TIMELESS ARCHITECTURE:
A NEW COURTHOUSE AND TOWN SQUARE,
EMBRACING TRADITION FOR THE GOOD OF THE CITY

A Thesis

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by

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Abstract

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This thesis intends to study how some American cities have faced growth and detrimentally relocated their civic identity, the courthouse, to isolated new sites outside the city. All too often cities are making choices, due to tremendous growth, to abandon the historic center and hastily disperse the community beyond its periphery. In order to embrace tradition and maintain a sense of place, cities must find ways to maintain their historic center, keeping important civic functions at the core and clearly defining the city edge. As a case study for this thesis, an alternative design for a new courthouse building and new town square in Monroe, Georgia will be proposed. Special attention will be given to the study of classical architecture and traditional urbanism to prove the
Shaun Horsman Yurcaba

significance of maintaining healthy, timeless cities with a civic identity and sense of place.
Many thanks and much appreciation goes to my loving husband and best friend, Ryan, and to my wonderful parents for helping me to accomplish the seemingly impossible. Their unconditional love, support and encouragement has been steadfast and I am forever grateful. Without Ryan by my side cheering me onward throughout this journey, I could not have endured. I look forward to continually sharing our passion for architecture together.
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And finally, my sincere thanks go to my classmates, and the entire faculty and staff at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture. The past two years have been unparalleled for which I will always remember.
The intent of this thesis is to propose strategies for the failing American small town to become once again a rich and meaningful place that is not only sustainable but also embodies a sense of place. Cities and towns are the fora for community. Strong communities need healthy cities that are shaped by good and timeless Architecture and Urbanism. Most American towns were conceived and began their development with this focus but, in recent decades, many have lost their direction. In order to correct this, it is essential that historic towns embrace and adapt to growth while reversing the effects of modern planning that have weakened historic centers and encouraged suburban sprawl. It is of utmost importance that the places where we live and engage as citizens be of the highest quality, so that the best of human civilization can thrive. The city, its architectural and urban milieu, is what shapes, and is a reflection of, the values and cultures of its inhabitants.

Cities should be built for longevity. They should grow with the understanding of the effects they will have on today’s and tomorrow’s generations. Traditionally, cities were built with materials and methods that would last for hundreds of years. Cities built this way evolved throughout time as the needs of the citizens changed and the city grew. There is no better city in which to understand this than the ancient city of Rome, Italy. Rome was built well to serve its people, government, and religious needs. It evolved as was necessary, but did so in such a way that it sustained the important continuity between
architecture and urbanism. The buildings that each generation inherited were adapted to fit each generation’s changing needs. The built environment was not held as sacred or thought of as expressing particular moments in time as modern day preservationists’ claim nor were buildings valued as documentary evidence of historical epochs in a way that inhibited needed new construction to make the city viable, yet meaningful. Even today, as Rome evolves many of the city’s buildings are being used despite their long history and age; and the fact that they continue to be used maintains their connection to their urban context. Cities today have much to learn from Rome’s example about how to design, plan and adapt in order to provide and sustain a more significant built environment over the long term.

As a result of the advances of the Industrial Revolution the advent of the automobile, and new modernist theories, cities (specifically American cities) began to change. Traditional materials and construction methods were left behind and long-standing principles of design were orphaned for new technology. Modernism’s influence changed our communities, our built environments and our lifestyles. Modernism’s main contribution, as proven repeatedly, has been buildings and places that are temporary and self-referential. Cities are no longer designed and built for longevity or timelessness. The effect of modernism on our cities today has caused places to lose civility and significance.

It is imperative that we look at why cities today are failing and why they lack good architecture and urbanism. It is also essential that we change our current philosophy as it relates to the built environment so that cities can evolve into rich and complex places. Good cities contribute to the fostering of better citizens and good citizens contribute to the making of better cities. This thesis will attempt to analyze and
prescribe the components of a good city in order to provide new hope for our failing towns and cities.
INTRODUCTION

Good, timeless architecture and urbanism can only be achieved by knowing what makes them good. Therefore, as both example and subject, this thesis will use a small historic town to explore issues described in the thesis statement. Monroe, located in rural Georgia, will serve as the case study for this endeavor because the issues this town faces are typical of small towns across America.

