

community greenways:

integrating trail and town in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania

Michael V. Johnson. Landscape Architecture Undergraduate Thesis. Ball State University. Spring 2004



Abstract

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Many of our communities are deteriorating. The places in which we live are lacking character and commitment to healthy lifestyles. Our lives revolve around a fast-paced society dependant upon the automobile. Luckily, the design solutions for many of these troubling contemporary issues can be found in the greenway design principles introduced by some of the earliest and most well known landscape architects in this country. It is the job of designers to improve the health of our society through quality recreation design, and it is at the community level that a collaborative team of professionals can make the greatest impact on human lives.

This project re-evaluates and re-defines the diverse roles of landscape architects in designing multiple types of greenways as transportation routes, sources of community identity, and places of healing. Greenway design has been implicit to landscape architecture since the inception of the profession over 100 years ago. Frederick Law Olmstead first introduced the term in his master plan for the campus at Cal-Berkley, and through his design for the Emerald Necklace. Olmstead's theories on greenways as healing environments have been improved upon on different levels by Ebenezer Howard's greenbelt plan at the community level, and by Benton MacKaye's conceptual plan for the Appalachian Trail at the regional scale. Contemporary designers have further evolved the greenway ideal in the reclamation of old rail beds for adaptive reuse as pedestrian corridors.

This study applied the historical background and relevant theory on greenway design to a specific "trail town" community in the borough of Meyersdale, Pennsylvania that will serve as a prototype for other similar communities along abandoned rail beds. The plan focuses on an uncompleted piece of the Allegheny Greenway Trail connecting Pittsburgh to Washington D.C., and running through Meyersdale. In addition, the design solution takes into account

recreation and transportation plans for the community and its tourists in order to provide the framework for the beginnings of a healthy community. The master plan will serve as a case study to be applied to similar communities across the country, setting new precedents for greenway design, and inspiring community members to a new appreciation of their own community.

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Acknowledgments

There are a number of people that need to be recognized as important players in the creation of this creative project. Obviously, none of this could be possible without the love and dedication of my parents and family. But I would also like to thank the people of Meyersdale for their willingness to help a young college student live out his dreams through a real-life project. They dealt with some of my crazy ideas, and helped to keep me grounded throughout it all. Now it is up to them to get it built! I cannot go on without also mentioning the support and help I received from numerous professors, including Malcom Cairns, Ron Spangler, and Darren Reno. They helped to keep me on track throughout the process. This project probably would not make much sense without them.

Some of my greatest experiences at this university have come through different charrette experiences with Jim Segedy, Lohern Deeg, Andy Tarcin, and the Community Based Projects organization on campus. It has been especially rewarding to work with small towns across the country, and to be inspired to create great designs in unique places. I have always been attracted to small towns, because I love the feel of community that exists within these towns. I feel as though these small towns are where a difference can be made. I have loved getting to know everyone in the community, sitting down and talking with them, and finding out their issues, because at the end of the day, after I leave, I know they all have a vested interest in the design. Just like in Meyersdale, it is always their town.

The fitness and healthy living aspect of this project is also very important to me. Sometimes I become discouraged with how unhealthy this country has become, but I am re-energized when I go for a run or a bike ride on the Cardinal Greenway in Muncie on a Saturday afternoon, and it is packed with people. It gives me hope that when given the right opportunity, people will attempt to stay fit and interact with nature.

This creative project has united many of these interests though a unique design opportunity dealing with the relationship between a regional greenway and small town in southwestern Pennsylvania. While providing some very interesting challenges, this project also helped to define some of my most important career goals.

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

This project examines greenways in a new light. The plan integrates a greenway into a small town urban environment, creating new opportunities for recreation and development, while maintaining the ecological needs of the region. Building upon the very bold concepts and ideas that already existed for greenways in Pennsylvania, this study expands the idea for greenways to the next level. The borough of Meyersdale is the perfect site for such a study because of its regional connections, and because of its wonderful scenery. But more than anything, it is the perfect site because it has a unique similarity to many of the towns in the region and even to many towns along abandoned rail lines across the country. It can become the model that other greenway towns can build from.

Greenway design is a trend that is currently gaining interest amongst landscape architects and other professionals in this country. If implemented correctly, these types of projects have the potential to benefit communities on numerous levels. This project used a qualitative research method, providing a case study for a greenway and connection to town along an abandoned rail bed now owned by the Allegheny Trail Association. More specifically, it can serve as a model set of framework and goals for the redevelopment of rail trails, and the potential connections that may exist within adjacent towns.

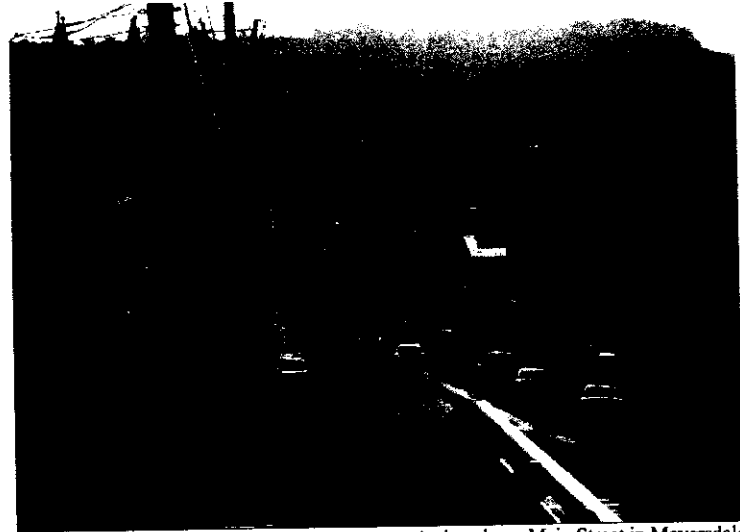


Meyersdale Station

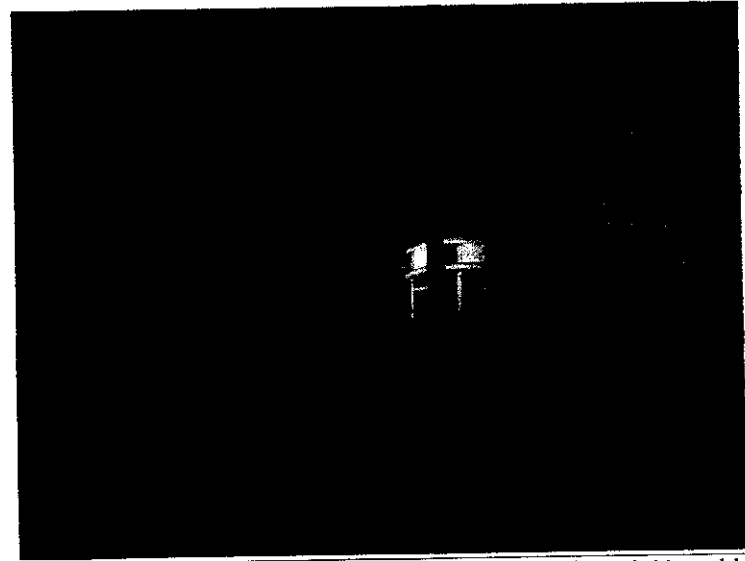
Introduction

Meyersdale Background

The borough of Meyersdale is home to approximately 2,500 residents, nestled in the rolling hills of southwestern Pennsylvania. The town originated as a coal-mining town, but the remnants of that industry have all but disappeared. The railroad tracks around which the town was originally built have now been abandoned, and the town is seeking a new identity. Many of the residents live in Meyersdale because their families have lived there for generations, while others just like the small town feel. The town has a certain historical richness to it. The potential to attract visitors and tourists to the town has caused some interest in local entrepreneurs looking to build Meyersdale into a destination for travelers seeking an “American Experience” that is free from today’s chain stores and commercialism. The citizens hope to preserve and build upon the strong local economy that already exists. The trail can help the town to begin to look inwardly at the improvements that need to be made to create a readable identity for the visitors. In the process, the town will also become a space where residents want to be.



A view down Main Street in Meyersdale



A Residence in Meyersdale

Introduction

Delimitations, Key Terms, and Assumptions

Delimitations

One of the limiting factors of this study was a lack of emphasis on ecological issues. While the overall concept and idea is as sensitive as possible to the surrounding environment, the plan is not based on an ecological planning technique due to a simple lack of information. Since an inventory of local and regional ecosystems has not been conducted, an alternate process that is guided by recreational goals was followed instead. Any environmental suggestions that are made are general recommendations about the impact of typical trails applied to any specific information about the area that were gathered.

Definition of Key Terms:

Greenway—A linear open space that is established along a natural corridor, river system, ridgeline, or rail corridor, that has been converted to recreational use and is focused on pedestrian, bike, or other uses. These corridors can link parks, natural resources, cultural features, and historical sites with each other and with populated areas.

Trail Towns—A generic term that applies to all small towns and urban centers that are located on, or in a close proximity to existing or proposed greenway routes, encouraging and implying interaction between the trail and the town.

Charrette—A quick and intense multidisciplinary design process in which a community is involved with the formation of ideas focusing on the course of action the project will take.

Rail-Trails—A term used to describe abandoned rail beds that have been converted to trails for recreational purposes.

Sustainable Design—Design ideas and practices that meet the needs of the current population and issues, while taking into account the impacts of the design on this earth and on people many generations into the future.

Assumptions:

For the purpose of this study, certain assumptions were made in order to adequately push this project forward and truly accomplish some very challenging goals.

It was assumed that the landscape architect in this project was the lead designer, while the trail association and other designers served as consultants and an integral part of the collaborative design team.

It was assumed that there were two unique but very important clients in this project, one being the borough of Meyersdale, and the other being the Allegheny Trail Association. Each had different needs that were combined to form a common goal for the project.

It was assumed that the state of Pennsylvania and the extensive work that they have already done to promote rail-trails and greenways served as a basis for the idea behind of this project. However, this project has built upon these pre-existing guidelines to develop a separate set of principles for rail-trail connections that were applied to the final design.

Introduction

Significance of Study and Summary

Significance of Study

Because of the processes that were involved in the project, including a public charrette process, this project truly has the potential to be implemented in phases by the community. The citizens of the borough of Meyersdale have already been more helpful than can be imagined in getting this project off of the ground. Their enthusiasm during the charrette was contagious, and they seem ready to get ideas rolling so they can begin the transformation of their trail. This project can become one of the first contemporary trail designs that successfully integrates small town design into the design of the trail, combining fitness, wellness, and healthy living issues with the functioning aspects of a small town. The impact of the study can go well beyond influencing other “trail towns”, and may be used as a case study and model for other aspects of healthy living design that is necessary in the future of our country.

Summary

Many designers throughout history have attempted to develop theories and plans to successfully connect recreational trails and greenway opportunities to the places where people live. This project proposed a new solution to that age-old question, while at the same time developing a new set of priorities for design of healthy environments for community members and tourists alike. The study produced solutions that can be applied to numerous towns on a number of different levels. It has provided a practical application to a very real problem in this country, while specifically developing a plan that the people of Meyersdale can be excited about.



A view along the Trail



A view of one of the gateway bridges along the Trail

Review of Related Literature

Historical Perspective (Frederick Law Olmsted)

Landscape architects and other designers have been involved in the design of greenways, parkways, and other types of designed linear parks and linkages for many years. Greenway design began as early as the 1860s in this country, with some of the most well-known designers in our profession taking a lead in high profile greenway designs, and setting a strong precedence for future designers to follow. Despite this early start in our country, designers did not use the actual term “greenway” to describe this particular aspect of landscape architecture until the 1950s, and the contemporary greenway movement did not gain much attention until the late 1980s. The greenway movement is now at full strength, and there is a current push in our country towards the design of accessible greenways to help cure the ills of urban fragmentation we are currently experiencing in many developed areas (Little, 6). This movement attempts to develop new environmental solutions for the next century, and is usually implemented through grass roots efforts by the individual communities.

The strong historical basis for many of these contemporary greenway projects can be traced back to Frederick Law Olmsted, the “Father of American Landscape Architecture”, who is credited with actually “inventing” the greenway. Mr. Olmsted was a powerful individual and incredible thinker who pushed the limits of landscape architecture in order to introduce the country and world to new designs and ideas in many aspects of our profession. His greenway theories are some of the most notable, because the framework for them still exists today. The larger context for this greenway design movement was developed in Olmsted’s plan with Calvert Vaux to develop a “central park” for New York City. It was with this park that both designers hoped to cure some of the ills of the urban world by providing a large-scale natural and healing environment in which urban dwellers could escape. However, it was not until Olmsted’s design for

the Berkeley campus in California in 1865 that the actual term “greenway” was introduced. His plan included “two ‘greenway’ elements that served as links through campus, and provided scenic views and a scenic experience”(Little, 8). Olmsted also hoped to “enhance the recreational and aesthetic experience of visitors through the design of parkways”(Smith, 5) that would link the city of Berkeley to the city of Oakland. While his design was never implemented, it did set the stage for a new era in Olmsted’s career in his partnership with Calvert Vaux (Rybczynsk, 280). This Berkeley plan emphasized Olmsted’s love for the linear park, and began to form his concept for creating scenic and aesthetic drives because they were the most pressing needs of his day (Smith, 6). He admired the boulevard designs of Paris and Brussels, and attempted to bring those design elements to this country through his greenway designs.

