

MMD

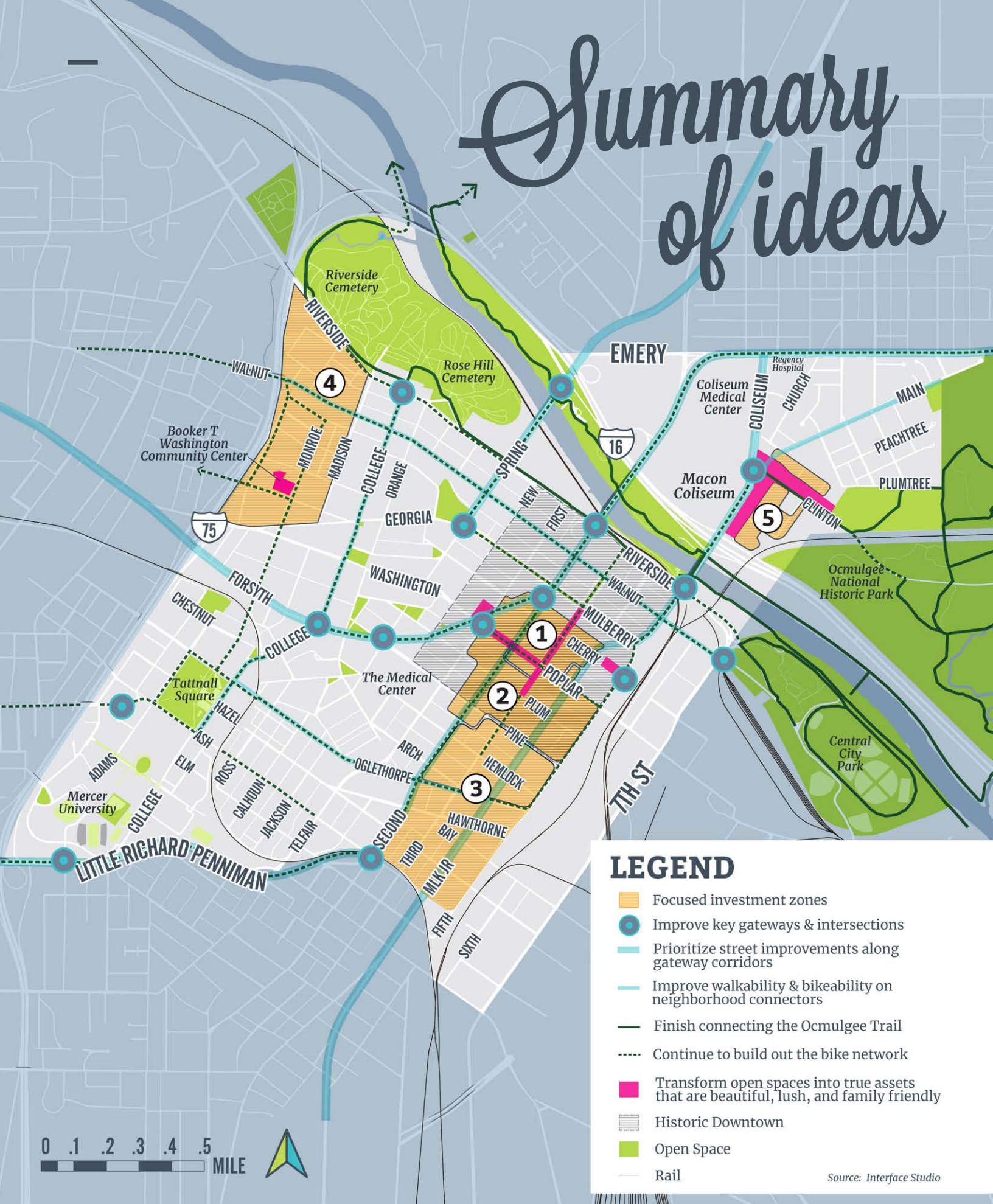
Refresh

MACON ACTION PLAN

for the heart of macon

October 2020

Summary of ideas



LEGEND

- Focused investment zones
- Improve key gateways & intersections
- Prioritize street improvements along gateway corridors
- Improve walkability & bikeability on neighborhood connectors
- Finish connecting the Ocmulgee Trail
- Continue to build out the bike network
- Transform open spaces into true assets that are beautiful, lush, and family friendly
- Historic Downtown
- Open Space
- Rail

Source: Interface Studio

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAP Refresh: Be intentional when it comes to new investment

- ① **Retail Core:** Focus retail/restaurants along Cherry and Poplar Streets – and the blocks connecting the two
- ② **Downtown South:** Focus new residential density South of Poplar to Pine Street to support downtown businesses and affordability
- ③ **Creative Warehouse District:** Be ahead of the market, preserve affordable space for light industry and local jobs
- ④ **Pleasant Hill:** Focus rehab and infill one block at a time, starting with Walnut Street, and reconnect neighborhood assets
- ⑤ **East Macon:** Redevelop vacancy to reconnect East Macon to Downtown

The Macon Action Plan, originally published in October 2015, is back for a five-year update. Since the completion of the first plan for Macon’s Urban Core, Downtown has seen \$5 million in foundation grants, and over \$400 million of additional public and private investment in Downtown. Eighty percent of the strategies from the original plan have been implemented.

While Downtown has made a lot of progress, there’s still some work to do. Twenty percent of the parcel area in the Urban Core remains vacant. And, while recent investment has spurred new residential units, the population of residents living in the Urban Core is still 60% of what it was in 1960. Continuing to revitalize Downtown will not only increase revenue to support services throughout the County, it will fuel economic growth and work to create a vibrant Downtown for all Bibb County residents and visitors alike.

Amidst the momentum, the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority [UDA], the City of Macon, and their partners are undertaking this REFRESH of the original plan, looking at what’s next for Downtown Macon over the next five years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THANK YOU! to everyone who contributed to the MAP Refresh by participating in an interview or who shared a vision for the future at a public event. Many local voices helped shape this plan; Downtown neighbors, employees, businesses, artists, community organizations, institutions, visitors, City staff and leadership—your words and ideas populate the pages that follow.

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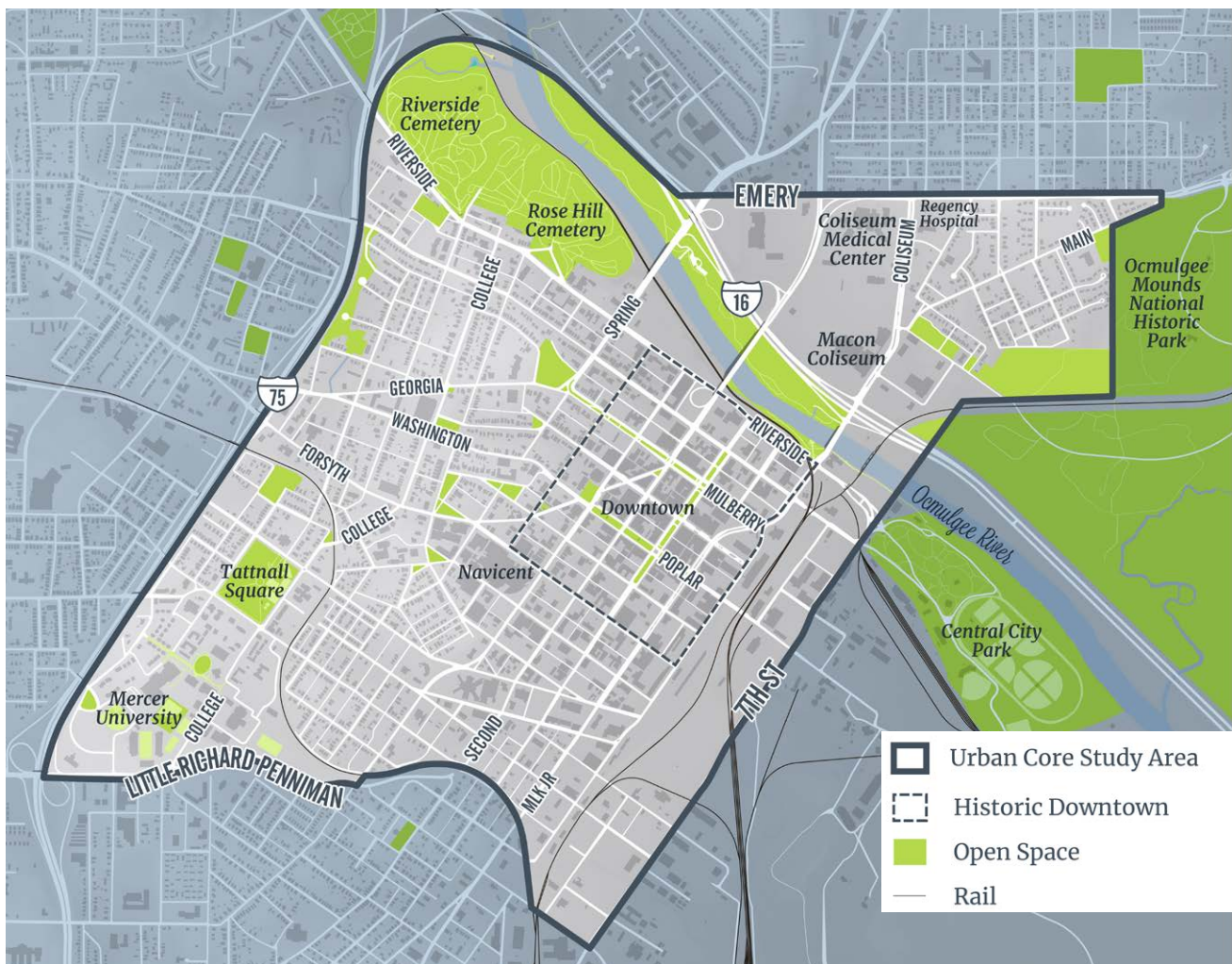
INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MAP?

Macon Action Plan (MAP) is a comprehensive, community-driven, plan that envisions the future of Macon's Urban Core. The Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority received generous grants from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Peyton Anderson Foundation to fund this effort to plan for our collective future. Facilitated by the Macon-Bibb Urban Development Authority, Macon-Bibb County, and their partners, MAP is our roadmap to guide change and decision making in coming years.

WHAT IS THE URBAN CORE?

The "Urban Core" refers to Downtown Macon and intown neighborhoods. The Urban Core is where the City was first established, and it remains a center of employment, entertainment, and institutions, as well as home to a collection of historic and diverse neighborhoods and communities. The Urban Core is the heart of Macon and is bound by I-75 to the west, Seventh Street and the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park to the east, Little Richard Penniman Boulevard to the south, and the Emery Highway to the north.



PROGRESS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS

The original Macon Action Plan was approved in October 2015. It summarized a year-long planning process, and because the A in MAP is for Action, the MAP movement began with a running start towards implementing the plan's recommendations. With funding for many of the projects provided by the Peyton Anderson Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation – each organization providing \$1.5 million in support – and the dedication of the Urban Development Authority and its partners, 95 of the over 120 recommended strategies have either been completed or are underway.

In looking at Downtown today versus five years ago, Downtown is visibly more vibrant, with more people in town on a daily basis, and more things to do. Since 2015, 602 promotional events have taken place, bringing along at least 111,950 attendees. These programming efforts have amounted to over 9,000 volunteer hours. 129 Downtown Challenge projects have been funded. The food scene is booming as well; the Urban Core has welcomed 56 new restaurants, 40 or so in Downtown proper, along with 31 new bars and venues. One of the favorite new additions to the Downtown scene is the Main Street Christmas Light Extravaganza, drawing over 250,000 visitors per year to see hundreds of thousands of lights along Poplar Street tied to music during the holiday season.

The local economy is doing better, too, as Downtown remains the economic hub of the region. Since 2015, 305 new jobs have been created, and 74 new businesses have opened. The County is seeing an increase in net business tax and real estate tax revenue from recent growth. Only five percent of the population in the Urban Core (about 440 residents) lived Downtown according to the 2010 US Census but since 2015, 360 new housing units have been added. This marks a big shift, and will be captured in this year's 2020 Census [we're looking forward to seeing the findings!]. Downtown will also soon be welcoming two new hotels, scheduled to open by the end of the year.



The following is a 'Report Card' to track MAP's progress over the last five years. Each section is broken out by each of the goal areas of the plan, and indicates whether or not the overarching strategies have been completed, are in progress, or still need work.

Support the Engines of Economic Development **B+**

➤ **Institutions as anchors**

- Medical corridor (Navicent/Mercer School of Medicine)
- Navicent health campus (Lofts at Navicent complete)
- Healthcare-related businesses, medical office space

Complete In progress Still needs work

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➤ **Open for business**

- Incentives and financing strategies
- Business recruitment/talent attraction
- Commercial property movement
- Customer attraction (programming and clustering)

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➤ **Start-ups and job-creating businesses**

- Collaborative workspace
- Entrepreneur strategies
- Innovation Center
- Modern industrial park along 7th St (brownfield grants complete)
- Mill buildings as maker spaces

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MERCER INNOVATION CENTER



\$163,237 NET BUSINESS TAX REVENUE

74 NET NEW BUSINESSES

305 NEW JOBS CREATED

THE OFFICE: COWORKING SPACE

Create an Unparalleled Urban Core Experience

A

➤ Clean & safe

- Signature beautification project (Cherry block)
- Lighting on street trees, buildings
- Municipal recycling strategy and public recycling bins

Complete	In progress	Still needs work
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➤ Sidewalks & public spaces

- Destination alleys
- Movable furniture purchasing plan
- Friends of Medians / BID
- Open space (Rosa Parks Square, Cotton Ave Plaza, Cherry St Plaza)
- Ocmulgee Heritage Trail downtown connection

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➤ Social life

- New temporary pop-up events
- New regular events
- Place-specific programming

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➤ Good first impressions

- Landscape medians
- Gateways (Triple Triangle Park, Spring/Georgia, Poplar/First, Clinton)
- Wayfinding system

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➤ National buzz

- Brand and message
- Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve monument expansion
- Tourism

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602 EVENTS SINCE 2015

56 NEW RESTAURANTS IN THE URBAN CORE



Focus on Downtown Living

A

➤ More households

Mixed use development (Capricorn complete)

Adaptive reuse and infill

Welcome materials/events

Complete

In progress

Still needs work

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➤ Surrounding neighborhoods

Blight reduction

Beall's Hill

East Macon Main Street

Pleasant Hill

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\$437,016 NET REAL ESTATE TAX REVENUE



360 NEW HOUSING UNITS DOWNTOWN SINCE 2015

LOFTS AT CAPRICORN



MILL HILL PROGRESS



plan_concept

➤ **Parking system**

- Parking tools (meters, mobile application, map)*
- Wayfinding*
- Parking Authority*
- Residential permit parking program*

Complete **In progress** **Still needs work**

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➤ **Safety**

- Truck traffic re-routing from MLK*
- Pedestrian safety measures (pedestrian signals, restrict right on red)*
- Initiatives (USDOT Mayor's Challenge, pedestrian/bicycle committee)*
- Activity challenge*

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➤ **Multi-modal transportation**

- Transit (bus/shuttle level of service, Terminal Station transit, regional BRT)*
- Bike facilities (on-street bike lanes bike share, bike parking, group rides)*
- Streetscape standards/sidewalk improvement pilot (Cherry block)*
- Pilot car share*
- Electric car and scooter infrastructure*
- Ride share*

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NEW WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

MACON CONNECTS

Overall, everyone involved in MAP's implementation has a lot to be proud of. Keep up the good work and continue taking ACTION!

WHY ARE WE REFRESHING MAP?

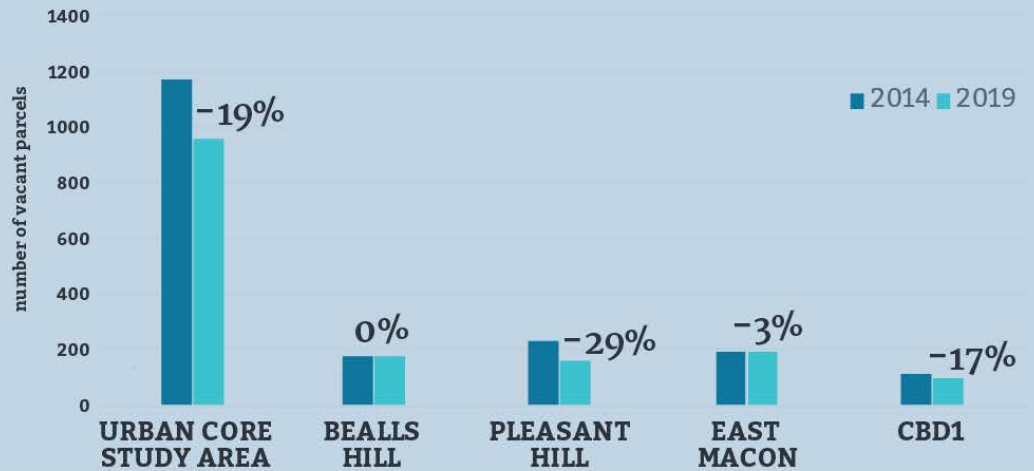
The continued success of MAP calls for sustained support and involvement by the whole of our community, and not just for the first five years, but for the long term. With 80% of the first MAP recommendations being completed or underway, refreshing MAP will allow the UDA and its partners to continue to move the needle forward, while focusing on what's most important for the Urban Core today. As change continues to unfold and new opportunities arise, it's important to revisit and reprioritize the plan's strategies.

Many of the recommendations for the first round of MAP were the "low hanging fruit." Downtown has more things to do, is cleaner and safer, has new parking meters and wayfinding signage, and lighting in the

alleys. But, despite the successes made over the last five years, there is still work to do in the Urban Core. Vacancy has gone down 19%, but 20% of the developable land in the Core remains vacant, amounting to 319 acres, the equivalent of 241 football fields.

Retail in the Downtown is still struggling. According to a 2018 Retail Market Study conducted by Ninigret Partners, "the pedestrian experience is uneven at best... Some of the inactive frontages are entertainment venues; others are vacant or underutilized storefronts." This hurts existing businesses and discourages new ones from finding a home Downtown. In fact, 42% of storefronts in the Central Business District are vacant.

Vacancy* over time 2014-2019



Total acreage of vacancy* today



*Parcels that are entirely vacant, containing vacant land or buildings
Does not include partially vacant parcels

In comparison to other similar Downtowns, Macon has so much more retail space to fill than other cities, with fewer people to support retail.

Refreshing MAP will help to maintain the momentum needed to accomplish some of the harder, bigger projects, including filling Downtown storefronts, attracting new residents, upgrading the public realm infrastructure, completing the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, and eradicating blight in the intown neighborhoods.

Refreshing MAP will also help to sustain funding for the things we've grown to love – like the Christmas Lights Extravaganza. But MAP cannot do it alone. It continues to rely on important partnerships, and continued reinvestment in Downtown.

How Downtown Macon Compares



Macon

Asheville

Knoxville

Greenville

Population

MSA ~230,000
 City 153,000
 Downtown 1,600+

Population

MSA ~460,000
 City 91,000
 Downtown 14,000+

Population

MSA ~883,000
 City 187,000
 Downtown 2,000+ (adjacent to ~30,000 students)

Population

MSA ~907,000
 City 68,000
 Downtown 5,000+

Downtown core linear feet of existing frontage:

~8,200 between Poplar, Forsyth, Mulberry, and MLK

Downtown core linear feet of active retail frontage:

~3,600 along Patton Ave and College Street +
 ~2,600 along Biltmore Ave

Downtown core linear feet of active retail frontage:

~3,200 along S. Gay and Market Streets

Downtown core linear feet of active retail frontage:

~3,000 (core) +
 ~5,800 (expanded) along S. Main Street

DOWNTOWN'S HEALTH IS CRITICAL FOR MACON-BIBB AND THE REGION

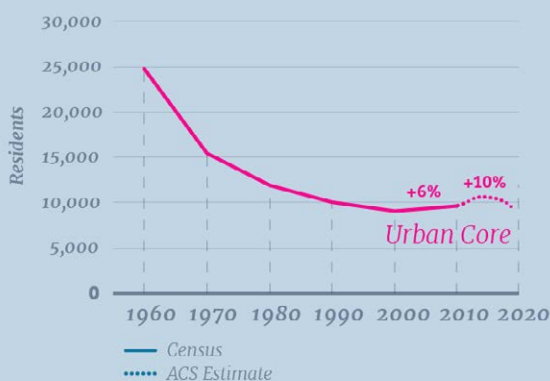
The Urban Core fuels the County's economy and growth. The Urban Core contains over 20,000 jobs or 26% of all jobs in the County while comprising just 1% of the County's land area. A full quarter of these jobs are in small businesses. It is where the region comes to work and where there is the best chance to create more jobs for all residents. In the past five years, 305 new jobs have been created in the Urban Core. During the same time frame, Macon-Bibb collected over \$160,000 in net business tax revenue and over \$430,000 of net real estate tax revenue from the Urban Core, which is used to support necessary services across Macon-Bibb. Every dollar invested in the Urban Core has the potential to generate far greater returns, revenues for Macon-Bibb and jobs than any other location in the region. As we see in cities of all sizes across the Country, when downtowns do well, the city and county do well.

But the reverse is also true. Negative or even stagnant growth in the Urban Core would impact Macon-Bibb's overall revenue and the neighborhood services provided. The

Urban Core does indeed have momentum, but recent investments and initiatives need support to fully realize the economic benefits for everyone. For instance, while the population in the Urban Core has grown since 2000, this is on the heels of losing 60% of its population over the last 50 years. And as much has changed in Downtown in the past years with the generous support of public and private investment, there remain significant challenges to address. The infrastructure along, and under, many streets - the oldest in Macon-Bibb - is in need of improvements. Existing businesses struggle to retain and expand their customers and we still have too many empty spaces that could be home to new retail, services and jobs. The Urban Core contains historic buildings and neighborhoods including Pleasant Hill and Mill Hill that are central to Macon-Bibb's culture and deserving of investment. These and many other challenges remain on the Urban Core's "to-do" list. To maintain and expand the positive economic impact of the Urban Core, there needs to be continued focus and investment.

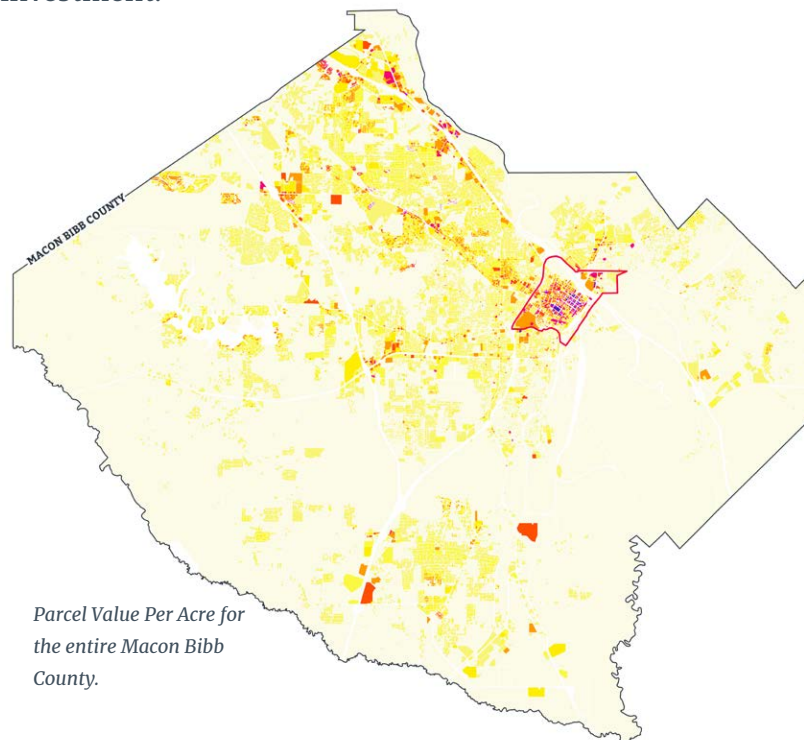
The Urban Core lost over 60% of its population over the last 50 years, but 2000 marked a turning point

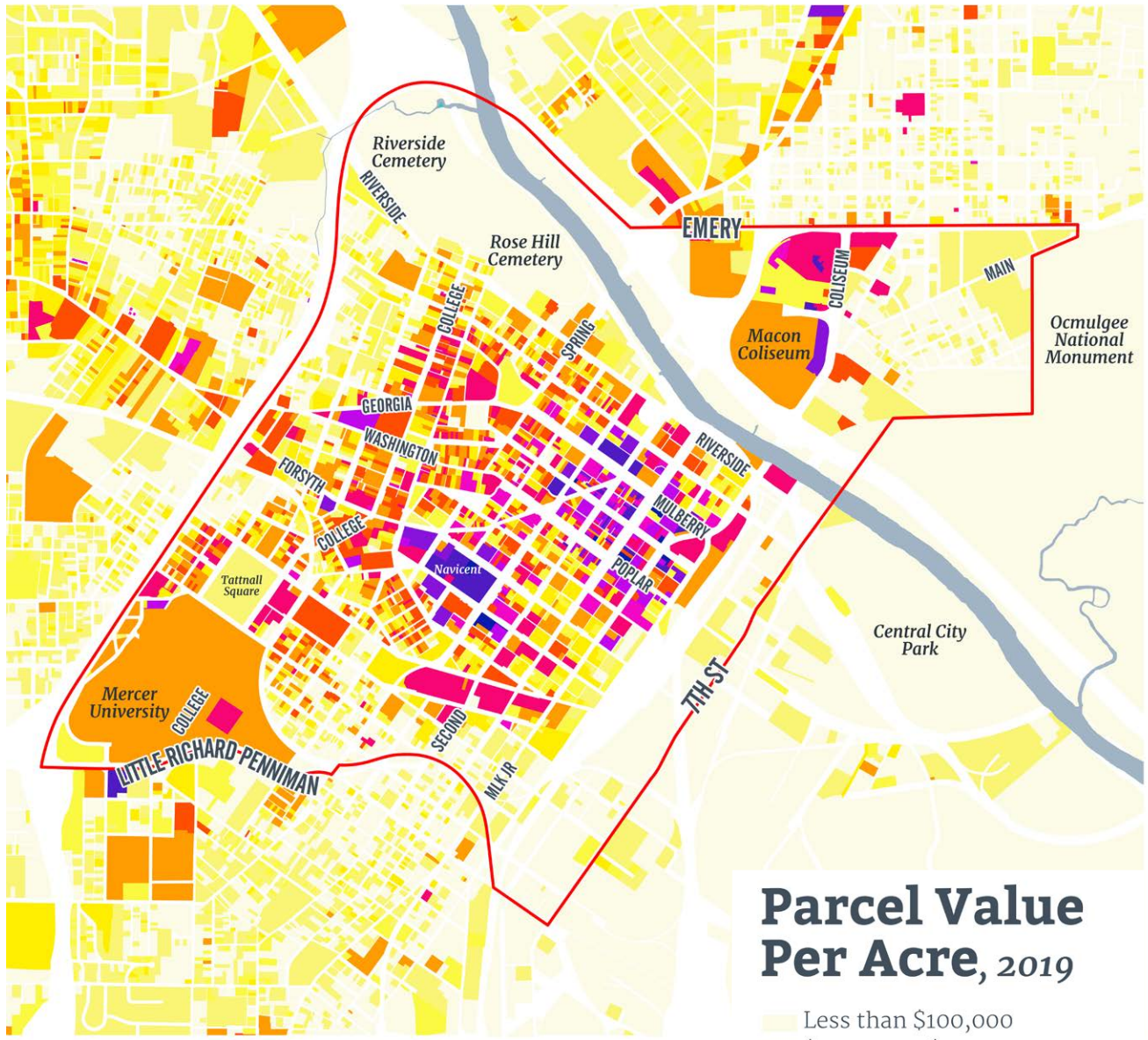
And, it still has a long way to go to get back to where it once was.



POPULATION CHANGE OVER TIME

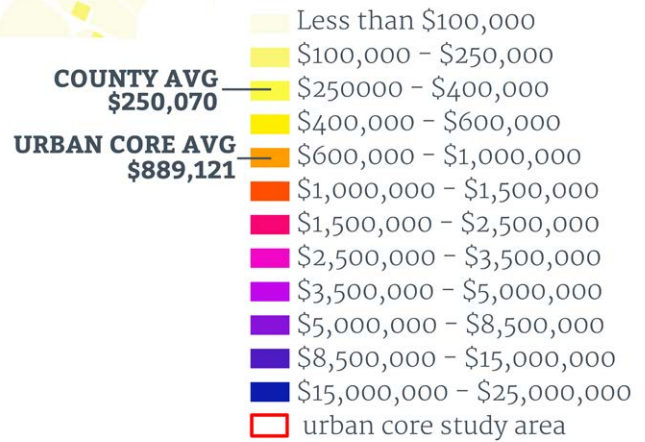
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, Social Explorer





Source: CAMA database, Macon Insights Parcels 2019

Parcel Value Per Acre, 2019



TIMELINE & PROCESS

This refresh began in February 2019. It began with an analysis of the MAP progress to date, the current land use and vacancy parcel data, and an updated housing market study by Zimmerman/Volk Associates (ZVA).

All members of the Macon community – those who live, work, worship, learn, and play in Macon’s Urban Core – were welcomed participants, invited to help craft and reprioritize actions for change to make our shared vision become reality. Similar to the first planning process, MAP benefited from a body of committed stakeholders who engaged with the year-long planning process in multiple ways:

Steering Committee

Formed by the UDA, the steering committee comprised 30 community stakeholders, representing a range of voices, including NewTown Macon, Navicent Health, Macon Water Authority, Macon Housing Authority, Macon Arts Alliance, local foundations and City officials. The planning team met with the Steering Committee four times throughout the process to discuss findings from research and public outreach, and to guide the plan’s recommendations.

Stakeholder Interviews

Throughout the process, the MAP planning team conducted approximately 10 interviews with local stakeholders, community leaders, and elected officials to test ideas and gain further insight from local expertise.

Public Meetings

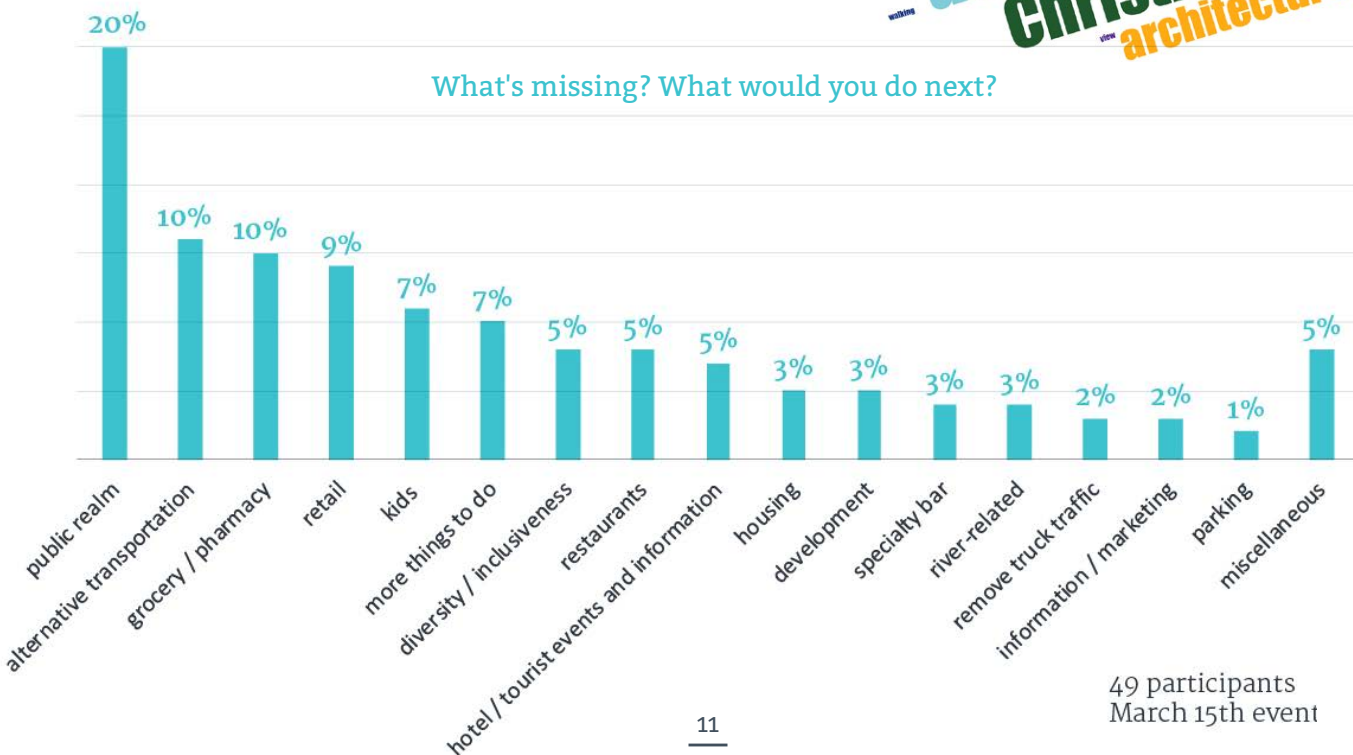
Public Meeting 1 (March 15th, 2019)

The focus of this meeting was to present MAP’s progress over the last five years and ask the public what this refresh should focus on. About 50 residents weighed in. They told us how often they come Downtown and what they’d like to see more of.

What do you love about Downtown today?



What's missing? What would you do next?



49 participants
March 15th event

Public Open House (December 11, 2019)

Stationed alongside the Christmas Lights Extravaganza on Poplar Street at NewTown Macon, the planning team hosted an open house style meeting, engaging with the crowds visiting the lights. This provided the team with an opportunity to interact with different and diverse voices, from locals to visitors, to think about the future of Downtown Macon.

While 50 people signed-in at the event during that time, the total attendance is estimated to be closer to 100 people. They came from all over the region. The purpose of the Open House was to vet the draft recommendations for the plan. Participants provided their input largely through two exercises.

First, attendees could watch a brief looping presentation that provided a history of MAP, progress to date, and draft recommendations for each of the five goals. They were then asked to identify which recommendation under each goal area was their priority for Macon.

Next, participants could write a letter to Santa with their wishes for the Urban Core. The letters highlighted different themes that were identified during the first round of public input as prompts for these wish-lists for Downtown.

Your priorities for MAP:



➤ 1. Support the Engines of Economic Development

Top Priority ➤ 1 Focus retail and infill strategically, so the Downtown experience doesn't become diluted	44%
2 Make space for more housing and extend the momentum south of Poplar	27%
3 Preserve work space in a creative mixed-use warehouse district	10%
4 Cultivate talent through youth radio, podcast, and music production programs	12%
5 Broaden movie production to generate revenue and draw potential new residents	8%

➤ 2. Create an Unparalleled Urban Core Experience

6 Enliven empty storefronts with art and exhibits	20%
Top Priority ➤ 7 Plant shade trees to increase the tree canopy	26%
8 Introduce green stormwater management with infrastructure upgrades	17%
9 Use planters to add color, texture, and beauty	20%
10 Repurpose the 3rd Street Median with a buffered vertical playground	17%

➤ 3. Focus on Downtown Living

11 Explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and new construction in South Downtown	25%
12 Continue to market Schell Avenue homes at the Mill Hill Arts Village	11%
13 Build a sculpture park along Coliseum Drive and Clinton Street as a tourist destination and test fit complementary development programs at the Bibb Mill site	4%
Top Priority ➤ 14 Stabilize vacant property in Pleasant Hill and focus rehab and infill, one block at a time	45%
15 Continue to invest in the Booker T. Washington Community Center and pool	5%
16 Work with the Housing Authority to redevelop or renovate the Louis Mounts Homes and reintroduce the sidewalk network and trees	9%

➤ 4. Cultivate Connectivity

Top Priority ➤ 17 Improve access to the riverfront via trails and trail heads	40%
18 Build out the bike lane network	19%
19 Seize opportunities to improve gateways as part of planned street reconstructions	29%
20 Advertise special events to draw people from throughout the County	12%

➤ 5. Take Action for Implementation

21 Build a leadership team reflective of Macon's diverse community	24%
22 Establish a Housing Trust Fund to support affordability over time	19%
23 Offer sustained business development supports to start-ups and entrepreneurs	15%
24 Create job training and work opportunities through MAP initiatives and programs	15%
Top Priority ➤ 25 Revise the zoning code to promote a dense, walkable environment	27%

WHAT DOES MAP LOOK LIKE IN 2020?

MAP's vision and goals were crafted from the voices of hundreds of people during the original MAP planning process back in 2015. This language still resonates, and as such we will keep working towards our shared vision:

A Vision Statement for Macon's Urban Core

We are proud of our city - its **good bones, rich history** and traditions that give rhythm to community life.

Our future will respect, honor, and **complement our past**.

We see **positive momentum** at work in our urban core, and we are ready to work together to continue this trend.



photo credit: Alexdi at English Wikipedia

We are **full of promise**. We are **eager to take ACTION** and **grow** Macon's urban core.

We are ready for the heart of Macon to become Central Georgia's **flagship downtown experience**.

Vibrant, diverse, and **historic yet modern**, our urban core will **thrive** as a unique collection of neighborhoods, a **college town**, and a **center of culture, commerce**, and **new connections** -- all nestled within the **intimate, comfortable scale** of a small city.

Together, for our future, we will:

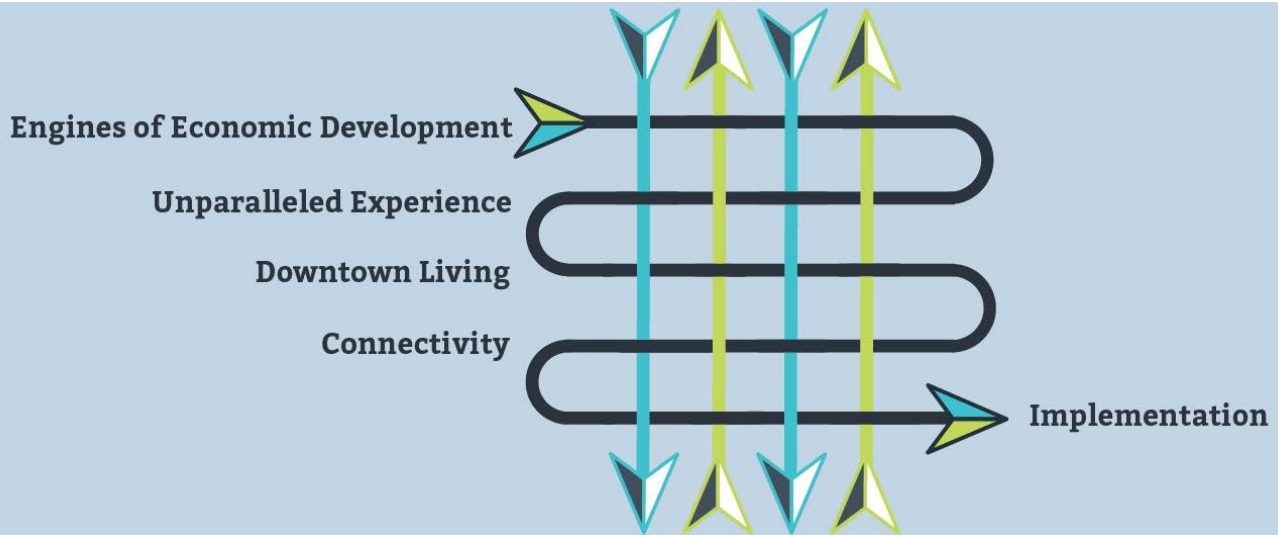
Grow with grace – we will evolve as a city that is historic and modern, inclusive and diverse, home to families and people of all ages, with walkable streets, new businesses, and riverfront connections that add vibrancy, livability, and sustainability to daily life

Build upon Macon's good bones – our beautiful buildings, strong institutions, rich and ancient history, and economic engines will continue to draw people to Downtown and strengthen our Urban Core

Dance to our local rhythm – our local talent will bring us together through the calendar of events that form the beat of community life, and Macon's charm and creative spirit will remain a magnet for tourists, people who come to play, and those who choose to stay

Care for our heart – we will revitalize neighborhoods and meet the needs of our residents, businesses, and investors by adopting progressive policies and programs for a clean, safe, and livable Urban Core

If it ain't broke... let's recommit to the Vision and Goals, but with a fresh look at what these goals mean in today's context, and a commitment to a few new themes, or threads to weave through each goal, dictated by the public outreach conducted for the MAP Refresh:



➤ *A Kid-Friendly Urban Core*

A focus on children and family-friendly planning, including the incorporation of a Downtown playground

“Destination Playground”

“safe kid play that does not include technology and encourages imagination”

“things for kids to do and see”

➤ *An Inclusive Urban Core*

Ensuring that Downtown is welcoming to all, affordable for a mix of incomes, a model for economic equity, and that decision-makers are reflective of a diverse population

“finding the commonality of things that engage people like food, music, sports, enlightenment, exercise”

“anyone from 8 days to 108 years can walk, visit, play, experience downtown and find something that speaks to them”

“ways to ‘break-in’ – fellowships, etc for people without experiences”

➤ *A Creative Urban Core*

Ensuring that the Urban Core grows as a hub of arts and culture

“Hip hop, jazz, and R+B outlets”

“arts as civic practice-- how can we use cultural outreach to start a dialogue about civic priorities and community issues?”

“public art that all community members can participate in building”

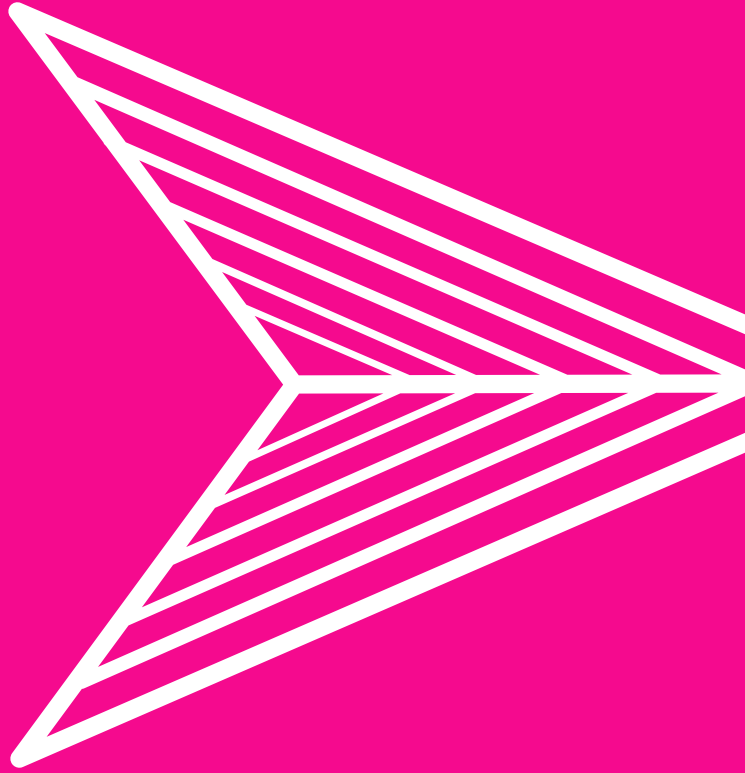
➤ *A Greener Urban Core*

Now that the Urban Core is clean and safe, let's make it shadier, spongier, and more sustainable over time

“more green space”

“community garden”

“accessible recycling”



**FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS
FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS:**



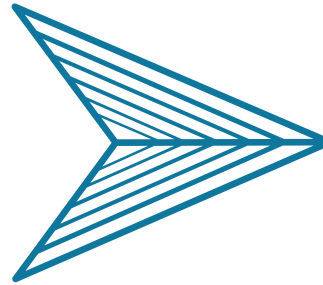
ACTIONS FOR THE URBAN CORE

MAP must continue to direct resources to targeted areas for maximum impact to the Urban Core. Unlike the original plan, this action strategy is streamlined with a shorter list of 25 priority recommendations that cover a broad range of topics and geographies in the Urban Core. Strategic implementation of these action items is critical so as not to dilute their impact.

1

SUPPORT THE ENGINES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This section aims to guide development as Downtown continues to grow as the economic center of the region, with an effort to balance retail and residential while preserving work space. It also looks to explore opportunities to return to our roots with renewed focus on the music industry, entertainment, arts, and tourism, growing the mix of local businesses Downtown equitably.



1.1

Celebrate & Grow Black-Owned Businesses

The average income for a white household in the county is \$57,152; for a black household it's \$28,823. Closing this racial wealth gap requires an equitable approach to economic development. In Downtown Macon, this means ensuring that black- and minority-owned businesses can get established, grow and thrive. Uplifting these businesses will ensure they establish permanent roots Downtown and foster diversity in the population that Downtown serves, breaking down barriers.

PRECEDENT:

Black-owned Brooklyn is a website and curated guide to Brooklyn's Black-owned and Brooklyn-based businesses, places and products.

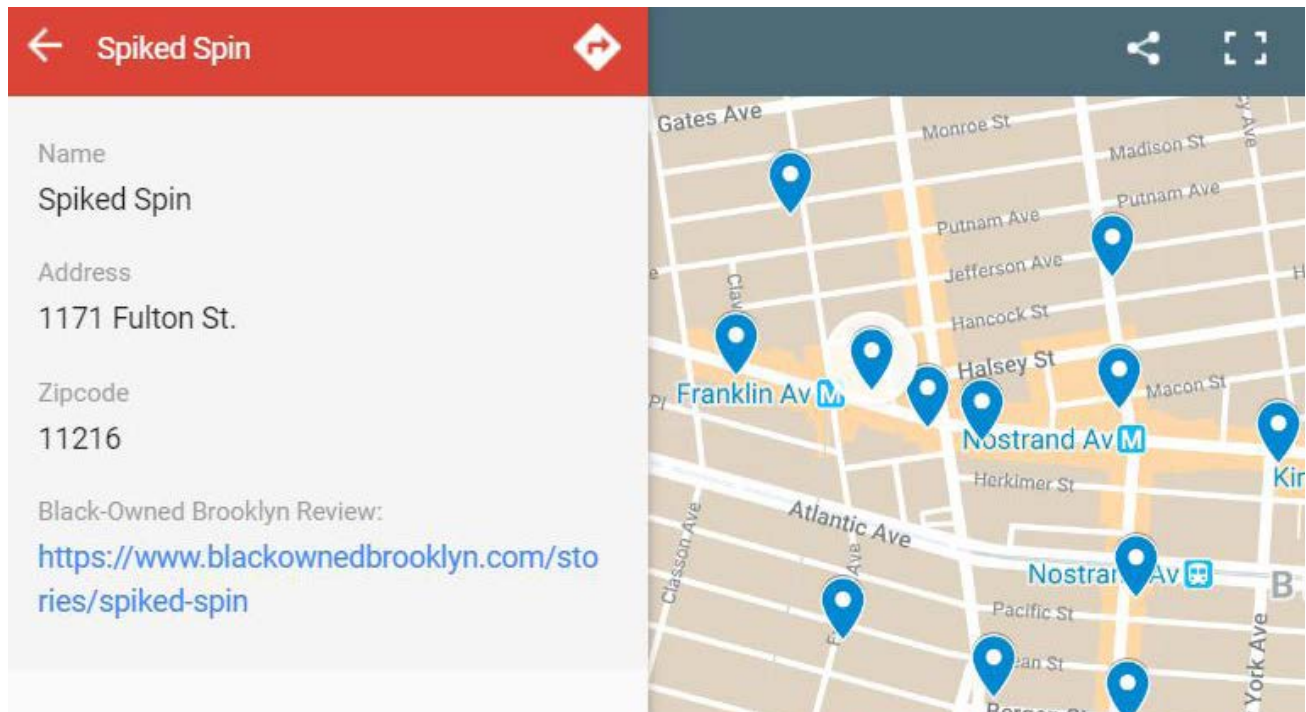


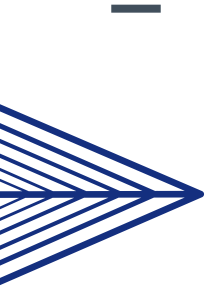
Highlight the diversity of Downtown's business owners

Black-owned businesses make up the foundation of Downtown's small businesses, they should be celebrated as Downtown evolves. Call attention to the diversity of Macon's business owners in the public realm by displaying a portrait of the business owner with information about the business in their storefront. This will help to provide the background stories around their business and provide a window into how Downtown has changed over time.

