

US 521 / SC 9 Corridor Study *Moving Forward*

Place-Making

Chapter 5



Place-making embodies the movement to create more livable communities, identifiable character, and a higher quality of life through quality design and planning. The process of place-making celebrates the uniqueness of a community and connects the social fabric of those who live, work, and visit in an area. Given the sheer expanse of the study area, place-making principles are discussed at a broad scale. Recommendations offered in this chapter provide a preliminary strategy for initiating place-making in the study area. The five main place-making principles discussed in this chapter include gateways, wayfinding, branding and image, community design, and signage.

Guiding Principles

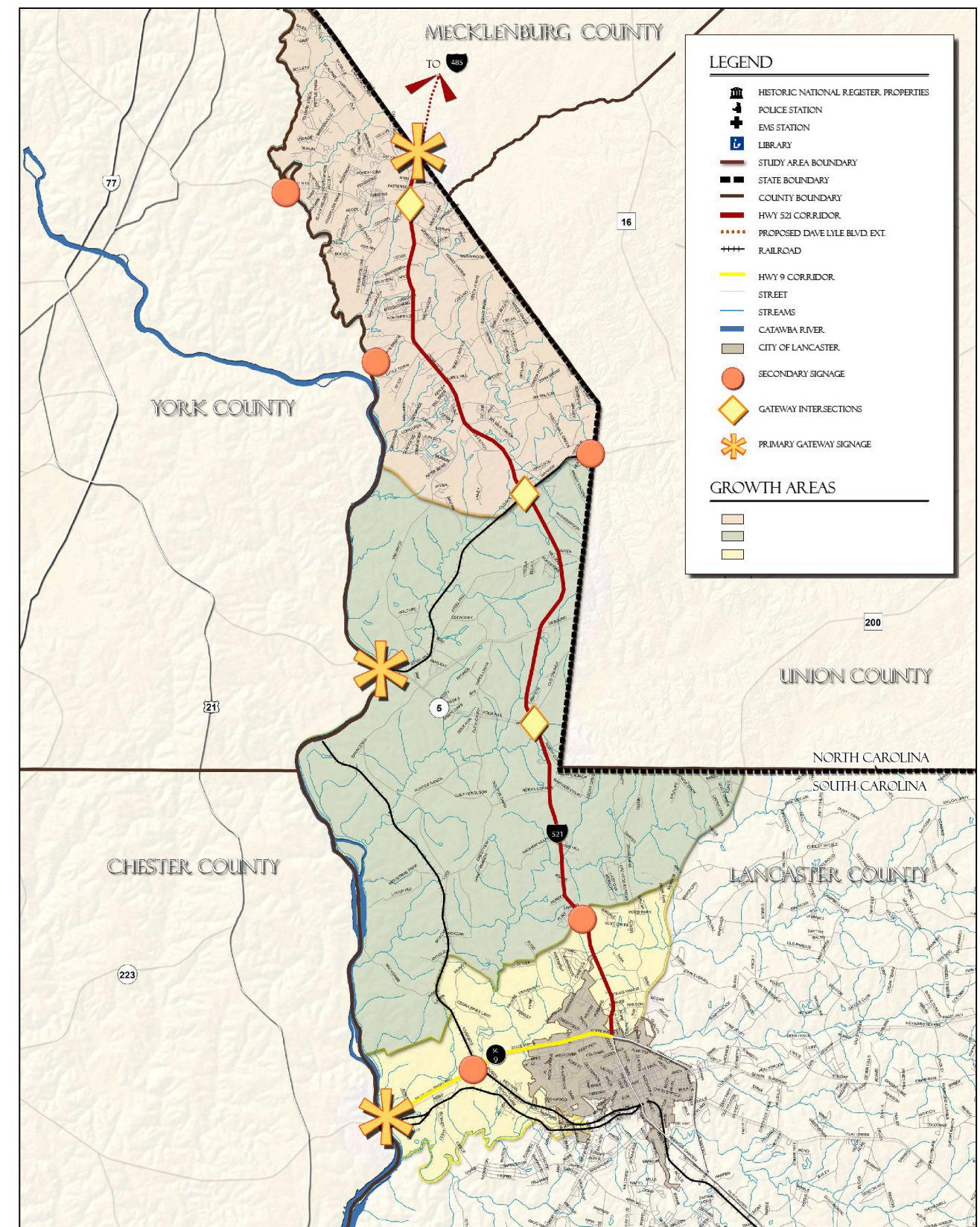
The consultant team, through collaboration with the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), stakeholder interviews, and feedback received from the public in the form of a questionnaire and input at public work sessions and community events, created a set of guiding principles for creating a sense of place in the study area. These principles are designed to enhance quality of life, protect community character, encourage quality design, and create livable places for community residents.