In the 1930’s Monroe was a perfect example of the courthouse town. Today it is facing the detrimental results of sprawl development and misguided historic preservation. The town faces tremendous growth and has given in to cheaper and more convenient development located outside the town center. Because of this sprawling landscape, the town of Monroe is displaced and the sense of community diminished; a circumstance that can be found all over America. Not understanding the consequences of relocating its important civic institutions to the seemingly better (i.e. cheaper) land outside of town. Monroe has changed its economical and political structure. It is now a town driven by tourism, dependent on nostalgia and memory.

As a result of the growth impacting Monroe and all of Walton County, the town has abandoned its historic courthouse after recently building a new Municipal building in former farmland outside the town center. The original courthouse is no longer used for civic functions but serves as a courthouse museum and city offices. The new Walton
County courthouse is not a part of the historic center where it traditionally would have served as the primary identity of the town.

This thesis will redefine the historic center in order to strengthen the original fabric of the town and delineate the historic town edge. There will also be a defined new town edge that surrounds the historic center and embraces the old neighborhood fabric. To reconnect the historic fabric to the urban center the thesis will propose new infill that consists of residential, commercial, civic, religious, and recreational functions. The strengthening of the corridors that lead into and out of the town center will be addressed.

This thesis will also explore an alternative design proposal for the Walton County courthouse in Monroe, Georgia that relocates the civic building back into the center of town. Inserting the courthouse back into the center of Monroe is significant, both symbolically and urbanistically, as it helps to re-establish the town’s civic identity and hierarchy within the urban fabric. This new courthouse will be representative of the city of Monroe but will also draw on precedent studies of other classical courthouses.
CHAPTER ONE

THE ENDURING CITY: ITS ARCHITECTURE, URBANISM
AND PRESERVATION

1.1 Traditionalism and the City

1.1.1 A City of Tradition

There is much to be learned from Tradition. Tradition is defined in the New World Dictionary as: *a long-established custom or practice that has the effect of an unwritten law; specifically any of the usages of a school of art or literature handed down through the generations, and generally observed.*¹ Tradition, in the sense of practices manifested in architecture and urbanism, can inform us of what works and doesn’t work in the built environment. Tradition, being “tried and true”, therefore should influence what we do today, not only how we live but also how we build our cities.

A city steeped in tradition is one that has an established sense of place. Tradition, as applied to cities, can describe many things, but this discussion will focus on traditions that shape the physical, built environment (i.e.: materials, techniques, and design). The use of locally available materials is logical, economical, and results in a city and buildings that are appropriate to their place. The use of local materials usually means local craftsmen develop techniques and traditions that are particular to these materials, lending the city identifiable characteristics of local craftsmanship. These local materials

and techniques are the sources of the familiarity that helps to create a sense of place. Tradition can also be found in the arrangement or layout of the city. Numerous cities in America were originally established on gridiron plans with centers, squares and tree lined streets. In cities of hot, sunny climates streets are often arranged to capture cool breezes while providing shade with local trees, building overhangs, etc.

The tradition of a city is significant because it helps to establish one’s roots with the past and a familiarity with one’s heritage. The relationship one has with the past provides answers to such questions as why we are the way we are and why we do the things we do. Tradition offers reason and understanding; these bring meaning to our lives and perspective about things greater than ourselves. This relationship to the past is in danger of being forgotten as our cities move farther and farther away from tradition.