Program to attract and draw customers

Programming can also help to raise awareness and draw customers to these businesses. Create an online interactive map or directory featuring these businesses. Local partners can also create a black-owned restaurant or business week that specifically highlights and supports these businesses. This would be an annual or biannual event celebrating black-owned businesses. Visit Philadelphia, for example, calls out the 28 "must-visit" black-owned restaurants in the City.





1.2

Be intentional when it comes to the evolution of Downtown 'South,' preserving work space and cultivating a creative mixed use warehouse district

A thriving future for Macon calls for more residents AND more jobs. The natural progression of Downtown residential development seems to be heading southward toward Pine Street, not towards the river as previously projected. Macon can learn from other cities who did not get in front of the real estate market in their downtowns. Often it is the case that the housing market moves into the available industrial properties surrounding a downtown, causing the building stock that would support new businesses to disappear. When a new business is ready to set up shop, they are forced to look outside of the city.

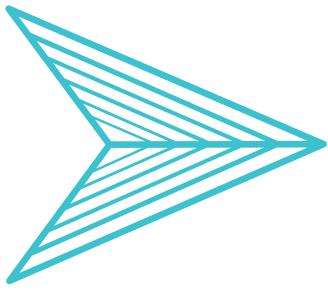
As housing development pressure moves south of Poplar Street, it is important to strike a balance; allow the housing market to continue to bring more residents and density to Downtown, but also preserve space for businesses to make Downtown their home. We can accomplish this by allowing additional housing to integrate into the fabric south of Poplar Street to Pine Street. South of Pine Street, preserve work space, and foster a creative, mixed use warehouse district that draws creative ventures, artisans, and tech start-ups alike. Kick start this process by creating an inventory of remaining warehouse and industrial space in or near the Downtown.



DOWNTOWN 'SOUTH'
General land use strategy

Be intentional about clustering future development to support both new housing AND space for jobs:

- Creative Warehouse District
 - Housing
 - Hospital/Medical
 - Retail Core
 - Institutional
 - Commercial
 - Light Industrial
-
- Public Ownership
 - Hosp. Authority Owned Property



1.3

Explore opportunities to return to our roots with renewed focus on the music industry, entertainment, arts, and tourism

A flourishing arts and cultural scene is essential to growing the Downtown economy and attracting talent and employers. Downtown is home to large cultural events that draw thousands of people every year including the Cherry Blossom Festival and Bragg Jam. Grow this cultural scene with a focus on the music and film industry.

Cultivate young talent through youth radio, podcast, and music incubator programs

Macon is well known for its musical history. Leveraging this history, as suggested in the Macon Cultural Plan, by preparing young adults for creative industries through an incubator program will form a pipeline of young creatives to enter the workforce and grow creative industries Downtown.

Broaden movie production to generate revenue and draw potential new residents

Georgia's television and film industry continues to grow with strong state support. In 2016, more feature films were filmed in Georgia than any other market globally. The industry employs over 30,000 people, and Downtown Macon is well suited to develop a pipeline of talent to support the industry. In fact, Downtown Macon has seen a recent influx of filming and movie production speaking to this opportunity. Partner with the Georgia Film Academy, production houses, talent agencies and local universities to develop training and incubation programs focused on the needs of film production here in Downtown.



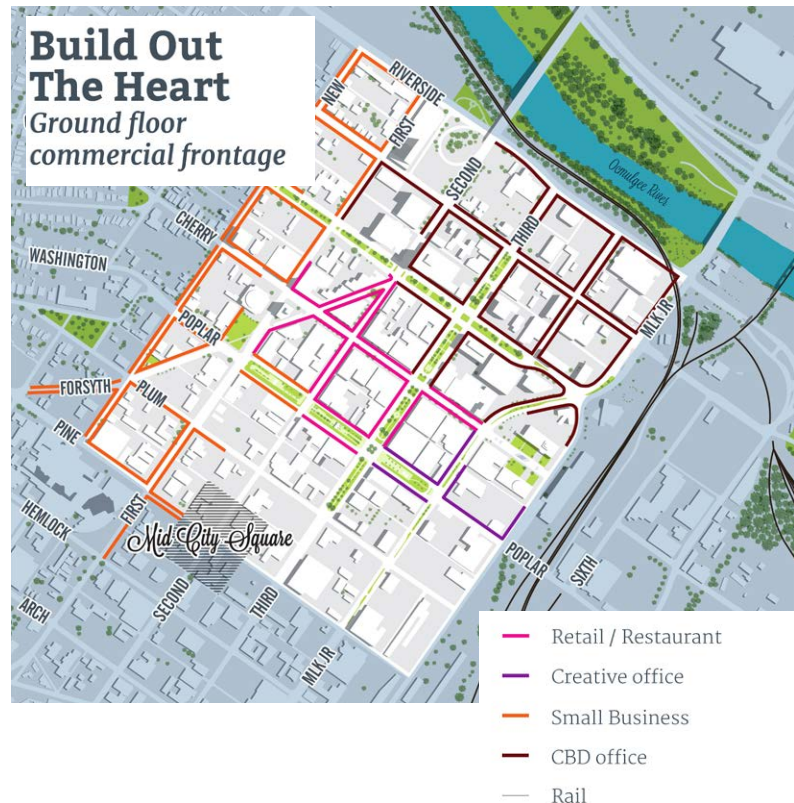
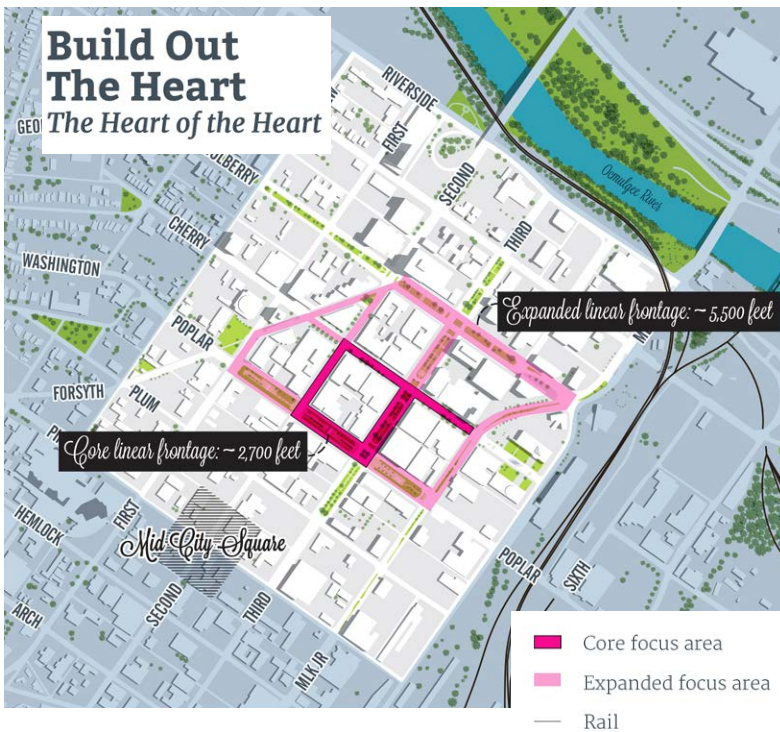
1.4

Adopt a land use strategy to focus retail and infill strategically, so Downtown doesn't become diluted

As illustrated on page 8, Downtown's footprint is a lot larger than similar downtowns. There is simply too much ground floor space for it all to be retail or restaurants. Continuing to allow these types of commercial spaces to land organically can dilute the Downtown experience; as destinations become spread out, it will encourage visitors to hop in their car and drive to different parts of Downtown, instead of walking from one place to the next. We need to increase the foot traffic in the Downtown core to support local businesses and retail.

Future investment should be strategic about what types of development go where, and the

mix of new businesses most thought of when creating a vibrant Downtown experience – restaurants, bars, venues, and retail – should be targeted in the very core of Downtown along specific street frontages – Cherry and parts of Third, Second and Poplar. Other types of commercial, such as offices and professional services, should be located on the periphery. When it comes to larger employment centers or anchors, encourage them to locate in the Central Business District area shown in red on the adjacent map. And because commercial uses can't fill all the ground floor spaces Downtown, consider residential as a first floor use in the area shaded in yellow.

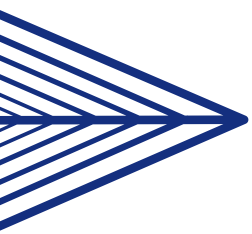


Build Out The Heart

General land use strategy



- Retail Core
- Central Business District
- Commercial
- Hospital/Medical
- Institutional
- Housing
- Rail



1.5

Create pathways out for those experiencing homelessness

As Downtown continues to grow and broaden its economic base, it is important to bring vulnerable populations along. Like many other cities, homelessness is a visible issue in Macon. New residents, visitors and businesses herald a change in Downtown fortunes that need not be at odds with the needs of the homeless. Downtown provides a number of services to those experiencing homelessness, and its central location and transportation options make it the logical and best place to do so. Linking economic opportunity for those experiencing homelessness to the continued improvement of Downtown is a way to support the new theme of inclusivity and provides a model for economic equity.

Macon must continue to address homelessness with existing programs while also considering creative interventions to provide economic opportunities and pathways to housing.

For this, Macon can look to other cities. Denver Day Works and Wheels of Change in San Diego are low-barrier employment models that offer day work with a daily paycheck and transportation for homeless individuals doing jobs such as cleaning up litter and landscaping. In Macon, a day work

program could connect homeless individuals with Downtown projects, potentially through a partnership between the BID and existing homelessness resources such as the Daybreak Center, Loaves and Fishes Ministry, and Macon Outreach at Mulberry. For transportation, Re-cycle, Macon's bike program, could also be a valuable partner in providing participants with the opportunity to earn a bike.

In addition to economic opportunities, there is a need to provide transitional and pathways to longer-term affordable housing. Consider adopting a "Housing First" policy. In a more traditional approach, a person experiencing homelessness would be given space in an overnight shelter while trying to find work or get sober or healthy enough to secure housing. With *Housing First*, people are given a stable, safe place to live and offered support, whether it's for substance use, mental illness, physical health or employment training. This approach has been shown to yield better outcomes and costs less money over time than keeping people on the streets, where they use costly emergency services like homeless shelters, emergency rooms, ambulances, police and jails. See page 46 for a potential financing approach.



PRECEDENT:

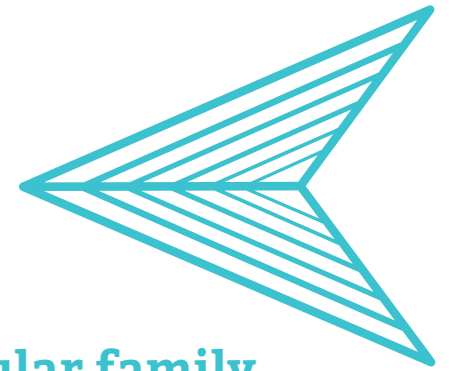
Wheels of Change in San Diego provides dayworking opportunities for people experiencing homelessness. Their two vans go out five days a week to pick up homeless people who express an interest in working. The van takes them to work sites where they pick up trash, pull weeds, clear brush, etc. At the end of the day, they are driven back to a local shelter and provided with their wages for the day.

2

CREATE AN UNPARALLELED URBAN CORE EXPERIENCE

One of the primary features of successful downtowns across the country is that they offer a distinctive experience that draws visitors, attracts talent, drives investment, and creates jobs. The urban experience is rooted in a city's vibrancy and unique spirit, how much there is to do, the social life of a community, and the vibe of the spaces and events that bring people together or encourage them to explore and get to know a place. In other words, a successful urban center must offer a wide range of activities that make people want to visit, stay, play, live, work, launch, and invest. Downtown is cleaner, safer, and more vibrant than it was five years ago, but now it's time to make it beautiful, lush, more fun, and comfortable after hours.

2.1



Provide regular family friendly programming, and build a destination playground Downtown

Downtown should not only be a place to dine out or grab drinks with friends; it must also be a place for families. There are three recommendations for encouraging more family-friendly activities in the Downtown:

Create a vertical playground in the Third Street median

The addition of a destination playground to the Downtown would encourage families to come and stay Downtown longer, patronize nearby shops, and bring whimsy and playfulness into the urban fabric. As shown in the graphic below, to keep kids from running out into the street, consider a sculptural vertical 'caged' obstacle course in the center of the median. In addition, redesign the median to allow for more flexible programming, eliminate the slip turns as proposed in the original MAP, and create an extra buffer from on-street traffic by accommodating the proposed bike lane along the median.

Activate the lawn of the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame

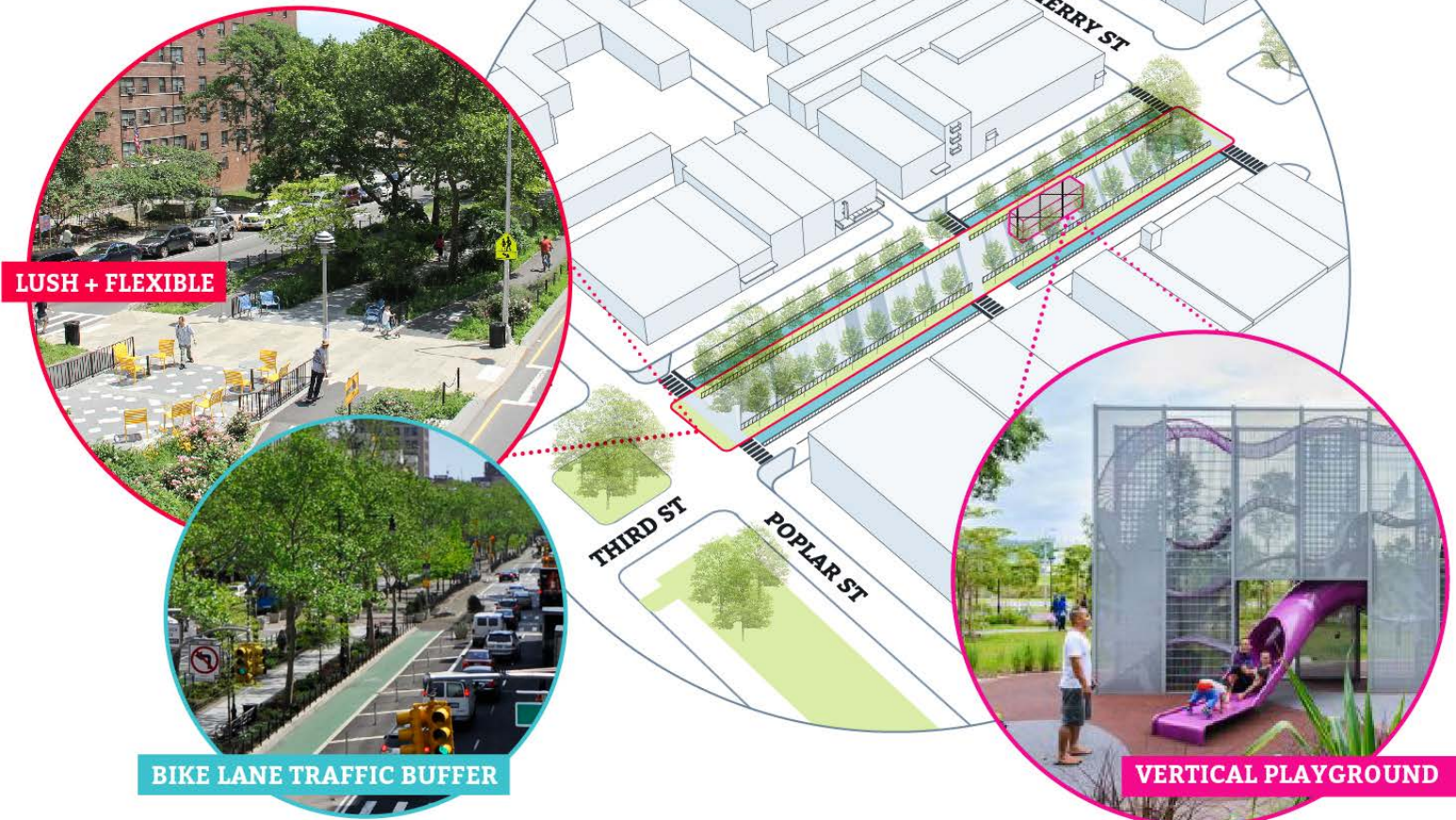
Program the underutilized space in the front yard of the Hall of Fame with recreational and sports fields - for example volleyball courts.