- Develop a gateway series that improves key entrances into the County, enhances main intersections, and distinguishes unique sub districts in the study area.
- Develop a wayfinding system that orients people to the study area and enhances their ability to navigate to desired destinations within the study area.
- Detail the process for creation of a uniform brand identity for Lancaster County.
- Explore ways to integrate building architecture and overall site design with anticipated market forces and the needs of the surrounding environment.
- Amend sign regulations to reflect community preferences for type, mass, materials, and design.

Gateways

One of the first ways to establish a defined character for an area is to announce that one has entered a place that is different and new. This is often accomplished with gateway treatments. Gateways help distinguish an area from neighboring communities by identifying boundaries and sub districts within a community. As part of this study, the consultant team conducted an assessment of the gateways in the study area and made recommendations for their improvement (see Gateway Location Map). The assessment considered the following four types of community gateways: primary gateways, secondary gateways, gateway intersections, and district gateways.

Gateway Location Map



Primary Gateways Assessment

Primary gateways are the main entryways into Lancaster County. They are generally the most traveled routes with the highest traffic counts. Three primary gateways were identified in the study area: US 521 at the state line, SC 9 at the Chester County line, and SC 5 at the York County line (see the Gateway Locations Map).

US 521 at the state line

- Location: This gateway is located at the northern limits of the study area. It extends south to SC 160 and includes Carolina Crossing and the 521 Business Park. It serves as the main gateway into the Indian Land portion of the study area.
- Traffic volume: 32,200 vehicles per day (highest traffic volume in the corridor)
- Observations: Although developed, this portion of the corridor is still predominantly “green” with large stands of trees and landscaped medians. Currently, existing signage is limited except for a small green Lancaster County sign, a small blue “Welcome to South Carolina” sign, and a small green Indian Land sign. A Wal-Mart is being constructed at the northern limits of Lancaster County, which will have a significant impact on the gateway from both a traffic and aesthetic standpoint.



SC 9 at the Chester County Line

- Location: This gateway is located on SC 9 at the Chester County line and extends from the County Line to the Lancaster City Limits.
- Traffic volume: 11,100 vehicles per day
- Observations: This gateway is characterized by the large bridge over the Catawba River separating Lancaster and Chester Counties. The corridor exists as a green, open roadway, with industrial uses set back and well buffered from the road. There is a large monument “Welcome to Lancaster” gateway sign. The sign is well placed, is an appropriate scale, and is easy to read. It has limited graphics and introduces the “Proud and Progressive” tag line.



SC 5 at the York County Line



- Location: This gateway is located on SC 5 at the York County line and extends from the Catawba River to the intersection of SC 5 and US 521. This corridor is the primary route from Rock Hill into the study area.
- Traffic volume: approximately 8,200 vehicles per day
- Observations: The approach to US 521 is a green, rural two-lane road with limited development. A large monument sign similar to that at SC 9 announces the gateway into Lancaster County. Graphics are similar, but this sign introduces the “See Lancaster” tag line. A large concrete bridge and train trestle over the Catawba River separates Lancaster and York Counties. The road into Lancaster is a narrow, two-lane road with limited view sheds to the river.

Secondary Gateways Assessment

Secondary gateways are the secondary entryways into the County. They are generally secondary thoroughfares with lower traffic counts. Secondary gateways in the study area include US 521 into the City of Lancaster, SC 160 at the York County line, SC 9 at the City of Lancaster, SC 75 from Union County, NC.

US 521 into the City of Lancaster



- Location: This gateway is located at the intersection of US 521 and Hubbard Drive.
- Traffic volume: 18,200 vehicles per day near gateway.
- Observations: Gateway treatments for this gateway are within the municipal limits and are the responsibility of the City of Lancaster. It includes a well designed brick monument sign with the Lancaster brand and significant landscaping. The gateway feature is in need of maintenance and currently gets lost in the more urban environment.

SC 160 at the York County Line



- Location: This gateway is located at a bridge over Sugar Creek separating York and Lancaster Counties.
- Traffic volume: approximately 12,900 vehicles per day.
- Observations: The gateway treatment is simple and includes green Lancaster County and Indian Land signs. The approach to US 521 is characterized by a hodgepodge of commercial uses leading to a business park area, and ultimately the intersection with US 521.

SC 9 into the City of Lancaster



- Location: This gateway is located at the municipal limits of the City of Lancaster on SC 9.
- Traffic volume: 12,600 vehicles per day near gateway.
- Observations: Gateway treatments for this gateway are within the municipal limits and are the responsibility of the City of Lancaster. The gateway is a well designed metal sign with the Lancaster Brand and graphics. The backdrop of development makes the sign difficult to see.

SC 75 from Union County, NC



- Location: This gateway is located at the state line separating Lancaster County from Union County, NC.
- Traffic volume: approximately 4,900 vehicles per day
- Observations: The character of the area is rural in nature. Existing signage is very simple and includes a green Lancaster County sign and a blue Welcome to South Carolina sign.