1.1.2 Classicism and the City

Classical buildings have an important and relevant role in cities. They are designed according to the highest standards that tradition has brought us concerning proportion, rhythm, tectonics, and materials. The Classical tradition represents two of the greatest civilizations, Greek and Roman, and their different forms of government, aspects of which America adapted and combined as our government. Classical architecture helps to create hierarchy and provide order to the city by celebrating the government and religious functions. Charles Siegel states, “(a) human-scale classical architecture can help promote the belief in enduring human values that we need in the twenty-first
century.”  Good classical buildings make important buildings for cities because of their rigorous design, care in craft, devotion to traditional materials and techniques, and humanity, both in scale and design. Classical buildings should still be designed today for government and religious functions in order to continue the tradition of civic importance.

1.1.3 Architecture vs. Building

Traditionally, cities have been made of a variety of building types and designs according to their uses and functions. Cities inherently have a hierarchy of building types and designs that make up the fabric. The buildings which make up this fabric may be distinguished as foreground buildings and background buildings. It is important to distinguish the difference between foreground and background buildings.

Foreground buildings may be described as being those devoted to the civic livelihood of the citizens. Foreground buildings typically have a scale and character more monumental than surrounding structures, and the materials used are more rich. In addition, foreground buildings have a greater level of articulation in their design. Applied correctly, this articulation can explicitly show the function of the building. Foreground buildings are those that significantly contribute to the city both architecturally and urbanistically. Representing the highest level of importance hierarchically, foreground buildings establish the order of the city and their role is greater than that of background buildings. Examples of foreground buildings would include capitol buildings, courthouses, post offices, banks, theaters, libraries and churches.

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2 Charles Siegel, “An Architecture of our Time.”
Background buildings within the fabric of the city have the primary role of accommodating the people’s everyday needs. With background buildings, the scale, materials, and architectural articulation are less specific to the building’s use. The role of background buildings is to help shape the streets and squares of the city, while establishing the context or framework within which the foreground buildings can stand out. Examples of traditional background buildings include commercial and retail buildings, as well as residential buildings.

It is important for a healthy city to maintain its built environment while keeping good balance between both foreground and background buildings. Once this balance shifts or becomes displaced, the city will be in danger of losing its center, its framework, or possibly both.

1.2 Urbanism and the City

1.2.1 Relationships between Architecture and Urbanism

The significant relationship between architecture and urbanism is crucial as it helps to establish hierarchy within the city. A clear hierarchy contributes to the way the city functions and is experienced. Without the appropriate relationships between architecture and urbanism the sense of place is easily lost or forgotten. In Principles of True Urbanism, Henry and Suzanne Lennard state that "(w)e can learn from traditional cities that still have strong communities how the specific design of streets and squares can encourage a rich public life, and how the form of buildings and their relationship to..."
the street can support this." 3 When communities have declined due to the side effects of sprawl they are left with vacant blocks, misused blocks, vast building setbacks, big box stores out of scale with the existing downtown, and many unseen issues including lack of community and civic involvement, increased car travel, and others.

Establishing a city core as the nucleus for which everything else surrounds can help define hierarchies within the built environment. To have a central core is to imply that there is also an edge or boundary that surrounds the center. This core and edge relationship is important as it forms the center and edge of town. This in turn helps to create a sense of place, which brings awareness, thus providing civic identity. Living and working in a community that has a clear relationship between its architecture and urbanism, one is able to orient oneself within the environment. Once growth occurs outside of this core and begins to follow its own set of principles the important relationships between architecture and urbanism can be lost, but more importantly, people are drawn away from the center. This is the case in most cities, towns, and communities today. Léon Krier points out that our cities or "(u)urban centers are not called ‘historic’ because of their age, but because of the maturity and genetic power of their organizing principles. These principles are transcendent, and timeless." 4 It is those transcendent and timeless principles that traditional cities have been built upon, both in the architecture and the urbanism.

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1.2.2 Defined City Center and Edge

A good city should have a defined edge that separates its more planned environment from the rural and more natural environment. The edge can be described as being the transition point between urban and rural, from one realm to another. The urban area is more planned and controlled whereas the rural area is less so. This defined edge serves as the point where one begins to realize the importance of the city and their role as citizen within that city; where the city provides order the country allows disorder.