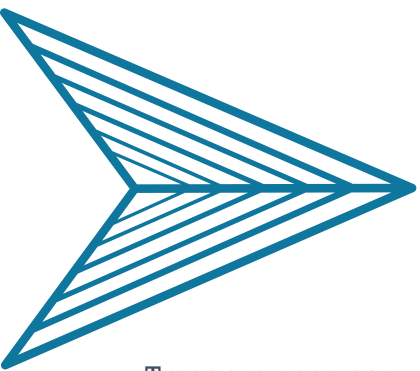
Formalize a Downtown Farmer's Market

A frequent ask of residents is a grocery store Downtown. The recently piloted farmer's market in the Poplar Street median has shown to be a valued amenity to both Downtown residents and office workers. Efforts should be made to grow and formalize this program, first by expanding

the number of vendors and increasing the frequency. Once the market is self-sustaining and has grown a robust customer base, consider creating a permanent, centrally located outdoor market for buying local fresh produce and purchasing local goods that is open at least three days a week.

Potential redesign of the Third Street median, including a new vertical playground, flexible plaza space, and green buffering





2.2

Plant shade trees to increase the tree canopy

Trees are necessary elements for a successful downtown. Besides the health benefits associated with trees, they mitigate issues like heat and wind while also adding value to nearby properties. Downtown is blessed with wide sidewalks and green medians, and in February 2020 Macon was named one of the "Tree Cities of the World," yet the walking experience Downtown often lacks shade trees, and is very hot in the warmer months. Close your eyes and imagine if Downtown Macon channeled the lushness of Savannah or Greenville. Increasing the tree canopy would make the walking experience more enjoyable, reduce surface and air temperatures, enticing visitors to spend more time Downtown, and make walking (instead of driving) to their next destination more likely. A healthy urban tree canopy is an invaluable resource, and as such we should do it right:

Work with an arborist to take an inventory of the existing tree canopy Downtown and develop a tree planting strategy.

Identify trees that are unhealthy and need to be replaced, and protect trees that are older and healthy. To ensure both visibility and impact of new tree plantings, priority streets should be identified for concentrated plantings.

Plant the right tree in the right place.

Different tree species are suited for different environments. Target larger shade trees along medians, and sidewalks that have adequate tree pits and limited overhead wires. In spaces that are tighter, consider smaller tree species. Again, work with a local arborist to identify the street tree species that will work best in Downtown Macon.

Maximize tree pits and tree spacing.

Urban street trees face a lot of stress. To minimize this, provide a minimum of 4-foot x 4-foot tree pits, where space allows, and encourage continuous tree pits where two or more trees are planted in a single trench in the sidewalk. Look to implement green stormwater management infrastructure here as well.

Work with the BID to execute proper tree care and watering.

It's not just about getting the trees planted, the City needs a plan to make sure these trees grow properly and establish good roots. This will maximize this investment in the Downtown and allow for the tree canopy to flourish.



after



before

Stretch of Mulberry Street lacking in street trees.



STREET TREES

- street lacking in shade trees
- open space
- rail

Map highlighting streets that are currently lacking in street trees.

2.3

after



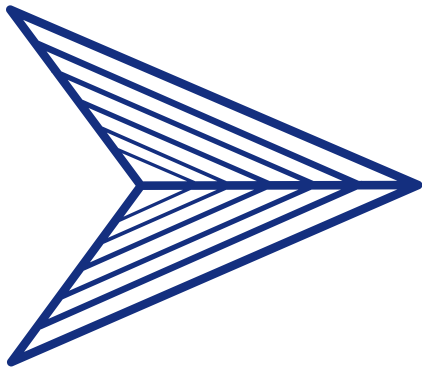
Introduce green stormwater management with infrastructure upgrades

Macon’s underground stormwater infrastructure is aging. Cities across the country with similar outdated stormwater systems have been replacing their “grey” underground infrastructure with “green” above ground stormwater infrastructure. Green stormwater infrastructure uses vegetation, soils and other landscape features to reduce and treat stormwater runoff when it rains. This infrastructure can include techniques such as rain gardens, bioswales, planter boxes, permeable pavement, and rain barrels or cisterns. Implementing these features Downtown would provide a host of benefits. Besides creating a more lush pedestrian environment, this sustainable approach to stormwater management would provide numerous public health benefits and reduce pollutants. In many cases, green infrastructure has even been shown to cost less than conventional grey infrastructure and provide green jobs. Work with the Macon Water Authority to establish best practices and designs that are suitable for Macon.

before



Alley makeover implementing green stormwater infrastructure techniques.



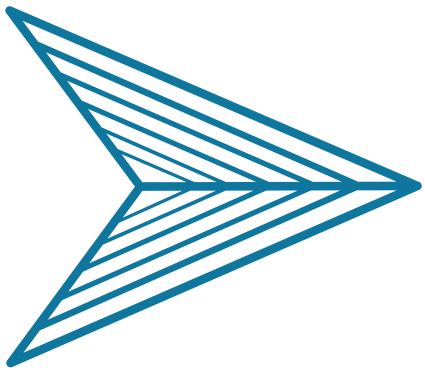
2.4

Use planters to add color, texture and beauty

The addition of shade trees and green stormwater infrastructure plantings will work to create a more lush and beautiful Downtown, but they will take years to grow to their full potential and there are many spaces Downtown that simply can't support that type of inground planting. Work with the BID to utilize planters to fill in these gaps, by maximizing the number of planters and flowers that are Downtown. This could be done through an Adopt-a-Planter program with local businesses, or a coordinated effort along key pedestrian/retail corridors.



Rendering of the potential of a vacant storefront at Third and Poplar Streets, including a facade upgrade, window treatment, planters, and uplighting of the Bibb Theatre sign.



2.5

Enliven storefronts and spaces with art, exhibits, and greening; prioritize key blocks, iconic buildings, and publicly owned vacant land

While storefront occupancy has improved over the last five years, vacancy still plagues many Downtown streets, creating gaps in the pedestrian experience. In fact, 42% of storefronts in the Central Business District are vacant. As the retail market continues to find its footing, there is a reality that shopping won't be able to fill every storefront. So, while these storefronts await permanent tenants, it is critical to address the gaps in the pedestrian experience by activating these spaces temporarily. Prioritize these improvements along key retail corridors - Cherry Street from MLK to First, Second from Poplar to Mulberry, Poplar Street from Second to Third, and Third Street from Poplar to Cherry. Do this systematically - "finish a block" and move onto the next, until all of these corridors are activated and provide a truly pleasant walking experience. Pay particular attention to highlighting iconic buildings (the Bibb Theatre for instance).

Potential activation measures include:

Curate rotating exhibits

Work with the property owners and local historians to display art or historical artifacts about music, history, etc. in empty windows and display cases.

Light, art, interactive installations

Hire local artists to enliven empty storefronts with installations that capture the imagination and bring life to the streetscape.

Incubation spaces

Work with landlords to provide temporary uses or shorter leases of storefronts for pop up shops for entrepreneurs who aren't ready to take on a permanent space. These incubator spaces can work to bolster a single business, or in the case of a larger space, allow for multiple small businesses to set up shop.

For active storefronts that could use some sprucing up, provide merchandising and storefront facade assistance. Partner with local designers to work with business owners to redesign and improve storefronts to help attract new customers.

In addition to the core retail corridors, there are some highly visible publicly-owned vacant parcels in the Downtown that detract from the public realm experience. Examples include the old Harriet Tubman Museum site on the corner of MLK and Walnut Streets, and the land being held for Mid City Square at the intersection of Second and Pine Streets. Take care to temporarily improve the appearance of these sites with beautification measures as they await future development - such as landscaping, edge treatments, public art, etc.

PRECEDENT:

Activated Spaces Dayton gives new life to vacant spaces in their Downtown. The project aims to re-activate and beautify vacant storefronts and offices with unique businesses and to showcase Downtown properties and increase interest in available Downtown space. The project had three phases. The first was to fill empty store windows with vibrant works of art. The second matched property owners with potential tenants for Pop Up Shops. Phase three was Activated Office. This phase builds on the success of the Pop Up Shops. Selected Activated Office tenants will receive a short-term lease option for downtown office space a small stipend to help offset startup costs. In addition, each selected business will receive 10 hours of free legal services and 15 hours of free marketing support.



WWW.ACTIVATEDSPACES.ORG

3 FOCUS ON DOWNTOWN LIVING

The Urban Core needs additional residents as well as healthy and stable neighborhoods in order to sustain a pattern of growth and increased vibrancy. The strategies addressed in this section include: increasing residential development in Downtown and nearby, and fighting blight and revitalizing neighborhoods throughout the Urban Core.

The updated ZVA market study finds the total market potential for 2,600 households of all incomes annually to rent or purchase new dwelling units in the Downtown Study Area. 1,477 of those households are those with incomes above 60% AMI, with the ability to rent or purchase new workforce and market rate housing units. Based on a 15-18% capture of those households for new rental housing units, and a 10-12% capture of new for sale housing units, the study forecasts an absorption rate of 990 to 1,175 new units over the next five years. That would mean if the Urban Core were able to produce 198 to 235 dwelling units each year, there would be market demand for them. Meeting this demand is the challenge, as developers noted that development in Downtown is more difficult than it was five years ago. The key here is to not fixate on the price per square foot, modern buyers pay attention to the total purchase price of a house, and are more likely to be attracted to smaller housing typologies.

3.1



Continue to build out from points of strength and diversify the housing stock

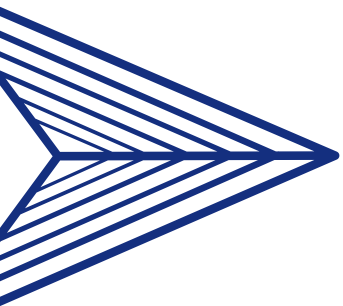
As Downtown's residential momentum moves southward, explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and new construction in South Downtown, from Plum to Pine, being careful not to cannibalize prime working space. There are also opportunities to increase the number of housing units across MLK to the east. In the longer term, capitalize on opportunities to build out the heart of Downtown as they become available, and increase the density of multi-family or clustered housing types to respond to market preferences and price points, which value smaller units and walkability. Any institutional sites that become available should be reconsidered for demolition and replacement with denser uses to enable more housing infill that would bring new residents to support the retail establishments that people want to see Downtown.

Diversifying the housing stock not only means expanding the types and sizes of units available in the Urban Core, it also means diversifying the price points of the available housing units to ensure Downtown is accessible to all.



Source: Opticos Design, Inc.





3.2

In East Macon, continue to market Schell Avenue homes at the Mill Hill Arts Village

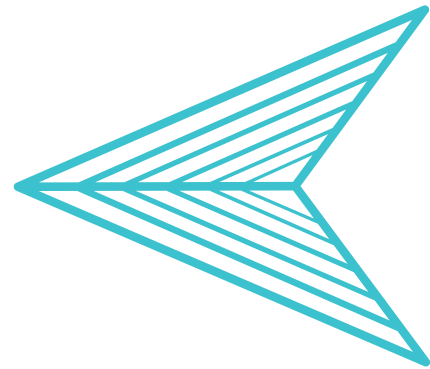
Mill Hill has made significant strides over the past five years. Most of the Schell Avenue homes have been rehabbed, and the Mill Hill Community Arts Center has opened. In order to build support and attract new residents to this development, host a series of community land trust seminars that educate prospective occupants on the history, concept, and value of land trusts and the vision for the hill. In addition, consider hosting porch parties, or use the houses for gallery openings to encourage visitors and build excitement around the project.



Explore options for the near-term and long-term use of the Bibb Mill site

Walking from the intersection of Cherry Street and MLK in Downtown is only a 20 minute walk to the Mill Hill Community Arts Center, and 25 minutes to the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park. However, in between Downtown and these incredible destinations is a large 14-acre vacant parcel known as the historic Bibb Mill Site. As the property awaits redevelopment, connect these destinations by building a temporary sculpture park along Coliseum Street as a tourist destination tied to the Arts Village and National Park. Considering the size of the property, this park could easily support a 100 foot buffer, with large iconic sculptures and landforms (or mounds!) to encourage visitors to cross the river and experience these destinations. These pieces would have visibility from the highway, and would create an additional tourist destination without

3.3



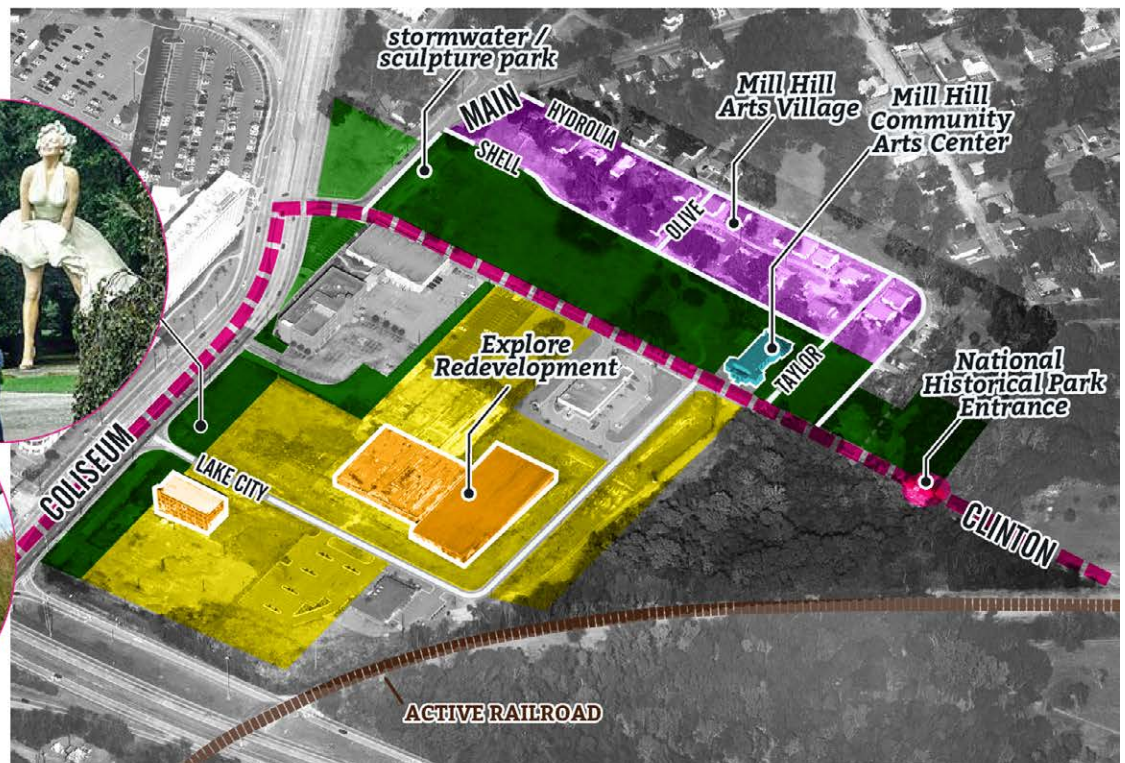
drawing the development potential out of Downtown. These sculptures could be pieces on loan, or part of a permanent collection. The photos included here are examples from Grounds for Sculpture, in Hamilton NJ, which attracts visitors annually from across the state.

