

Steps for Developing Scenic Highway Standards: Concepts to Consider

Scenic Highway Committee Meeting
January 31, 2013

**The following slides are solely intended
to present the Scenic Highway
Committee with**

some

**possible approaches for
creating a set of standards aimed at
ensuring the sustainability**

**Highway 11's
scenic designation**

Step 1- Scenic Highway Committee Initiates Effort

Responsible Party: Scenic Highway Committee

The Committee presents list of concerns over potential loss of Highway 11's scenic designation to Council, noting any suggested concepts for addressing issue.

Step 2- Establish Purpose, Scope of Effort, and Adopt Guiding Principles

Responsible Party: County Council

Step 2 (a)

Council takes up matter and holds discussions aimed at determining scope of effort to successfully mitigate the problem. Some topics to be considered are:

- 1) The value of the scenic designation, and the potential impacts of losing it (tourism, quality of life, etc.);
- 2) The scope of desired protections and the need to balance any regulation with property rights; and,
- 3) The intent to implement standards that both protect scenic viewsheds and attract 'good' development in appropriate locations.

*Value and Scope Discussed in Detail Later

Step 2- Establish Purpose, Scope of Effort, and Adopt Guiding Principles (Continued)

Step 2 (b)

In addition, Council establishes series of 'Guiding Principles' to steer the project; these include:

- 1) the minimization of negative impacts of future development;
- 2) the facilitation of an environment conducive to good development; and,
- 3) limiting restrictions on properties to the minimum necessary for success

Step 3- Create a 'Review Panel' to Study Issue and Report on Needed Standards

Responsible Parties: County Council

Council creates Review Panel that includes representative owners of property adjacent to Highway 11 to evaluate scenic status and recommend standards aimed at improvement.

Step 4- Review Panel Develops Report and Recommendations

Responsible Party: Review Panel

Review Panel evaluates current conditions of Highway 11, identifies existing and future threats to scenic designation, drafts report and recommendations and presents to Planning Commission. (Note: recommendations should be general in nature, with any draft standards to be developed by Planning Commission)

Step 5- Consideration of Report by Planning Commission

Responsible Party: Planning Commission

Planning Commission takes Review Panel's report and recommendations under consideration; works with staff to develop appropriate draft regulations, and submits recommendations to Council for their consideration.

Step 6- Consideration of Planning Commission Recommendations

Responsible Party: County Council

Council takes Planning Commission recommendations under consideration, and takes First Reading on draft regulations; Council holds joint workshop with Planning Commission and Review Panel; following workshop, Council completes adoption.

Discussion of Purpose

Why do it? What are the costs of not doing anything?

Step 2 included a recommendation that Council identify the value of the scenic designation early in the process, which would clearly answer these questions. While there are a number of possible points to consider, the following slides examine a couple of the more apparent ones.

Economic Development-

- Something to consider...Highway 11 is the main north/south artery through Oconee, and a major entry point into the county off of I-85; visitors and potential investors may (probably) base their opinion of the county (and region) largely on the impression left by conditions along the road (that's what people see).
- The attraction of our location and access to interstate may cause some potential investors to overlook issues, but technology and competition for jobs from other areas allow decision makers today to take into account where they want to live (see today's *Anderson Independent* article on Sanctuary Pointe).

- Few areas possess a scenic route, a designation generally seen to be ‘special’ and valuable; failure to take steps to maintain that value may lead potential investors to worry about the local government allowing a lack of stability to threaten their investment.
- Tourism is now a major component of our economic development, and first impressions are a major consideration in attracting revenue from visitors; a major objective established in the Comprehensive Plan states that the County will, “Conserve and protect features of significant local, regional and national interest, such as *scenic highways*, state parks, and historic sites and expand efforts to promote them for tourism.

Quality of Life- Natural, historic and cultural resources always rank high on the list of Oconee residents' priorities. Regardless of political persuasion, maintaining these resources is usually a major concern- the approach to accomplishing it is where most difference lies.

This priority is reflected in the strategy in the Comprehensive Plan that states, “*Review and adopt appropriate standards* aimed at maintaining the state ‘Scenic Highway’ designation for SC Highway 11 and other routes; such standards may be based on adopted Scenic Hwy Corridor Plans or best practices, and may include the designation of the route as a County Scenic Highway.”

Scope of Protections and Balance of Rights:

How far-reaching should any standards be? What will be the cost to property owners?

Most problematic issues can likely be addressed through simple buffering (vegetative screening) to maintain a 'natural' look, implementing some simple property maintenance standards to 'clean up' the worst eyesores, and establishing minimum setbacks for new development to help establish consistency and avoid 'crowding out' viewsheds.

It is very likely that any immediate burden would be at least partially if not completely offset over time through increased values resulting from stability and greater desirability.

What type of standards do other jurisdictions put in place to protect scenic characteristics?

Buffers, Property Maintenance Standards, and Setbacks are very common tools.....

Buffers- Essentially a vegetative screen to partially or completely 'hide' development activity, it also can serve as a visually pleasing tool that helps focus attention within roadway

Concepts for Consideration:

- Require all new residential developments consisting of 3 or more units located adjacent to Scenic Highway 11 to establish/install and maintain a 25' vegetative buffer between any developed areas and the road- leaving existing vegetation should be encouraged.
- All new residential developments consisting of 10 or more units/lots, and all commercial/industrial projects, located adjacent to Scenic Highway 11 required to be approved by BZA as Special Exception to ensure proposed design is compatible with setting.

Property Maintenance Standards- Rules for how property is maintained; typically address trash/refuse, abandoned vehicles, dilapidated structures, and other issues that are potentially eyesores, threats to public health, or attractive nuisances

Concept for Consideration:

- Require all abandoned and/or dilapidated buildings or structures, refuse, litter, trash, scrap, junk, inoperable vehicles and appliances, and other improperly or poorly stored/maintained materials removed or screened so as to not be visible from the roadway- could be imposed through an implementation process over time.

Setbacks- The establishment of a 'building line' a certain distance off of the right-of-way for various uses, with no construction allowed between the line and the road to help retain natural feel, maintain views from the roadway, and enhance appearance of consistency.

Concepts for Consideration:

- New residential development required to be set back no less than 25' from the right-of-way.
- All other development (perhaps exclude bona fide agricultural) could be set back 50'.

Some Potential 'Costs'-

- **Buffers-** Cost of installation if adequate vegetation not present, and limits on activities within buffer area that might negatively impact buffer effectiveness
- **Property Maintenance Standards-** Cost of cleanup if necessary, and requires consideration be given to how future activities should be performed
- **Setbacks-** Limit on activities within setback area

Questions/Comments