Olmsted also found inspiration for this type of design in some of his many train trips across the newly developing rail corridor

Review of Related Literature

Historical Perspective (Frederick Law Olmsted)

system that was beginning to span the country. He found peace in the views along the rail corridor that were “superb and glorious, producing a very strong moral impression through an enlarged sense of the bounteousness of nature”(Little, 10). Olmsted and Vaux had laid the framework for a new type of design challenge.

Olmsted expanded his greenway concept through the design of a linear parkway in Brooklyn that approached Prospect Park, in an attempt to prepare the hearts and minds of visitors entering the park (Little, 10). He saw the park in Brooklyn as “part of a system of grounds of which Central Park is only a single feature, designed for the recreation of the whole people of the metropolis for centuries to come”(Rybczynsk, 282). He believed that parks in urban environments needed to be linked, and he implemented his greenway concept in master planning everywhere from the Emerald Necklace in Boston, to his new “suburb” design at Riverside that connected to the city of Chicago. Especially in the early years of this kind of design, the parks and greenways were designed mostly for pedestrians, and occasionally the horse and carriage. However, the concept was strong enough to adapt as technology continued to push transportation in our country, first to the bicycle in 1890, and finally to the automobile in the 1910s. Especially for his design of Prospect Park, Olmsted focused on altering the current grid already in place by creating a very grand “parkway” that would be 260’ wide, serving the needs of commuter vehicles, carriages, and pedestrians in a park-like environment. Olmsted’s greenway and parkway designs, while changing slightly for different uses over the years, have remained mostly intact as they were originally designed. His concept still sits at the heart of what would eventually become the greenway movement.

In his design for both Prospect Park in Brooklyn and the Emerald Necklace in Boston, Olmsted attempted to solve problems with his designs that go beyond the greenway movement. Considered

a “great park maker” throughout his career, his designs for these two parks created a continuous area of green space that could be accessed by the community. It was through this accessibility that he intended to bring life, hope, and energy to these cities. His designs were created to give people a place to escape from the urban environment, but in applying them, he instead created beautiful places that interacted with the urban environment, developing areas that were very scenic and very livable at the same time. In addition, his unique design for the Emerald Necklace system in Boston also addressed issues dealing with drainage of surrounding neighborhoods and improved water quality (Smith, 5). Olmsted was a man far ahead of his time in every aspect.

Review of Related Literature

Relevant Theory (Benton MacKaye)

Benton MacKaye built upon Olmsted's contributions to the profession by focusing on the ecological impact that such a system of green linkages could have on the entire life cycle, and the positive environmental influences that could grow out of the implementation of such ideas. Mackaye began to develop his very broad concept for a system of wooded open space that would form a linear area, or belt around and through different localities (Smith, 6). His concept was more than a plan to block sprawl of urban areas, he also suggested bisecting already settled areas with 'spokes of green' to increase human interaction with these park spaces, similar to the concepts of Olmsted. In 1921 MacKaye believed that he had created the perfect solution for these problems with his idea for the Appalachian Trail, a continuous trail connecting Maine to Georgia along the eastern coast of the United States. He envisioned the idea of a "footpath in the wilderness that included a dam and levee system for the eastern seaboard and created a continuous 'openway' that would control metropolitan invasion, and save numerous native species and natural systems that would be destroyed through development of the land" (Emblidge, 46). His concept also included the proposal to protect scenery in "intertowns", areas that were directly adjacent to the "openway". These "intertowns" would create a right of way along the trail that was to be protected along with the trail itself (Little, 20). MacKaye envisioned an entire system of hostels, inns, and seasonal study centers along the trail, with the intent of creating "self-owning communities whose inhabitants would support themselves with cooperative 'non-industrial activity' based on forest, farming, and crafts" (Bryson, 29). The challenge came in fitting these ideas into the larger system of natural based design. It was his dedication to the natural system that pushed the concept, but MacKaye also intended to successfully marry human uses and the process of the natural system through his concept.

Unfortunately, while the trail was built in its entirety (due mostly to the work of a man named Myron Avery), MacKaye's vision was not completely realized. However, anyone who has walked any portion of the Appalachian Trail would probably agree that at the regional scale, his concept is still evident in the use of the trail and adjacent areas today, even if there are improvements that can be made at the detailed site scale (Bryson, 30).

Review of Related Literature

Design Trends and New Ideas

The 1960s in America opened the eyes of many designers to a newly emerging conscience for the ecological considerations that must go into designs. It was because of this contemporary movement that some of the most well known landscape architects and designers of our time were able to build upon the ideas of Olmsted and MacKaye, with a new emphasis on the natural systems (Smith, 7).

Ian McHarg further pushed the ideas of Olmsted and MacKaye with his book in 1969 entitled *Design with Nature*. This book introduced his system for finding suitable sites based on map overlays. Through this system it becomes obvious that "the distribution of open space must respond to the natural process" (McHarg, 65). McHarg argues that there are enough open space areas in our country; the problem simply lies in the distribution of these areas in relation to the distribution of population.

While much of the historical development of greenways in the United States have come from landscape architects and planners, some recent political efforts in stream and river conservation have also led to the protection of riparian greenways (Smith, 8). The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, in addition to the Clean Water Act, and the National Trails System Act have all made the process easier for designers to take on these types of projects. There has also been a social push towards demand for outdoor recreation in the United States that has spurred numerous greenway initiatives. Because greenways are linear in nature, they are also well suited for trail uses. Numerous opportunities are being realized for development of greenways and trails along abandoned railway corridors and in unused utilities corridors. Many of these projects are being pushed by local organizations, truly proving the need for such projects. In fact, in 1987 the President's commission on Americans Outdoors delivered a report stating:

We have a vision for allowing every American easy access to the natural world: Greenways. Greenways are fingers of green that reach out from and around communities all across America, created by local action. They will connect parks and forests and scenic countryside, public and private, in recreation corridors for hiking, jogging, wildlife movement, horse, and bicycle riding (President's Commission on Americans Outdoors, 124).

The need exists in our country for the development of such greenway systems. Our landscape architectural predecessors have successfully paved the way for the types of projects that need to be created in order to be successful. Ideas from contemporary projects will further develop the concept for this specific project type.

Review of Related Literature

Case Studies

Case #1 Ecological Based Trail System: Charles River, Boston (CRJA)

This project is an example of designing a trail that the community has embraced. While once skeptical of the trail's influence on the area, local business have now taken responsibility of mowing, pruning, picking up liter, and controlling non-native plants in the greenway corridor. Three and a half miles of the trail are currently completed, and people are not only using it, but also beginning to help raise money for the completion of the rest of the vision. The borough of Meyersdale can learn much from this example of a trail embraced by a community, because in the end, that is going to determine the success or failure of the project.



Using the greenway(www.indianatrails.org/photos)

Review of Related Literature

Case Studies

Case #2 Heritage Based Trails: Stark County Trail and Greenway Plan

The overall concept of the Stark County Trail and Greenway Plan is “to show how cultural precedents can define community identity and lead to economic revitalization” (Stein, 30). The trail passes through numerous towns in northeast Ohio. The canal lands, river channel, and riparian buffers provide a continuous north-south greenway through the county, while the central spine of the greenway is a multi-purpose trail for a variety of uses in all seasons. Also occurring along the greenway trail are a series of activity centers that serve as trail heads and visitor service centers associated with existing developments within the towns and at major crossroads (www.starkparks.com). The plan makes the most of these connections, in addition to emphasizing the relationship between the trail and natural features, schools, historic downtowns, and museums. The designers found the trail a “tremendous opportunity for communities to market their history, lifestyle, and picturesque scenery” (Stein, 31). It was important that the design for the trail through Meyersdale made these same connections.



A view of one of the Stark County Trails(www.starkparks.com)



A biker on a greenway(www.indianatrails.org/photos)

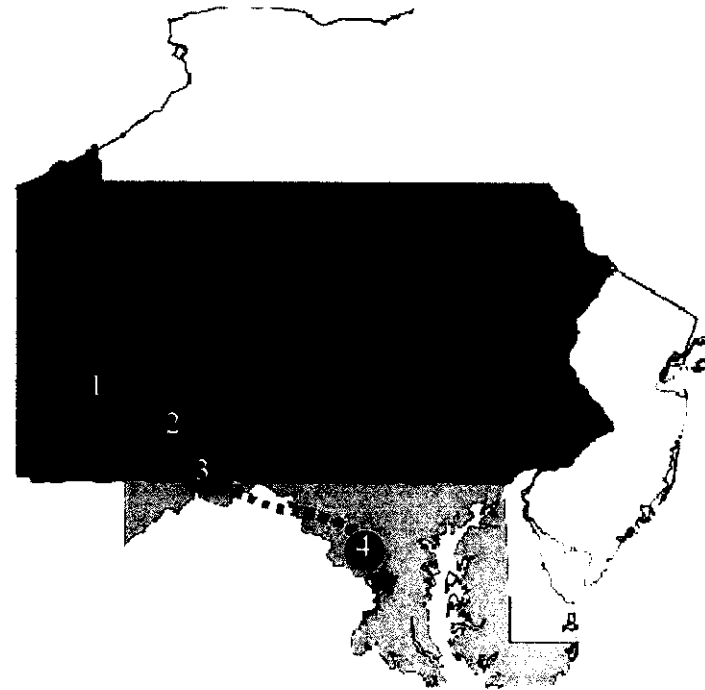
Methodology

The greenway trail development that is currently taking place can serve as a stimulus to the town. The greenway will become the starting point from which the town can grow, not only improving itself, but serving as a model for the numerous other small towns that occur along this trail and along other trail projects everywhere.

The design of portions of the greenway will become a very important element to the overall success of this larger design idea within the community. The greenway will potentially be utilized by a diverse group of users as a connection between small towns, as a connection between regional towns, and as a connection within the town. It can become a natural playground and learning environment for bikers, hikers, runners, walkers, and even cross country skiers in the winter months. But the trail needs to become more than that. After spending a morning running on the trail and watching the sunrise through the trees and over the mountains to the east, it is evident that this is a special aesthetic place. It is a place that speaks to you. But it is also a very natural place. The abandonment of the railroad some twenty years ago has allowed for the trail to go through a natural reclamation of sorts. Undergrowth plants have begun to take their place along the hillsides sloping down towards the trail, and the trees provide a canopy of enclosure from the surroundings. At times it feels as though you are completely alone in this greenway “room”, and then the trail turns the corner and opens up to a beautiful view of the surrounding hillsides. This trail can become a wonderfully social and aesthetic place. But it can also become a very ecological place.

Site Description and Greenway Context

It is important to continue to study the wildlife and growth patterns of the area to determine the possible uses that the trail may have as a wildlife corridor, in addition to a human corridor. By creating a wider buffer along the trail, more opportunities will be developed for creating this type of space. It can become a new type of integrated greenway that sits among the beautiful hillsides of southwestern Pennsylvania.