In addition to this temporary activation, test fit development programs for the site, focusing on new single- and multi-family residential development. Other cities have taken this approach and created new neighborhoods and new housing options adjacent to their downtowns to serve a mix of families and incomes.

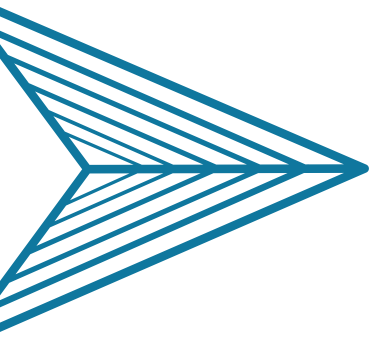
Near Term: Sculpture Park!



Combine Art + Open space to connect Downtown to East Macon, Mill hill and the National Park



- INTOWN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
- EXPLORE REDEVELOPMENT FOR MULTI FAMILY RES.
- CONTINUE REHABILITATION
- OPEN SPACE



3.4

Jump start investment in Pleasant Hill by stabilizing vacant property, and focusing rehab and infill, one block at a time

Pleasant Hill has seen some investment over the last five years as part of the I-75 project. The linear park is now completed, and the Wise Avenue Park has opened, but much of the vacancy and blight in the neighborhood remains. In fact, there are 11 football fields worth of vacant land in just this small area. In areas like these where the market for redevelopment is lacking, take three focused steps to lay the groundwork for revitalization.

Existing conditions in Pleasant Hill



VACANT LAND

14.5 acres
= 11 football fields
19 properties (17%) are publicly owned

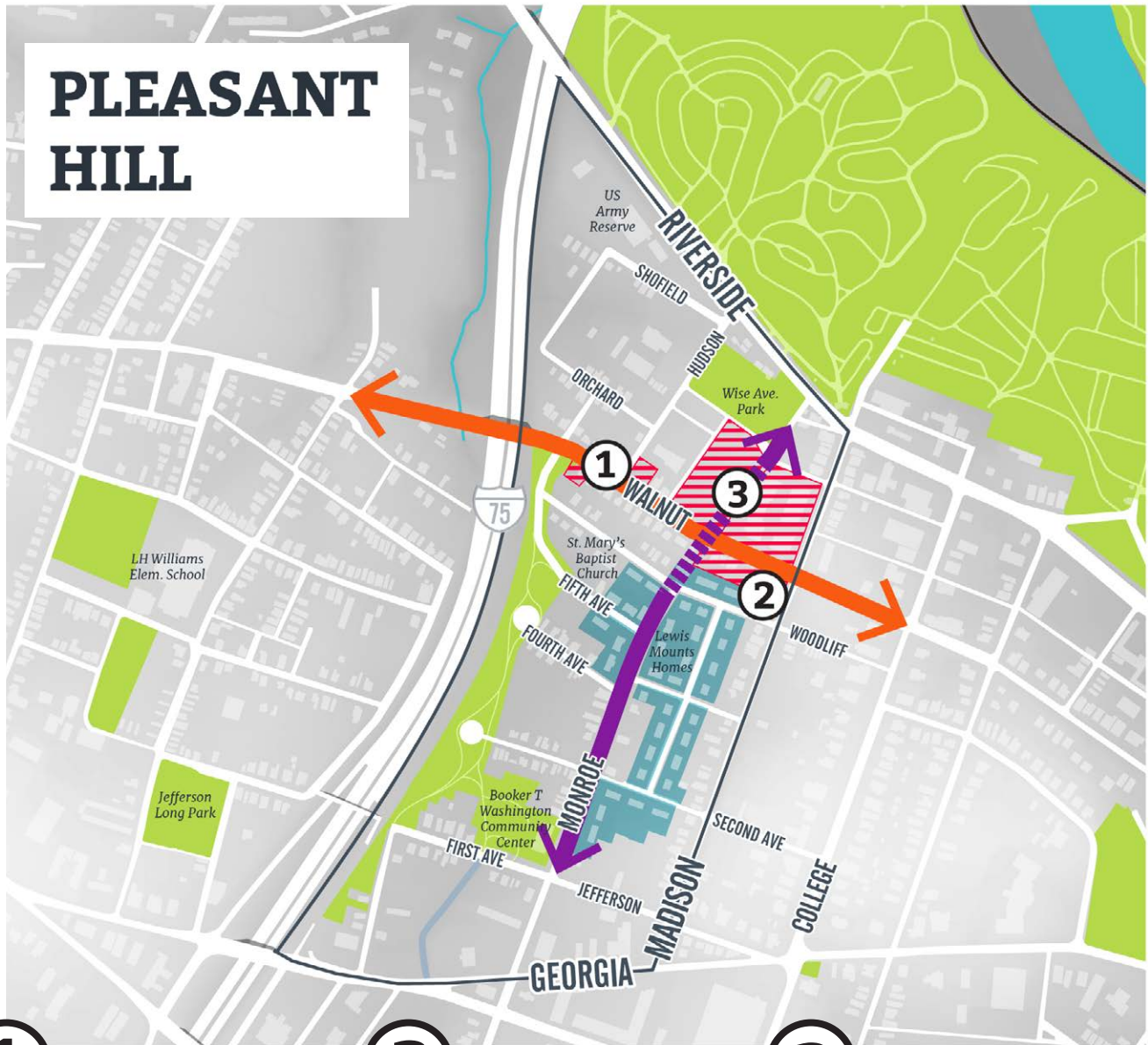
VACANT BUILDINGS

54 vacant structures
28% of the building stock of the neighborhood

15 structures were recommended to be torn down in 2014.

- 2014 proposed demolition
- publicly owned property
- vacant building
- vacant land
- housing authority homes

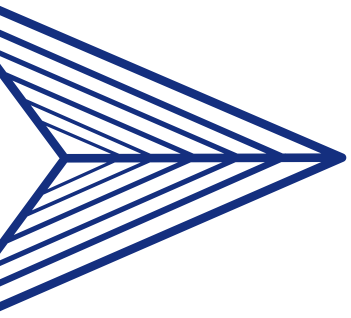
PLEASANT HILL



1 Stabilize vacant properties, beautify the public realm, and prioritize the pedestrian and bicycle experience along Walnut Street as it is a major neighborhood connection between Pleasant Hill and Downtown.

2 Focus rehab and infill, one block at a time starting along Walnut Street.

3 Reconnect the neighborhood along Monroe Street, from the Booker T. Washington Community Center to the Wise Avenue Park. There are some grade challenges to overcome, but even a pedestrian connection to provide residents with access to the other side of the neighborhood would de-isolate it.



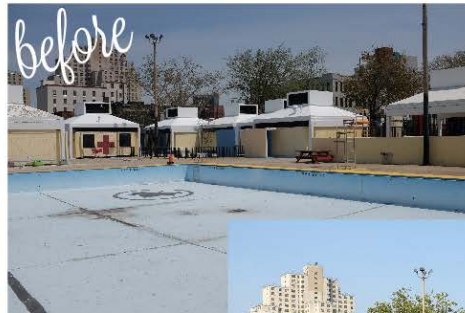
3.5

Reopen the Booker T. Washington Community Center as a true neighborhood asset, with a pool pop-up in the summer and a workforce training center

Activating this community center means thinking outside the box and creating welcoming space that will help capture the pride residents have in Pleasant Hill. The Chamber of Commerce is searching for a new home for its workforce training center, and while it's outside of Downtown proper, moving this type of valuable programming into the Booker T. Washington Community Center would work to benefit a neighborhood in need of economic opportunity. In addition to bringing valuable programming to the interior of the building, transform the pool in the summer into a neighborhood destination. For example, the NYC Cool Pools program uses placemaking tools such as colorful paint, planters, and pool furniture to transform typical public pools into "private pool-like" experiences at a very low cost.

WHY CAN'T THE POOL BE MORE THAN A PLACE TO SWIM?

→ Transform the pool in the summer to a neighborhood destination →

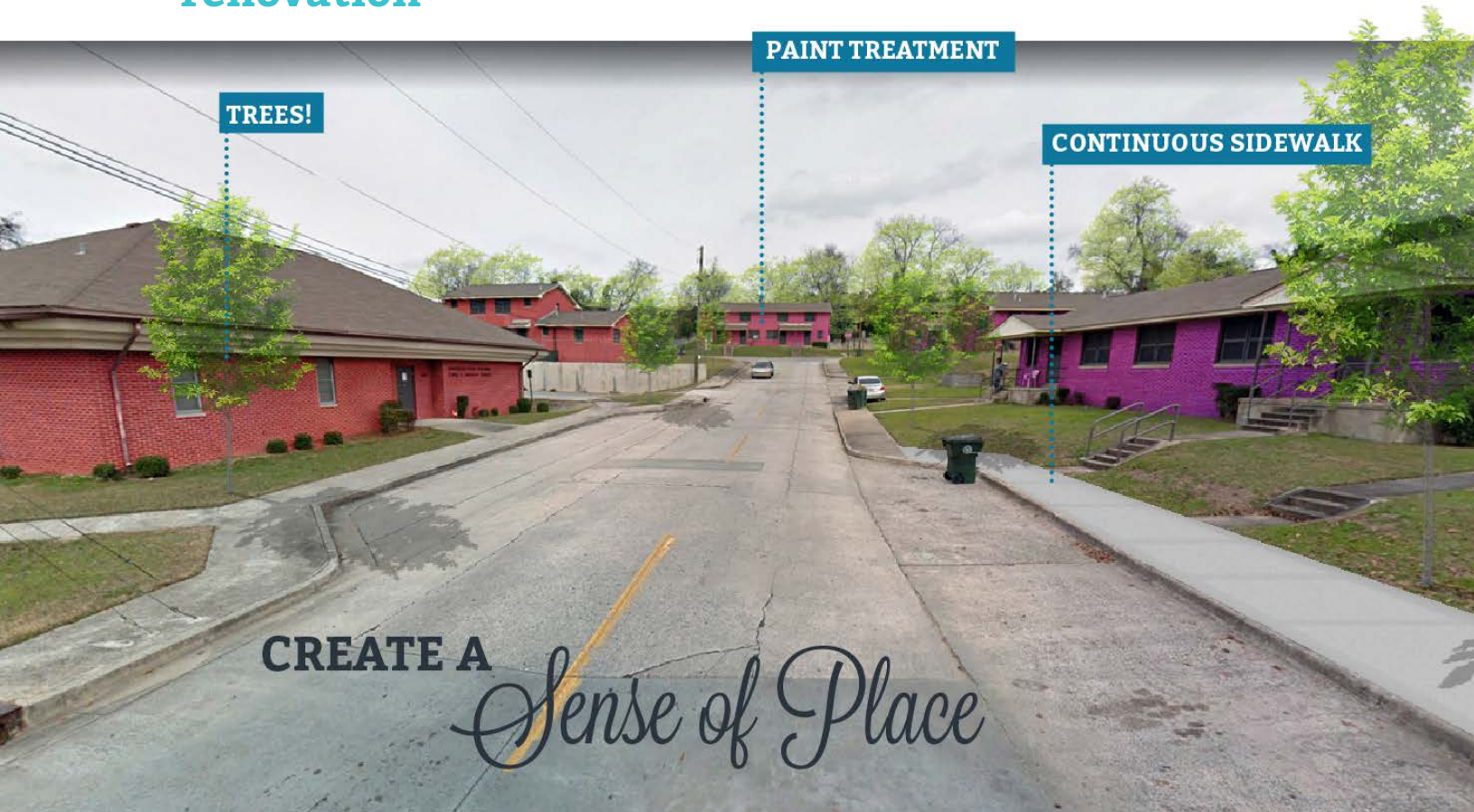


Example: NYC Cool Pools

3.6

At the Louis Mounts Homes, work with the Housing Authority to determine the feasibility of redevelopment or renovation

In Pleasant Hill, the Louis Mounts Homes take up a large portion of the parcel area in the neighborhood. The development is a collection of one and two story multi-family buildings that lack color, and while much of the rest of the neighborhood has sidewalks, this development does not provide a continuous sidewalk network. The landscaping mostly consists of lawn and a few shrubs. If rehab and renovation of this development is a long term plan, consider simple paint treatments to distinguish between structures and add color. In addition, create a continuous sidewalk network and introduce shade trees to create a sense of place.



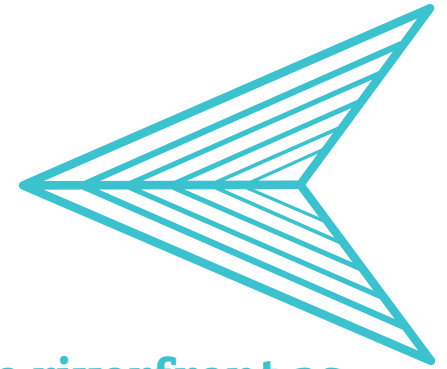
4

CULTIVATE CONNECTIVITY

As the hub of business and government in Central Georgia, the Urban Core has excellent local and regional vehicular connections through its grid network and interstate highways. The movement of vehicles to and from Downtown has long been a priority of its transportation system.

The Urban Core needs a different approach to transportation. Pedestrians are critical to the success of the Urban Core and their safety should be the highest priority in the design of its streets. The recent parking meters have improved the Downtown experience for residents, employees, and visitors. Now, it's time to shift our focus on improvements to key corridors and bike infrastructure to increase transportation choice, and maintain pressure on longer-term implementation efforts.

