

Produced for the Northwest Georgia Regional Greenspace Plan

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Northwest Georgia is a fifteen-county region occupying approximately 3,223,000 acres in the northwest corner of the State, and stretching across the Appalachian Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Blue Ridge, and Piedmont Physiographic Provinces, and six major environmental corridors are located within it, in whole or in part.

The region is notable for its rich bio-diversity, and many species of fauna and flora that are confined to the region will benefit from the preservation of greenspace to provide habitat.

The same greenspace will provide recreation and wilderness experience to residents and visitors alike.



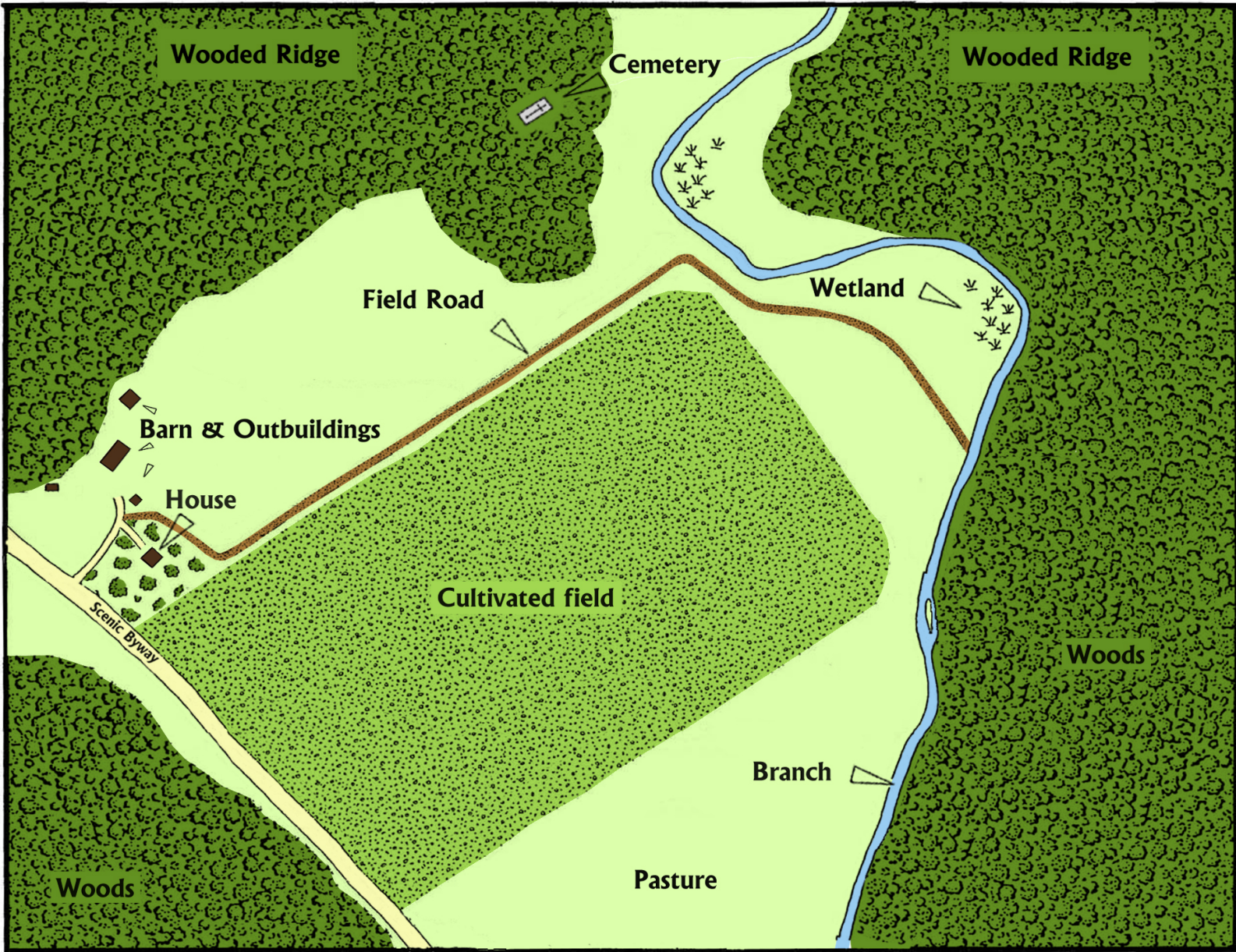
# **DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE NORTHWEST GEORGIA REGIONAL GREENSPACE PLAN**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Northwest Georgia remains largely rural, though accelerating population growth is increasing development and altering the character of the region. Greenspace preservation is one tool to conserve the County's Appalachian character that informs and is a source of pride to residents.