A map of the extents of the trail

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Pittsburgh, PA | 2. Somerset County, PA |
| 3. Meyersdale, PA | 4. Washington, DC |

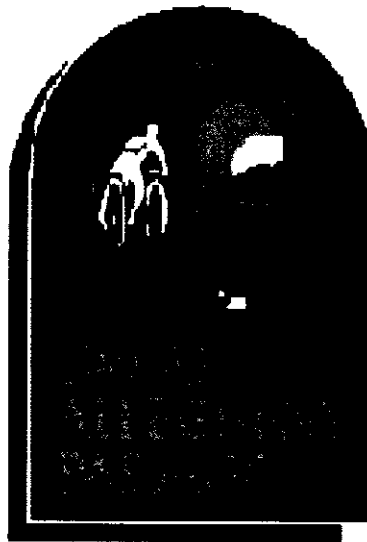
Methodology

Site Description and Greenway Context

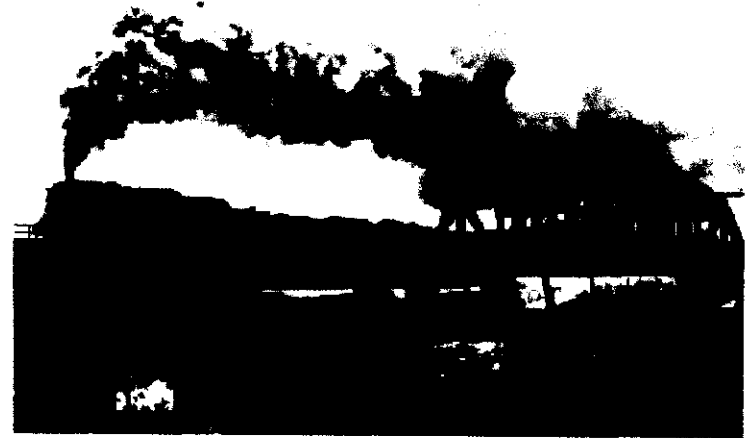
The greenway sits on the corridor of the former Western Maryland Railroad, which was abandoned in 1952 as coal industry slowed in the area. Portions of the trail, The Great Allegheny Passage were opened in 1991. Currently close to 100 miles of completed trails from Pittsburgh to Meyersdale. Meyersdale is the first town south of the completed trail.



A historical photo of the Western MD Railway



The Great Allegheny Passage Logo



A train on the Salisbury Viaduct

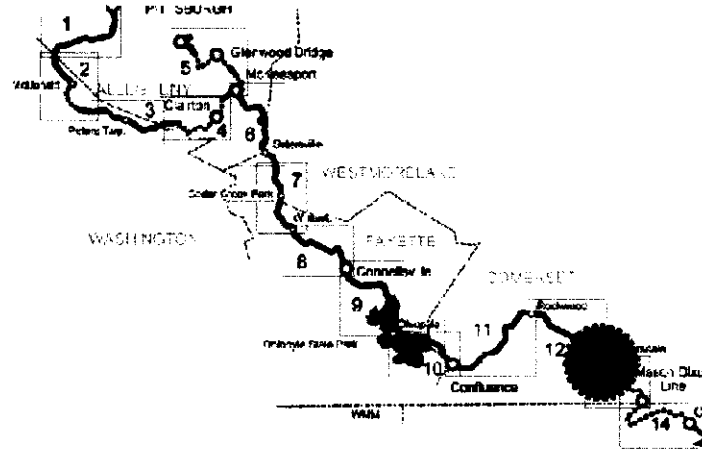
Methodology

The site for this study is located in southwestern Pennsylvania, about an hour drive south of Pittsburgh, and just 10 miles north of the Mason-Dixon Line and the state of Maryland.

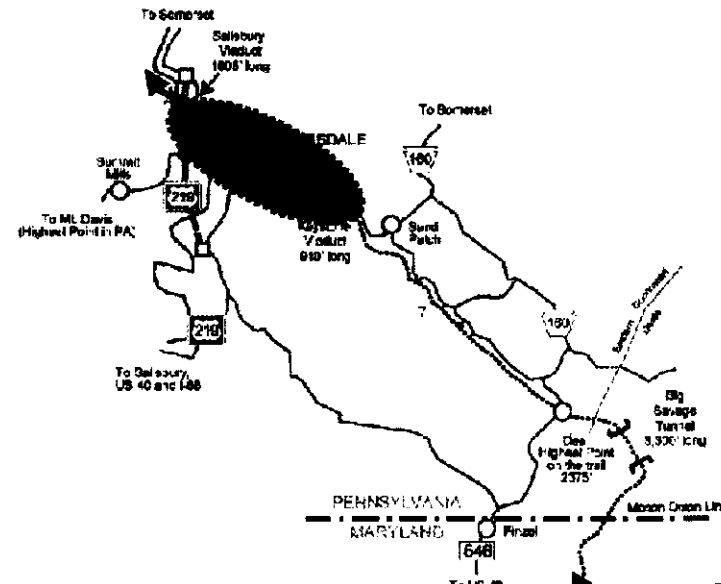
The Borough of Meyersdale sits nestled in the Allegheny Mountains in southwestern Pennsylvania. It is one of many small urban areas in the region south of Pittsburgh, each town finding its niche amongst the hilly topography. The foothills of the Laurel Highlands surround the main street of town that rises up an incline at the town's entrance. At the base of the street is a park, serving as a buffer between the river and the developed areas of town. The river meanders through the southern edge of town, protected by man-made levees and dams. Traveling up the Main Street, one encounters a historically rich downtown environment that is full of redevelopment potential. The architectural detail of historical buildings serve as the focus of the streetscape, while residential houses successfully merging with more commercial and civic uses. A highly ornate redeveloped bank façade serves as one of the main focal points, drawing details from the past to create a building that correctly addresses the streetscape. The street eventually culminates at an abandoned rail line that has become the Allegheny Rail Trail, connecting Pittsburgh to Washington D.C.

Meyersdale is a quaint town, originally settled for the mining industry, now seeking a new identity. The character of the town has begun to take shape with the preservation of an old abandoned train station. It is a beautiful building, and an excellent gateway to the downtown core. The potentials are seemingly endless, and the people are enthusiastic about a change. It is a small town that is home to generations of families and people that are still hanging on to the hope that they can survive on a local-based economy.

Meyersdale Site Context



A map of the existing and proposed Greenway



A map of the project site through Meyersdale

Design

Design Process and Special Considerations

While this study focuses on the borough of Meyersdale and its immediate surroundings, it is also imperative that the design for the greenway and its connections also fit into the regional context. The plan briefly touches on the impact of the design at the regional scale from Pittsburgh, all the way to Washington D.C., in addition to pointing out other connections that this trail may have with other trails, such as the American Discovery Trail. In order to limit the scope of the project, the majority of the emphasis of the project focuses on the trail as it passes through Meyersdale. The plan also emphasizes a small 2-mile portion of the trail in either direction, developing specific design guidelines for implementation for the four mile area. Each phase of the project goes through the appropriate processes of inventory, analysis, and programming, to assure that goals are met on numerous levels.



A view of the Trail in winter



A view of the Trail and Station from one of the gateway bridges

Design

A series of rolling hills and portions of dramatic changes in elevation characterize the region of Pennsylvania surrounding Meyersdale. The town is sited on a downhill slope of a hillside, with the central downtown core sloping back towards a river that runs along the town boundaries to the South and West. The trail itself is located on a ridge halfway up the hillside as it enters into town from the Northwest. Visitors entering Meyersdale along the trail from the Northwest have quite an experience entering into town. On the Northwestern edge of the limits of this study, just before the trail crosses the Salisbury Viaduct sits Meyers Cemetery, which is the final resting place of the Meyers family, with most of the graves dating to the 19th century. After the gravesite the trail crosses a 1700' long valley along The Salisbury Viaduct, a massive and beautiful bridge structure. The viaduct carries the users of the trail 30 feet above ground level on a paved surface before the trail finally meets up with another ridge. While on the Viaduct visitors have magnificent views of the Salisbury Junction valley, including the arrival of Rt. 219, the major automobile access to the area. To the Northeast is a view of Blue Lick Mine, a strip mine that was used for mining hard and soft coal. To the Southwest is a wonderful view of the borough of Meyersdale, complete with large windmills hovering over the town in the background. The viaduct also crosses over a section of the original Pennsylvania and Maryland Street Railway that used to connect Meyersdale with the nearby town of Garrett. The two miles of trail from the Viaduct to the Train Depot in Meyersdale gently slope upwards along the ridge, but are filled with wonderful scenery. The trail is almost completely enclosed with vegetation for the first ½ mile, with only brief glimpses through the dense vegetation back to town on the south side of the ridge. The northern side of the trail is enclosed by a steep hillside. The trail occasionally passes through portions of enclosure on both sides of the trail, where the original rail line must have been cut through the hillside. The next mile

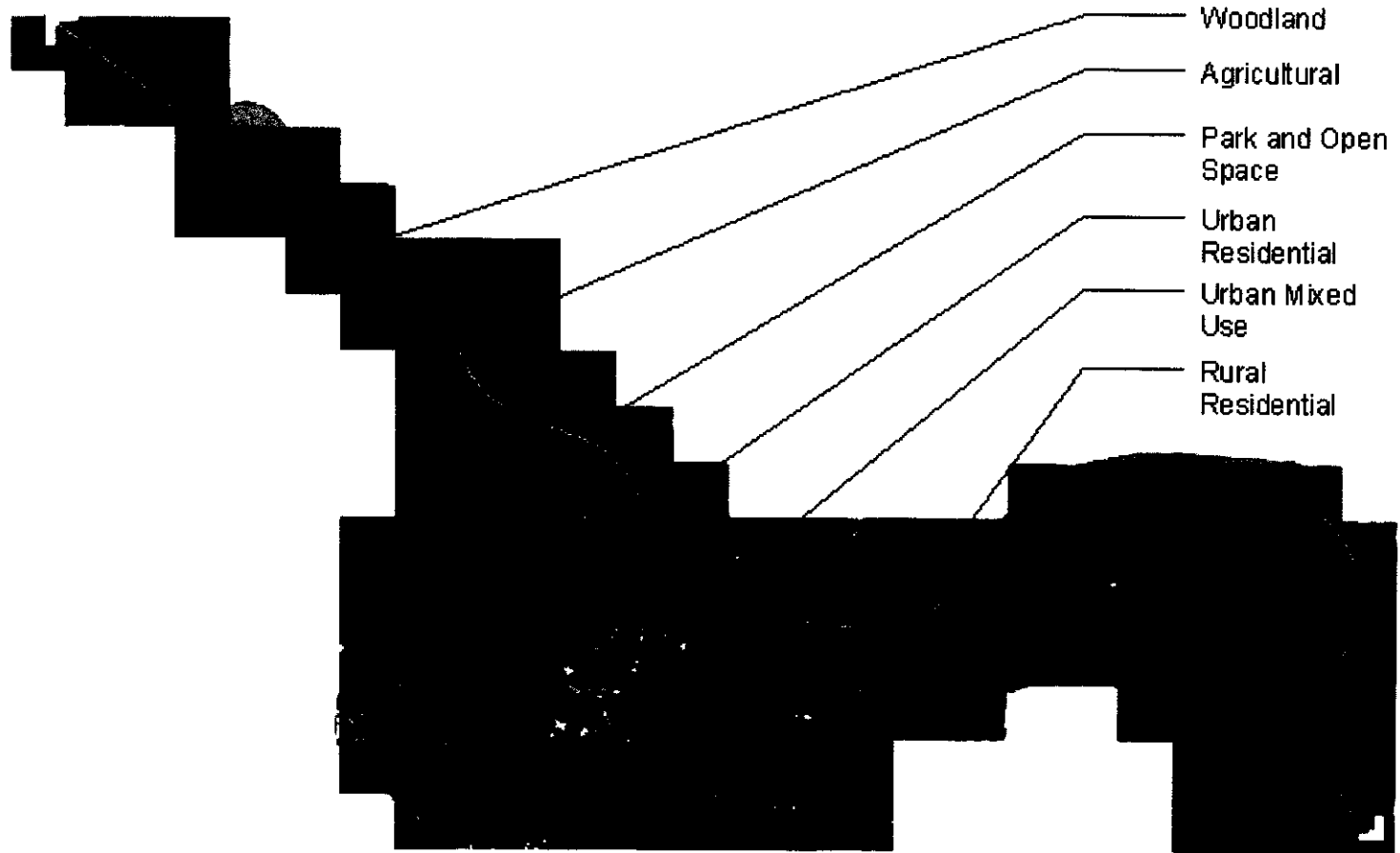
Site Inventory

of the trail keeps the traveler focused straight ahead, as there is not much to look at on either the north or south of the trail. The trail crosses over one road at grade, the only connection with civilization as one enters the borough of Meyersdale. While the enclosed portions of the trail to be a good fit for learning areas, this road crossing seems perfect for a secondary trail head. As the trail continues towards Meyersdale, it crosses under a series of old bridges that used to be roads from town crossing over the rail line. These bridges, made of beautiful old treated wood, may be structurally unsafe, but they provide excellent gateways into town. As the trail passes under the bridges it is completely enclosed by the hillside. After passing under the last bridge, the trail opens up to a view of the newly renovated Train Depot. The station offers quite a picturesque view when entering into town. It is also the first time when the trail opens up, providing an opportunity for a multi-use trailhead and entrance plaza for the trail.



