (LaFayette, Alabama). LaFayette, AL: L.L. Blanton, 1988. Print.

Calvino, Italo. Invisible Cities. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978. Print.

"Column: A Free Ride on the Bus » The LaFayette Sun." N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

"County Schools Will Get New Buses » The LaFayette Sun." N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

Delken, Ellis. "Happiness in Shrinking Cities in Germany." Journal of Happiness Studies 9.2 (2008): 213–218. EBSCOhost. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

Deresiewicz, William. "The Entrepreneurial Generation." The New York Times 12 Nov. 2011. NYTimes.com. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.

Desimini, Jill. "From Planned Shrinkage to Formerly Urban: Staking Landscape

Architecture's Claim in the Shrinking City Debate." Landscape Journal 33.1 (2014): 17–35. Print.

Frey, William H. "A Population Slowdown for Small Town America." The Brookings Institution. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Jan. 2015.

Griner, David. "Another Subway Ad Blows a Woman's Hair Around as Trains Arrive, but There's a Twist." AdWeek. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Dec. 2014.

How Design Sparks Rural Development. N.p., 2014. Film.

"How Does Urban Planning Impact Our Health? A..." IF YOU BUILD IT. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.

Insights with Robert Wuthnow. N.p. Film.

Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. Discovering the Vernacular Landscape. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. Print.

---. Discovering the Vernacular Landscape. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. Print.

Johnstone, Lesley, and Québec) International Garden Festival (Grand-Métis. Hybrids: Reshaping the Contemporary Garden in Métis. Vancouver: Blueimprint, 2007. Print.

Incorporated Towns, and One with Population Zero (Odd Travels with Gallery)." AL.com. N.p., 29 May 2013. Web. 16 Jan. 2015.

Krohe, James Jr. "The Incredible Shrinking City: Places Are Trying to Make Smaller Better, but It Isn't Easy." Planning 77.9 (2011): 10–15. Print.

"A World With 11 Billion People? New Population Projections Shatter Earlier Estimates." National Geographic News. N.p., n.d. Web. 25 Apr. 2015.

"laFayette." Social Explorer. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 May 2015.

"Le Laboratoire Cambridge |." Le Laboratoire Cambridge | Art and Design Center. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Mar. 2015.

Liebmann, Heike, and Thomas Kuder. "Pathways and Strategies of Urban Regeneration—Deindustrialized Cities in Eastern Germany." European Planning Studies 20.7 (2012): 1155–1172. EBSCOhost. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

"Mapping Legacy Cities." N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

Rewriting the Rural Narrative. N.p., 2014. Film.

"Rural and Proud." Blog. N.p., 24 Oct. 2014. Web.

Ryan, Brent D. Design After Decline: How America Rebuilds Shrinking Cities. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. Print.

Schilling, Joseph, and Jonathan Logan. "Greening the Rust Belt: A Green Infrastructure Model for Right Sizing America's Shrinking Cities." Journal of the American Planning Association 74.4 (2008): 451–466. EBSCOhost. Web. 3 Mar. 2014.

"School Busses » Search Results » The LaFayette Sun." N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

"Stalking Detroit." Scribd. N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Sept. 2014.

"The Racial Dot Map: One Dot Per Person for the Entire U.S." N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Feb. 2015.

"The Third Landscape." domusweb.it. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.

The Website Services & Coordination Staff, US Census Bureau. "Before and After 1940: Change in Population Density." U.S. Census. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.

---. "Population Change by Decade, 1910-2010." N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2014.

"This Place Matters." THE BITTER SOUTHERNER. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Jan. 2015

.
US Census Bureau, Data Integration Division. "Small Area Income & Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Main Page." N.p., n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2015.

"USDA Economic Research Service - Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America." N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Apr. 2015.

"USDA Economic Research Service - Go to the Atlas." N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.
---. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.
---. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.

Walker, Chris. "Restless America: State-to-State Migration in 2012." vizynary. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Jan. 2015.

Woodward, Joan. "Feral Landscape: Lessons in Resilience." Landscape Review 9.1 (2004): 12. Print.
---. "Letting Los Angeles Go: Lessons from Feral Landscapes." Landscape Review 9.2 (2004): 59 –69. Print.
.
Wuthnow, Robert. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton University Press, 2013. Print.

---. Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013. Print.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS