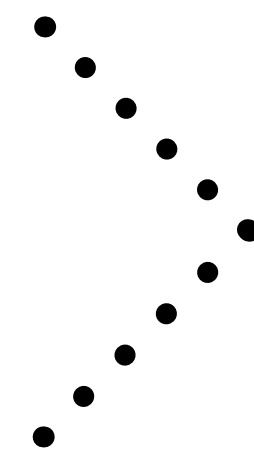
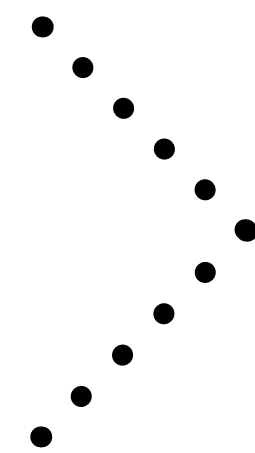


Marcellus by Design



HISTORIC ROUTE 6

SENSE OF PLACE

HABITATS AND CORRIDORS

RECREATION

HISTORIC SITES AND LANDSCAPES

WATER

FOOD AND ENERGY FUTURES

Sense of Place



Blossburg is located in the southeast corner of Tioga County where Route 15 cuts through its west boundary parallel to the Tioga River. It is a small town with 1500 population. In 1792, Patterson brothers first discovered Blossburg which was first named as Peter's Camp. First settler Aaron Bloss changed the name to Blossburg in 1802. 10 year later, the first coal mine opened by David Clemens near Bear Creek. In 1817, coal mines were shipped out of Blossburg through Tioga River. Later in 1840, Fallbrook railway (connecting Williamsport, PA to Corning, NY) was accessed to Blossburg. According to the old schedule from 1890, train arrives at the Seymour Hotel (where today's school building is) at 2:40 pm every schedule date. After the built of railway, Blossburg coal started to shown on the markets in Buffalo, Philadelphia and New York. The town was then thrived. Store, restaurants, hotels and opera hall on the old map of Blossburg indicates that the community was once dynamic and vivid. As the coal mining era ended up in early 1900s, new industry company Ward manufacturing was founded in 1924. It is a descendant of the Blossburg Coal mining industry and the major economy sector of local community. 1969-ariel image shows that the shops on the west side of Main Street were gone and new mall was than built. It was a gas explosion that burns down all the old stores. The old street was paved with stones. Since 1993, residence of Blossburg have started to celebrate Coal Festival ever Memorial Day weekend. It usually takes 3-5 days to honor the coal mining history while holding events like car show, carnival and parade.

Historic Sites & Landscapes Historic Route 6 Water Dynamics Food, Water & Energy Futures Habitat & Corridors Sense of Place Recreation



Reflection of the old street
Right on where the old Tobacco store was, the new mall is selling the same product in a different landscape. The photo was taken in November 2014 during my field trip to Blossburg. The tobacco sale banner is like a ghostly reflection of the old street which was once a thrived town center of coal mining Blossburg.



Main Street Today
Also kown as Williamson road, caught on a major fire in 1960s which destroyed the west side of the street, left a big void which is now the parking lot of the new mall.



Main Street in 1900s
Before the fire, there was more enclosure on the mainstreet. Downtown business was more engaged with the pedestrians



old street businesses photo montage



Where we come from

Perception of sense of place: Both the team members being international students at Penn State are unfamiliar to Tioga County or its historic small towns. To perceive the sense of place of these regions as a local inhabitant would be a different experience for both of us. Thus we started with trying to perceive the sense of place of regions we are already familiar with, our hometowns. One of us is from Chengdu, China while the other had spent a significant part of his childhood

in Haldia, a port township in eastern India. Chengdu is a big city in southwest China. Sense of place of Chengdu includes the buildings and shrines reflecting three-kingdom history. The teahouses, the smell of the local cuisine and sidewalks in the streetscape add to the unique experience of the urban life. The iconic rural landscape in the suburban areas just outside Chengdu marks a threshold in terms of access to the urban life. Haldia is an industrial township housing

a number of small and large industries including an oil refinery. The shipyard and the small river flowing through the town were integral parts of the entire experience about the small town. The planned urban developments and open spaces designated for outdoor activities led to an enhanced interaction among the local people and the kids.

Sense of Place

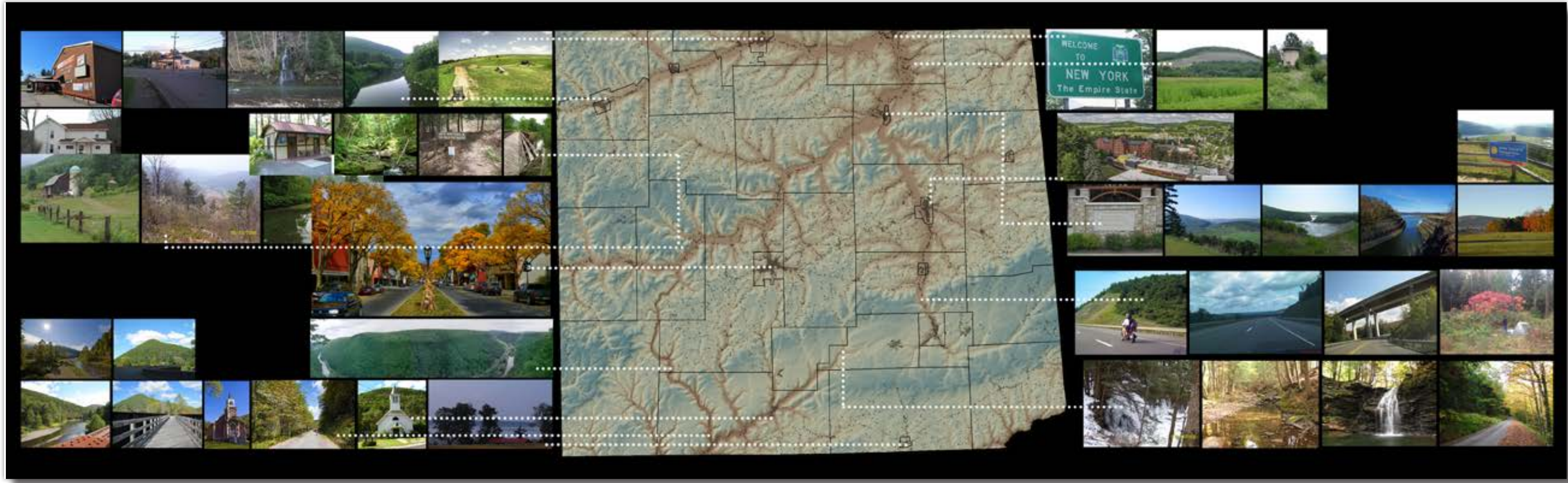
Sense of Place

We started with trying to perceive sense of place for the entire Tioga County. We searched for images from different sources including social network sites to identify what is popular or famous or what people talk about. While Wellsboro is politically important and historically significant, Mansfield is known for its university.

We came up with interesting findings which suggested Wellsboro's political importance in the County, and its popularity as the gateway to Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. People are so fond of the town's historic significance that the historic gas-lit street lamps are still in use. If you visit Wellsboro and walk into a bar, don't be surprised to see on the menu something that says, 'Gas street lamp hamburger'.

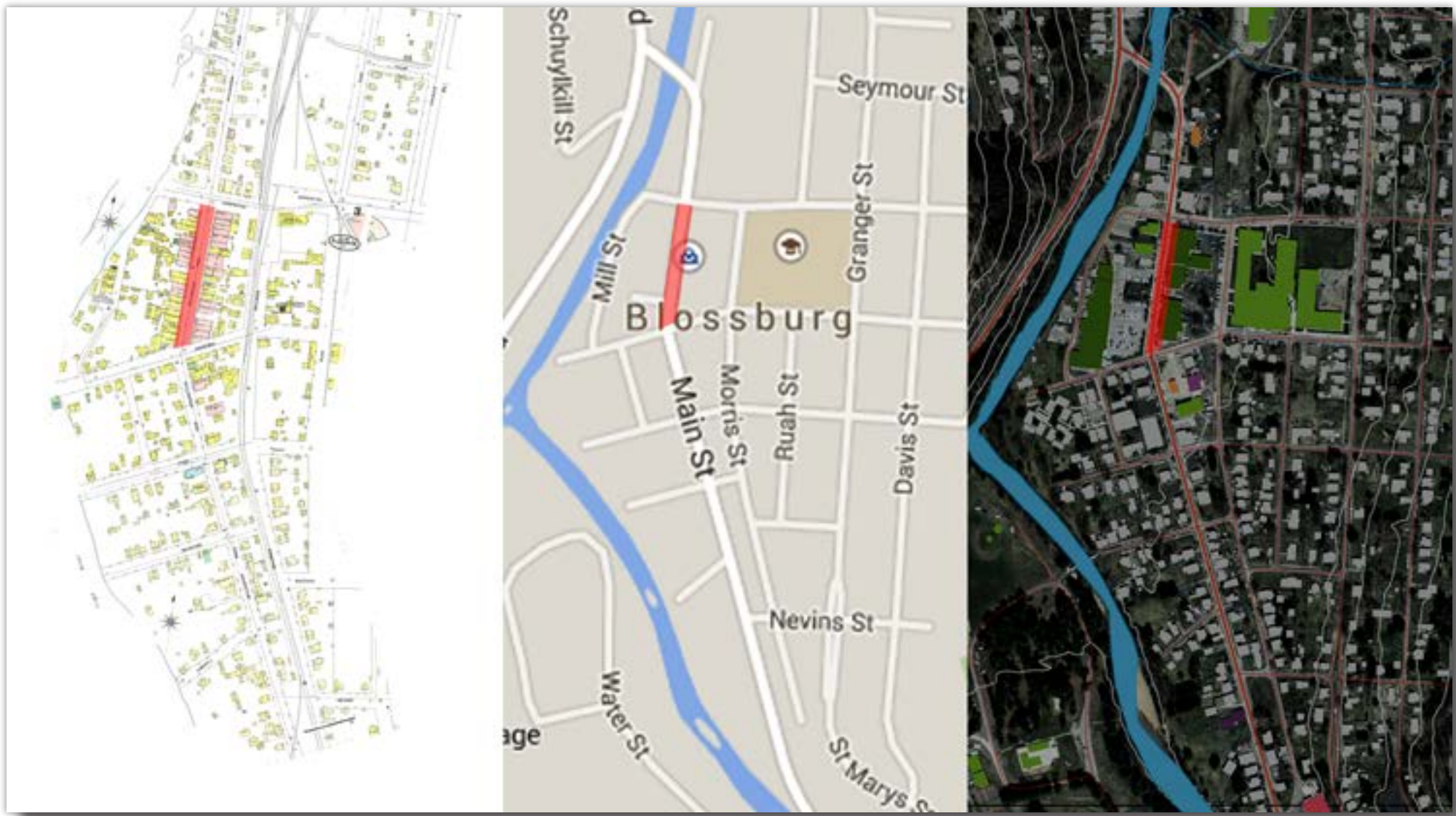
Next, we tried to look at the history of Blossburg using historic maps and photographs. The old maps were obtained from the historic Sanborn maps and the new ones using Google Maps and ArcGIS satellite images. Using ArcGIS we mapped the building footprints and tried to find a relation between the built and open space.

The images on the right show maps from the historic and current times. The coal festival in Blossburg is a popular event that contributes to the sense of place of the town.



Understanding sense of place with images

The images found from different sources show the different elements that are popular in Tioga or that people are proud of. Wellsboro is popular because of its political and historic significance and known as a gateway to the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. Mansfield is known for its university and Blossburg for its history of coal mining. The Coal Festival is still celebrated in the town as a remembrance to the past.



Maps from the past

The historic Sanborn maps with the current maps from ArcGIS and Google Maps.



Blossburg Coal Festival

The coal festival is a remembrance to the historic coal industry in the region.

Sense of Place



The historic maps compared to the current ones from Google Maps and ArcGIS helped us understand the changes made to the spatial form and distribution of the built spaces.

Here we tried to identify the different buildings and images taken from the same places and locate them in order to show the changes in how the town developed. The historic images give us an account of the materials used in construction in the earlier days and the current ones show the changes in the built spaces with time.

Many of the small local businesses in downtown Blossburg have been changed to big convenient stores, parking lots and gas stations.

This has resulted in creation of large open spaces which do not support interaction among local inhabitants in any ways. The newer buildings have broken down the flavor of the historic coal mining town and instead has created a mosaic of open and built spaces that do not contribute to a positive sense of place attachment for the people.



Changing built environment: Comparing historic images of Blossburg

Historic images and current ones show a clear change in materials used for construction and replacement of small local businesses with big convenient stores, gas stations and parking lots.