A view of the trail east of the station

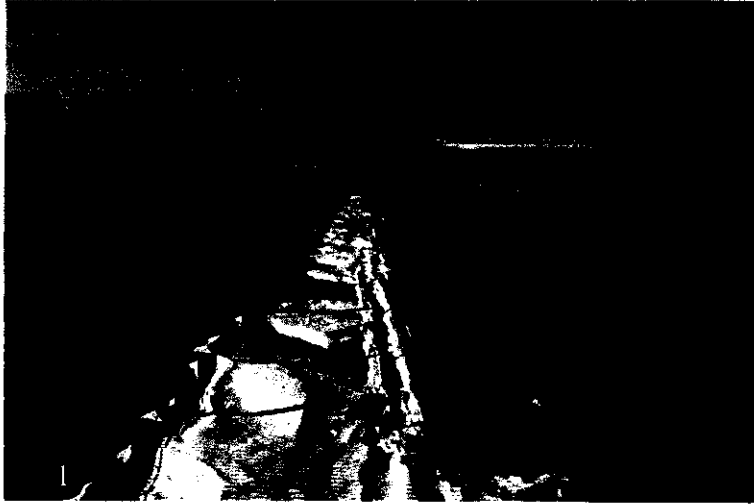
Site Inventory--Existing Landuse



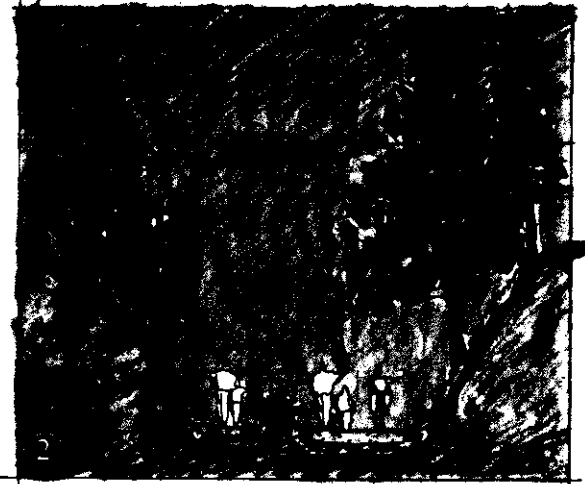
The station will eventually become an interpretive learning center, housing exhibits from the Meyersdale historical society, and offering another opportunity for learning to take place. As the trail continues on to the East, it crosses over Main Street leading into downtown Meyersdale. The view along the street to the south is beautiful, including a wonderful residential streetscape backed by a series of rolling hills. The street provides an excellent connection between the town and the trail. Further to the East the trail continues on the same ridge. The outskirts of town provide

a few unsightly views of run down developments and trash dumps. However, once one is outside of town, there is nothing but nature and the occasional view of the existing B&O Railroad track to the South to compete with. The trail east of town is also quite breathtaking, weaving in and out of hillsides, and leading up to more peaks and rolling hills. The trail eventually leads to the Keystone Viaduct east of town, not quite as long as the Salisbury Viaduct, but just as beautiful as it curves above the valley.

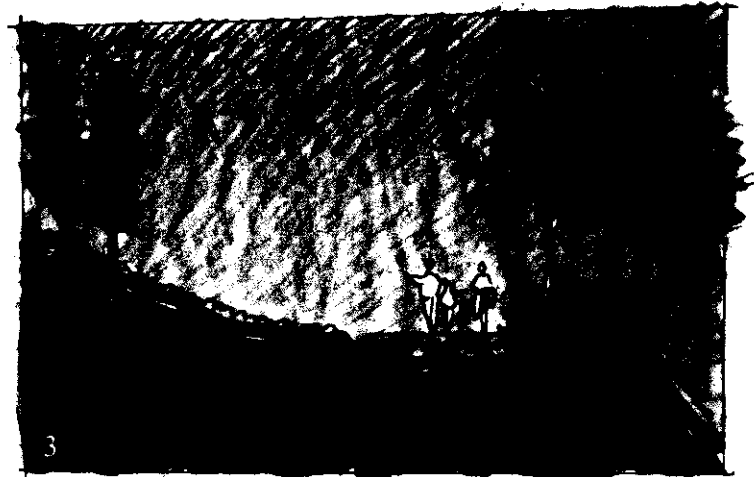
Site Analysis Trail Sections



The Salisbury Viaduct



Woodland Trail



Agricultural Trail



Urban Trail

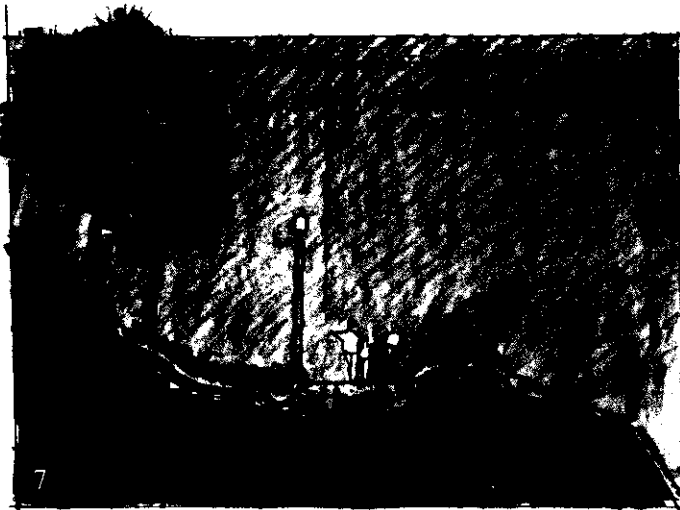
Site Analysis--Trail Sections



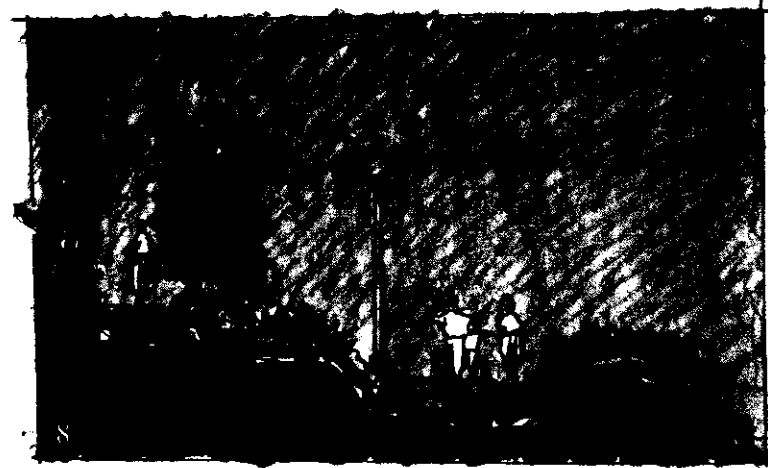
Rural Residential Trail



Park and Open Space Trail 1



Park and Open Space Trail 2



Park and Open Space Trail 3

Design

Project Goals

This project requires a very unique set of goals and objectives based primarily on interviews with community members through the charrette process in October, 2003, and interviews during a town meeting on January 31, 2004. The goals also take into account the data gathered from the site inventory and analysis phase.

1. Develop a trail system through the borough that has a distinct Meyersdale character, creating a “Meyersdale” image.
2. Provide adequate connections and facilities to strengthen the link between the trail and the downtown business district, encouraging tourists to explore local businesses.
3. Allow for a relationship between the trail and town, increasing usability and fitness for residents.
4. Use the trail and its potential as a catalyst to spur additional development in town, and additional cleaning up of town.
5. Develop a prototype (case study) for a “trail town” through illustrative design that fits the community and fits the trail town handbook, fits Meyersdale, but can also be duplicated and copied in other towns.



A view traveling out of town on the Trail



The Meyers Residence, home of the Maple Festival

Design

Project Program

1. Propose design of signage ideas for different levels of communication along the trail through the study area. This can include both way finding, educational, and “community branding”.
 2. Develop a trail that provides for four season activities and year round use.
 3. Locate and design key projects to “get the ball rolling”, such as minor trailheads, kiosks, and learning nodes.
 4. Design Train Depot plaza and surrounding properties
 5. Locate Educational/Environmental Art/Cultural connections between trail, town, and surroundings.
 6. Show connection to recreation assets in area (ie: ski resorts, snowmobile).
 7. Show connection to Cultural assets (ie: 9-11 memorial, Civil War sites).
- Locate and design trail way gateways into town.



A view of the Station during the winter season



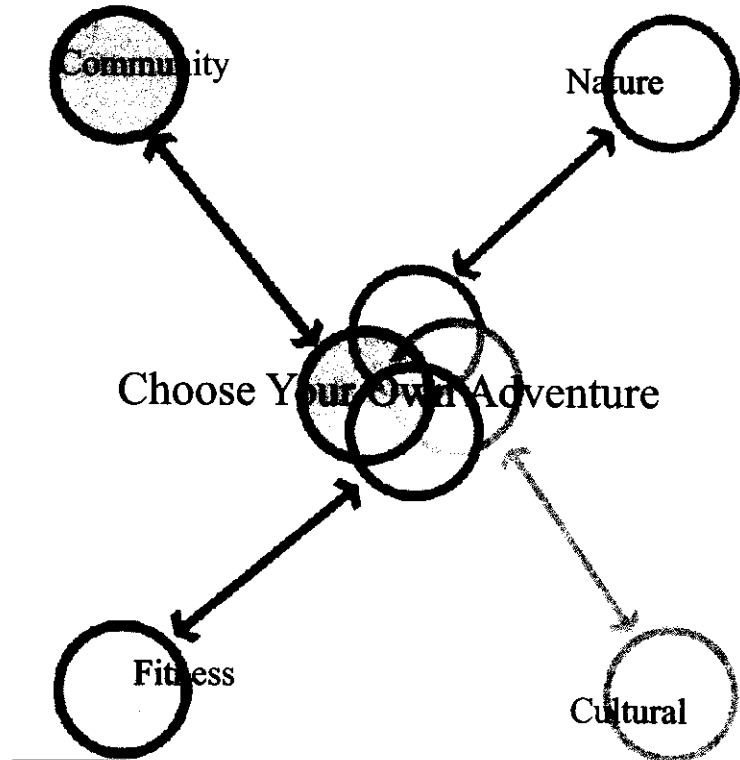
A view of the trail heading into town in the winter

Design

Concept: A Choose Your Own Adventure Trail

The creation and implementation of this project centers around the idea that this trail must integrate four basic conceptual goals into the design of one trail. These concepts build off of the design program, and emphasize the need for a naturally focused trail, a trail that highlights the cultural history of the area, a trail that gives character to the community of Meyersdale, and a trail that meets the fitness needs for community members and tourists in all four seasons. It is in uniting these four individual goals that the design for this trail became unique design problem.

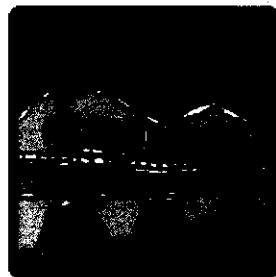
These individual goals were united through the design by building the trail as a conceptual "Choose Your Own Adventure" trail. This concept was accomplished by layering the different goals as individual opportunities for learning along the same linear path. Similar to the way in which "choose your own adventure" novels allowed readers to experience the same novel numerous times because the ending was always different, this trail allows users to spend more time along the trail because new learning can take place each time. The trail is also a more interactive experience because the user determines his or her path and destination each time. The layering of these learning experiences takes shape through different styles and colors of signage and environmental artwork used to emphasize the different goals of natural history, cultural history, community branding, and fitness.