Gateway Intersections

In addition to the Primary and Secondary gateways, there are strategic intersections that because of the location and traffic volumes and may present opportunities to establish a brand or design theme for the area. These are at prominent locations in the community and include:

- US 521 at SC 160
- US Hwy 521 at SC 5
- US 521 at SC 75

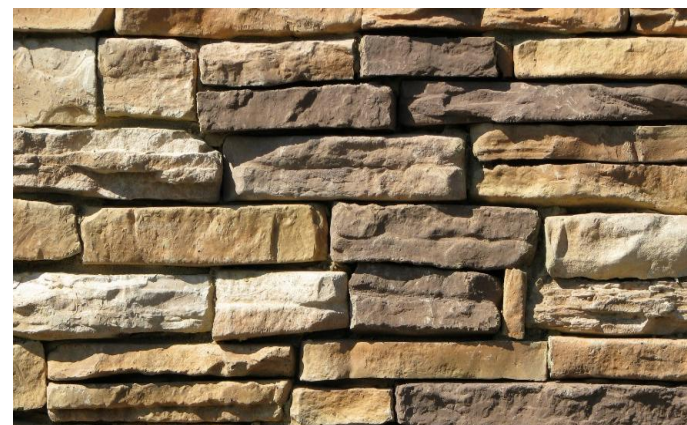
District Gateways

District gateways serve as a transition between different sub districts in a jurisdiction. Within Lancaster County there are areas, or sub districts, that have unique identities and individual identifiable characteristics. Elements and characteristics in these districts, if enhanced, can further help to differentiate and define unique places within the study area. During this study, four possible districts were identified including Indian Land, Central Rural Core, Urban Core, and the SC 9 Business Corridor (see Gateway Locations Map). Further study may determine additional sub districts are warranted, such as Van Wyck.

Indian Land

This sub district begins at the State Line on US 521 and extends south to Twelve Mile Creek.

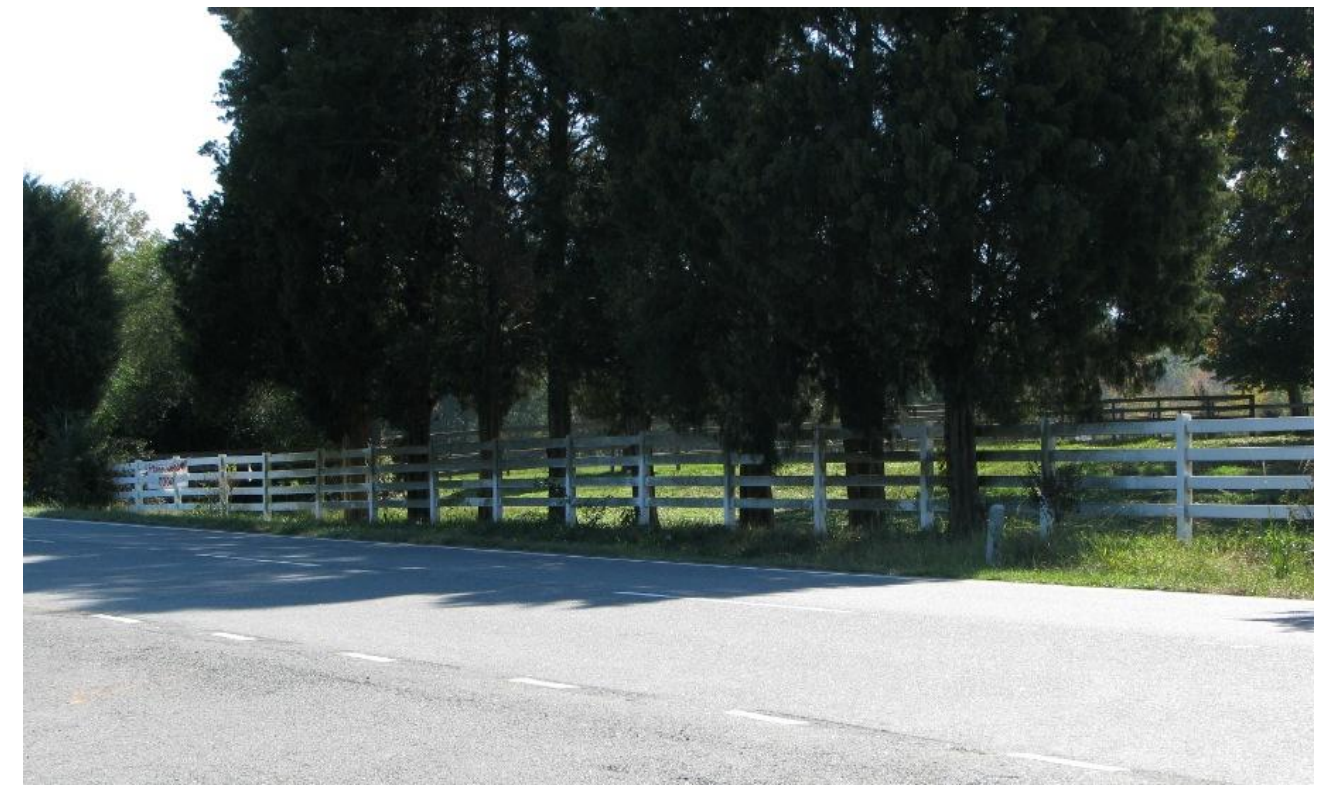
- The district is developed and growing both commercially and residentially.
- It has its own identity and name, reflected in the name of schools and other destinations in the area. The area is currently identified by small green “Indian Land” signs at each of its entrances.
- Existing character elements include stacked stone signage and entries into private sector residential and commercial developments. There is a consistency to many of the private sector gateways and signage.
- Elements such as stacked stone signage, district banners, and manicured landscaped medians and public and private spaces can further enhance the character of the district.



