

Rural Preservation and Design in the Kentucky Crossroads Region



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RURAL PRESERVATION AND DESIGN

Rural design may sound like an oxymoron. How is design involved in the practical work of farms and other rural activities? How can rural communities make claims to be anything more than ad hoc collections of houses and small business buildings?

It is true that professional design expertise has had less effect on rural than urban places. Given widespread preferences for rural scenery, however, something must be at work to cause us to value them. Rural places represent a history of many small decisions about building on and using the land based on vernacular knowledge, professional advice, and economic necessity. At their best, the integrity of those decisions about buildings and land management result in landscapes of harmony and, occasionally, stunning beauty. Regional and national trends in farming practices, barn design, and house style have affected individual property owners' decisions throughout the history of any rural place. In this sense, the design of rural places is the result of the independent implementation by many individuals of unifying rural trends.



Farmhouses, barns, and other rural buildings are as intentional in style as those in urban places. The ways that farmhouses are positioned presents particular views to those who approach on roads or driveways and they are arranged within their landscapes to create intentional scenery. Scale and style communicate the social and financial status of their owners. At different times in history buildings have intentionally projected an image of modernity and progress, or have used historic imagery to recall feelings about the past, a region, or an idea.

Buildings express regionalism, perhaps more so in the past than they do presently. Regionalism results from adaptation to climate, local materials, and regional economies.



As Henry Glassie wrote, “every building is...the consequence of a collision between intentions and conditions”¹ and regional conditions enforce some similarities onto the process of building.

Work buildings betray their function through form, scale, material, and detail. Most anyone familiar with their region can identify barns used to house tobacco, horses, or for a mix of agricultural purposes. In the case of tobacco barns, shape and scale are all that are needed for identification. Horse barns reveal themselves also through shape and scale, but particularly through a set of details including “cupolas, dormers, arched windows, contrasting paint, (and) door cross-bracing...”² Barns for general agricultural use usually appear as a main mass that supports smaller additions such as sheds and silos.

Building arrangements and other landscape patterns are based on traditional knowledge of work and agricultural needs. Certain work buildings are placed close to houses and others further away. Outdoor work spaces relate to the function of the buildings with which they connect. Barns for dairy cattle, for example, are usually placed close to farmhouses because of the frequency of milking. Tobacco barns, conversely are placed near tobacco fields to minimize hauling, and may be widely scattered on farms.

Not all of the knowledge used to form traditional rural landscapes is vernacular. Farm advocacy groups, the cooperative extension service, state universities, and others have developed and broadcast information about

farm practices for decades. This activity began at least as early as the 1840s with publications such as *American Agriculturist*, *Southern Planter*, and *Western Agriculturist*. It continues today with the Cooperative Extension Service, the state and federal departments of agriculture, the Kentucky Department of Forestry, private groups like the Farm Bureau, and many others. Farm families depend on their land and the improvements they make to it for their livings and so have incorporated useful technical advice from these and similar groups into the design of their properties.

So design is already present in rural places. That design does not always result in beauty, but it does represent intention. In much of the Kentucky Crossroads region, the rural landscape does rise to the level of beauty. This rural scenery is the result not of random juxtapositions, but of harmonious relationships between terrain, vegetation, buildings, and other structures that are organized by the work done in the countryside.

Rural landscapes are constantly becoming less rural. Towns and cities grow into them as their areas expand and their fringes move outward. Non-rural land uses such as residential development, industrial sites, or new commercial enterprises are built in the midst of rural areas. Conversely, rural land uses never invade more densely developed places. The process of urbanizing and fragmenting rural landscapes is not dynamic – it only progresses in one direction and that direction diminishes both the area and the clarity of rural landscapes.



A purist may wish that rural landscapes would not change; that land uses would remain rural and that traditional buildings and landscape patterns would not evolve along with agricultural practices. This is, of course, not possible. Land use change may be slowed, directed, and managed, but never completely stopped. Because land use change will occur, part of the management process in rural landscapes is the planning and design of non-rural land uses and sites to minimize their impact on the larger rural landscape.

One example of this is locating residential development in places where it shares the smallest amount of edge with farms, reducing the impact on agriculture. Grouping houses together into neighborhoods with one acre lots (still quite

large compared to residential properties in towns) rather than spreading them out on five acre lots is a way of reducing the total amount of land converted from agricultural use to residential use.

Designing new rural commercial enterprises such as gas stations so that they fit with their rural context is an example of using design to manage change at the smaller scale. Using traditional building materials and forms, setting a building and parking area a decent distance from the edge of the road, and then using trees, fences, or other landscape material to help situate it in a way that is similar to other rural buildings could easily make the difference between a new business that is considered an eyesore and one that enhances its locality.



Finally, those property owners and organizations who use the quality of the rural landscape to market their products or who maintain sites to educate others about history in rural places should lead in the design of their own facilities. Four basic practices can make this endeavor manageable:

1. Following accepted historic preservation practices will ensure that historic resources are modified in ways that maintain their integrity.
2. Understanding and using the incentives offered by regulatory agencies will reward property owners for following established practices for historic preservation and land conservation.
3. Designing and building new facilities in ways that are compatible with existing buildings and landscapes will create change that enhances life in rural places without detracting from the beauty of rural places.
4. Implementing sustainable site development practices such as using local materials when possible, maintaining water quality by preventing erosion, and preserving habitats will contribute to the quality of rural landscape.

To participate in rural design, then, is to intentionally protect and maintain land uses that are rural, to preserve traditional buildings and landscape patterns, and to design new development to maximize its compatibility with rural landscapes.

The alternative to rural design, rural preservation, and rural planning is to simply accept whatever happens. It is to assume that rural landscapes are of less value than the landscapes that take their place, or at least that all change is inevitable. Loss of rural landscapes is not inevitable; it is enabled by the people who live in those landscapes.

These best practice guidelines are for the leaders of rural design and preservation: those property owners and organizations whose intentional desire is to provide the focal points and examples of rural design. Their purpose is to illustrate ways in which enlightened landowners and residents of the eight counties of the Rural Heritage Development Initiative can continue to develop their rural economies while preserving traditional buildings and rural landscapes and developing new buildings and sites that enhance the quality of their rural places.

How citizens and property owners choose to manage change within the region will vary from county to county. Some counties have planning and zoning, while others have chosen to have minimal input into land use changes in their rural areas. For that reason, the best practices guidelines are written for property owners who are making an individual choice to preserve or to create change that enhances the quality of their rural landscape. In other regions of the country, design guidelines are parts of counties' or towns' planning legislation. They are sometimes applied to specific districts that are considered to have the highest values for preservation. They may also be used to protect scenic corridors or byways as part of a corridor management plan. Other counties use

design guidelines in all of their rural areas. Within the RHDI counties, the idea of these guidelines was proposed as a way to assist property owners without compelling anyone to follow their recommendations.

The guidelines address design issues for three key parts of rural landscapes: crossroads communities, farmsteads, and rural businesses. For each of these landscape types, there is a discussion of the design considerations that can help keep them as functional pieces of their rural landscapes. Along with that discussion, there are also case studies. The case studies describe projects that have already been completed and are used to illustrate site preservation concepts and design process considerations.



RURAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

What is rural landscape character? Is it a made-up idea, defined differently by each person, or is it a tangible quality?

Defining the components of a rural landscape and determining the characteristics that make one rural place different from another is objective and can be described in similar terms by different people. Landscape character has a foundation in the tangible physical qualities of a landscape. Less certain is how those characteristics of a landscape are valued by different individuals and groups. Those differing values affect how one might respond to questions of preservation, design, and change. The literal position of the person viewing a landscape, the scale of that perspective, and how it affects one's sense of the intactness of a landscape also effects the value that one places on landscapes.

Rural

Rural places are sparsely populated areas in which people make a living from natural resources: agriculture,

forestry, recreation, mining, and other pursuits.³ Sparsely populated is not, however, equivalent to vacant or unused. Rural economies involve pursuits that require large land areas to support smaller populations. Though low in population, rural areas are busy with the work of agriculture and other enterprises.

Rural landscape

Rural landscapes result from the interactions between people making a living from the land and the intrinsic qualities of the land itself – geology, topography, soils, climate, and vegetation. Rural landscapes within a region are typically variations on patterns. These patterns might include the kinds of crops, the size and shapes of fields, the kinds of buildings and their placement, and the form and character of small communities. The interactions of people and land evolve as new agricultural practices and ways of living develop and the results of these continually layer themselves onto traditional landscape patterns.



Rural landscape character

Rural landscape character is tangible and the features that create it can be defined. Character is defined by the describable set of specific types of features and patterns that compose the physical structure and visual impression of a particular place. Southern Wisconsin and Central Kentucky are both rural places where people make a living from agriculture. Their rural landscapes both contain fields, fences, farmsteads, barns, and wooded areas. They have very different landscape character, however, which one can describe in straightforward terms.

In the scene from Wisconsin below, the fields are used to grow corn and winter wheat. They remain unfenced because

they never contain livestock. Large woodlands occupy stream valleys and steep slopes. Trees are rare outside of wooded areas, but are planted in farm yards. Individual farms contain many kinds of barns and outbuildings, from wooden gambrel-roofed barns to steel silos and grain bins. Barns and other outbuildings cluster very near farmhouses. Contour plowing makes curvilinear lines in the landscape enhancing the perception of terrain. The main character-creating features in this rural landscape near Barneveld, Wisconsin are complex patterns of contour cropping and woodlands in sloped areas, very large open fields on level uplands, a variety of barn types, multiple silos, and the close clustering of houses and farm buildings.



In the scene from Kentucky on this page, every visible field is used for pasture. Fences are prominent because they are needed to contain horses and cattle. Barns are spread across the landscape instead of being placed in clusters. Some of these are horse barns, some are used for multiple purposes, and some are former tobacco barns that may be used for new purposes. Trees are widely scattered into pastures, along fences and roads, and in house yards. There are no large patches of woodland. The main character-creating features of this landscape are the widely spaced barns and outbuildings, the plank fences dividing pastures, and the gently rolling grassland.

The ways in which people build in and manage the landscape to suit the purposes of their livelihood and their homes create the character of these two rural places. Some regions are well-known for their landscape character. The dairy farms of Wisconsin are such a place. Central Kentucky is another regional landscape that is well known and whose image has intrinsic value. Within a known region, some smaller areas may exemplify its rural character more clearly than others. This is the case with many parts of the eight county Kentucky Crossroads region.



Rural Heritage

Change is inevitable in rural places, just as it is in urban places. New methods of construction, new crops, and new ways of producing traditional crops cause new patterns to develop. This change is often slow and appears as a steady adaptation of older patterns. Rural landscapes do not have to be pristine to have heritage value, but some semblance of traditional farming patterns, buildings, and landscape features has to be present in a rural landscape for heritage to be physically present. Equally important is that even as it changes, a rural area remains a place where most of the population is there because they make a living from the land. Rural heritage cannot exist without rural landscapes.

Rural heritage development attempts to capitalize on the distinctive character of traditional rural landscapes to enhance local economies with heritage tourism. It can contribute more than financially to the quality of life within a region. Conservation of heritage and of the landscape character that is distinctive to a place affects the quality of local residents' lives when it helps to maintain landscape characteristics that they value.

Understanding the character of rural landscapes is the foundation for preserving their heritage and for compatible design within them. The remainder of this essay describes different ways of understanding the landscape of the Kentucky Crossroads region. Scale of landscape, regional variation, town to rural transects, and landscape preferences all relate in different ways to how one might approach design on a single site, or land use decisions in an entire county.



Scale of landscape

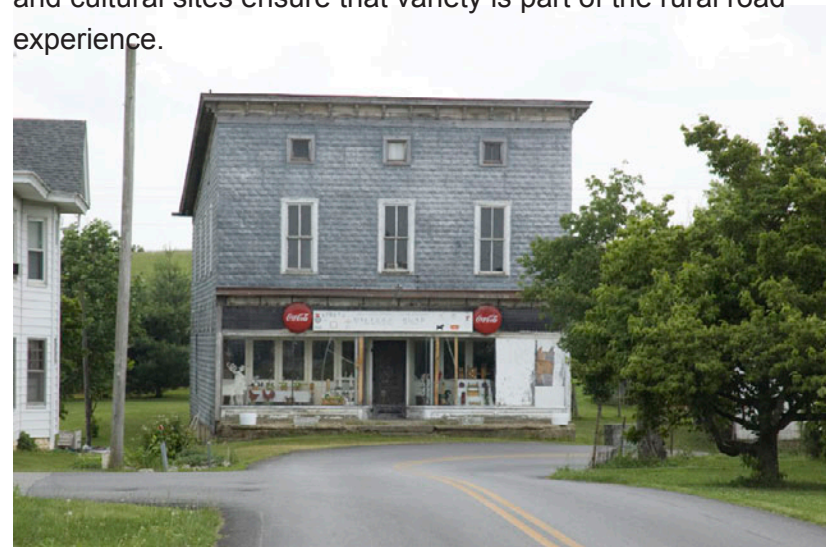
Individual Properties

“Making a living is the single most important human activity,”⁴ and in an agricultural region, people work out their livings on individual properties. Single properties exemplify local traditions in agricultural practices and in the construction of homes, farmsteads, and communities. At the scale of a property there is a balance between individual differences in design and similarities within a property type. There is variety in the arrangement of buildings, building details, and the organization of outdoor areas. There is unity in the scale of houses and work buildings, and in the connection between domestic and working landscapes. There is a traditional consistency in a pattern of residences in county seat towns and crossroads communities that are usually separated from workplaces and residences in rural areas that are usually connected to workplaces. Continuity of roadside vegetation, fields, and fences is balanced by the individuality of houses and farmsteads viewed from the road. This balance has a strong impact on the visual experience of rural landscapes. Preservation of heritage along with well-considered design on individual properties is the fundamental building block for rural landscape quality.

The cumulative view from the road

We perceive most rural landscapes by traveling on roads. Roads constrain our placement in the landscape and the directions from which we will view its scenery. The

speed of our vehicles allows us to accumulate multiple landscape images within short time spans and that in turn allows us to form visual patterns. These mental patterns are formed from the repetition of landscape features. Roads place these images and patterns within fixed sequences. This offers those in the region opportunities to consider the cumulative experience along a road as something that can be not orchestrated, or designed, but at least influenced by preservation, design, and planning. Land use planning, incentives to property owners, knowledge of and voluntary application of best practices, and opportunities for interaction with the landscape at commercial or cultural sites all can be part of a strategy for enhancing the experience of rural landscape. Planning and best management practices can protect the continuity of rural land use while heritage preservation and opportunities to interact with commercial and cultural sites ensure that variety is part of the rural road experience.



The region

Regional landscapes cannot be comprehended in their totality. We instead perceive them as sets of images or place experiences. If one is asked to imagine a well-known regional landscape – the old Spanish heartland of New Mexico, for example – a single image of the entire region is unlikely to be formed. Instead, one starts to imagine adobe buildings around a town plaza, traditional pueblos, views of distant mountains, sheep grazing in chaparral, and other images. All together, these image sets form a sense of the region. When these images are no longer present in reality, the identity of the region has been transformed or perhaps its place identity is lost completely.

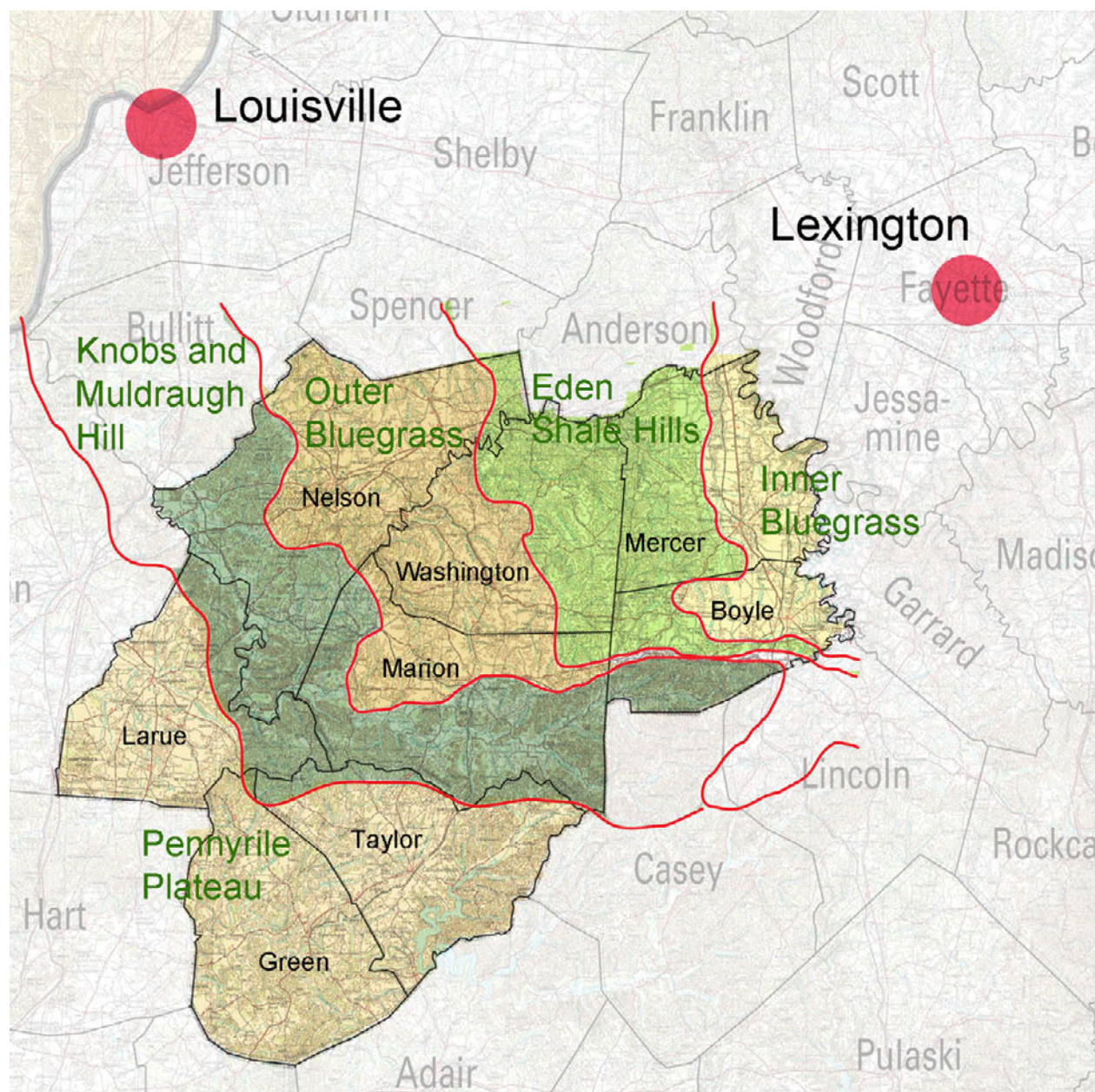
The importance of this to heritage tourism and landscape character is that it places great importance on individual places and properties. That importance is shared with regional topography, agricultural practices, and large scale vegetation patterns which create background settings for regional landscapes that are punctuated by the features found on individual properties. Some of these properties provide landmarks that extend their identity to a broader area of influence. These might be an outstanding barn, house, or church or a distinctive view. The cumulative effect of repeating patterns of property development and landscape organization results in a sense of regional character, so even at the regional scale, the actions that take place on individual properties are important.

Regional geography and variation

The eight counties of the Kentucky Crossroads region compose a rural region that is an exceptional example of traditional relationships between agricultural countryside, county seat towns, and smaller rural settlements. The region is surprisingly uncluttered with large rural subdivisions or other land uses that blur the distinction between town and countryside. It is also, however, a diverse landscape. From its northeast to its southwest edges, it spans across clear changes in topography, agricultural patterns, and landscape character.

There is no single landscape type or scene that can symbolize the entire region. From the large horse and cattle farms of the northeastern part of the region, to the wooded knobs that separate the Bluegrass and the Pennyrile, and to the interspersed wooded valleys and open crop land of Green County, the Kentucky Crossroads region changes dramatically over a short distance.

Geological differences across the region caused different terrain and soil conditions to develop over millions of years. Each variation in terrain and soil creates differing capabilities for agriculture and other land uses. The people who settled and continue to live in the region have responded to those capabilities over the last two hundred and thirty years to create a distribution of land use and land cover with distinct variations. The arrangement of buildings, fields, barns, and other elements – the character of the landscape – follow regional divisions as well.



This map shows the boundaries of the eight counties in the Kentucky Crossroads region and the boundaries of the five physiographic regions that form the landscape base for those counties.

The geography of central Kentucky is like a series of concentric rings that radiate out from Lexington, which lies at the center of the Inner Bluegrass. Each ring out from the Inner Bluegrass is a distinct landscape region lying atop its causative geological formation.

The eastern two thirds of Mercer County and the northeastern quarter of Boyle County are in the Inner Bluegrass region of Kentucky. The Inner Bluegrass is mainly level to gently rolling land and pasture occupies a high proportion of it. Horse farms and more numerous cattle farms are supported by the pasture lands of the Inner Bluegrass. The large size of the farms causes farmsteads to be spaced fairly far apart on large parcels. The productivity of agricultural land in this physiographic region has decreased the financial pressure to sell off smaller parcels for residential development. Newer rural residences less frequently line rural road edges as a result. Trees are found along fence rows and stream edges. Major wooded areas are in the steep valleys of tributary streams flowing into the Kentucky and Dix Rivers. Views can be quite open in this region, but long views are limited to occasional high points. Salvisa, Harrodsburg, Shakertown, and Danville are located in the Inner Bluegrass.

The Eden Shale Hills are west of the Inner Bluegrass. The Eden Shale is a steeply dissected area of broad ridges, steep valley slopes, and narrow bottomlands that comprises the western third of Mercer, the northwestern quarter of Boyle, the northeastern half of Washington, and small parts of northeastern Marion and eastern Nelson Counties. Land cover in the Eden Shale Hills is approximately half woodland and



Inner Bluegrass



Eden Shale



Outer Bluegrass



Knobs

half agriculture. The woodlands include large areas of cedar thickets in old pastures and fields, and wooded stream valleys. Agriculture uses of land are predominantly pasture on slopes and ridge tops. Smaller tobacco fields are confined mostly to more level areas on ridge tops, and some areas where the bottomlands are wide enough for fields. Development patterns are very linear: houses and farmsteads are close to the roads on the ridges and along streams. Because of the steep drops into the valleys, views are expansive and long. Mackville, Cornishville, Mayo, and Chaplin are all in the Eden Shale Region.

West of the Eden Shale Hills the terrain becomes smoother in the Outer Bluegrass region. This region forms a band through the center of Nelson County, western Washington County, and most of the northern half of Marion County. The Outer Bluegrass region is less steeply dissected and more gently rolling than the Eden Shale. Bottomlands are broader and rise more slowly to the rolling upland. Ridges are less defined as topographic features. The landscape is more open but views are usually shorter because there are few places of prominent elevation. Land cover is less than twenty percent woodland, with the remaining land in agricultural use interspersed with rural residential development. Prime farmland soils are widely dispersed through the region. Most of the agricultural land is in pasture and hay, but there are significant areas of cropland. Roads and associated development are less restricted by topography, so they are spread further apart than in the Eden Shale region and follow more direct lines between communities. Bloomfield,

Bardstown, Springfield, and Lebanon are in the Outer Bluegrass.

Disconnected round-topped hills with open valleys between characterize the Knobs Region that includes western Nelson, southern Marion, and southwestern Boyle Counties. The Knobs form a band around the Outer Bluegrass, separating it from the Muldraugh Hill escarpment and the Pennyryle Plateau. These steep slopes provide a dramatic backdrop to many of the lower-lying farms and communities located at their bases. The region is over eighty percent wooded, but appears as if it has more farmland because most of the roads and development are spread in linear patterns through the agricultural areas between knobs. Agriculture in the knobs region takes place on gently sloping upland areas and on terraces between knobs and stream valleys. The small areas of prime farmland soils are mainly in hay and tobacco. This region contains large amounts of contiguous forest cover that protects the steeper slopes from erosion, supports a higher level of biodiversity than the other regions, and provides another economic resource: timber production. Most of the views in the knobs area are from the lower elevations, and are contained by hills. Boston, New Haven, Bradfordsville, and Forkland are in the Knobs Region.

The Muldraugh Hill escarpment is a steep, forested, and convoluted slope at the edge of the Pennyryle Plateau. There is very little agricultural or residential development on the Muldraugh Hill. The escarpment provides a strong horizon line seen for many miles as it is approached from the north and east. Most roads that ascend the escarpment do so by



Muldraugh Hill



Pennyryle Plateau

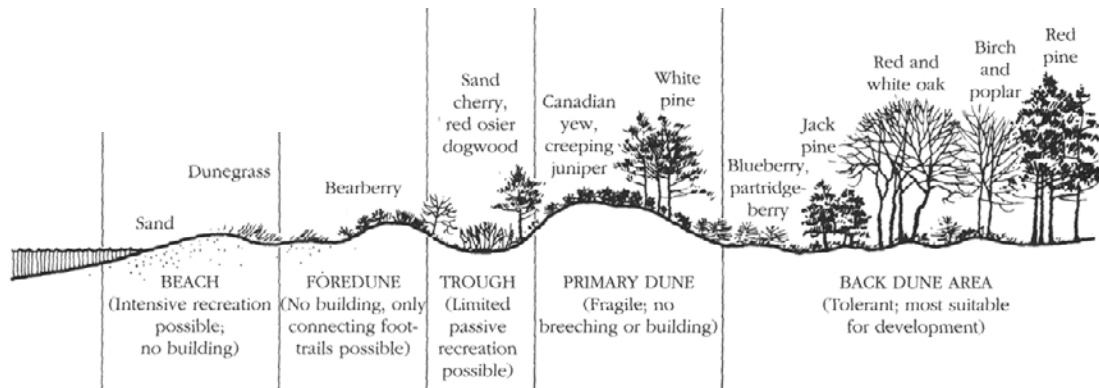
way of one of the many steep sided stream valleys that cut into the edge of the Pennyryle Plateau. The ascent or descent through these forested valleys takes a relatively short distance, but is a memorable contrast to the more open plateau and knob landscapes on either side. The Muldraugh Hill extends along the eastern edge of Larue County and along the border between Marion and Taylor Counties.

The Pennyryle Plateau is a rolling landscape whose eastern and northern edges are formed by the Muldraugh Hill escarpment. Nearly all of Larue, Green, and Taylor Counties are in this region. The Pennyryle Plateau is the most diverse of the landscape regions in the Kentucky Crossroads counties. Dimpled sinkhole plains, steep wooded landscapes near the Green River, and nearly level agricultural landscapes are all found within the Pennyryle. Views in the Pennyryle are highly varied. Nearly Midwestern views of level farm fields and farm buildings predominate in Larue County. Taylor and Green

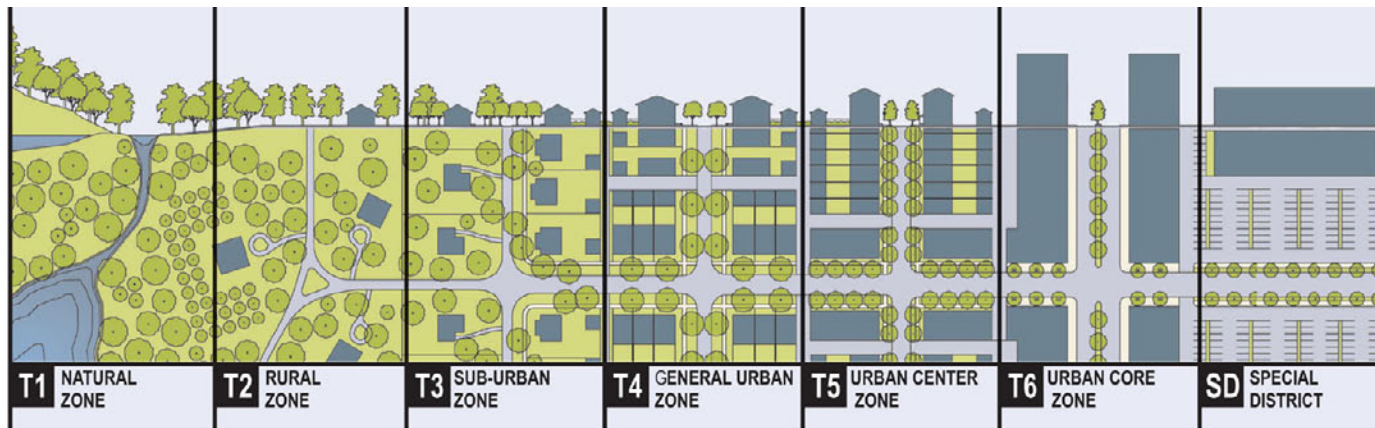
Counties have level upland farm views interspersed with wooded slopes and stream valleys.

Each of these landscape regions contributes a different kind of scenery to the experience of the entire Kentucky Crossroads region. Visitors who travel in the region can take away a sense of the diversity of rural landscapes found there if they are exposed to them in a way that celebrates the distinctiveness of these varied places. A primary goal of preservation and design in the Kentucky Crossroads should be to maintain the distinctiveness of landscape regions and individual places. Preservation does this by retaining those features and landscapes that are representative of the way people have lived and shaped their environment in different ways in different places. New design can strengthen the distinctiveness of regions by following traditional patterns when new houses, businesses, or other developments are proposed.





An ecological transect, left, from *Landscape Planning: Environmental Applications*, by William Marsh and a planning transect, below, from Andres Duany.⁵



Rural landscape transects

Those who live there and those who visit usually experience the landscape of the Kentucky Crossroads region from a car. Roads define for most of us the specific locations of our landscape experience. Roads also cause our experience of landscape to be linear and sequential. A road route can

actually function as a cross-section through a region, providing a method for understanding the nature of the larger area.

Ecologists and others in the natural sciences have long used cross-sections or transects as tools for documenting relationships between terrain and biological communities. Planners have begun to use them as a way of documenting changes in density and development type – from the centers of towns out to rural areas.

Our expectation of a transect from one county seat town to the next would likely have the following profile. Relatively high density commercial and institutional uses would dominate the center of a town. The transect would then pass through residential areas which might become increasingly less dense as the transect passed from the center to the edge. A transitional zone at the edge would give way to the lowest building density and the largest land parcels in the agricultural area outside of the town. Rural settlements – clusters of houses near a store, school, church, or a combination – would interrupt the agricultural density, but would be widely separated. The transect described possesses a predictable gradient of densities. Residential uses would be densest in towns, would be spread thinly and evenly in rural areas where residences are mostly on farms, and occasional clusters of residences at crossroads would punctuate the rural gradient.

To understand the extent to which the landscape of the Kentucky Crossroads region is changing, it is helpful to examine the linear experience of an actual rural landscape gradient along one of these routes. Imagine how a typical sequential landscape experience might unfold in the Crossroads region on a road between two county seat towns: Harrodsburg and Lebanon on U.S. 68.

Our sequence begins at the intersection of Poplar and Main Streets – the traditional center of downtown Harrodsburg. This is the densest concentration of buildings we will see until we get to the center of Lebanon. The four square blocks that focus on this intersection have a nearly urban density. The wall of buildings is continuous along the streets. There is





unity of height and spacing, but great variety in detail. Moving south from the intersection, we pass the courthouse square, churches and other institutional buildings, and the view centers on the old city hall and opera house, which terminate South Main Street. Turning right on Moreland leads to College Street (US 127) and its north-south strip of fast food restaurants and other drive-up businesses.

Crossing College Street we enter into a neighborhood of mostly mid-twentieth century homes interspersed with some older and larger homes. This neighborhood ends where Perryville Road (US 68) turns southwest off of Mackville Road (KY 152). Houses on both sides soon give way to a road segment with houses on the left and a school complex on the right. Finally, a small apartment complex in front of a single family subdivision ends the housing development that extends out from Harrodsburg.

A group of farms occupies the land past the apartment complex. The more open agricultural portion of the drive is short-lived. Within a half mile, there is a string of houses spaced at 200 foot intervals set on perhaps one acre lots. This residential development screens the view from the road of the farmland to the north and west.

Following this smaller lot development is about a mile long segment where houses on five acre lots are interspersed with farm properties.



After a mile, a more uneven pattern begins: occasional long stretches of farmland and farm buildings are divided by other stretches where both large and small lot residential properties mix with farm properties.



Near the Boyle County line, there is one small traditional settlement called Nevada with a declining old general store building and a group of houses.





In Boyle County, the pattern of non-farm housing on large lots mixed with farm properties continues. One mile from Perryville, two cul-de-sacs lined with residences extend west from the highway. A mile of farmland continues and then we enter the residential edge of Perryville, a crossroads community along the Chaplin River.



Perryville has a small and compact downtown on the east side of the river. Commercial buildings that line the edge of the sidewalk occupy three sides of the town's main intersection, but this pattern changes to houses on lots in a very short distance.

An older commercial district called Merchants Row occupies the west bank of the Chaplin River. Our route turns south on Buell Street, passing the two blocks of Merchants Row. A line of nineteenth and twentieth century houses about a half mile long forms the transition back into the countryside.



The road bends to the west and is lined by farm properties. This section west of Perryville contains rural residential lots, but they are fewer in number and spaced further apart than in the stretch between Harrodsburg and Perryville. About five miles out of Perryville, the path of US 68 begins skirting the knobs which lie to the south. These wooded hills form a backdrop to farms and farmland that are only occasionally interspersed with non-farm residences.