The present Design Considerations are intended as a development design manual to demonstrate how land can be developed while retaining its traditional rural character. The maps in the text represent one discrete, fictional location for demonstration purposes, and each map can overlay the others.

## **NOTES**



## NOTES

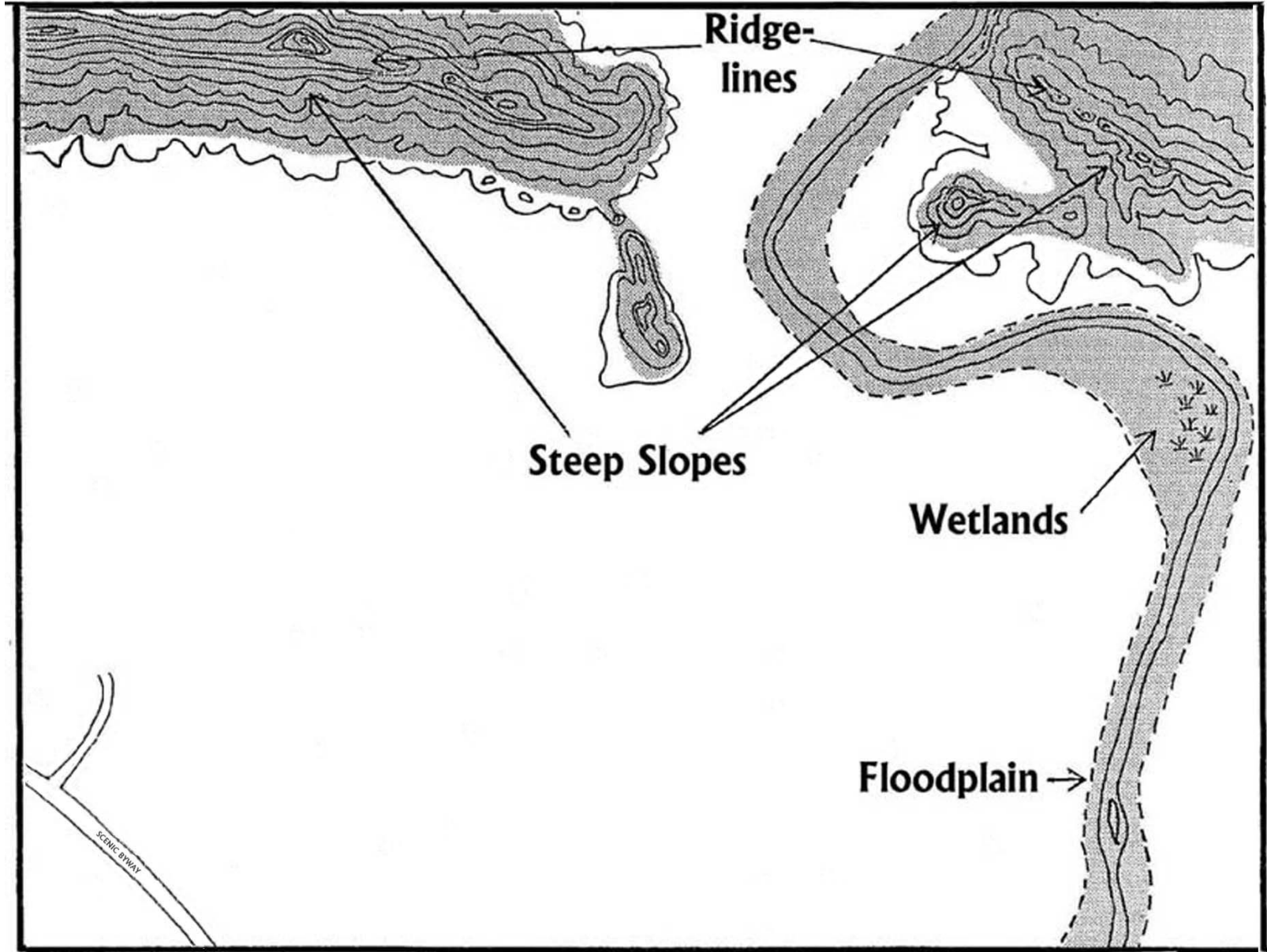
### **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The region still preserves many cultural resources associated with traditional Appalachian life. Often, barns and farmstead outbuildings remain along with the main house. Many fields are under cultivation or in pasture, or are dedicated to some form of animal husbandry. Woodlands still produce timber for lumber, paper, and other purposes.