A diagram of the trail concept



Nature



Cultural

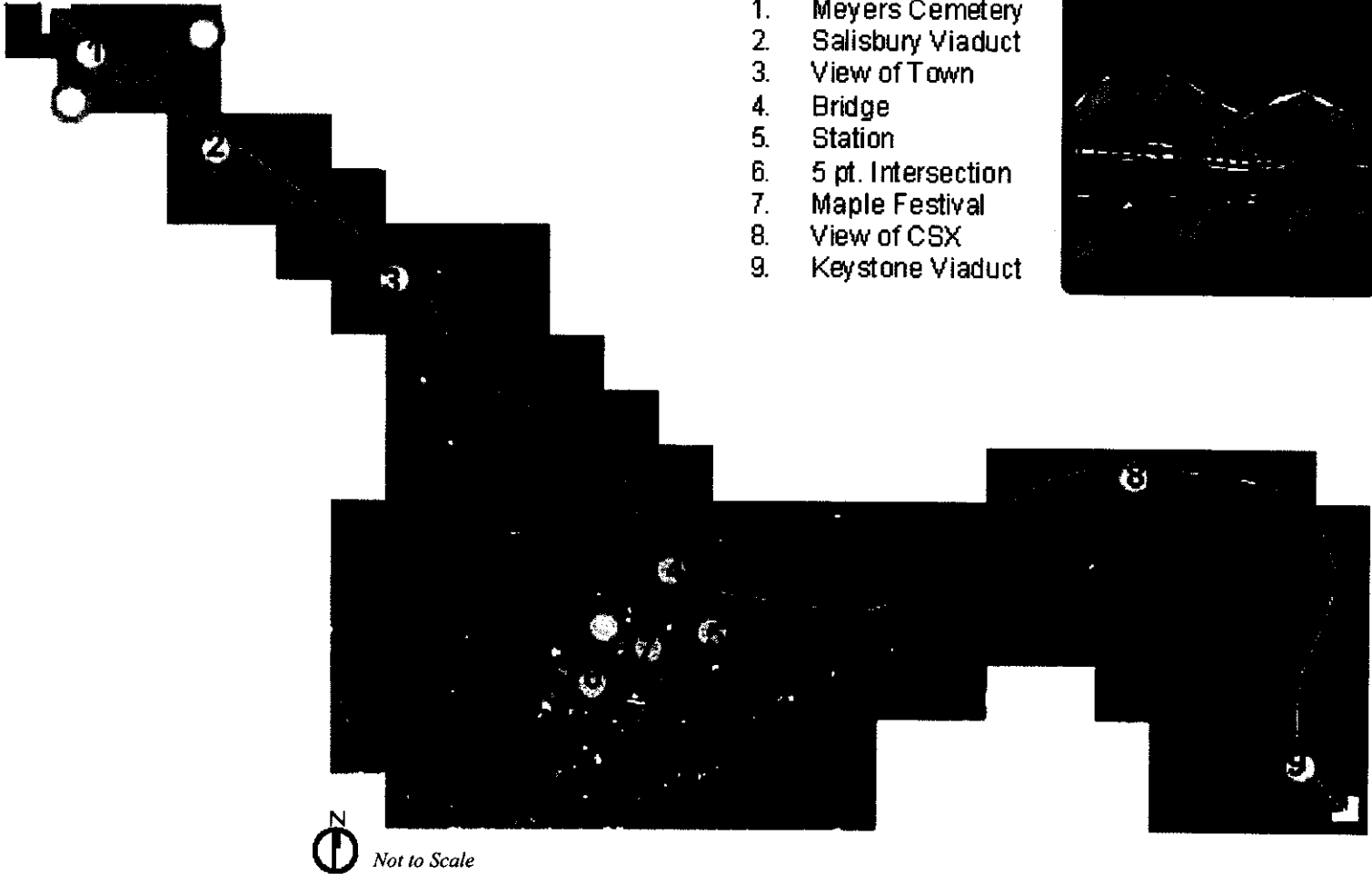


Fitness



Community

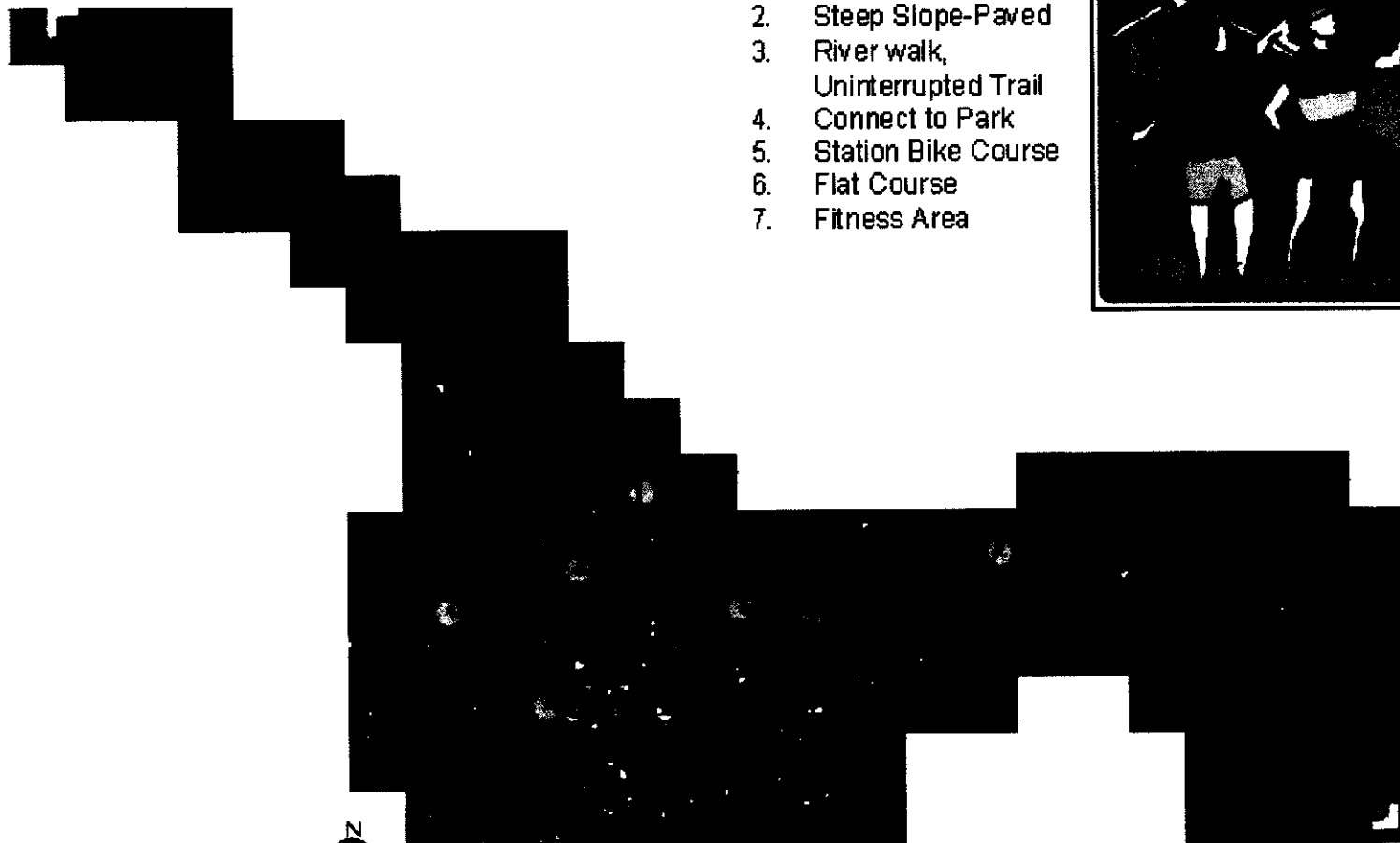
Trail Concept: Cultural Component



A map showing the Cultural Loop of the Trail


Design

Trail Concept: Fitness Component



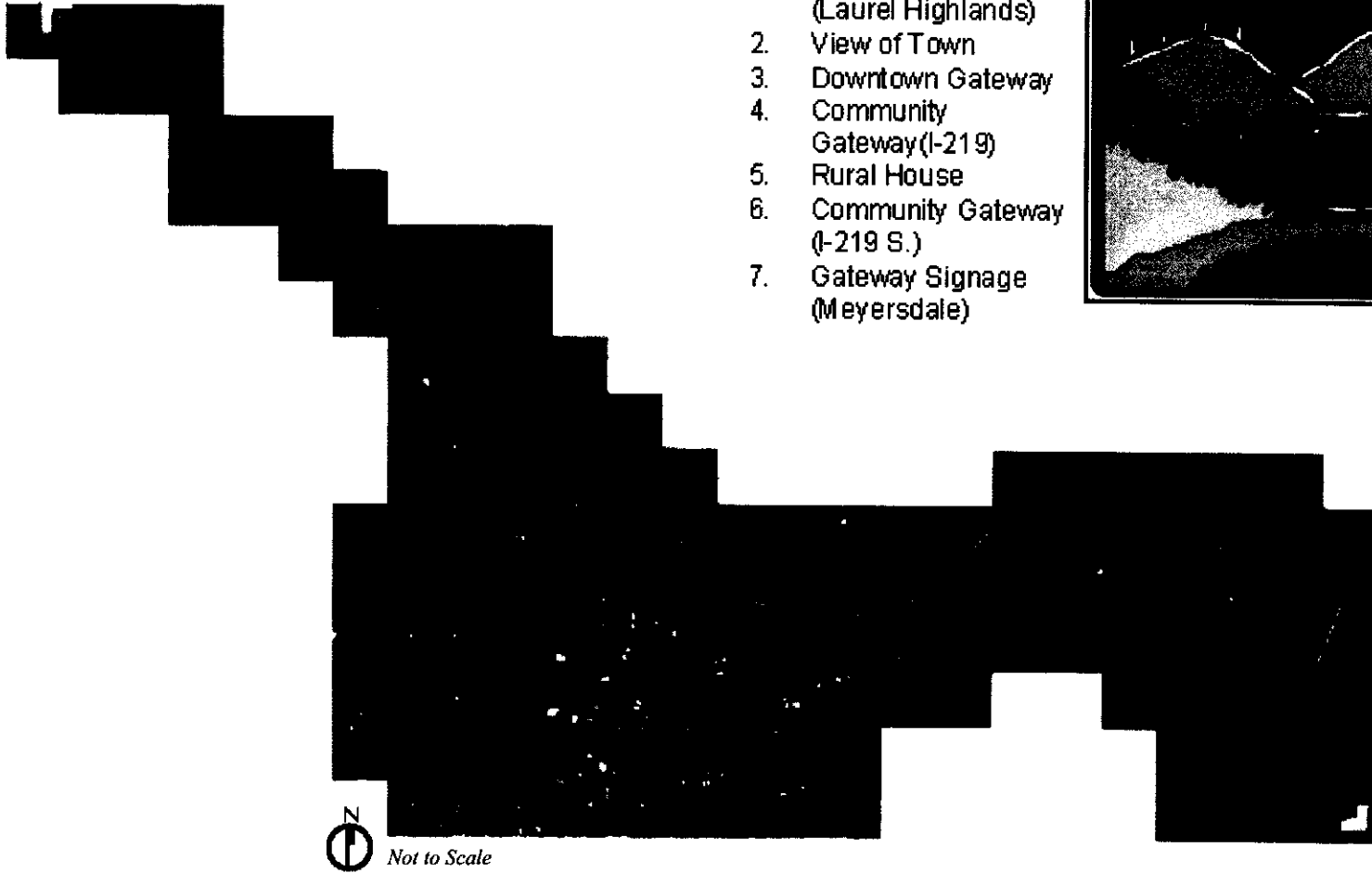
- 1. Steep Slope-Unpaved
- 2. Steep Slope-Paved
- 3. River walk, Uninterrupted Trail
- 4. Connect to Park
- 5. Station Bike Course
- 6. Flat Course
- 7. Fitness Area