Sense of Place

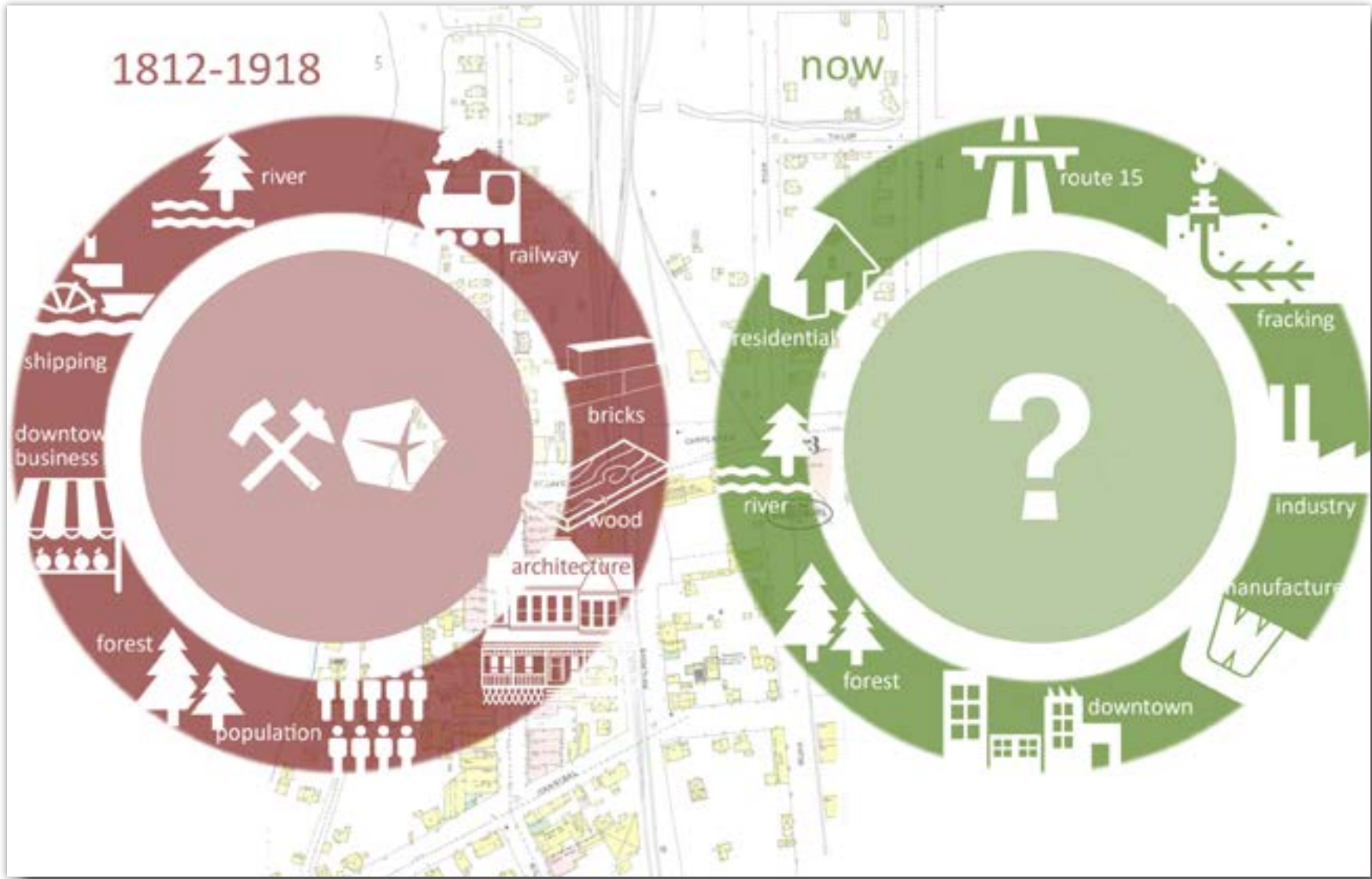


The historic images and maps show different factors that contributed to the sense of place then and now. While some of the elements like the landform, mountains, the Tioga River and the forests remain the same, the main form of transportation has shifted from the Tioga River and the railways to the route 15. The coal industry is now replaced with the shale-gas industry and downtown Blossburg is now host to big convenience stores instead of small local business centers. The building materials have changed from wood and bricks to concrete.