Dirt roads run through and past fields, and remote areas are served by gravelled alignments. Churches and cemeteries dot the countryside, and along creeks occasional mills or their ruins are found.

All these things represent the continuity of life in Northwest Georgia, and serve as a link to the past.





## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

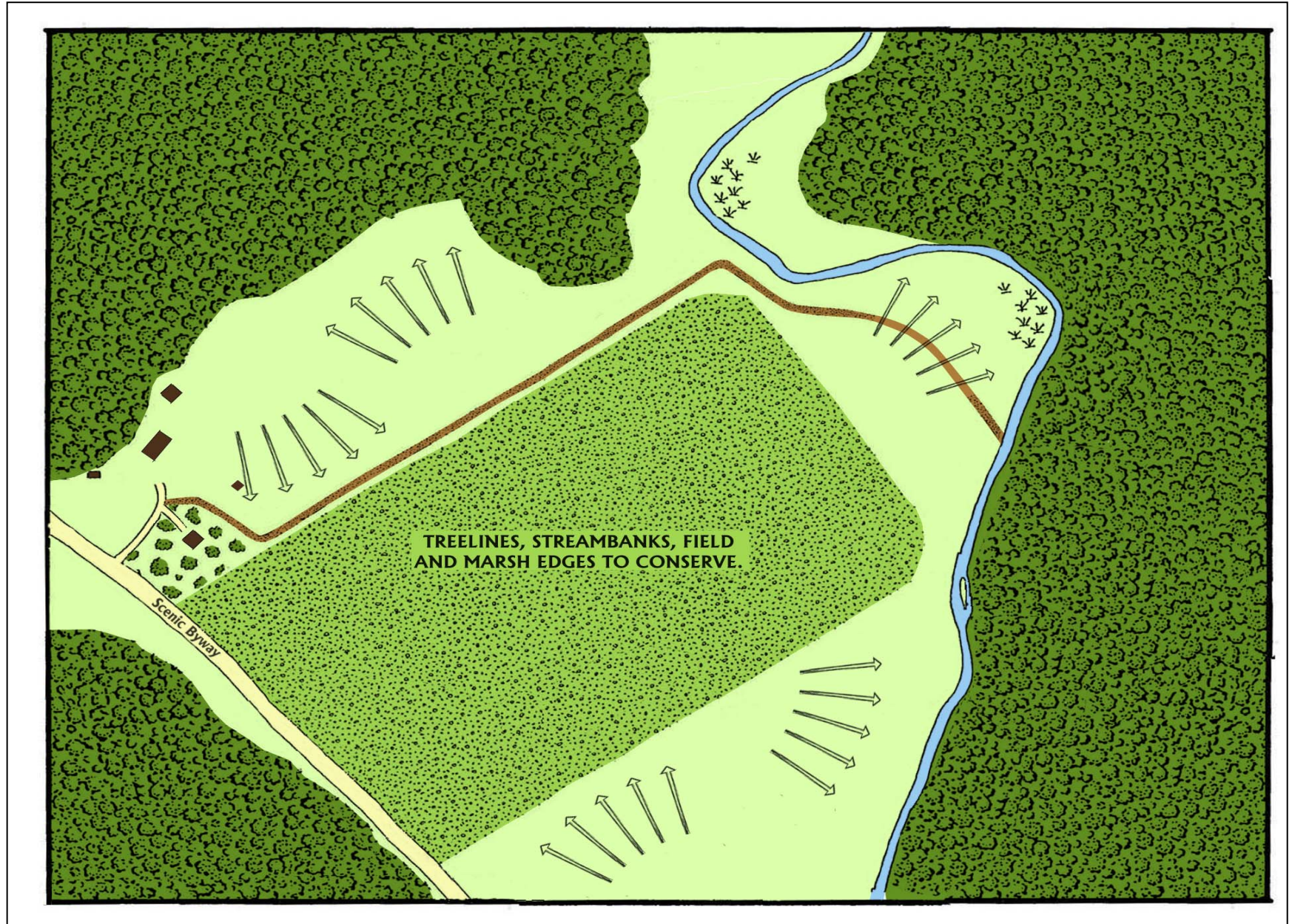
The Northwest Georgia Region extends through four physiographic provinces: the Appalachian Plateau, the Ridge and Valley, the Blue Ridge, and the Piedmont.

Terrain varies from steeply sloped mountains and ridges to wide, fertile valleys. Vast, forested areas remain in some places, and large, intact agricultural landscapes continue to produce crops and cattle.

Since much of the water in the region's creeks flows down steep slopes before collecting in waterways, the mountains and ridges are critical to water quality. Creeks and streams in certain places are habitat for trout and endangered species, and woods and fields are home to many species of game and other animals and plants.

## **NOTES**





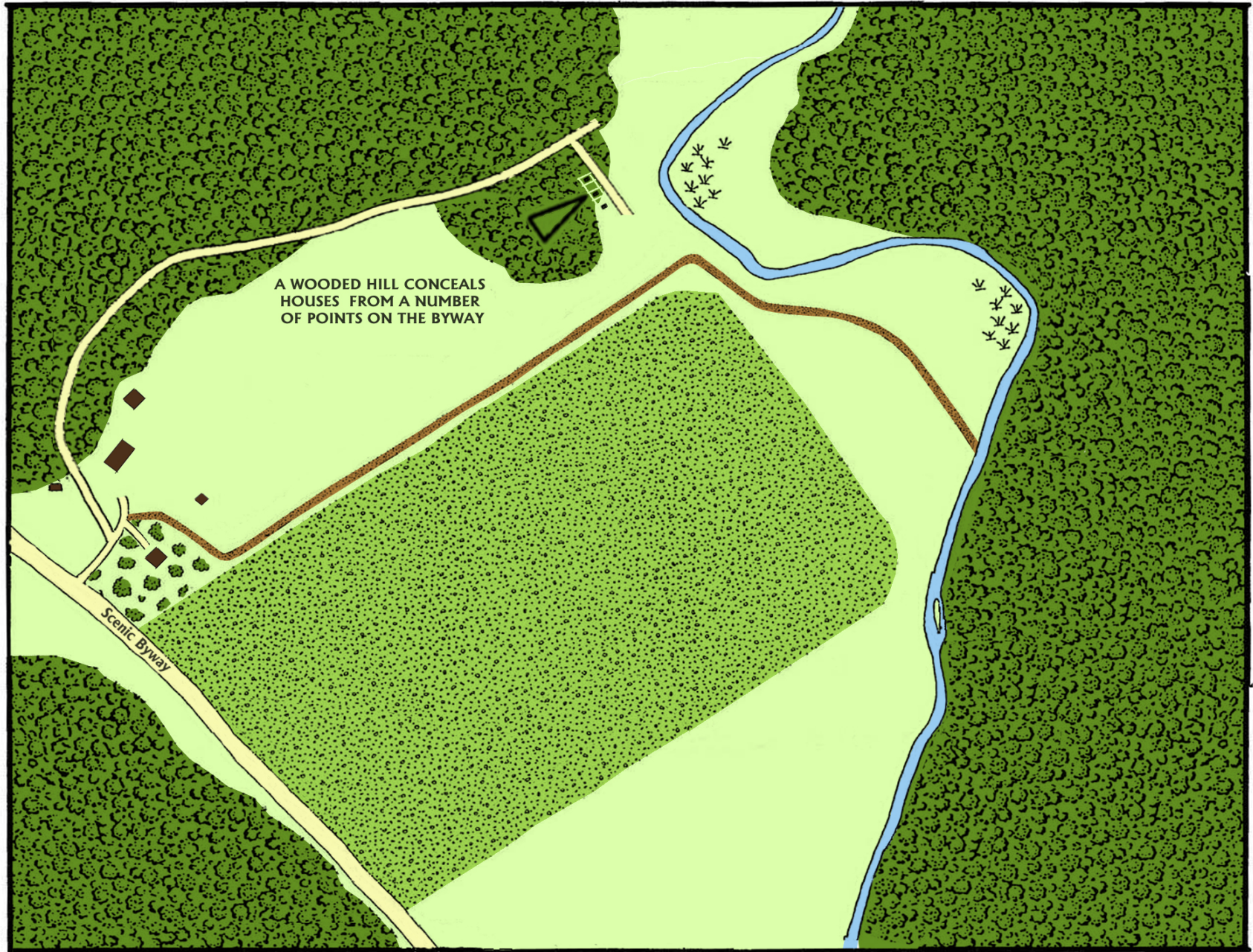


## TRADITIONAL VIEWSHEDS

The settlers of Northwest Georgia built houses and roads, cleared land and planted crops, dammed creeks and built mills, and so established a landscape much like that we see today.

Mountains and ridges, woods and open fields, houses with barns and outbuildings, and scattered small settlements, together with the lay of the land give the region much of its character. The edges of woods and fields are important defining features as well, and should be preserved whenever possible. In addition to their visual importance, these edges provide important habitat for deer, quail, turkey, and other species. Fence lines, the edges of branches and creeks, and the occasional marshland are also important in similar ways, and they too should be kept.