Indian Land Median Landscaping and Stacked Stone Precedent

Central Rural Core

- This is the largest sub district in terms of area, extending from Twelve Mile Creek south to Cane Creek.
- The district is rural in nature, and is characterized by natural green elements, horse farms, post and rail fencing, and Andrew Jackson State Park.
- Natural vegetation such as wildflowers, low grasses, and trees should continue to define the district. Where appropriate, district signage or post and rail fencing can also be incorporated. The district also includes water towers that could be painted to identify the area as a unique district.
- The Van Wyck Community lies at the heart of this rural district, and has its own unique identity. Van Wyck could be separated from the Central Rural Core as its own district.
- During public work sessions, this area was referred to as the “Garden of Waxhaws.” The County should consider the merits of this name when developing identities for each district.



Urban Core

- This sub district represents the City of Lancaster generally, but begins around Shiloh Unity Road, continuing to the bypass and into town.
- The district is a small town urban environment, and is initially identified by development that is suburban in nature.
- The character of this district would be the responsibility of the City, which has implemented its own unique brand and wayfinding system.



SC 9 Business Corridor

- This sub district begins at the City of Lancaster limits on SC 9, and extends to the Catawba River and Chester County.
- It is a business and employment district that is characterized by green landscaping buffering adjacent industrial uses.
- The character can be enhanced with continued green buffering, as well as improved signage in both the public and private sector. Banners can be incorporated to identify the area as a unique business district.



Gateway Recommendations

After conducting an assessment of the gateways in the study area, the consultant team offers the following recommendations for their improvement:

Primary Gateways

US 521 at State Line



- Create a significant monument gateway sign and landscaped area announcing entrance into the County. Lancaster County should be the primary focus of the graphics of the gateway signage.
- Secondary signage should identify the area as Indian Land. This could be with post and panel gateway signage between the State Line and SC 160, as well as with banners mounted along the gateway corridor.
- The character of the gateway corridor from the state line to SC 160 should include green buffers whenever possible, as well as low-maintenance landscaped medians. The monument gateway sign as well as private sector signage can incorporate stacked stone as a key character identifying design element.

SC 9 at Chester County Line

- The existing monument sign is well placed and easily seen. New gateway signage should be similar in composition, but incorporate a unique Lancaster County brand identity. Rather than the existing columned sign, the new sign could have a concrete or stone design composition that reflects the corporate nature of this business corridor.
- Existing private signage along the corridor should also be improved, particularly the signage for the airport which is need of maintenance. Future private sector signage should have a consistency in size, type (monument), and landscaping.
- The green buffers along the extents of this business corridor should be continued.



SC 9 Gateway: Unimproved image



SC 9 Gateway: Improved images

SC 5 at York County Line

- The monument signage should be made more visible by clearing vegetation in front of and around the sign. Similarly, the guardrail blocks the existing signage, so a new gateway sign may need to be raised.
- The monument sign can be redesigned to incorporate a natural stone material and simple landscaping.
- The character of the gateway corridor should be protected as a green corridor with natural buffers between the road and new development. Also, the existing concrete business located just into Lancaster County should be screened from the road, including the concrete “fence”.

Secondary Gateways

US 521 at Lancaster City Limits (responsibility of City)

- This gateway represents the transition from the rural corridor into a more urban corridor located within the City of Lancaster.
- The existing gateway signage needs landscaping maintenance.
- Lancaster County can cooperate with the City to incorporate directional trailblazer signage to USC-Lancaster, downtown, County Offices, etc.

SC 160 at York County Line

- Gateway signage just into Lancaster County at Sugar Creek Bridge should be simple. Use a post and panel gateway sign to announce entrance into Lancaster County. A smaller, secondary Indian land sign can also be used.
- On the approach to the business parks and US 521, vehicular trailblazer signs should be used.
- The gateway corridor needs appearance enhancements including private sector landscaping and signage.

SC 9 at Lancaster City Limits (responsibility of City)

- Improved landscaping is needed including a contrasting backdrop to the existing sign.
- Lancaster County can cooperate with the City to incorporate directional trailblazer signage to downtown, County Offices, etc.

SC 75 at Union County (NC) Line

- This road currently has the lowest traffic counts of any other entryways into Lancaster County, and the gateway treatment can reflect this.
- Ultimately, signage can be very simple with branded, post and panel Lancaster County gateway signage with a secondary “Welcome to SC” sign.

Gateway Intersections

US 521 at intersection with SC 160

- This is the primary intersection north of the City of Lancaster and essentially represents “downtown” Indian Land. It is also the southern extent of the primary gateway corridor into Lancaster County from North Carolina.

- The design of this intersection is currently set through private sector development and public sector road improvements. However, the existing intersection can be improved through simple landscape enhancements.
- Signage would include unique Indian Land banners as well as branded, trailblazer signs that are part of the comprehensive Lancaster County wayfinding program.

US 521 at intersection with SC 5



- Enhance medians on SC 5 in a manner similar to US 521 at the same intersection. Use low-maintenance, natural landscaping to highlight the rural nature of this portion of the corridor.
- Consolidate or eliminate directional signage on SC 5 at the intersection. Use primary trailblazer signs at each of the three entries into the intersection.
- The rural character of the intersection can be enhanced by incorporating natural vegetation such as low grasses and wild flowers. Rural design elements such as post & rail or split-rail fencing can be incorporated into the medians.

US 521 at intersection with SC 75

- This intersection receives very little traffic from 75, and signage enhancements can be limited to a simple branded trailblazer sign.
- If Dave Lyle Boulevard is extended, this new gateway intersection will be very important and need a significant treatment.

District Gateways

Create unifying themes for each sub district and enhance each sub district’s urban design elements to further differentiate and define each area.

Wayfinding

Wayfinding orients people to the area while also directing them to various civic, cultural, and public uses within the community. Comprehensive wayfinding systems enhance places with attractive, easy to read signage that directs people through the community in an efficient and safe manner.

The current signage system in the County is limited. Outside of the two monument style “Welcome to Lancaster” signs, the County has no signage or wayfinding strategy. The City of Lancaster has successfully implemented early phases of a branded wayfinding system with primary and secondary gateways and vehicular trailblazers. Remnants of past signage still exist in places, and some of the newer signage is in need of maintenance. Highway signage is also limited, and existing NC and SC state line signage is understated. Private sector signage ranges from typical suburban treatments to more significant architectural compositions.

Lancaster County should consider creating a comprehensive wayfinding strategy that includes primary and secondary gateways, vehicular trailblazers, district gateway signage, banners, destination markers, and other directional signage. The plan should:

- Identify all destinations within Lancaster County, including those within the study area.
- Rank destinations as primary or secondary, categorizing them by type (cultural, governmental, recreation, etc) and location (northern panhandle, central Lancaster, southern Lancaster County).
- Map all of the key transportation routes and circulation patterns that lead to the highest-ranking destinations. Not all destinations would warrant directional signage.
- Incorporate a unique and unified brand identity for Lancaster County.
- Create a sign schedule showing design, content, and location for all wayfinding signage. The sign schedule would have accompanying measured construction drawings.
- Inventory older existing signs in need of removal.

Wayfinding plans can be capital intensive in their implementation, and are therefore often implemented in phases over multiple funding years.



Example of Comprehensive Wayfinding System for Hinesville, GA

Branding & Image

The identity of a community comes from its environment, tradition, and culture. A branding of that identity represents the pride of community members, and a promise made to visitors for what to expect when they arrive. In its simplest terms, the brand distinguishes a community in the marketplace. It must be apparent in every facet of the community, including its scenic views, natural areas, gateway signage, building architecture, and overall site design.

A “brand” is not simply a logo, but rather a graphic identity with a unique style, theme, palette, typography, and overall message that is applied to a broader system positioning the community as a special place. A brand system generally begins with a graphic logo composition and style set, including a community tag line and brand statement.



The brand imagery is then applied to various marketing concepts and strategies that often include logo variations, brand extension, and other collateral such as wayfinding signage, website concepts, brochure concepts, print advertisements, etc. The goal is to create a seamless marketing package for the community that can be implemented over time.

Although there are several agencies marketing the community in some capacity, there is no uniform branding strategy in place. Each agency has its own unique identity, message, and logo. Although it is important for each agency to get its individual message across, organizations should be connected graphically or through the messages they project and should coordinate efforts and partnerships. Agencies likely have difficulties making these connections because the County has no unique identity of its own.