The city with a clearly defined edge must also have a clearly defined center that serves as the nucleus. As one approaches the city and passes through the edge, there are changes that indicate one’s arrival in the city. With the city center being the nucleus, the urban fabric and buildings around the edge should intensify as one nears the center. The city center has a greater proportion of civic (foreground) buildings compared to fabric (background) buildings. However, the fabric buildings located around the city center are larger in scale and have more elaborate detail to help define the center.

There should be a crescendo effect from the edge to the center and a diminuendo effect from center to edge. Procession through the city from edge to center is critical for establishing a sense of orientation, arrival or departure. This type of organization or plan for the city helps to emphasize when one has reached or departed the city.

The planning of the architecture and urbanism helps to identify one’s place in the city in relation to the center or edge. A city that has both a clearly defined center and edge is an environment that establishes a sense of place. Our sense of place is important because it not only helps to identify where we are, but how, why, and what we are in our
communities. Over the past fifty years, we have been losing those things within our communities that contribute towards our sense of place. It is important that we re-establish city centers and edges to restore our sense of place and traditional self-sustaining communities.

1.2.3 Nodes and Corridors

Nodes and corridors connect and announce the edge and center. Nodes can either be primary or secondary. The city center is a primary node. Secondary nodes include gateways, monuments, and statues. Corridors define the importance of the city as it crescendos towards the city center. Corridors are defined by narrowing of street widths, the usage of sidewalks, and the inclusion of street trees, smaller building setbacks, and taller building heights.

1.3 Modernism and the City

1.3.1 Modernism’s Effect on Architecture and Urbanism

Architecture and urbanism are integral to creating a viable and livable environment. Models of this principle can be found all over the world. In the past century the built environment in America has stepped away from tradition by trying to create a newer revolutionary model while embracing the modern thinkers (architects, planners, and engineers). Architecture and town planning are now separate professions, where they were once a single profession. Because of this separation and specialization, the former integration of the two (each could refer to the built environment as its proper
study) has become a foreign concept. As a result our communities have become places with no connectivity or sense of place. This can plainly be seen in the individual commercial stand-alone buildings that are being built all over the country.

Most town planners do not understand architecture and have reduced their expertise to the science of zoning. Zone-based planning began as a means to separate factories from residential neighborhoods for a healthier lifestyle. This quickly tore cities apart. As we see today, 'single function zoning' creates problems within cities because it doesn't allow for flexibility or the diversity of uses. An unmistakable side effect—and some would argue impetus—of zoning, is the necessity of private transportation, the automobile. With this growing dependency the road network that supports its growth increases also. Many cities struggle with encroaching road networks which have come to dominate the built environment.

We also see the results in our historic communities that do not or can not adjust to new growth because of cost or inconvenience. This sprawl, or unstitching, is also reflected in the deteriorated state of our culture in America today. Everywhere we look examples can be found, and the sad thing is that most people are ignorant or content with this way of life.

1.3.2 Preservation as a Modernist Philosophy

The neglect of historic town centers is largely due to the impact of modernism and certain ill effects from historic preservation. Since modernism began there has been a shift toward cheaper and quicker building methods in addition to perceivably bigger and better techniques. However, this shift in focus often produces buildings that are
temporary and of poorer quality. The shift also promotes inappropriate growth inside and outside the historic centers resulting in overall decline. Historic preservation efforts narrowly treat architecture and urbanism as isolated pieces of history to be represented as ‘moments in time.’ This practice, while saving a historic building, many times creates a “dead building” which usually operates as a museum or houses some passive function; it doesn’t directly contribute to the livelihood of the city.

Modernism was built partly on disciplinary specialization and highlighted uniqueness, two elements which have yielded unfortunate consequences. The field of Historic Preservation, which evolved from modernist philosophy, greatly impacts our built environment. The current practice of preservation can be viewed as limiting cities from evolving in ways that would better them. There are priorities in historic preservation that are formulated by an obsession with saving architectural “objects” that represent distinct historical periods. Because of this, our cities lack and will lack the continuity that should exist from generation to generation, where we learn from and build upon our past. Modern preservation philosophy has steadily caused buildings to be isolated, treasured monuments of our past. Because of this our cities are at risk of poor urbanism.

Some historic towns today are being revitalized more to accommodate tourism and nostalgia rather than as truly livable communities. Historic preservation is a modernist philosophy that is wrapped up in a romantic obsession with the past.
CHAPTER TWO

PROJECT SETTING AND HISTORY

2.1 The Town Setting

Located forty-five miles east of Atlanta is the rural town of Monroe, Georgia. Officially established and incorporated in 1821, Monroe was created to service a trading route that ran north-south and to be a center for to the surrounding fertile agricultural land and farming industry. Monroe, situated in the geographic center of Walton County, is located halfway between two large cities, Atlanta to the west and Athens to the east. [see figure 2.1.3] Because of this central location near larger growing cities, the town of Monroe is currently facing exponential growth. With this rapid growth, the town has been unable to sufficiently handle the increase in population and businesses. As a result, the city has developed the surrounding land that was once largely dedicated to farming. The town edge now blends into the new suburban landscape and is being encroached upon by relentless sprawl development. Once a thriving town, rich with characteristic traditional architecture and gridiron streets, today Monroe displays vacant or misused blocks, and meaningless newly-built architecture.
Figure 2.1.1 Historic Monroe Jailhouse (left) and historic Hotel of Monroe (right)  
(images drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)

Figure 2.1.2 Monroe Aerial Photograph from 1912: This aerial photo of Monroe,  
Georgia depicts the town when it was a thriving, healthy community balancing civic,  
residential, and agricultural; all integral with the downtown center.  
(image from Georgia Historic American Building Survey, online database)
Figure 2.1.3 Map of Georgia: This map depicts the location of Monroe with respect to three large cities and the resulting growth from being in close proximity to increasing development. Monroe will continually be affected by the surrounding growth. (map created by Shaun Yurcaba)
2.2 History of Monroe

The north/south road, Rogue Road, through the area that became known as Walton County, originally served as a trading route for the Cherokee and Creek Indians. Rogue Road later changed its name to Broad Street when Monroe was settled. Running east and west was the old road—later named Spring Street—which linked Atlanta to Athens with Monroe as the midpoint. The crossroads of Broad and Spring Streets is where the center of Monroe was located, and it has been the setting of the courthouse since 1821. These two roads form the Cardo and Decumanus from which the town’s gridiron urbanism is established. [see figure 2.2.2] The town that began as a hamlet slowly grew and developed as a linear settlement along the old trading route.

In 1818-19 Walton County was created by the Lottery Act and shortly thereafter in 1821 the town of Monroe was established. As mentioned previously, the crossroads became the center of this new town:

the courthouse was moved to this more prosperous village, Rogue Road was made the main street and a grid of blocks was laid out on either side of it. Alleys, seldom used in Georgia after statehood, were laid out in Monroe where they divide the blocks facing the long sides of the public square. The courthouse was built in a block and faces Broad Street,…This “Augusta” type plan was a typical solution for fitting a courthouse and public square into an existing liner-oriented town.  

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5 Joan Niles Sears, The First One Hundred Years of Town Planning in Georgia. Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1979. p. 111
Figure 2.2.1 Sketch of Historic 1883 Walton County Courthouse
(sketch created by, Shaun Yurcaba)
Figure 2.2.2 Sanborn Map of Monroe, Georgia, 1916: This Sanborn Map shows the new development along Broad Street and Spring Street as well as the new courthouse square. (image from Georgia Sanborn Maps, digital database)
In 1821 the land around Monroe was ceded to the State by the Creek Indians. Designated the county seat in November 1821, the town was named after the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, and the first courthouse (which was a log building) was erected. The town of Monroe originally was a thriving trading center because of its central location in the cotton growing area of the Piedmont in Georgia. For this reason it, like many other cities of this time, was a place of much activity. Centering this activity was the courthouse square.

The courthouse and its surrounding square became the focus of many communities. County seat status was an attraction for commercial and residential development. County government was an industry. Courthouse squares became regional centers for agricultural activities as Georgia’s farmers brought their produce to market. The square became community assembly spaces featuring celebrations, commemorations, political rallies, and, in some cases, public hangings. Courthouse grounds were typically adorned with monuments celebrating the community’s history and its leaders and memorials to war veterans. During court week, courthouses and their adjacent squares were exceptionally busy places.  

Monroe’s importance grew in 1850 when the railroad line was laid and train depot erected. [see figure 2.2.3] This new, more convenient transportation made it possible for people to travel and relocate to new places; therefore Monroe grew significantly during the late 1800’s. There was fervor among County Seat towns such as Monroe because of the anticipated possibilities brought by the growing Georgia railroad system.

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After the Civil War, along with the excitement of the railroad coming to Monroe and the anticipation of tremendous growth, the town desired a bigger and better courthouse. The resulting Walton County courthouse [see figure 2.2.4] built by architects Bruce and Morgan in 1883 is a fine example of the Second Empire style. Some of the characteristic architectural elements of that style are large windows, bracketry and latticework, mansard roofs, and dormers.

This 1883 courthouse has character-defining elements that could be interpreted as exemplifying the political sentiment that existed during that time. After the Civil War there was a lack of trust in government among Southerners, especially in rural communities like Monroe. Many of the people in small rural communities disliked the government, feeling that it was an oppressive and controlling force. Because Monroe was the county seat to many small rural communities, I would argue that the courthouse design directly reflects the anti-government sentiment and typical classical courthouse architecture. On the other hand, one could also see the design as more of a reflection of what the people are rather than what they aren’t. Wilber Caldwell, an architectural historian, believes the courthouse “symbolized the aspirations and the collective self-image of the people of th[is] town.”

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were used on the 1883 courthouse that could also be found in the countryside on farmhouses, such as the large windows and front porch. These features reflect the desired transparency and connectedness between the people and the government.

Either way it is viewed, the Monroe courthouse is representative of an architecture of the people rather than of government, which was common in the South after the Civil War until around 1910.

Figure 2.2.4 Sketch of 1883 Historic Walton County Courthouse
(sketch created by, Shaun Yurcaba)
Figure 2.2.5 Walton County Growth Diagrams: These are diagrams depicting the growth of the railroad and automobile in and around Walton County. Monroe situated in the center of the county was and is greatly affected by growth. (diagrams created by, Shaun Yurcaba)
Figure 2.2.6 Historic Monroe High School  
(image drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)

Figure 2.2.7 Historic Bank of Monroe  
(image drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)
Figure 2.2.8 Historic Monroe Chapel (now the local Theatre)  
(image drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)
Figure 2.2.9 Historic Monroe Methodist Church
(images drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)

Figure 2.9.10 Historic Monroe Post Office (now the Art Guild)
(images drawn by Shaun Yurcaba)
CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT SITE INFORMATION AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Existing Conditions

The center of Monroe is quickly being displaced to the surrounding undeveloped agricultural land. Commerce and municipal services are moving outside of the traditionally located central business district around the courthouse square.

The town center has retained some of its rich architectural and urban environment and it has potential to be a thriving sustainable community. There are, however, misused and unused lots within close proximity of the historic courthouse square. There are also many buildings that are non-urban, meaning they don’t face the street or hold the edge of the block, which is important in an urban setting. With the recent growth of Walton County, and particularly Monroe, the 1883 courthouse could no longer accommodate the new needs of the people and a new courthouse was built outside the town. In addition to the courthouse being displaced, the post office too, will be relocated outside the town center. Both have been centrally located since the town was built, but now with the displaced center and removal of the key civic buildings to areas outside the town, Monroe will no longer be a pedestrian oriented community.

Monroe has an historic center that should be re-established and strengthened by building good architecture and urbanism. Efforts to retain the gridiron town plan should continue, while working and living should remain within the downtown area. The downtown building fabric that is of value should be rehabilitated and the existing infrastructure updated in a way that promotes better civic awareness and responsibility.
New infill development should be compatible in terms of design--i.e.: size, scale, height, massing, style and materials.

3.2 2003 Master Plan Proposal for Year 2023

A twenty-year Master Plan was created by the Regional Development Center for the city of Monroe as well for the greater Walton County area. [see figure 3.2.2] The 2023 Master Plan promotes sprawl development and a displaced community because of the zoning-based approach the town has adopted for planning. The results of this master plan would be a community without a sense of place that is driven by economics and requires automobile dependency. It will be a community that is neither sustainable nor desirable. It would result in the historic town center being turned into boutique shops and lunch cafés while forcing citizens to drive miles to accomplish daily errands and activities.
Figure 3.2.1 Monroe, Georgia Land Use Map for 2003: This shows how the land in and around Monroe is being used today.
(image from Regional Development Center for Walton County)

Figure 3.2.2 Proposed Land Use Map for 2023: This shows how the land in and around Monroe will be used today, utilizing zone based planning.
(image from Regional Development Center for Walton County)
3.3 New Municipal Building

To accommodate the growing community of Monroe and Walton County, the city offices expanded into buildings neighboring the courthouse, however there was a desire to build a new modern facility to house all city functions. To do this, officials saw the answer in wide open farmland rather than unused blocks in town. In January of 2005 the new municipal building [see figure 3.3.3] for Walton County was completed and is located 1.5 miles outside the town center. This new municipal building sits on what had been farm land and is surrounded by vast parking lots on two sides (one public parking lot in front, and a private parking lot in the back). The only way to get to this new government building is to drive and park, often hundreds of feet away.

Figure 3.3.3 New Walton County Courthouse and Municipal Building: This shows the new courthouse building located outside of Monroe. (sketch created by, Shaun Yurcaba)
CHAPTER FOUR

URBANISM DESIGN PROPOSAL

4.1 Master Plan proposal

4.1.1 Re-establishing the Town Center

This thesis proposes an effort to re-establish the town center using several methods to strengthen its urbanism and architecture. It is important that Monroe adapt architecturally and urbanistically in order to face growth while retaining its character. Firstly, the courthouse and municipal services will be placed back in the town center on two existing blocks located east of the historic courthouse. Secondly, there will be an increase in density through infill and the extension of the existing town grid. New civic, commercial, religious, residential and recreational uses will be established or old ones revived. Thirdly, the old railroad right-of-way will be re-established as a light rail transit system to and from neighboring towns as well as to and from Atlanta. And lastly, the town’s historic character and community will be strengthened by creating and naming historic districts or neighborhoods.

4.1.2 Clarifying the Urban Fabric

The urban fabric will be clarified in order to help orient those moving through Monroe, from the center to the edge of town. This will be accomplished by emphasizing a hierarchy between the architecture of the civic buildings and the buildings that make up the fabric. In addition to emphasizing the hierarchy between buildings, the locations of
the civic buildings in and around the town center will be highlighted. A second proposal to clarify the urban fabric is to shift the focus away from the currently predominant vehicular traffic to more pedestrian and rail traffic. The third proposal will be to distinguish park and green space from urban fabric.