Large lot rural development spaced at frequent intervals reappears about four miles from the eastern edge of Lebanon. The density of housing development steadily increases as Lebanon is approached and several cul-de-sacs lined with large lots extend off the highway near the city limits.

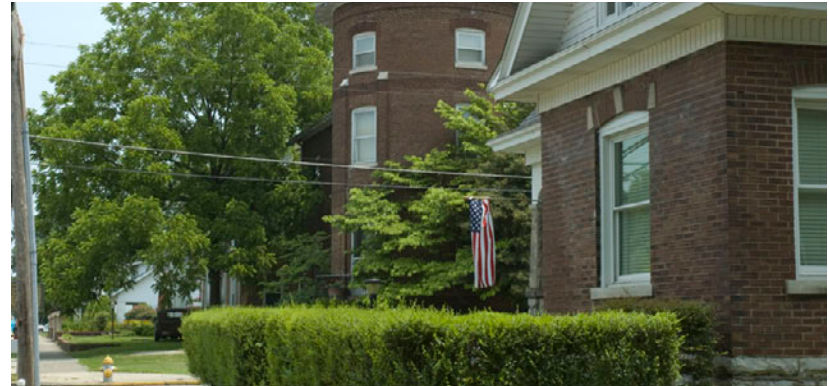


After entering Lebanon, the first mile and a third of the road passes through an area with large buildings occupying large properties. These include schools, retail buildings, health care and industrial facilities, a mobile home subdivision, and a cemetery.

We reach a traditional town neighborhood of single family homes and sidewalks just past Woodlawn Avenue, about four tenths of a mile from the town center. The neighborhood has mid and late nineteenth century homes set in yards with large trees. A block of early nineteenth century townhouses transitions into the town center with its late nineteenth century two and three story commercial buildings.

We of course took this narrative trip between two county seat towns in the Kentucky Crossroads region for a reason: to explore the real nature of an example transect from town to countryside and back. How does it differ from or agree with our assumptions? The contrast in building density along this route is becoming less sharp but still largely represents the idea that there are clear differences in density and land use between towns and surrounding countryside. In all, of the 29 miles on this trip, almost 19.5 miles were nearly exclusively passing through farms. Five miles passed through residential development in the countryside. Three miles were in towns or settlements, and one and three-fourths miles passed through mixed-use development at the edges of Harrodsburg and Lebanon. The major changes from traditional patterns are the five miles of rural residential land use and the nearly two miles of edge development.

The full spectrum of the traditional gradient – from town center to distinctly rural is much more intact between Perryville and Lebanon than it is between Harrodsburg and Perryville. In the five and three-fourths miles between Harrodsburg and the Boyle County line, more than two and one-fourth miles are



divided into large residential lots. On the other hand, there is an unbroken stretch of nearly thirteen miles west of Perryville that is almost exclusively farmland and farmsteads.

In 1941 there were 60 houses directly fronting on the road between the edge of Harrodsburg and the Boyle County line.⁶ In 2009 there were 107 houses in that five and three-quarter mile stretch.⁷ The landscape east of Perryville, like other areas within the Kentucky Crossroads region, is changing.

There were 34 houses and one church fronting on the road between the edge of Perryville and the Marion County line in 1941. In 2009 the number had only increased to 41 houses in that five and one-half mile stretch. Clearly if one were looking for traditional rural landscapes, the area west of Perryville is more promising than the area to its east. The degree of fidelity of the actual transects to our expectations of a traditional rural landscape gradient is one measure of the integrity of rural landscapes. The gradient concept helps clarify some important design goals for the Kentucky Crossroads region:

- To strengthen the commercial centers and economic focus of the crossroads communities, like Perryville, that punctuate the rural landscape.
- To cluster new development near existing communities and to maintain the open character of the rural landscape between those communities.
- To design new buildings and facilities along rural highways so that they fit as much as possible with

existing buildings and intrude as little as possible into the rural landscape.

- To preserve existing buildings and landscape features that make each part of the Kentucky Crossroads region distinctive.

Some of these are design issues, some preservation issues, and some planning issues. The proliferation of rural non-farm housing is in particular a planning issue. Planning decisions about housing and other land uses in rural areas are serious and should eventually be taken up by the counties in the region. In the present, however, individual property owners have significant influence over the character of the rural landscape. The accompanying guidelines for design and preservation best practices are focused on design on individual properties and are written from the perspective that heritage preservation and good design are essential to the character of the region.

Endnotes

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2. Raitz, Karl and Dorn VanDommelen. 1990. Creating the Landscape Symbol Vocabulary for a Regional Image: The Case of the Kentucky Bluegrass. *Landscape Journal* 9(2) 109-121.
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5. Duany, Andrés et al. Special Issue: The Transect, *Journal of Urban Design*, Volume 7, issue 3. Routledge. 2002.
6. General Highway Map, Boyle County, Kentucky. Kentucky Department of Highways, 1941.
7. Based on field survey in May, 2010.