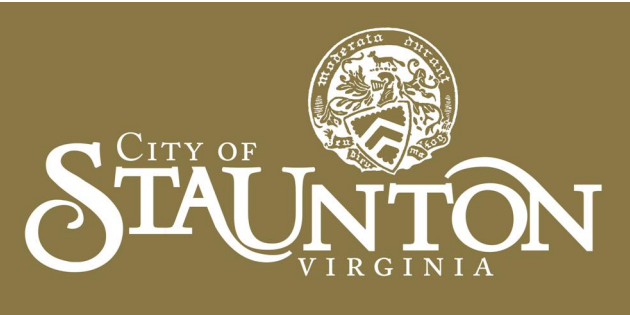
Brand System and Marketing Collateral for Marion, SC



Lancaster County should consider creating a uniform brand identity for the County. Currently, Lancaster County has a graphic logo that is used for the official business of the government. Partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and “See Lancaster,” the County should create a uniform marketing identity and apply it to a seamless package for the community. Similar to this corridor study, the plan should include a high level of public input, with the end result being the creation of a graphic identity that conveys the unique character of Lancaster County. The brand would include a logo, tagline and brand statement. This would be applied to specific marketing strategies and collateral, which would be incorporated into the work plans of the various agencies currently promoting Lancaster County.

The logo on page 5-10 was created for Staunton, Virginia specifically for the purposes of marketing the community. Pronounced “Stanton”, the logo first plays off of the unique spelling of the city’s name. It continues by focusing on the community being known as the “queen city” as well as its unique Victorian architecture. Finally, the tag line relates to the fact that the community is the location of the American Shakespeare Center, but more specifically as a way to position Staunton as a place where visitors and locals alike

can make their own experiences in this unique place. Much like Staunton, it is recommended that Lancaster County should have a dual logo system whereby there is an overall marketing brand, as well as an official brand image for the local government.



City of Staunton, VA logo

Nelson County Virginia extends it’s brand imagery to communities and subdistricts in the County, highlighting them with unique graphics, colors, and banner systems. The brand imagery could be extended to the gateway districts discussed early in this chapter.



Brand Extension in Nelson County, VA

As part of the larger branding and marketing plan for Lancaster County, brand design elements should be extended for use by existing agencies and events (Van Wyck Business Association, Indian Land Area Council, etc.). It is important that each have its own unique identity representing its character and purpose, but a consistency in design elements will create equity in the larger brand.

Brand Extension in Blackstone, VA



Community Design Principles

Quality architecture and supportive site design have the potential to influence the attraction of private investment, the quality of future development, and the value of properties in the area. Stakes are high for communities that do not formulate design principles (and implement subsequent design guidelines). Failure to do so can lead to:

- loss of community identity, tradition, and culture;
- irreversible environmental degradation; and
- drop in the desirability of the area for attracting businesses, homeowners, and visitors to the region.

General recommendations for community design principles were formulated in partnership with the Project Advisory Committee, Planning Staff, and participants at the public workshops.

Design principles presented in *the US 521 /SC 9 Corridor Study* should be considered general recommendations for balancing concerns of environmental stewardship, economic prosperity, and quality of life in the community. General design principles important to the community include: building architecture, site design, signage, and billboards.

Building Architecture



Building architecture is a critical component for quality development. Architectural design standards are intended to promote compatibility within a development and its surrounding environment, allow creativity and diversity of design, protect property values and neighborhood quality, and provide a safe and attractive environment for residents and visitors alike to destinations in the community.

In November 2007, Lancaster County passed an ordinance prohibiting the use of vinyl, tin, metal, and masonry block on the exterior walls of parcels that have frontage on US 521 from the southern right-of-way line of SC 75 northward to the state line or frontage on SC 160 from US 521 westward to the County line.

While this prohibition is a first step, it is recommended that an ordinance review committee be established to develop architectural guidelines for the County. These guidelines should include detail on building material and color, building articulation, rooftop equipment screening, roof articulation, signage, and architectural unity. The County should consider encouraging or requiring character elements identified in each gateway district as described earlier in the chapter.

Site Design

Overall site design is a critical component for quality development. Site design guidelines are intended to promote compatibility within a development and its surrounding environment, allow creativity and diversity of design, protect property values and neighborhood quality, and provide a safe and attractive environment for residents and visitors alike to destinations in the community.

The following elements of site design were identified as important to the community: open space, landscaping, buffers, parking lot design, and tree preservation.

Open Space

Neighborhood open space provides an alternative to publicly designed and managed parks, and has a tendency to boost property values and can serve as a social and recreational focal point for neighborhoods. Neighborhood open space, in the form of pocket parks, mini-parks, and trails/greenways, should be easily accessible by all demographics from surrounding neighborhoods, be centrally located, free from physical barriers, and offer a range of facilities. In addition, they should be accessible for use by the broader public.