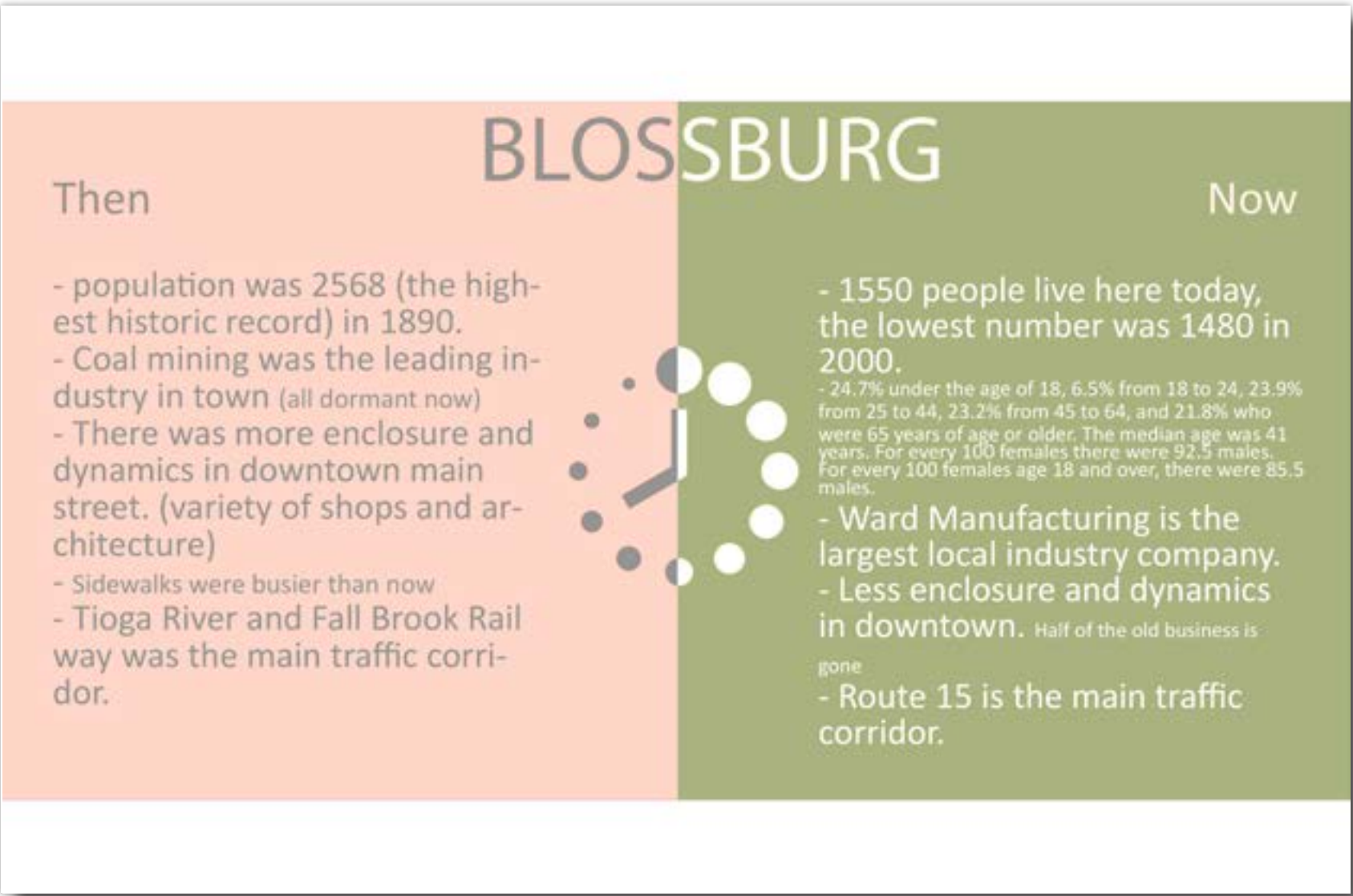
To study the downtown further in terms of an assessment of the relationship of built and open spaces, we created figure-ground relationship diagrams of the historic downtown in 1904 and the current one in 2014.

Downtown Blossburg during the coal-mining industry was more compact. The local shops flanking the main street not only created a cozy atmosphere at a human scale that enhanced community interaction, but also provided a sense of direction in the street.

The current developments show a haphazard distribution of built and open spaces without a distinct emphasis on the main street. This has been partially due to a huge parking lot that acts as an inactive space in the middle of the town. The sections clearly show the difference between the two developments, and the difference in quality of space.



A change in sense of place



Blossburg: Then and now



Changing built environment: figure-ground maps of downtown Blossburg

Figure ground maps and street sections show the difference between the urban fabric that was present in historic Blossburg and in the present day in terms of quality of open spaces thus affecting the quality of human interaction.

Sense of Place

Design Proposals

The design interventions to restore the historic sense of place and improve the existing one are directed towards improving the riverfront and the downtown. Engaging the river with the rest of the town is important so that the water quality and aesthetic values are taken care of in the future and the downtown will be improved so as to enhance interaction of people in the community.

