In the Summer of 2013, I was chosen as an intern through a partnership among the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, a public service and outreach unit of UGA; the UGA College of Environment and Design (CED) and the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). I was given the responsibility to work with municipal officials in a selected city in the state of Georgia. As a part of my academic criteria, the College of Environment and Design encourages all students to participate in a field related internship. Through this request, I found and was accepted to be a Renaissance Fellow with CVIOG and GMA.

Over a ten week internship period, I accomplished many improvement projects with municipal officials in Porterdale. I worked closely with Porterdale’s City Manager, Robert Thomson, Porterdale’s Mayor, Arline Chapman, and the rest of Porterdale’s city council members. The strong communication between myself and Porterdale, along with the many site visits, made the program successful. My involvement with the city and community showed in my research and designs.

The main project I worked on over the summer was to redesign areas throughout the city. My first task was tackling the Yellow Park Parking Plan. Porterdale’s city council strongly believed that they needed more parking throughout the city, however, I respectfully argued against this stance, urging the city to reanalyze the current parking situation. My argument was backed by a thorough parking analysis which concluded that Porterdale has over 450 existing parking spots and that they are rarely in use. I also found multiple vacant areas around the city that could quickly and inexpensively be used as an “overflow” parking lots. Fortunately, I was able to convince the city against installing new parking lots and her research ended up saving the city lots of time, money and resources.

Another main task I worked on was the Downtown Porterdale Streetscape Project. This project consisted of the redesign of the downtown business area. This included adding shade components, vegetation, hardscape materials, paving, benches, etc. The main point of this project was to stimulate Porterdale’s economy through helping to attract visitors to the city. I came up with several ideas on how to revamp existing structures and what new infill could look like. Through extending the downtown design, I also included three detailed planting plan for the entrance to the new gym/amphitheater. For this part of the project, I had to research low maintenance, drought tolerant plants to be installed outside the gym. My three planting
plans each consist of different vegetation, hardscape materials and design influences. Each plan also came with a cost estimate to help the city officials decide on what should be implemented.

The last task I set to completing was designing entrances into the city on the south and north ends. This project was given the title Porterdale Entrances Plan: North + South. Along with the north entrance, The Veterans Memorial Park will be revamped with new vegetation and walkways around the gazebo. Each entrance concept mimics the old-fashioned mill town vibe through unique signage and plantings. The purpose of this project was to clearly define the city limits and to allure visitors into the city.

Concluding the summer internship, I have completed many projects that are in talks to be implemented throughout the city. Working with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the City of Porterdale has been a great and beneficial experience, so much so that I extended my internship for the fall semester. I am excited and honored to have continued work with both partners.