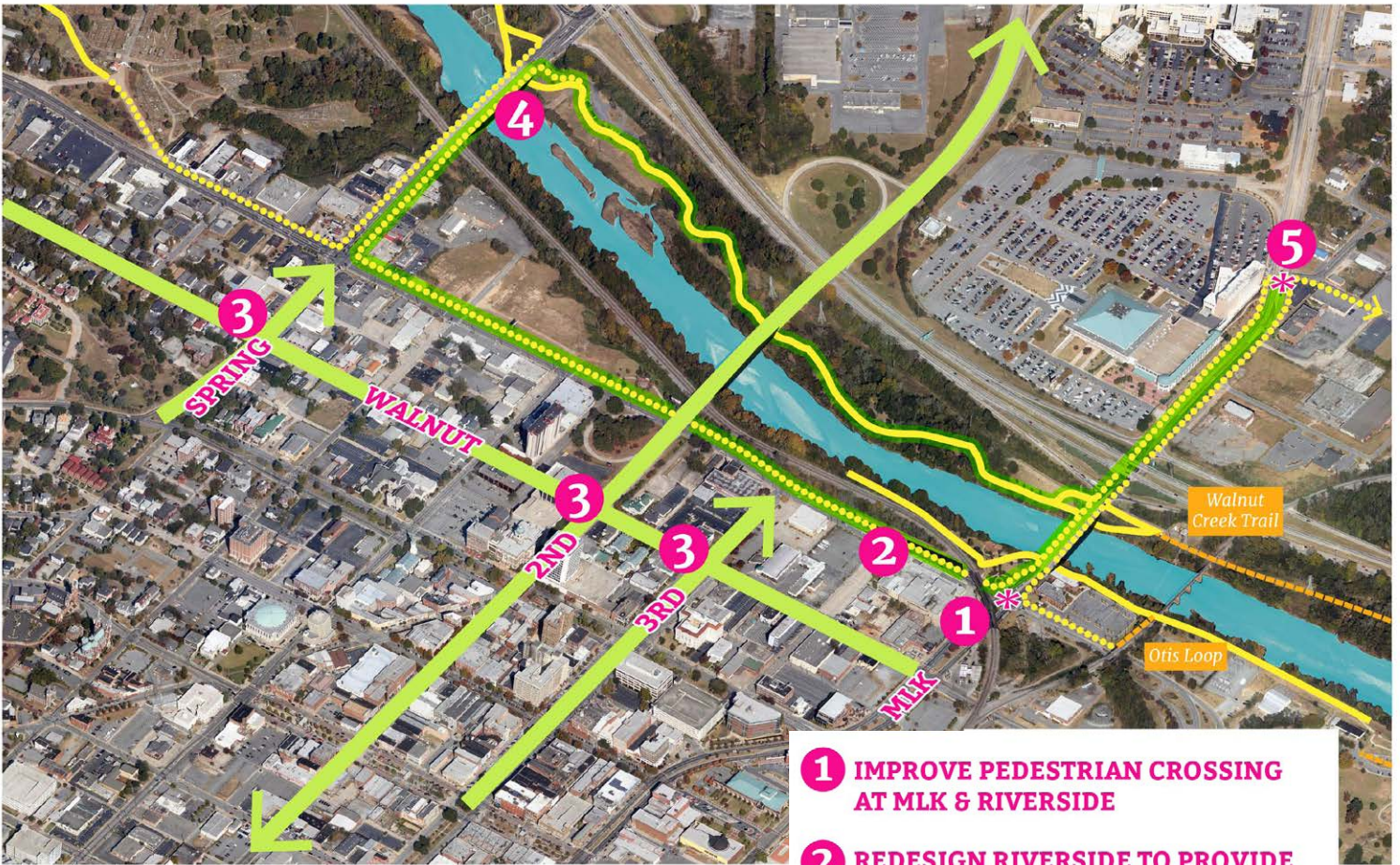
4.1



Integrate the riverfront as a key downtown amenity through trail and trailhead improvements

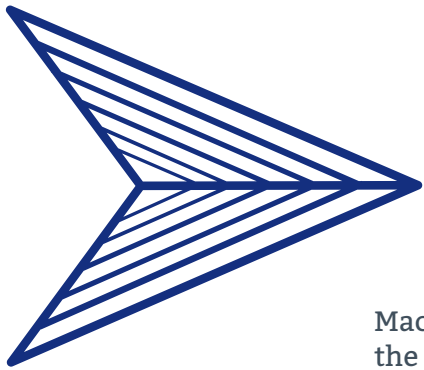
Poplar Street in the center of the Urban Core is only a 3-minute bike ride or a 10-minute walk from the riverfront. Building out the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail with both trail extensions and on-street connections will bring the riverfront and its open spaces into the Downtown sphere, extending Downtown to the Ocmulgee River. Implementing the Riverside Drive redesign is critical to creating a continuous Ocmulgee Trail and will help to reposition the riverfront as a gateway to Downtown. Additionally, connector streets (such as Second, Third and Spring Streets), the Spring Street and Otis Redding Memorial Bridges, and trail heads will need to be improved as part of the trail network.

The designation of Macon as a part of the Reimagining the Civic Commons initiatives is essential in making this dream a reality by using the resources and tools of that initiative to both redesign and program the core Downtown streets and medians. This is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to create an integrated trail system throughout Downtown and one that cannot be replicated in other cities. This unique trail can help to create a more vibrant Downtown but, more importantly, drive further investment in housing and economic development.



Complete the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail, connecting Downtown to the River and the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park.

- 1 IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT MLK & RIVERSIDE**
- 2 REDESIGN RIVERSIDE TO PROVIDE A GREENWAY**
- 3 IMPROVE CONNECTIONS ON 2ND, 3RD, WALNUT & SPRING STREETS**
- 4 IMPROVE SPRING STREET BRIDGE TO ACCOMMODATE BICYCLES**
- 5 IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT COLISEUM & CLINTON**



4.2

Build out the bike lane network

Macon has a growing bike culture but still needs to work on building out the bike lane network. Bike facilities, such as bike parking and public repair stands, are concentrated in the Downtown core and at Mercer University, and an on-street connection between the two runs along College and Forsyth Streets. Existing on-street connections, a mix of dedicated lanes and sharrows, are located mainly west of the Downtown core. More bike lanes are needed in the Urban Core for circulation around the core and also to connect it to the surrounding neighborhoods; Pleasant Hill along Walnut, East Macon along MLK and Coliseum, and Beall's Hill along Oglethorpe and Second Streets. Continue to build out the Riverside redesign, including a mixed use path.

Bike Network

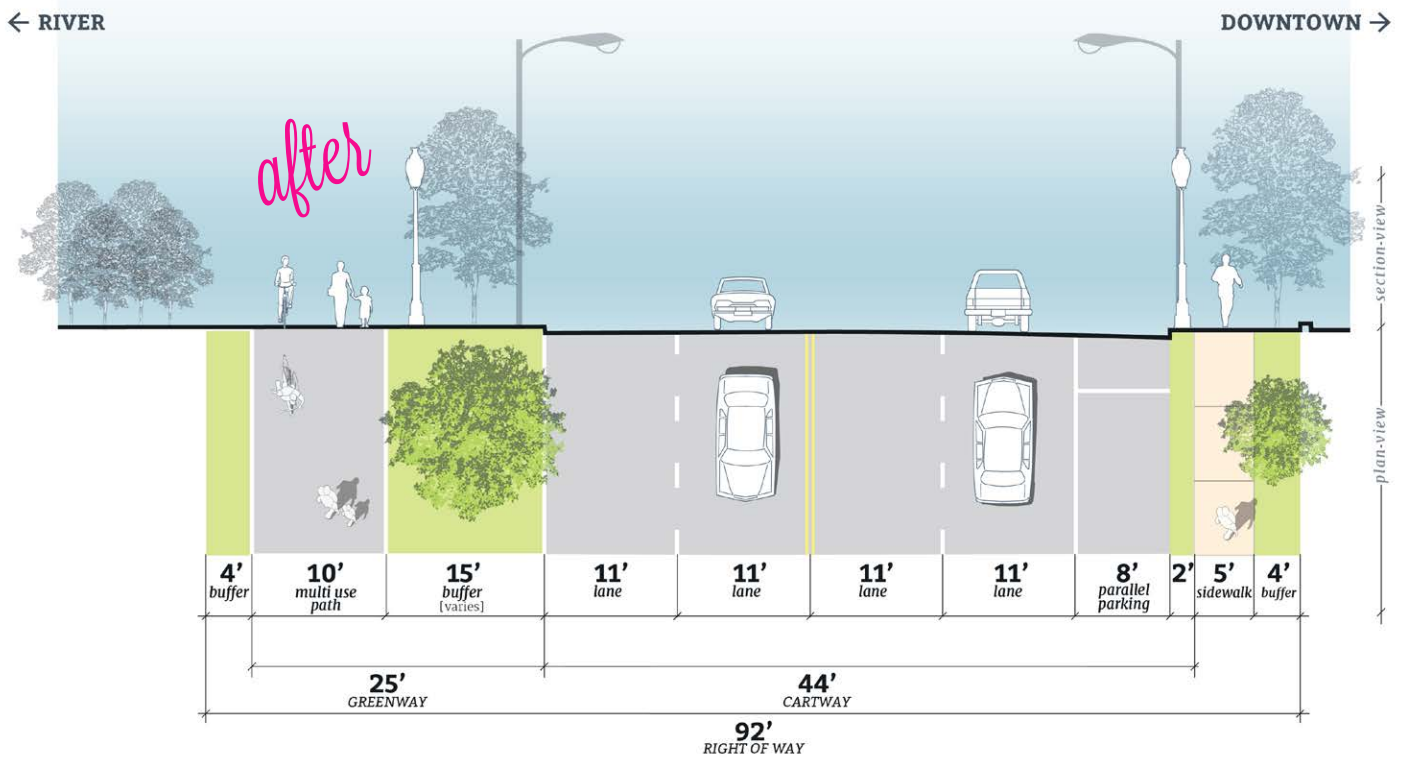
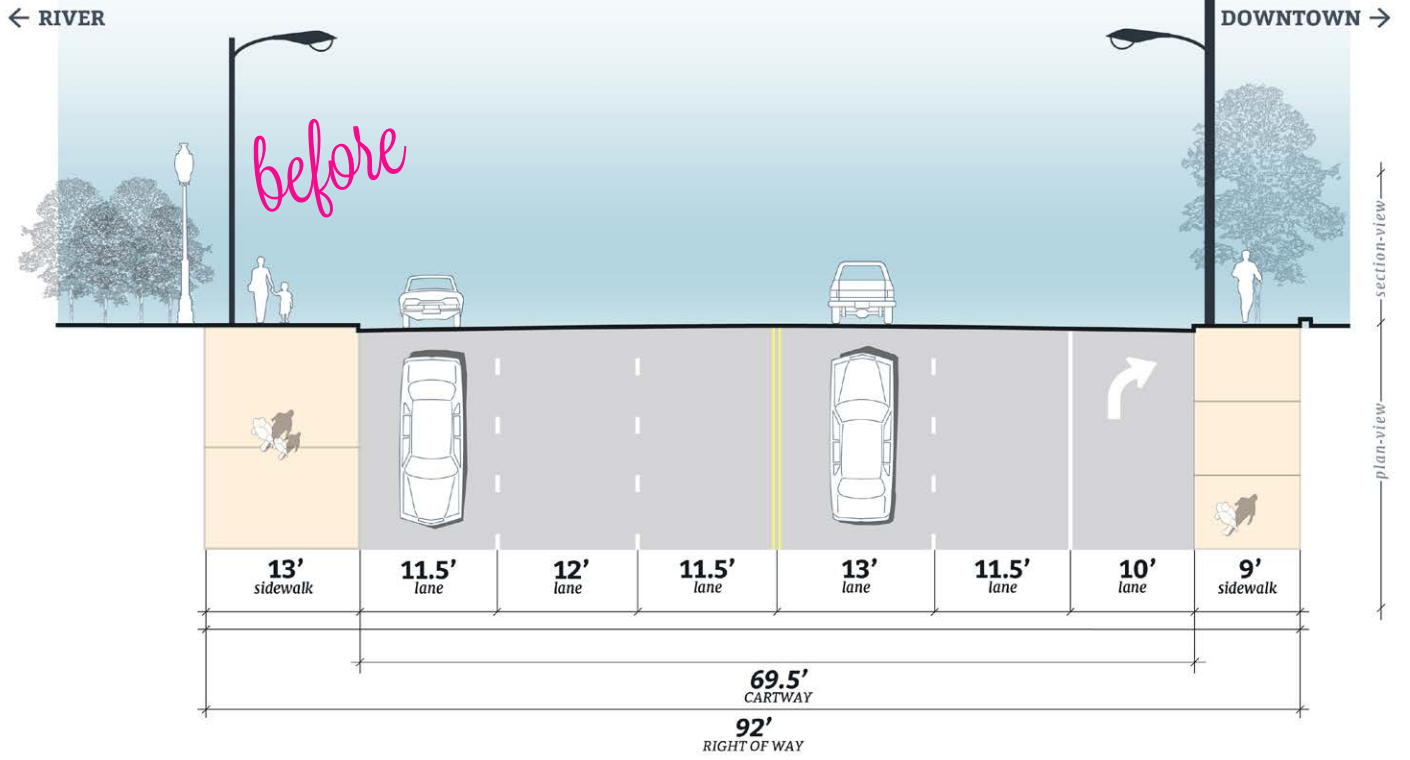
- Ocmulgee Heritage trail
- bike lanes
- sharrows
- multiuse path
- bike parking
- public bike repair stand
- historic downtown
- open space
- rail

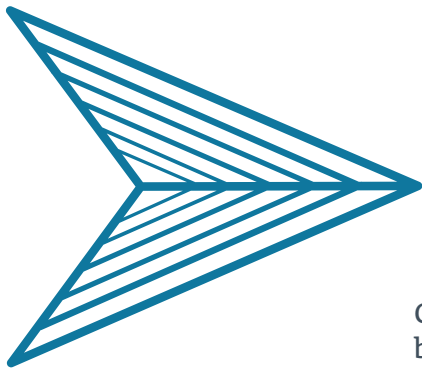


Source: Interface Studio

RIVERSIDE DRIVE

(facing southeast toward 1st St.)

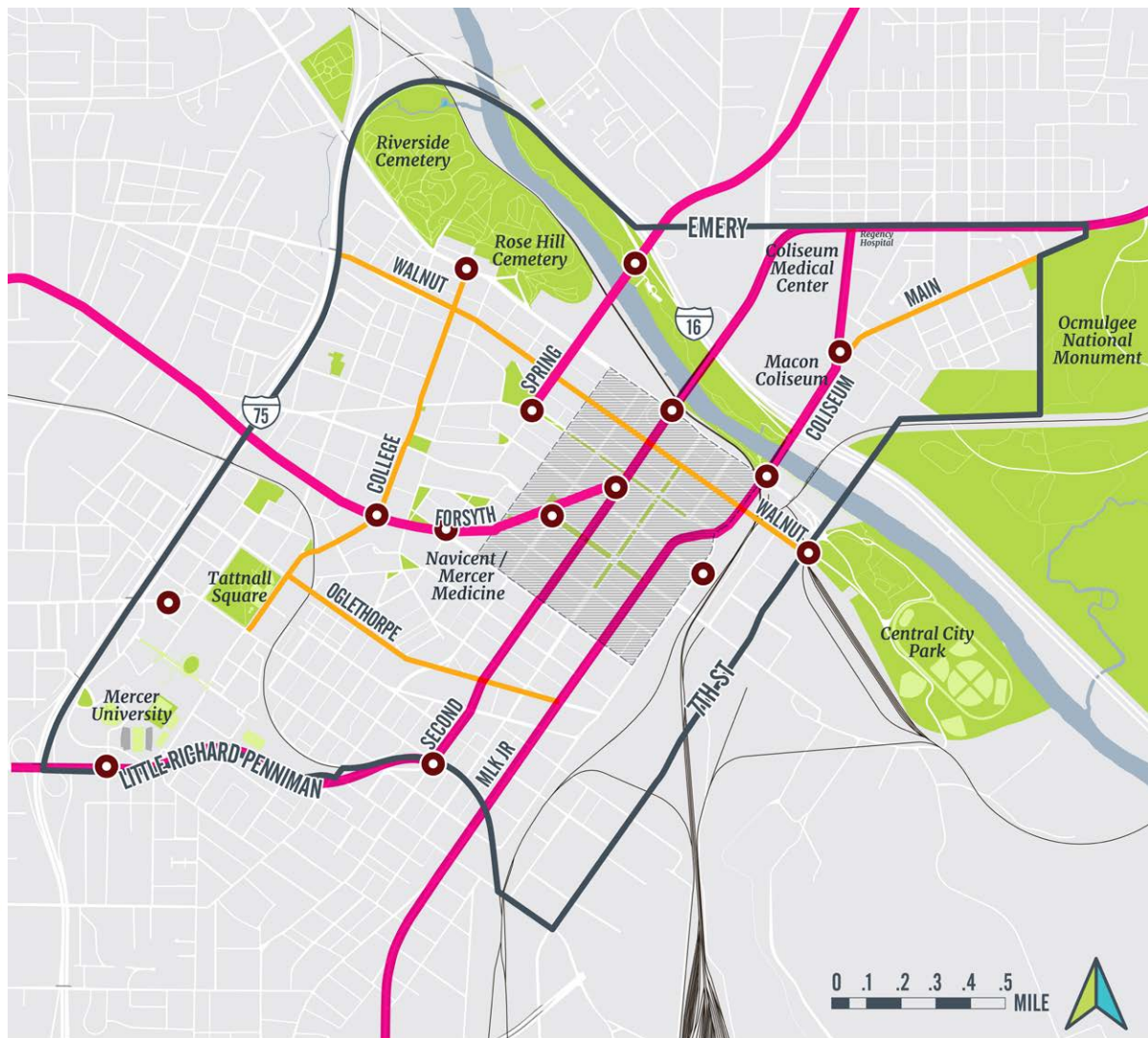




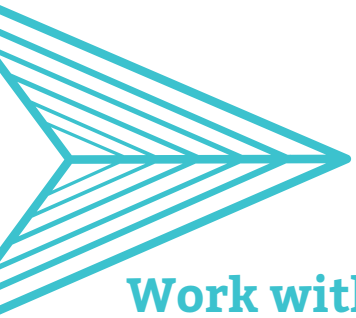
4.3

Seize opportunities to improve gateways into planned street reconstructions

Gateway corridors are major entry points to Downtown Macon and should be designed to make a good first impression of the city. These corridors are also noted as important components of the bike network which provides an opportunity to achieve multiple goals through coordinated street improvements. Gateway interventions could include tree planting and green stormwater infrastructure, sidewalk improvements, and bike lanes, and at key gateway intersections, enhanced crosswalks, wayfinding signage, and public art.