Currently, Lancaster County has a 20% minimum usable open space (gross acreage) requirement for Planned District Developments (PDDs). However, there is more than one example of a PDD being constructed in the County where the open space requirement has not been met or the open space dedicated is not usable. No other zoning districts or types of development are subject to open space requirements.

It is recommended that an ordinance review committee be established to develop open space requirements in all residential subdivisions, mixed use neighborhoods, and large employment centers. As parks and recreation budgets decrease and land costs increase, this will help the County provide acceptable levels of service for parkland and respond to increasing demand. Most importantly, whatever requirements are adopted as a result of this process should be enforced during the development approval process and site construction.



Landscaping

Landscaping improves the quality of the environment, helps maintain an aesthetically appealing community character, reduces topsoil erosion and storm water runoff, and minimizes the negative impacts of traffic and parking lots.

Landscaping requirements, including buffer yards and street yards, are found in the County's Landscaping Ordinance. The requirements, as written, are thorough especially in PDDs. However, the landscaping requirements are not consistently applied, resulting in some developments being more attractive than others.

Buffers

The intent of buffers is to create a screen, which minimizes nuisances, reduces the visual impacts of adjacent development, provides for the separation of spaces, and establishes a sense of privacy.



Vegetative buffers can have a natural or formal look.



Buffering between adjacent lots or uses

When adjacent uses are non-compatible or when disconnects in scale exist, buffering between adjacent lots or uses can minimize conflicts between abutting developments and establish a greater sense of privacy from visual and physical intrusions.

Buffering along US 521

Buffering along major roads, like US 521, preserves green space, beautifies the public way, and prevents commercial and industrial development from spoiling the scenery for people traveling the corridor. Additionally, it reserves critical space for future improvements such as road widenings or streetscape projects.

Buffer yard and street yard requirements are found in the County's Landscaping Ordinance.

As the County contemplates changes to existing codes, increased buffer yards in Growth Area Two should be considered. This may be accomplished through an overlay district or as a part of future planned development processes. The increased buffer yard will protect and promote the unique identity and character of the area while still allowing for future development to occur. See Focus Area D in the Focus Area Chapter for an example.

Parking Lot Design



Off-street parking plays an important role in the efficiency of the overall transportation system. To be efficient and maintain attractiveness of destinations, the transportation system must include adequate parking facilities. Properly designed parking lots can also provide screening, reduce storm water runoff, and provide shade.

Parking standards are found in the County's Parking Ordinance.

As the County contemplates changes to existing codes, it should evaluate the rats and design of parking with an emphasis on safe pedestrian accommodations, landscaping, and site circulation.

Tree Preservation

Tree preservation also improves the environmental and aesthetic quality of the study area and contributes to overall community character. Participants in the planning process expressed a strong desire to transform the US 521 corridor into a tree-lined gateway and to prevent the clear-cutting of trees on portions of new development sites.

The County has minimal requirements for retention and protection of large trees and protection of trees during construction within their landscaping ordinance.

It is recommended that an ordinance review committee be established to consider the merits of developing a tree protection ordinance. The ordinance should strive to protect the tree canopy along US 521 in Growth Area 2 (see Study Area Map) through a street tree requirement and where possible, re-establish the tree canopy in Growth Areas 1 and 3 with native species. During the development of the ordinance, the committee should also identify large stands of mature trees for preservation. Finally, the ordinance should strengthen requirements for protection of existing trees during construction.



Signage

Signage is a critical component of the economic and business climate. Signage helps identify, advertise, and communicate a place of business and is a primary tool used by business owners to attract customers. However, too much signage, signage that is too tall or large, or signage that is poorly located can detract from the visual appearance of an area, diminishing the message of each sign, increasing visual clutter, distractions, and obstructions to pedestrians and auto traffic.

Currently, the Lancaster County sign ordinance prohibits off-premise signs and has requirements for shopping center signage, outparcel signs, and business, office, and industrial park identification signs. No option or requirement exists for developing common sign packages. Additionally, the Board of Zoning Appeals has been increasingly approached by developers to obtain variances from existing sign regulations to allow an increase in allowable sign square footage for commercial properties. In all instances, these requests have been granted.

It is recommended that an ordinance review committee comprised of residents and business owners be established to review and amend sign regulations. This committee should be charged with ensuring design standards are in place that encompass preferences of the community for sign type, mass, materials, and overall design and that signs complement desired building mass and materials. The ordinance should also require multi-tenant centers to develop a common sign package that requires consistency among all signs in regard to sign size, location(s), color scheme, lettering or graphic style, lighting, and sign proportions. Most importantly, whatever standards are adopted as a result of this process should be upheld during the development approval process.

Billboards

Billboards proliferate because advertisers find them effective; advertisers spend \$5.5 billion per year on billboards, adding 5,000 to 15,000 new ones in the process (WiseGEEK.com, 2008).