## NOTES



## CONSERVING VIEWSHEDS

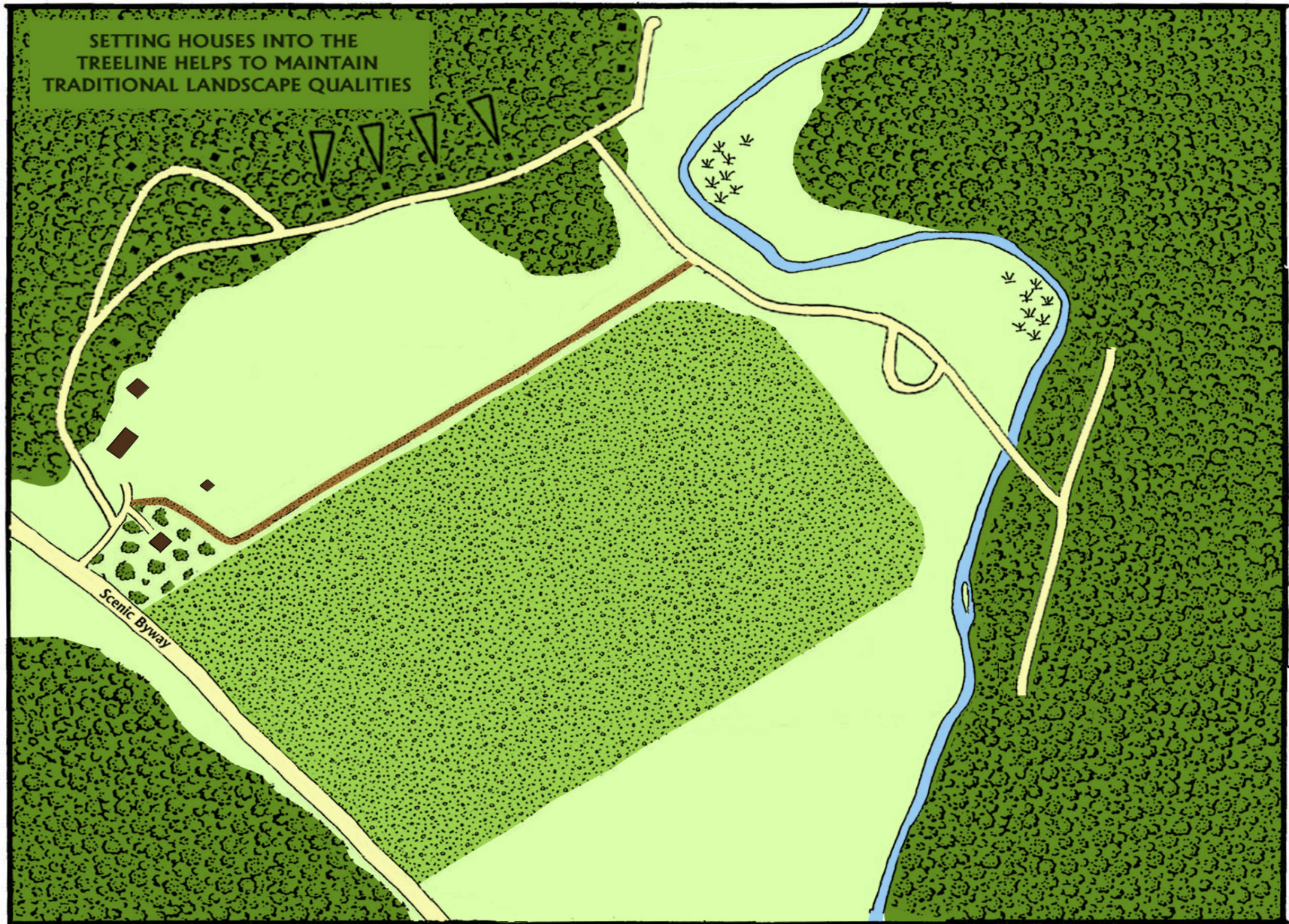
### Landforms

Set aside ridgelines, steep slopes, flood prone areas, wetlands, and significant natural features along with historic and archaeological sites as primary conservation areas. Site buildings in harmony with existing topography. Locate new buildings and structures where neither construction nor access causes substantial alteration to topography or natural or historic resources that characterize greenspace areas.

Whenever possible, use natural landforms to screen structures from public view. A natural feature such as a hill can protect a viewshed by screening new construction from the sight of motorists, cyclists, and other travellers. Fit buildings and other amenities into the site. Avoid making large cuts in visually exposed hillsides, or

## NOTES





grading large areas flat. Both practices can ruin the scenic quality of greenspaces, and are liable to cause erosion and disrupt natural drainage patterns. Use slopes advantageously to accommodate multi-level structures with entrances on more than one level (e.g. walk-out basements and garages under houses).