 *Not to Scale*

A map showing the Fitness Loop of the Trail

Trail Concept: Community Component

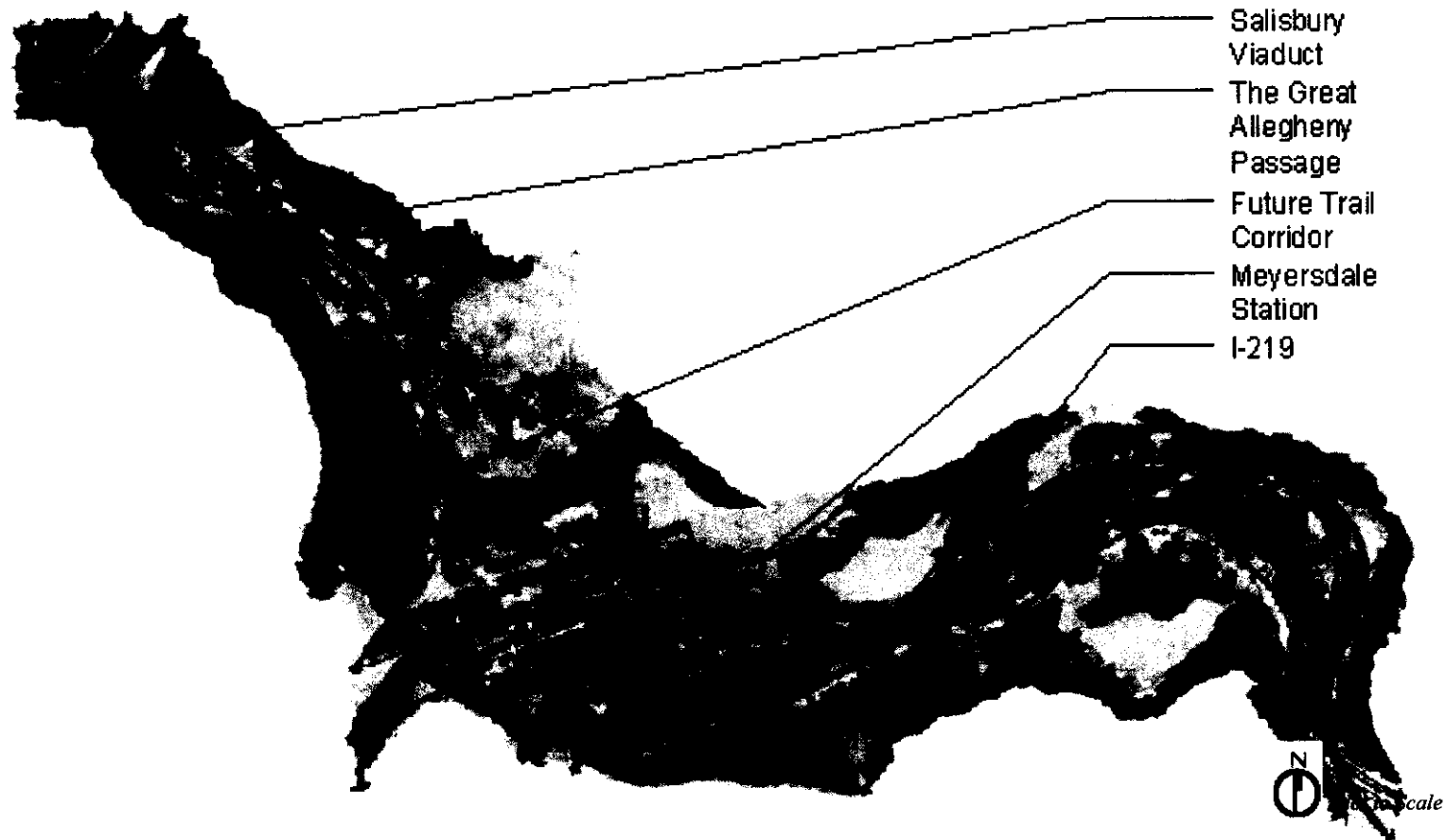


1. Gateway Signage (Laurel Highlands)
2. View of Town
3. Downtown Gateway
4. Community Gateway (I-219)
5. Rural House
6. Community Gateway (I-219 S.)
7. Gateway Signage (Meyersdale)



Design

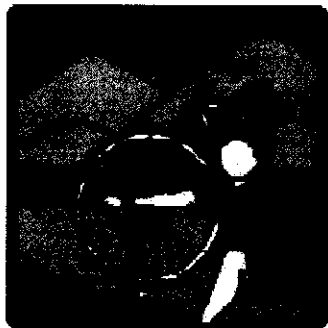
The Master Plan



The master plan of this project creates excitement for new rails to trails projects by emphasizing two important aspects of connecting the trail and the town that it passes through. This specific study emphasizes the development of a unique and exciting concept for the trail. This study also places emphasis on the trails connection with the town at the current train depot. Both of these considerations are emphasized in the master plan that is represented at two separate scales.

The regional scale of the master plan details an area of the trail between both viaducts, locating key stopping points along the trail. These key points are identified with icons (shown on the next page), and illustrated with sketches in the final plan. Visitors of the trail can experience these key points at a variety of levels of interaction, either simply passing them by, or becoming fully immersed in the trail and using the newest technology of hand held GPS systems that narrate the experience.

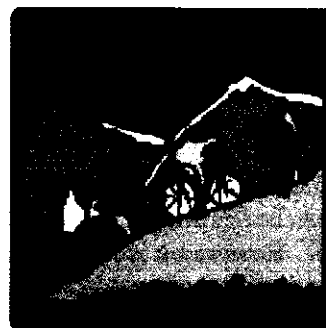
The Master Plan--Icons for Wayfinding



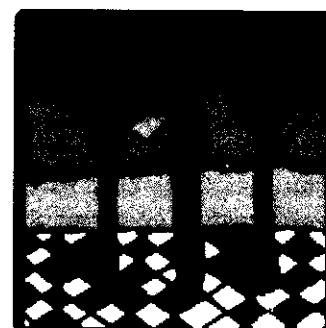
Bike Parking



Campgrounds



3% Slope or Greater



Food



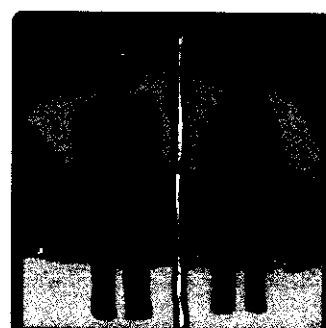
Community Info. Center



Scenic Overlook



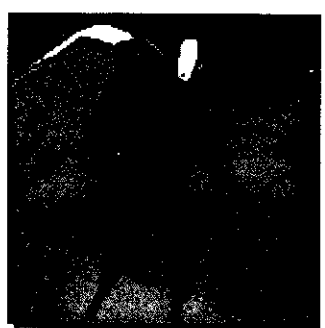
Parking



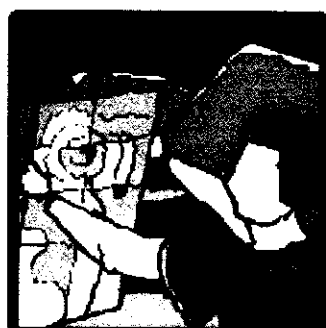
Restrooms



Seating



Off Trail Hiking



Maps



Community Connection

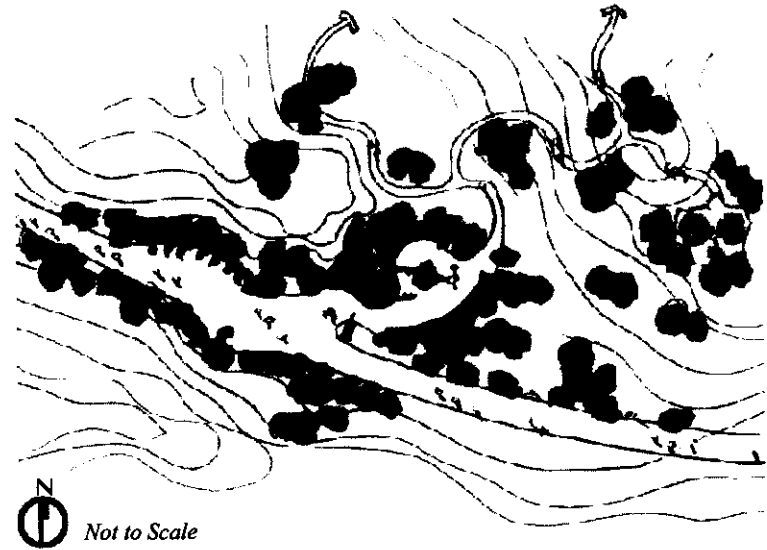
Design

Schematic Design of a Learning Node Along the Trail

This project develops the need for learning nodes along the trail, each fitting in the specific category of nature, culture, Meyersdale, or fitness. This project proposed two separate conceptual ideas for the development these nodes and learning areas at different sites along the trail. It is important to note that while the designs for these nodes were based on the constraints of a specific site, these broad ideas can be applied to a variety of sites at different points along the trail. However, it is important that each design scheme does feature the following common elements:

1. Seating
2. Bike Parking
3. Icon/Artwork
4. Signage

The concept for this node, entitled, Integrated Learning, locates the learning area directly adjacent to the trail, in an attempt to catch the eye of a variety of trail users.



Not to Scale

Integrated Learning Node



Not to Scale

Trail Master Plan

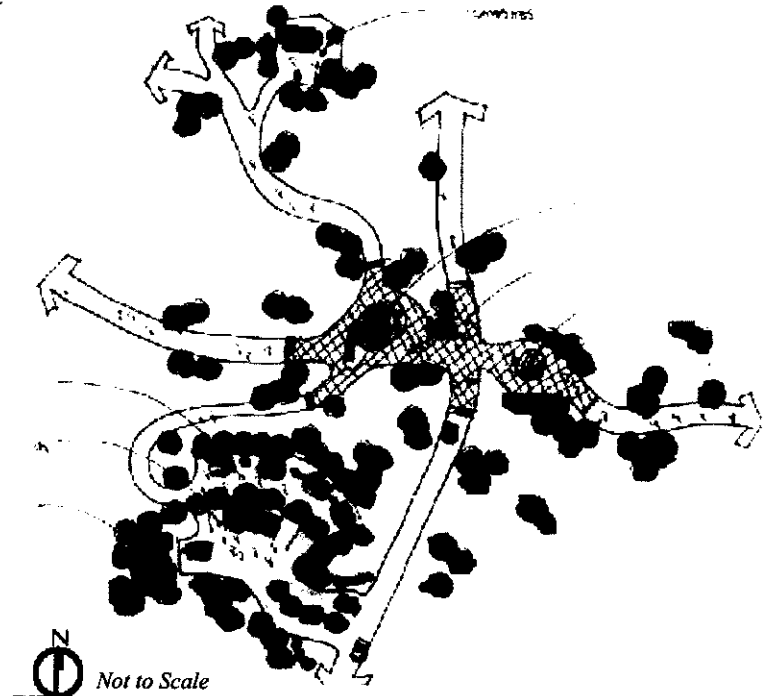
Design

Schematic Design of a Secondary Trailhead

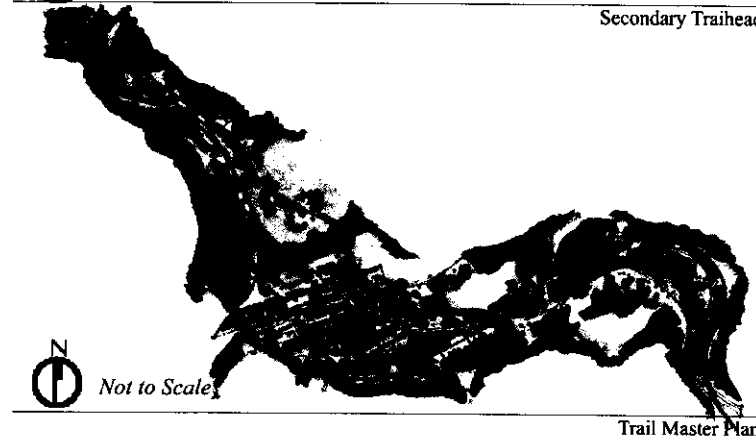
The master plan identifies need for a secondary trailhead northwest of Meyersdale. The scheme required the following specific program elements:

1. Bike Parking
2. Overlook/Views
3. Small Car Parking (off site)
4. Trail from parking to main trail
5. Interpretive Signage
6. Seating
7. Restroom facilities

The final scheme for the site, entitled Scenic Route, focused on the interaction between the trail, the trailhead, and the adjacent surroundings. The plan locates parking for the trailhead away from the trail, creating an important link between the trail and the surroundings, and allowing the visitor a secondary trail experience before even stepping foot on the main trail.



Secondary Trailhead



Trail Master Plan

Design

Master Plan of Meyersdale Station

The detailed scale of the master plan focuses on a plan for the existing depot and its surrounding areas. This site is identified as the predominant link between the town of Meyersdale and the trail, and is essential in the connection between trail and town. Three original schemes were developed for the design of Meyersdale Station. Each scheme required the following specific program elements:

1. Gathering/Public Performing
2. Bike Parking
3. Natural Learning
4. Cultural Learning
5. Bike Shop and Connections
6. Restaurant and Connections
7. Parking (Car, 20-25 spaces, and Bus)
8. Tie Interpretive Center to Landscape
9. Design and Place Signage/Way finding to Town
10. Gateway Signage along Trail (Icon development)
11. Crossing Main Street Plaza
12. Picnic/Passive Recreation
13. Seating

The first scheme for the design of the station was entitled Functional Station, allowing for parking on site, but still integrating separate learning stations throughout the site. The scheme also connected the site more completely with its surroundings, including utilization of the residential properties as retail stores and restaurants, and a specific focus on the intersection between the trail and Main Street.