Since their beginning, billboards have used catchy, simple slogans and striking images to gain the attention of drivers as they travel along highways, interstates, and busy downtown streets. Advertisers know they have mere seconds to capture attention, making the design task for this medium tricky. Technologies used for billboard advertising have advanced significantly over the years, and now include three-dimensional advertisements, hanging advertisements with multiple messages, and digital messaging. As technology advances, so do billboard techniques; some companies are experimenting with interactive and holographic billboards.



Billboards, like other types of signs, attract customers and direct them to their businesses. While the value to advertisers is understood, poor design and excessive numbers can diminish the message of each billboard and contributes to visual clutter in the area.

There are currently 12 billboards found in the study area, eight along US 521 and four along SC 9. Currently, the County allows billboards (outdoor advertising signs) in I-1 and I-2 zoning districts. The regulations include requirements for maximum surface area, height, distancing requirements, and setbacks.

A recent billboard application has brought the issue to the forefront of local debate. Residents and County Council have realized that the study area is becoming increasingly attractive to advertisers. Although billboards are not currently allowed along most of US 521 because of zoning designation, there is a strong likelihood that County Council will face additional requests to amend the ordinance in the future. County Council has placed a moratorium on the installation of new billboards until this study is complete.

Participants in the planning process felt strongly that billboards should be prohibited. Because billboards detract from the visual appearance of an area and would diminish other place-making efforts illustrated in this chapter, it is recommended that no additional billboards be constructed in the study area (especially along the US 521 and SC 9 corridors).

County Council could accomplish this through one or a combination of the following:



- Prohibit the construction of billboards Countywide.
- Allow the construction of billboards with restrictions (allowed in certain zoning districts if spacing, setback, surface area, and height requirements are met).
- Establish an overlay district(s) along US 521 and/or SC 9 that prohibits the construction of billboards (along with other strengthened design requirements).
- County Council should also consider the merits of amending the UDO to amortize existing billboards in the County.

Before a decision is made, it is strongly recommended that County Council establish an ordinance review committee and/or host a series of focus group meetings where stakeholders can voice their opinion on the issue.

Implementation Strategies

The following strategies could be implemented by County Council to improve site design in the study area:

- Amend/Update the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).
- Establish an ordinance review committee(s) to review and discuss existing site design guidelines and regulations. Amend/Update the UDO when necessary.
- Establish an overlay district(s) along US 521 and/or SC 9 that includes strengthened design requirements.

Summary of Recommendations

Gateways

1. Create recognizable entrances to the study area to distinguish it from adjacent jurisdictions.

Improve primary gateways, secondary gateways, and gateways intersections indicated on the Gateway Locations Map. Improvements to these gateways should be consistent with recommendations set forth in the Place-Making Chapter.

Wayfinding

2. Enhance visitors’ and locals’ ability to navigate to desired destinations within the study area.

Lancaster County should complete a comprehensive wayfinding plan that includes gateway treatments and directional signage for the following: primary and secondary gateways, vehicular trailblazers, district gateways,

banners, and destination markers. The plan should include a sign schedule showing design, content, and location of all wayfinding signage. All wayfinding should incorporate a unique and unified brand identity for Lancaster County.

3. Create a coordinated directional signage system throughout the study area.

Lancaster County should adopt a signage plan that identifies all area destinations. Destinations should be ranked by type (cultural, governmental, etc) and location (panhandle, central Lancaster, southern Lancaster County). The plan should include strategies for installing these signs throughout the study area over time.

Branding & Image

4. Create a uniform brand identity for the County.

- Lancaster County should establish a uniform brand identity that includes the creation of a graphic identity, a logo, tagline, and brand statement. The brand should be applied to specific marketing strategies and collateral, which would be incorporated into the work plans of various agencies currently promoting Lancaster County. The development of the plan should include a high level of public input.
- Develop brand identities for unique districts throughout the study area. These identities should reflect the umbrella brand identity for the County. Districts to consider include Indian Land, Van Wyck, the SC 9 business corridor, and the central rural portion of the study area. In addition to a unique brand, these areas should have distinct design elements such as materials, banners, and landscaping. These elements should be accomplished through both public sector improvements and private sector design.
- Extend the brand to other agencies, destinations, and events. Each agency, destination, and event should have its own unique identity that represents its character and purpose, but it should be consistent with and complement the larger brand.

Community Design Principles

5. Ensure design standards are in place that encompass preferences of the community for sign type, mass, materials, and overall design.

- Consider amending the UDO through a staff, Council, and Planning Board driven amendment process.
- Consider establishing an ordinance review committee(s) to have a public review and discussion of existing regulations relating to site design. Amend/Update the UDO when necessary.
- Consider establishing an overlay district(s) along US 521 and/or SC 9 that includes strengthened site design guidelines.
- Consider prohibiting the construction of additional billboards in the study area through one of the various methods described above.