Use flat areas and open fields for septic tank sites that are non-disruptive of historic integrity and traditional appearance.

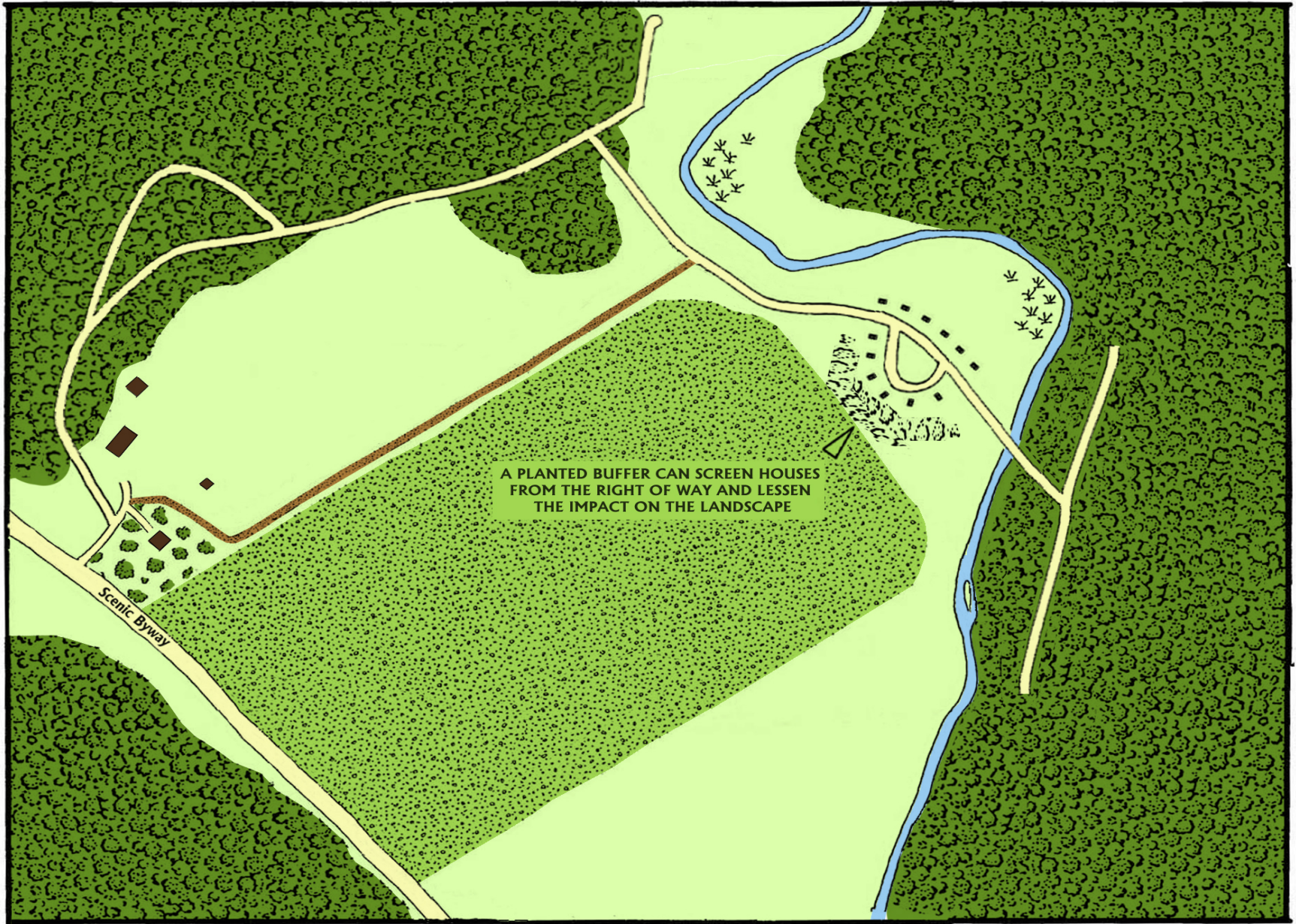
### **Treelines**

Maintain and take advantage of treelines and field edges, including irregular configurations, since these features define outdoor space in traditional ways, and add variety and interest to viewsheds.