4.1.3 Defining the Town Edge

The town edge will be defined through the build-up of corridors into and out of the town center. Areas outside the town center will be clarified and allocated specifically for agriculture to help provide for the community and improve sustainability. Through increased density mentioned earlier and clear urban transitions, there will be a newly defined edge for the town. There will also be a re-defining of the edge of the historic town center. To mark the edge of the central business district and the center of the town, nodes that serve as ‘gateways’ will be strengthened. These nodes will be a church on the north, a library on the west, a post office and town hall on the south, and a park, a cemetery and chapel on the east all leading to the historic and re-defined center and the new courthouse buildings. Establishing and strengthening the nodes and corridors will help tie the town center with the town edge and provide a stronger sense of place.
CHAPTER FIVE

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PROPOSAL

5.1 Building Proposal

5.1.1 Courthouse Buildings

This chapter focuses on the proposal for an alternative design for the courthouse and municipal building of Walton County, located in Monroe, Georgia. As an alternative to the new courthouse municipal building that was recently completed, this building design proposal draws on the premises of this thesis.

To accommodate the needs of the city and the county, two new courthouse buildings are located in town. The new courthouse buildings are classically designed to reflect the honor, respect, and justice associated with government at the highest level. Similar to what can be found in the government buildings at our nation’s capital, these two new courthouse buildings are designed with the most refined of Orders for the town of Monroe.

For the design component of this thesis only the primary courthouse building was designed in detail. The primary courthouse is situated on Spring Street and has three important façade elevations. The west façade faces the new court square, on axis with the historic town square and courthouse. The north façade that faces Spring Street and the historic cemetery is important as it establishes the secondary axis, with the second library then being the primary focus along that elevation. The east façade that faces the new park establishes the node along the east corridor with its relationship to the park and the cemetery. Its prominent park façade helps to bring a civic presence to the
community. The program of the new courthouse encompasses approximately 153,000 square feet of space on the principal floors. Three Superior courtrooms, a law library, and a centralized atrium space are the key aspects of the plan. Since this is a counterproposal to the courthouse that was recently completed outside of the town, the program of this thesis design followed closely to the already established requirements for the other building.

The new courthouse placement within the gridiron plan of Monroe is important because of the relationship established between the historic town center and the new town center. Equally important is the shifting of the town center towards the east to accommodate new growth around the center. The civic square is reoriented away from the Cardo, the north-south Broad Street, towards the Decumanus, the east-west axis along Spring Street. The new courthouse structures are located on the two adjacent blocks to the east of the historic courthouse, facing Spring Street.

The historic 1883 courthouse, which is presently a museum, will be re-established as a courthouse with the main courtroom space used for special, low profile court cases or ceremonial events. Because of new security concerns, in addition to current historic preservation issues, this courthouse should be used for government offices, judges’ offices, a small law library, and selective court cases.
Plate 1: Growth Diagrams
Plate 2: New Growth Analysis
Plate 3: Precedent Study

ARCHITECTURE OF MONROE
MONROE, GEORGIA
Plate 4: Existing Conditions of Monroe
Plate 5: Proposed Town Plan
Plate 7: Upper and Third Floor Plans
Plate 9: Watercolor Rendering of Principal Elevation
Plate 10: West and North Elevations
Plate 11: East and South Elevations
Plate 13: Technical Drawings
Plate 15: Perspectives
CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis attempts to serve all failing historic cities with an example of how to manage new growth and maintain their existing fabric in order to sustain healthy, timeless cities with a civic identity and sense of place. In order to embrace tradition and maintain a sense of place, cities must find ways to maintain their historic center, keeping important civic functions at the core and clearly defining the city edge. The courthouse, which is the most important building architecturally, urbanistically, and philosophically, must remain in the center of the city. Once the courthouse is removed from the center of the city to the suburbs or elsewhere, the city is at risk of becoming dispersed and dissolved. It is imperative that our cities strive to provide their citizens a place that is rich with good architecture, urbanism, and meaning.

The following plates and images are the graphic conclusion to the arguments and statements of the preceding text. These plates show how this can be accomplished in Monroe, Georgia as an exemplar for the American small town.
REFERENCES


Krier, Léon. *Architecture: Choice or Fate*. Windsor, Andreas Papadakis Publisher, 1998.