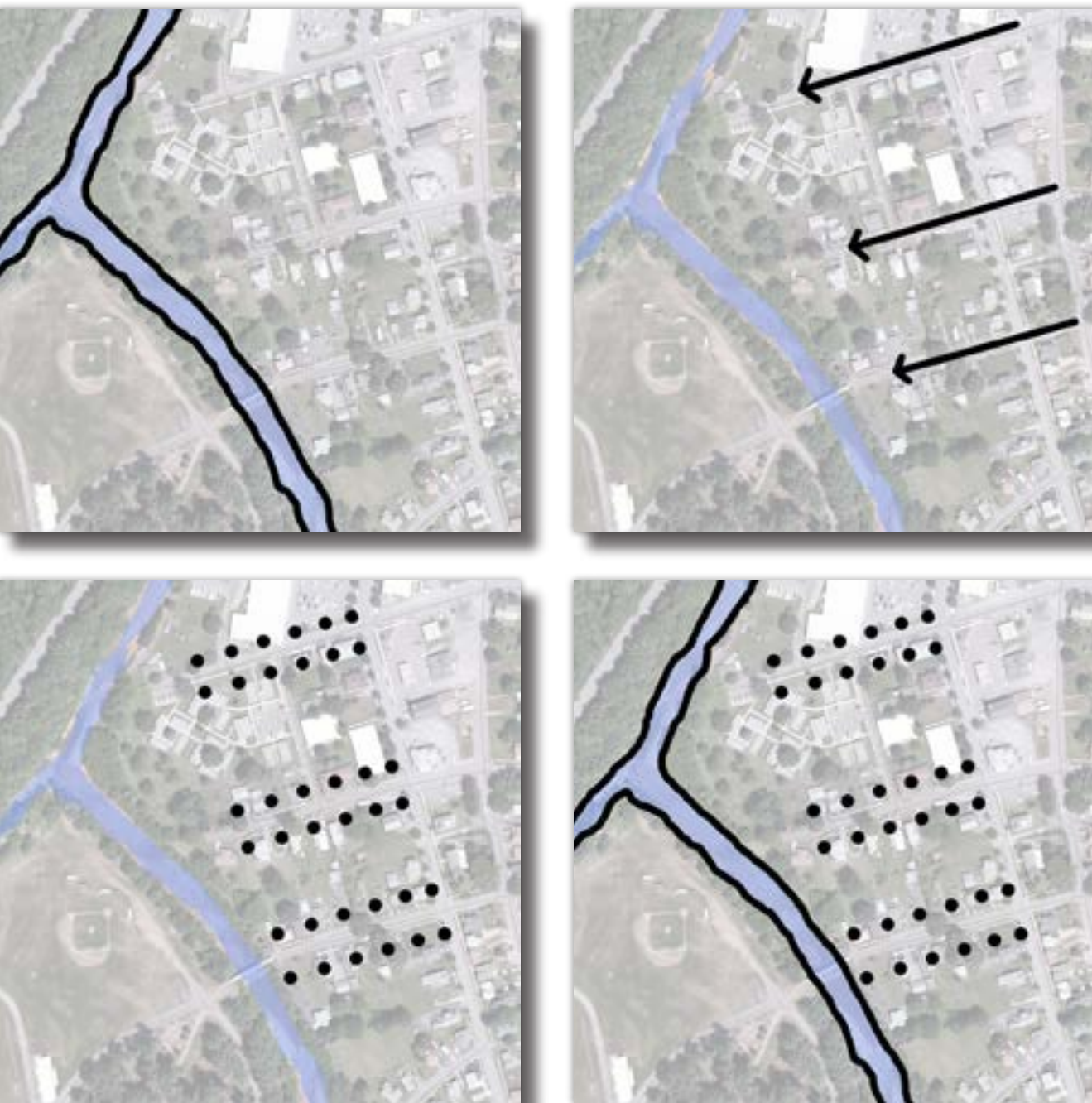
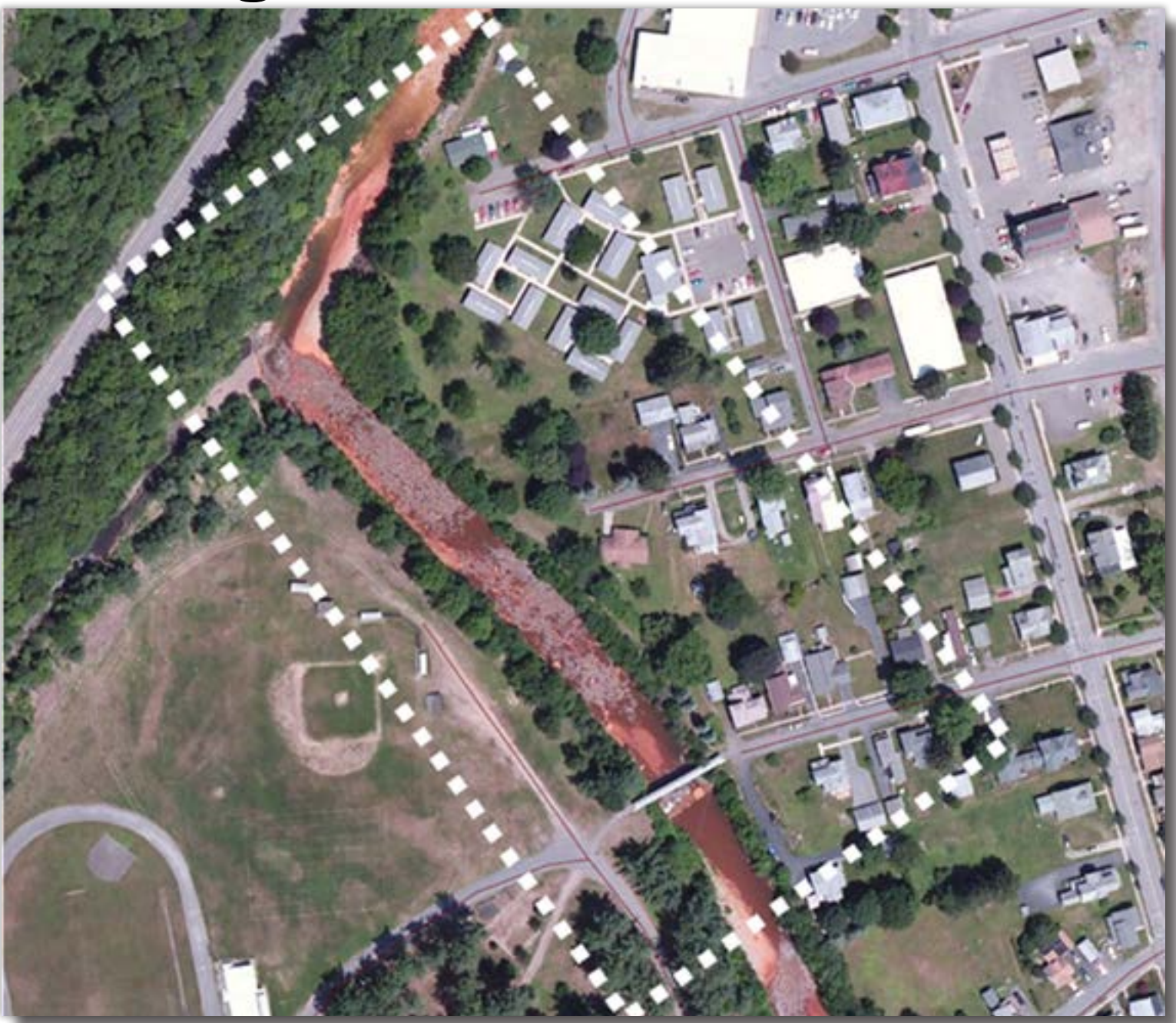