Cleared areas such as fields and pastures also define space in a complimentary way,

## NOTES







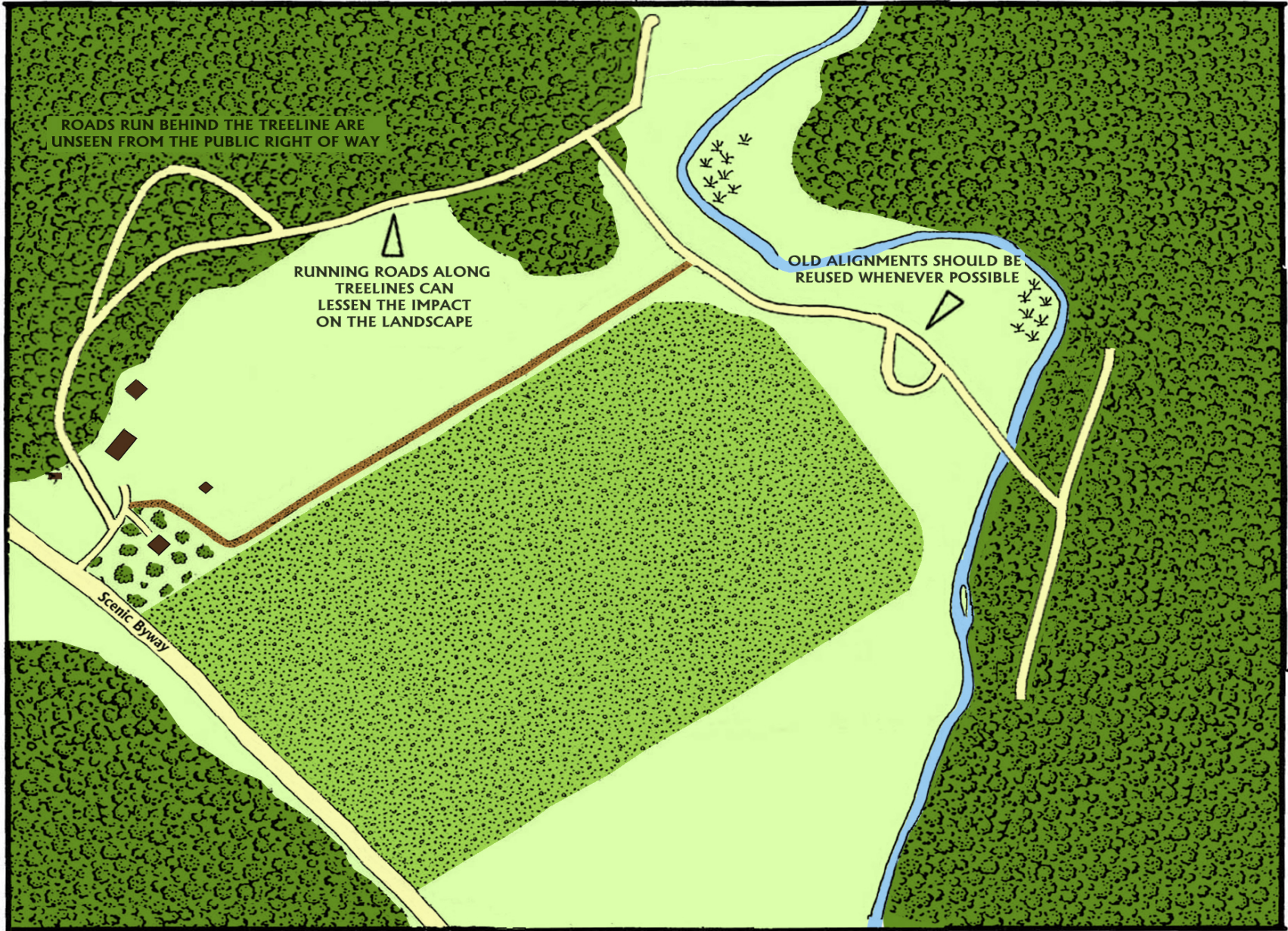
and new construction in open spaces can destroy the visual integrity of viewsheds. Set new buildings into or against treelines. Trees both screen the landscape from development, and afford a certain privacy from passers by.

If a parcel has no trees, or suffers from other development constraints preventing setting new construction in treelines, locate buildings at the farthest edges of fields, as seen from the roadway. Distance can help mitigate visual disruption of a traditional view.

### **Planted Buffers and New Plantings**

New construction that must occur in open fields should be screened from prominent view by high vegetative buffers. Generally it is preferable to plant traditional species and maintain traditional vegetation patterns. Places that have developed over time

## NOTES



generally have established planting practices. Ensure that any new species introduced harmonize with existing vegetation.