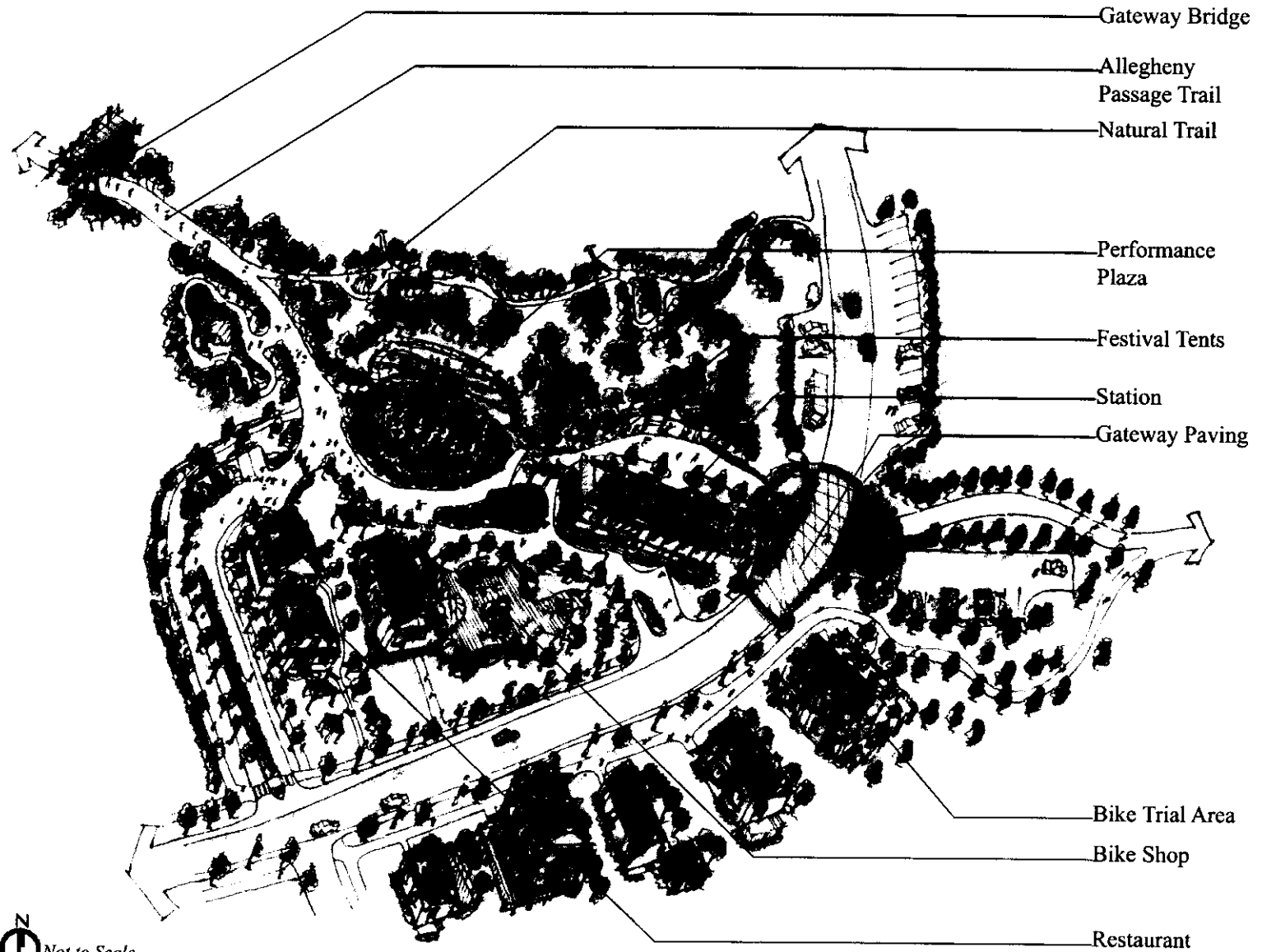
The second scheme for the design of the station, entitled Station as Park, emphasized the existing surrounding nature, and created a station plaza that was very much rooted in the context, and a site that revolved around recreational uses.

The third scheme, Station as Hub, united the above elements through a plan that emphasized the placement of the existing Train Depot as an interpretive center, and developing the surrounding site as a “hub” of learning. In this scheme the site became a place where the “Choose Your Own Adventure” concept could begin and end, providing a vibrant gathering place for tourists and residents alike.

The final master plan for the station plaza develops the site as a district in itself, complete with bike shops, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, exhibit space, and festival spaces. When complete, the station plaza will become the missing link between the trail and the town, in addition to the spur that is needed to drive additional responsive development along Main Street into town. The final master plan took favorable pieces from each scheme, while leaning heavily on the spatial design and layout of the third scheme.

Design

Master Plan of Meyersdale Station



 *Not to Scale*

Meyersdale Station Master Plan

Design

The community of Meyersdale already has numerous assets in place in order to assure that this project will be completed. The most important asset is a group of interested and concerned citizens. Numerous Meyersdale community members have driven this project from the beginning, and they are the ones that are going to make sure that it is finished. They have already taken the first step in hiring a Main Street Director, who has begun to bring these initial ideas into a workable concept.

The next important step is securing the funding to do it. Luckily, there are numerous opportunities for funding for trail associated projects at the federal and state level. Pennsylvania has done a particularly good job of helping to subsidize this type of project in the past. Since this project touches on many aspects of trail design, it should fit into a variety of different classifications for grants (State Parks, local interest groups, Federal ISTEA money). Also, since this design makes a specific effort towards incorporating fitness objectives, the possibility exists to receive numerous fitness oriented trail grants.

Conclusion



Entering along 219 under the Salisbury Viaduct



A potential connection between Trail and Town

Elements of the Design

Scenario One--Arriving at the Station



It is important for the station to become a gathering place in all season. It can become the place not only where community festivals are held, but also where visitors receive information about the town.



Elements of the Design

Scenario One--Arriving at the B&B



Many of the older buildings in town can be redeveloped into new uses, including bed and breakfasts. This is an excellent opportunity for beautifying residential property and can also serve as an economic development opportunity.

Elements of the Design

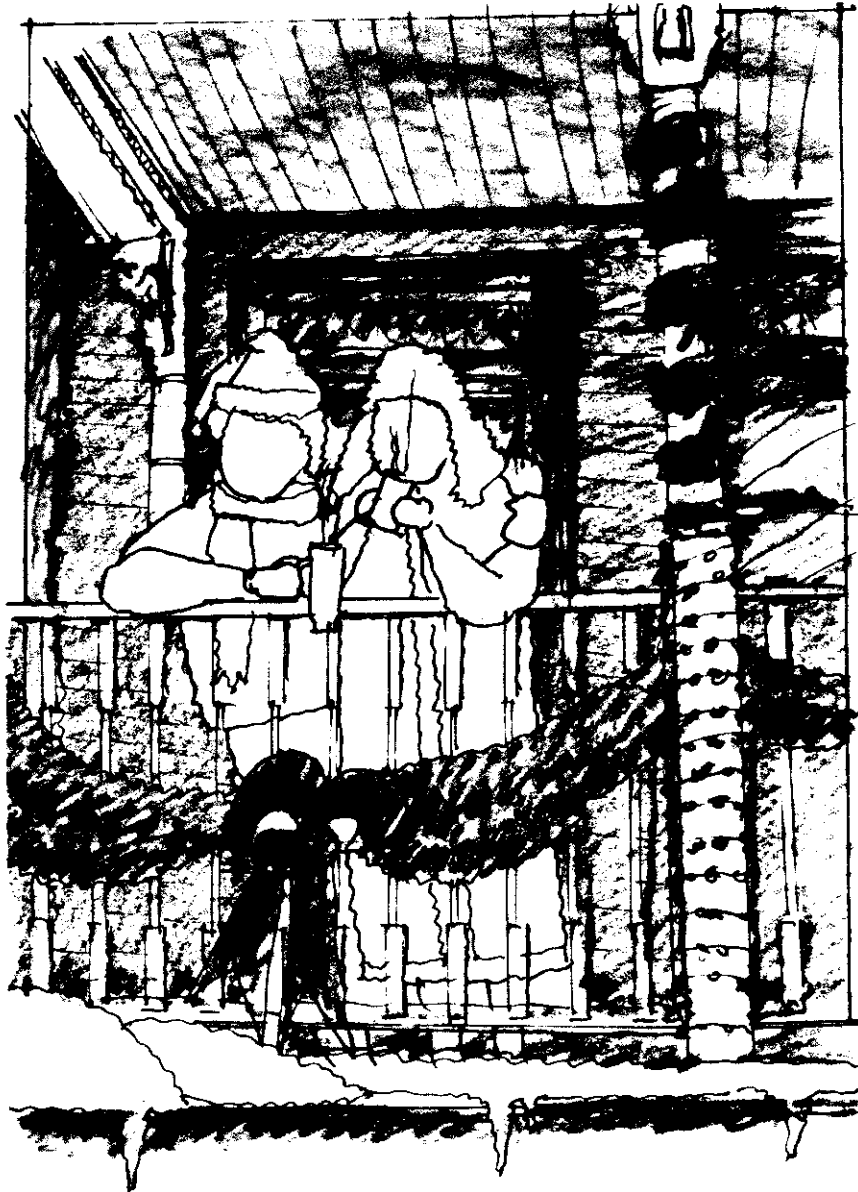
Scenario One--Going for dinner in town



Downtown Meyersdale can become the place where people go to eat dinner, catch an outdoor concert or festival, or simply walk around and window shop.

Elements of the Design

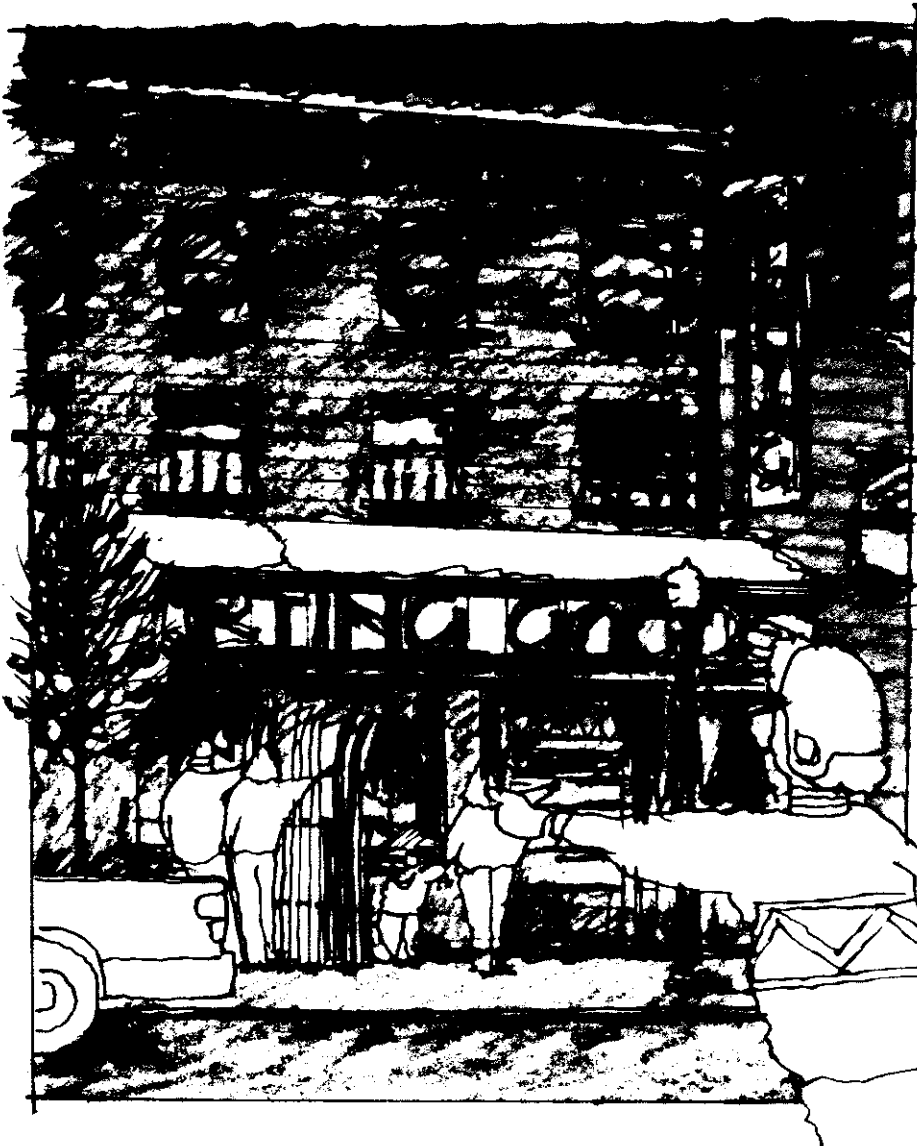
Scenario One--Breakfast from the Balcony



It is important to pay attention to the details when redeveloping older properties to maintain character and create beautiful places.