A riverfront development program will enhance the value of Tioga river among the people of Blossburg restoring its position among the town's pride.



Recreating the edge of the downtown main street in terms of elevated landscaped plazas will not only bring back the memories of the old days but will make the downtown a more happening place turning the dull parking lot into an outdoor interactive zone.

Existing conditions

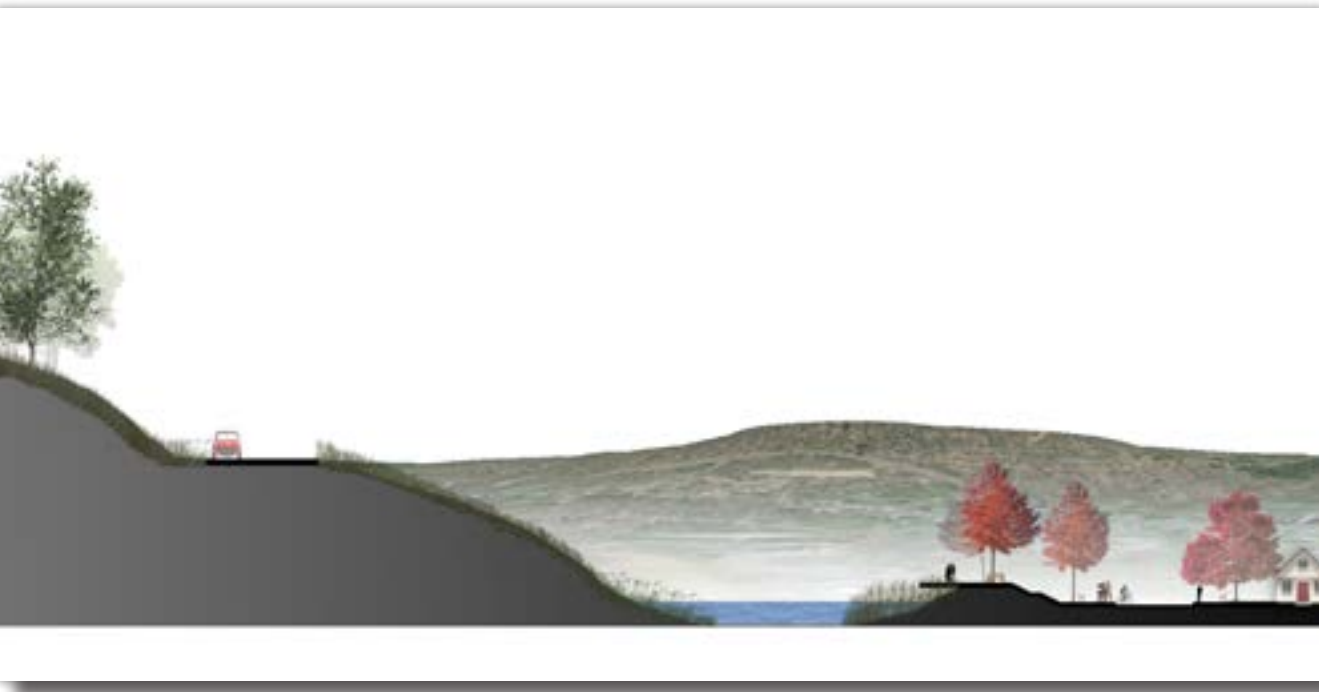


Proposed design



The Tioga river was once important to the town. Now it is not. A river front development project that improves the water quality and visual aesthetic values will contribute to the existing sense of place in a positive way.