### **Road Placement**

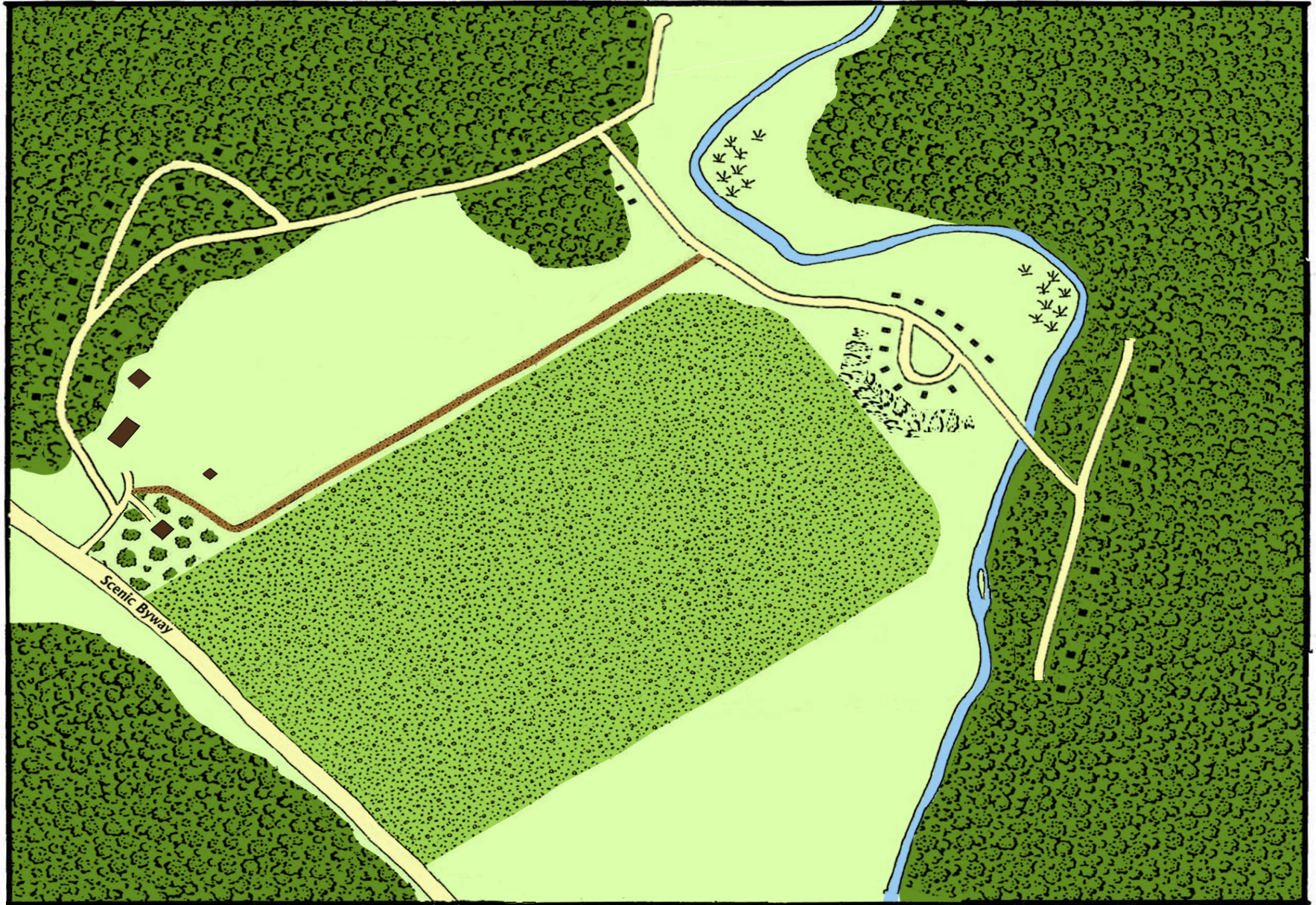
Use existing roads whenever possible to minimize clearing and landscape destruction. Widen existing roads as little as possible to take advantage of existing vegetation as a buffer.

Avoid running roads through the middle of open fields. Lessen the impact of a new road on a viewshed by placing it along treelines or other landscape boundaries.

A conventional, wide, clear-cut right of way presents a super highway as opposed to rural appearance. Construct new roads as narrow as possible to maintain a rural ambience, and

## NOTES





to avoid a discordant expressway atmosphere.

## **BUILD-OUT**

Following the guidelines above will give substantial protection to traditional viewsheds.

In conjunction with Planned Unit Development Regulations, these guidelines can allow a maximum density build-out, while conserving Appalachian cultural characteristics that define Northwest Georgia.

## **NOTES**