Elements of the Design

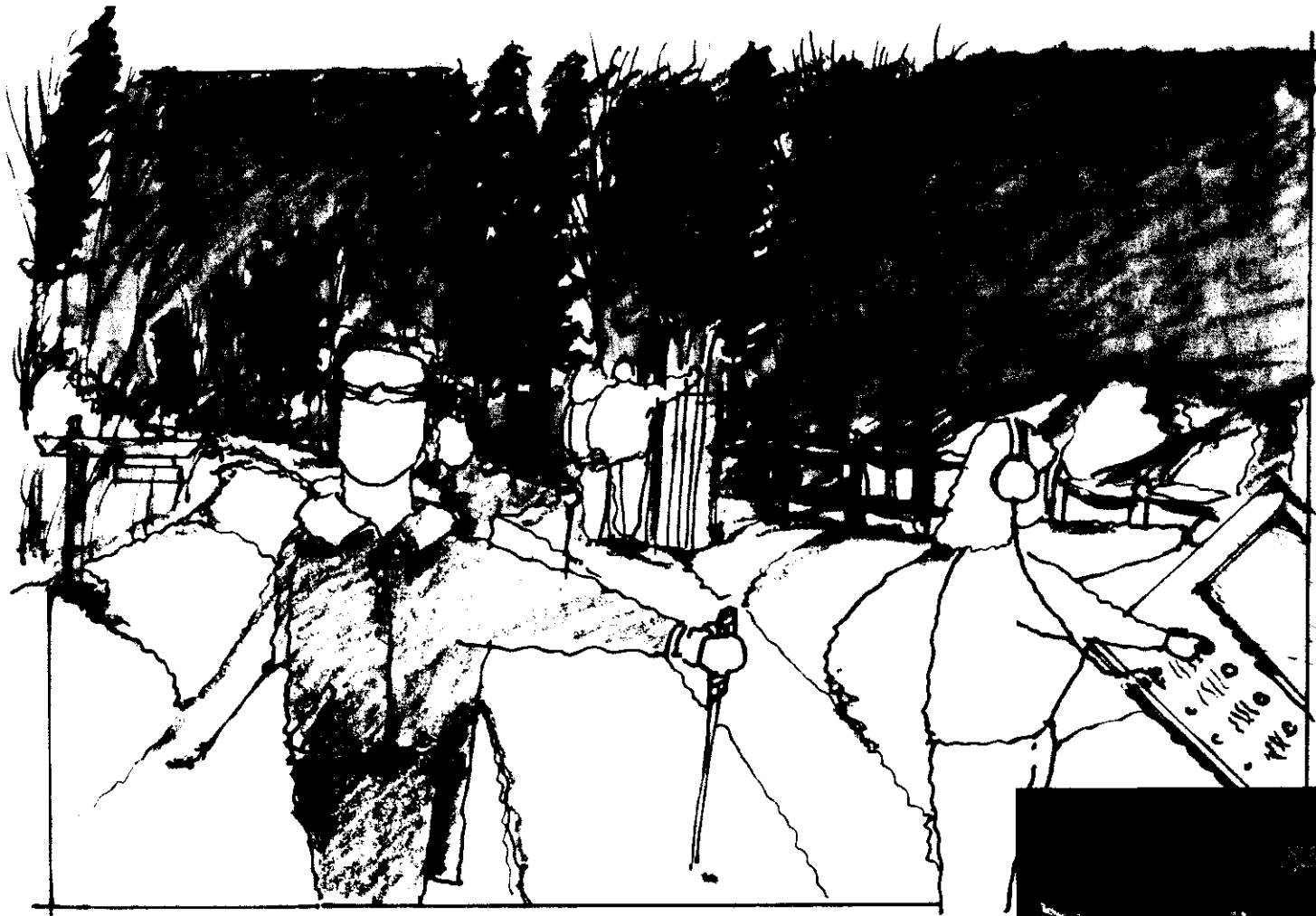
Scenario One--Going to the Sporting Goods Store



Many of the downtown buildings can be redeveloped for new uses such as sporting goods stores that will be needed by people using the trail.

Elements of the Design

Scenario One--Skiing on the Trail



The trail itself should also have a unique Meyersdale character in order to bring people into town and keep them coming back.

Elements of the Design

Scenario Two--Biking into Town

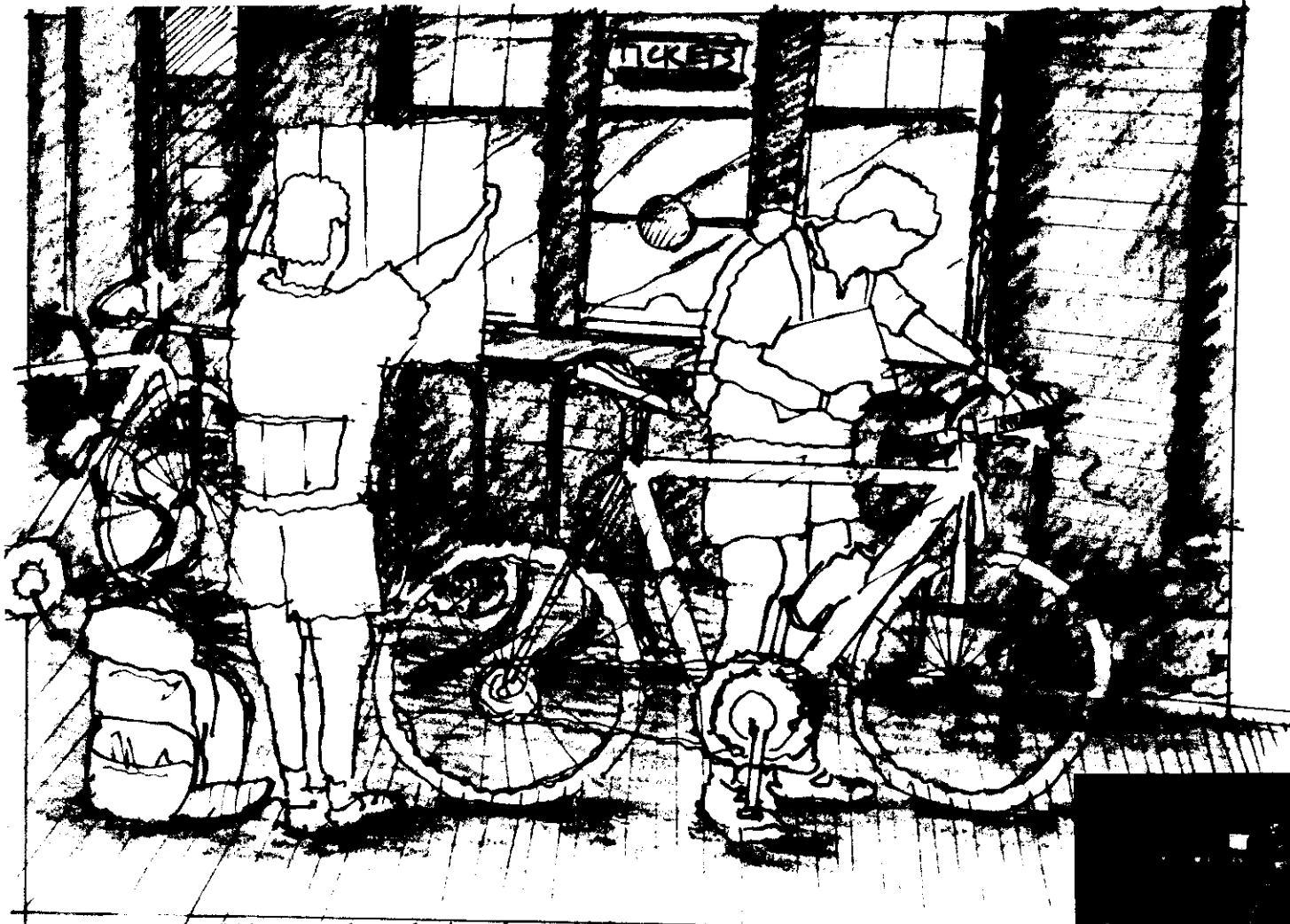


Many of the bridges coming into town serve as excellent gateways into Meyersdale. They should be preserved or rebuilt to maintain the same powerful entrance to town.

Elements of the Design

Scenario Two--Arriving at the Station

community greenways



The Station should become the gathering place and the starting point for journeys into town. People of all ages can use the station for information and wayfinding.



Elements of the Design

Scenario Two--Finding a place to stay



Many small properties and buildings in town can be redeveloped as cheaper housing alternatives to bikers on the trail.

Elements of the Design

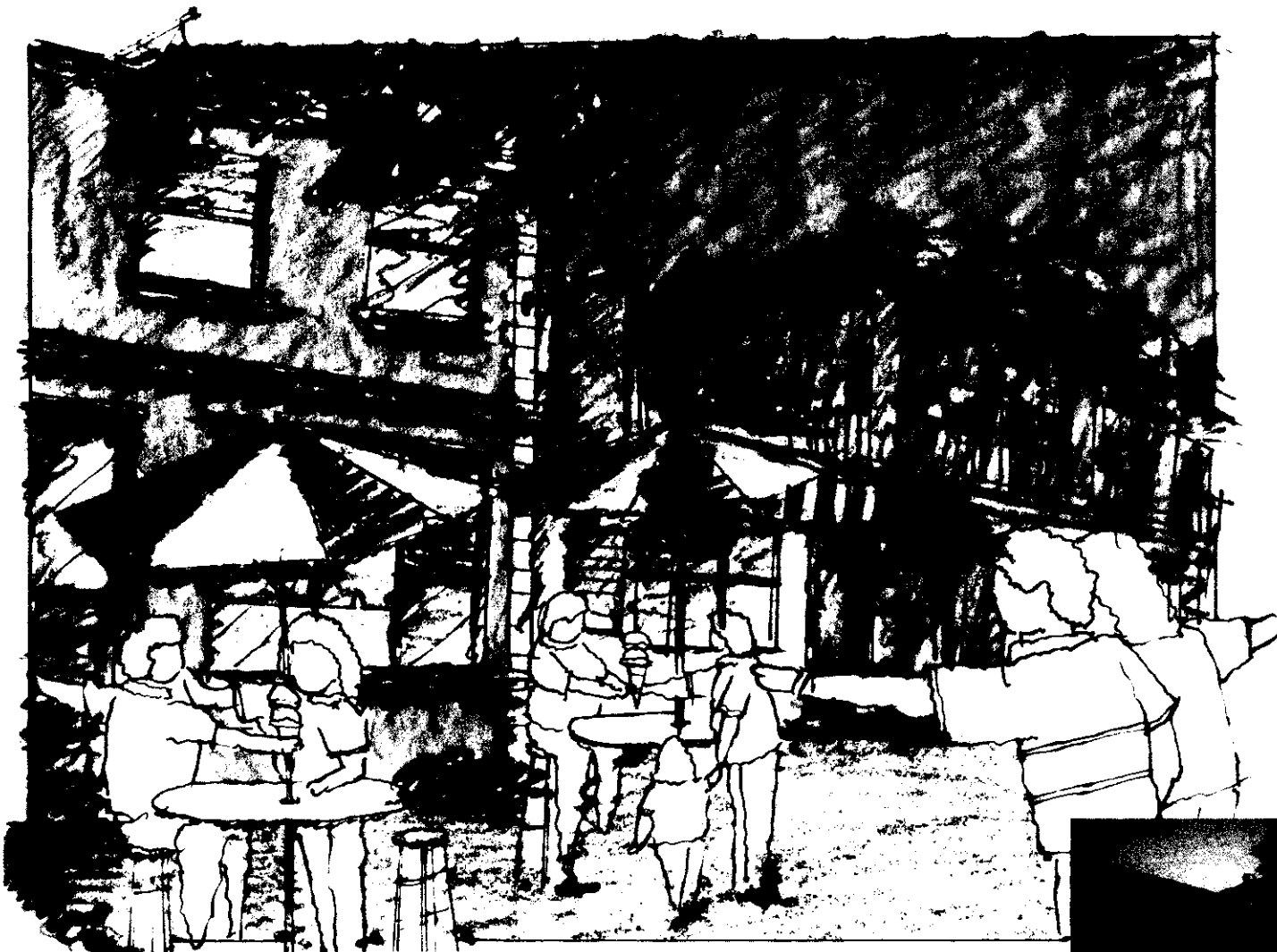
Scenario Two--Eating dinner in Town



Downtown can become a vibrant place with the addition of streetscape elements and restaurants to attract and keep people down there.

Elements of the Design

Scenario Two--Going for ice cream after dinner



Buildings can be redeveloped as small restaurants, hotels, and even ice cream shops to increase the usability of the area.



Elements of the Design

Scenario Two--Back on the Trail



The trail will bring the people past town, but how are you going to bring them in? There are many opportunities, this is the challenge!

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Ms. Linda Boxx. October 11, 2003

Pictures

The charrette team took all photographs not otherwise cited, October 10-11, 2003 and January 31, 2004.