Engaging the riverfront in terms of community engagement and connecting it to the rest of the downtown we propose an integration of the river into the existing urban fabric of Blossburg.



Sense of Place

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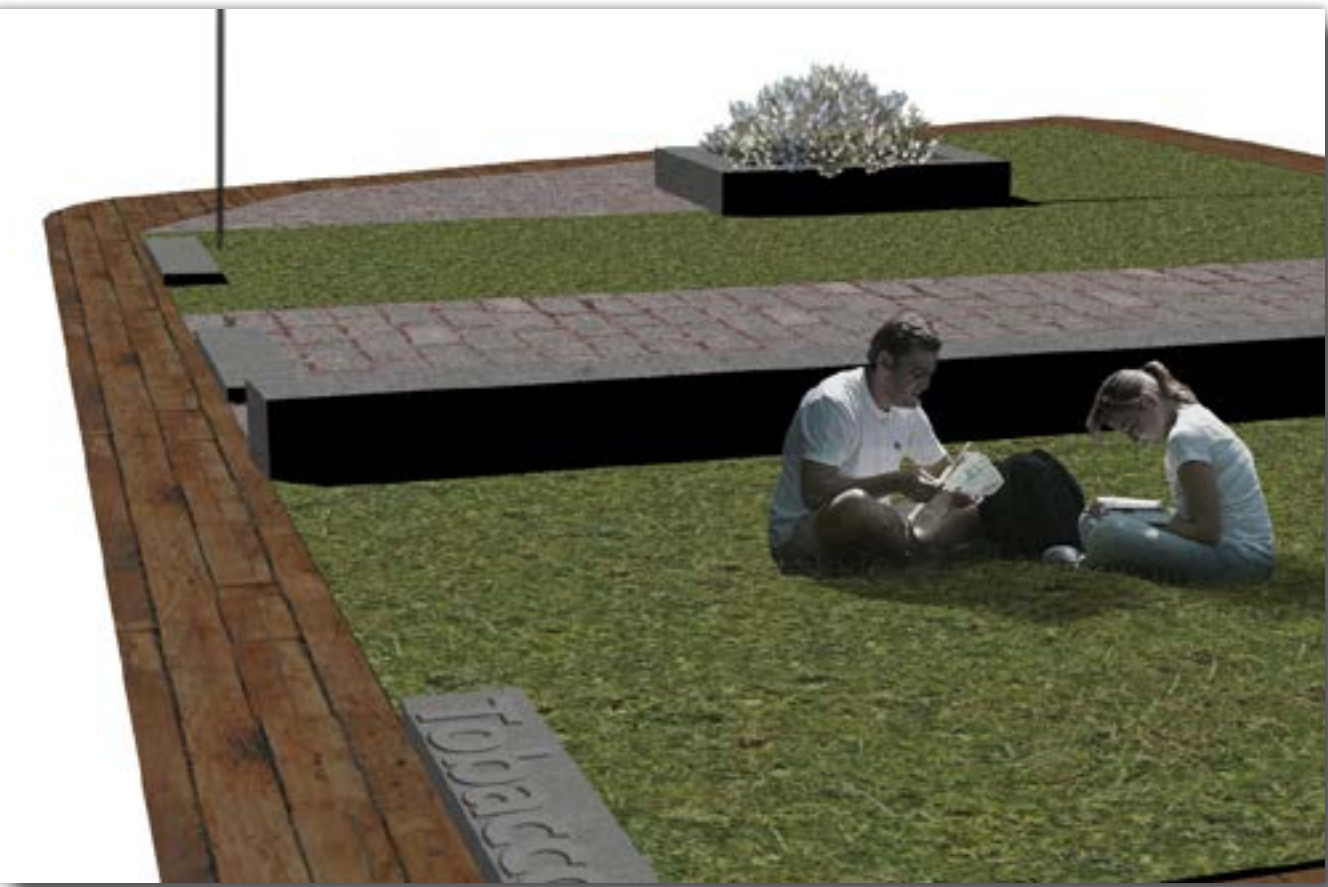
Perspective



Site plan



Bring the hey-day history back to the main street: Instead of filling up the voids on today's main street with buildings, this proposed design brings back the base sites of old downtown stores as the outlines of a new street park where people can enjoy the public space while being reminded about the coal mining history of Blossburg.



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Authors



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I am a second year graduate student at Department of Landscape Architecture at Pennsylvania State University. I have a background in architecture and in future would like to work on regional issues towards social and community development.



Li Bai

My name is Li Bai. I'm a fifth year student major in landscape architecture at Penn State. I found it's very interesting to discover the coal mining history of Tioga County, especially in Blossburg. The local history of a community has very essential impact on restoring sense of place. It is the source of the sense of pride, memory and familiarity. And I believe that intangible sense of place can be presented by tangible landscape design.

Sense of Place