Source: Interface Studio



4.4

Work with Macon Transit Authority to ensure that Downtown is accessible to all

As Downtown events and attractions grow, it will be important to make sure all people can access them. One in eight households in the County (12.5%) do not own a vehicle, and therefore rely on alternative modes of transportation such as public transit. Special events should be advertised to draw people from throughout the County and encourage them to take public transit. In planning events, attention should be paid to transportation options to ensure there is adequate service; for example, Macon Transit service is limited on Saturdays and doesn't run on Sundays. Service increases or special loops could be considered to bridge the gap.

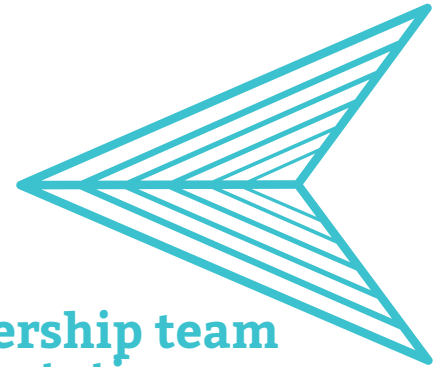


5

IMPLEMENTATION

In the MAP Refresh, all implementation efforts should improve accessibility and inclusion, in leadership roles, housing, business development, and job opportunities.

5.1



Build a leadership team for implementation reflective of Macon's diverse community

With respect to social justice, diversity, and inclusion, the MAP process revealed a lot of common concerns from community leaders to local advocates and representatives from the area's diverse communities. As MAP implementation continues to grow, and the calendar of events expands, it is essential that improvements and programming be inclusive and seek to attract a full cross section of individuals and families from across the region. Ensuring that Downtown is welcoming to all means bringing in diverse voices to implement the plan, and creating an implementation team that is reflective of Macon's cross section. This diversity will work to tap into different social networks, expanding the Downtown volunteer base, and invite groups to participate in MAP that have previously been left out of the process. To track progress, consider tracking metrics and demographics at events, and curate a mix of programs with broad appeal (like the Christmas lights).

5.2



PRECEDENT:

A planning process in Grand Rapids, MI 'GR Forward' reorganized in 2017 around their plan's diversity goals. Their Citizen Leadership Alliance now nearly reflects the racial diversity of the population living in the City of Grand Rapids, with 65% White, 16% Black, 10% Hispanic or Latino, 5% Mixed race and 4% Asian. They are also broadly representative of the community's diversity across professional expertise, geographic residence, and age.

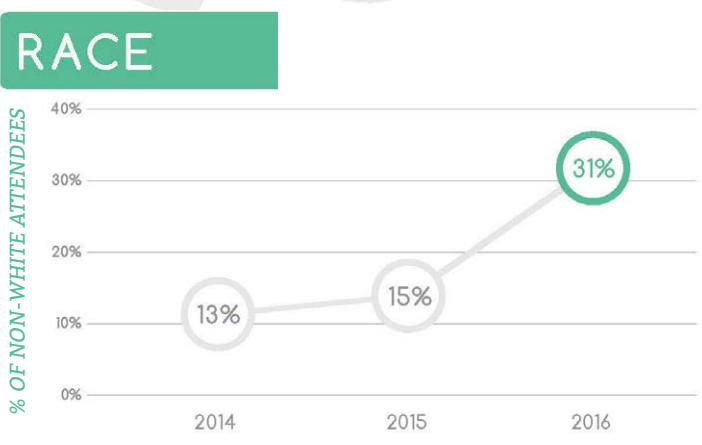


Establish a Housing Trust Fund to support affordable housing in the Urban Core and elsewhere in Macon-Bibb

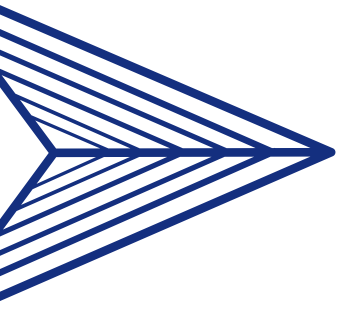
Affordability of future development is a concern to many Macon residents, particularly when it comes to housing prices in the Urban Core. To maintain affordability of intown neighborhoods, and support affordable unit production in the Urban Core, study the feasibility of a local housing trust fund to build a dedicated source of local revenue to address affordable housing needs. This funding is flexible, and can be used for new construction, housing preservation through home repairs, and homelessness prevention through utility assistance, rent subsidies, and foreclosure prevention, or the development of new affordable or transitional housing. Sources of revenue to create the trust fund are typically collected from developer fees, but other cities have used tax increment funds, or inclusionary in-lieu fees (fees provided to the fund in lieu of including affordable units in the development), or an allocation from the general fund.

PRECEDENT:

The City of Greenville identified the need for an organization to identify and implement innovative financing for affordable and workforce housing. The Greenville Housing Fund was created in 2018, funded by a \$2 million commitment from the City and \$1 million in matching funds from philanthropy. The fund is used as gap financing of the production and preservation of new affordable and workforce housing units, both for-sale and rental, through new construction or substantial rehabilitation of vacant units. It also assists low- and moderate-income homeowners in making repairs to their homes and funds land acquisition for future affordable housing development.



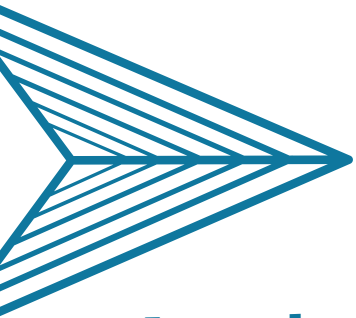
Attendance Tracking in Grand Rapids: Movies in the Park 2016 drew a total nonwhite attendance of 31%, up from 15% in 2015. That's an 80% change year over year. The number of both black and Hispanic or Latino attendees more than doubled. Source: DGRI



5.3

Level the playing field for new businesses and investors looking to establish roots

The current process for developing a new business and obtaining a license is confusing and difficult to navigate. To level the playing field, particularly for minorities, work with the Chamber and NewTown Macon to develop a 'how-to' guide or roadmap to help entrepreneurs easily navigate the permitting and licensing process. In addition, appoint an advisor to walk newcomers or first-timers through the process.



5.4

Launch a job training and local hiring program focused on landscape maintenance and stewardship of green investments

As mentioned above, the next five years should focus on creating a Downtown experience that is beautiful, lush and green. Implementing these greening initiatives can also double as a job creation and local hiring program, in order to meet the need for qualified green infrastructure professionals who can install and maintain the systems and plantings. This would be more cost effective for the City-County while providing access to well paying green jobs. From design and installation to ongoing maintenance, the opportunity here is to design a professional development pipeline program for green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), landscaping, and urban forestry careers - building skills including landscaping, paving, and construction.

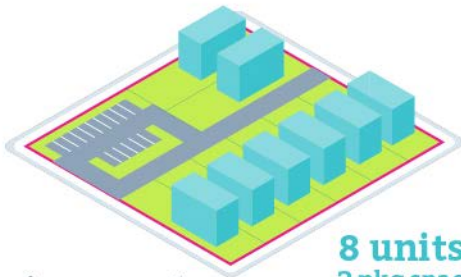


5.5

Revise the zoning code to promote a dense, walkable environment

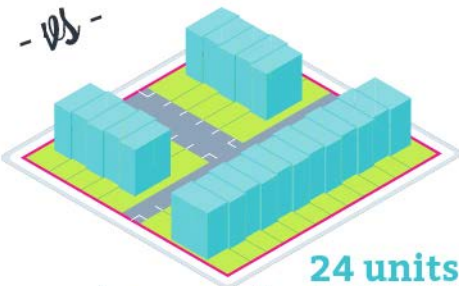
for example:

IF YOU WERE TO REDEVELOP THIS 1.25 ACRE SITE DOWNTOWN...



8 units
2 pkg spaces/unit
35' Height
2 Semi-Active edges

by right:



conditional: **24 units**
1 pkg space/unit
35' or higher
3 Active Edges


The Urban Core comprises 12 different zoning classifications. In many instances, these classifications are the same for the Urban Core as they are for the rest of Bibb County. While some of these classifications are appropriate for suburban developments, they do not result in the types of walkable neighborhood developments that should be encouraged in the Urban Core. MAP encourages Macon-Bibb to transition to a form-based zoning ordinance to encourage development of a variety of housing choices and other uses that encourages best practices in new construction development. A form-based code, with clear illustrations and a checklist of design features, would clearly communicate to developers what Macon-Bibb expects for new development. This will work to streamline the process for developers, and create more user-friendly development guidelines for Downtown, and will result both in better project designs, easier staff review, and a shorter review process. Goals of the overlay should support developments that:

- Respond to the block context
- Reinforce the urban form and architectural styles
- Encourage mixed-use and residential development to reinforce retail concentrations
- Promote pedestrian activity
- Provide active (not blank) facades
- Minimize curb cuts
- Minimize the presence of service/loading areas


In addition, to encourage a more active sidewalk experience, streamline the permit process to encourage outdoor dining, sidewalk displays, and enhanced signage where appropriate. Create a small, user-friendly manual that sets clear expectations with respect to how to implement these improvements.


SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES AND IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH


	#	Action	Timeframe	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
1) Support the Engines of Economic Development					
	1.1	Celebrate & Grow Black-Owned Businesses	short	NewTown Macon, Macon-Middle Georgia Black Pages	N/A
	1.2	Be intentional when it comes to the evolution of Downtown 'South,' preserving work space and cultivating a creative mixed use warehouse district	short	UDA, NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb Planning & Zoning, Macon-Bibb Industrial Authority, Spark Macon	N/A
	1.3	Explore opportunities to return to our roots with renewed focus on the music industry, entertainment, arts, and tourism	medium	NewTown Macon, Macon Arts Alliance, Mercer Music, Georgia Film Academy, OneMacon	Foundations
	1.4	Adopt a land use strategy to focus retail and infill strategically, so Downtown doesn't become diluted	short	Macon-Bibb Planning and Zoning Commission, UDA, NewTown Macon	N/A
	1.5	Create pathways out for those experiencing homelessness	medium	UDA, Macon Housing Authority, Depaul USA (Daybreak)	Housing Trust Fund
2) Create an Unparalleled Urban Core Experience					
	2.1	Provide regular family friendly programming, and build a destination playground Downtown	medium	Macon-Bibb Parks and Beautification, Public Works Department, Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful Commission, Main Street Macon, UDA, NewTown	Foundations
	2.2	Plant shade trees to increase the tree canopy	medium	Macon-Bibb Parks and Beautification, Macon Tree Commission, Macon BID, Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful Commission	Georgia Forestry Commission, Corporate or Philanthropic Grants
	2.3	Introduce green stormwater management with infrastructure upgrades	long	Macon-Bibb Public Works, Macon Water Authority, Macon BID	Macon Water Authority, Macon-Bibb County
	2.4	Use planters to add color, texture and beauty	short	Macon BID, NewTown Macon	BID Revenue, Business or Property Owner Match
	2.5	Enliven storefronts and spaces with art, exhibits, and greening; prioritize key blocks, iconic buildings, and publicly owned vacant land	short	NewTown Macon, Main Street Macon, Macon BID, Macon Arts Alliance, Property Owners	Foundations

 = Community priority identified during the public engagement process

	#	Action	Timeframe	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
3) Focus on Downtown Living					
	3.1	Continue to build out from points of strength and diversify the housing stock	long	UDA, Historic Macon, Private Developers	N/A
	3.2	In East Macon, continue to market Schell Avenue homes at the Mill Hill Arts Village	short	UDA, Macon-Bibb Public Works, Coliseum, Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park, Macon-Bibb Convention & Visitors Bureau, Macon Arts Alliance, community-wealth.org	Foundations, UDA
	3.3	Explore options for the near-term and long-term use of the Bibb Mill site	short/long	UDA, Macon Arts Alliance	UDA, NewTown Macon
	3.4	Jump start investment in Pleasant Hill by stabilizing vacant property, and focusing rehab and infill, one block at a time	medium	Pleasant Hill, UDA, Macon-Bibb Parks & Beautification, Macon-Bibb Land Bank Authority, Bike Walk Macon, Historic Macon	UDA, Foundations
	3.5	Reopen the Booker T. Washington Community Center as a true neighborhood asset, with a pool pop-up in the summer and a workforce training center	medium	Pleasant Hill, UDA, Macon-Bibb Parks & Beautification, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce	Macon-Bibb County, Foundations
	3.6	At the Louis Mounts Homes, work with the Housing Authority to determine the feasibility of redevelopment or renovation	long	Macon Housing Authority, Macon Arts Alliance, Macon - Bibb Parks & Beautification	HUD, Foundations
4) Cultivate Connectivity					
	4.1	Integrate the riverfront as a key downtown amenity through trail and trailhead improvements	medium	Macon-Bibb County, MTA, Bike Walk Macon	SPLOST, Foundations
	4.2	Build out the bike lane network	long	Macon-Bibb County, MTA, Bike Walk Macon	Macon-Bibb County
	4.3	Seize opportunities to improve gateways into planned street reconstructions	short	Macon-Bibb Public Works, UDA, Macon Arts Alliance	Macon-Bibb County, Adjacent Property Owners
	4.4	Work with Macon Transit Authority to ensure that Downtown is accessible to all	short	MTA	MTA, NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb County

 = Community priority identified during the public engagement process

	#	Action	Timeframe	Partners	Potential Funding Sources
5) Implementation					
	5.1	Build a leadership team for implementation reflective of Macon's diverse community	short	UDA, NewTown Macon	N/A
	5.2	Establish a Housing Trust Fund to support affordable housing in the Urban Core and elsewhere in Macon-Bibb	medium	Macon-Bibb County, UDA, NewTown Macon, Macon Housing Authority	Macon-Bibb County, Foundations, Developer fees or payment in lieu
	5.3	Level the playing field for new businesses and investors looking to establish roots	medium	NewTown Macon, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, Macon-Bibb Industrial Authority, Spark Macon	N/A
	5.4	Launch a job training and local hiring program focused on landscape maintenance and stewardship of green investments	long	Macon-Bibb Parks and Beautification, NewTown Macon, Macon BID, Macon Water Authority	Foundations
	5.5	Revise the zoning code to promote a dense, walkable environment	medium	UDA, NewTown Macon, Macon-Bibb Planning & Zoning	Macon-Bibb County, UDA

 = Community priority identified during the public engagement process



A ROADMAP TO

Recovery

The first draft of this document was released just before Covid-19 came to the United States. This pandemic will undoubtedly change Macon - at once creating unforeseen setbacks and hardships as well as powerful and resourceful expressions of love and community within our Urban Core. Businesses have closed, thousands of Maconites are currently out of work, and the distancing measures are affecting the very fabric of our tight knit community. Macon - Bibb elected officials, Downtown advocates and partners, and local businesses, residents, and service providers are in crisis-response mode, tending to immediate needs.

The coronavirus pandemic underscores the importance of the values of the Macon Action Plan Refresh: a healthy urban environment, physical and social connectivity, a strong local economy, and an equitable approach that serves *all* community members. Our streets, sidewalks and local parks have become our only source of refuge, yet many are lacking critical and safe walkable connections. These spaces are particularly important for residents in and around Downtown, who often lack private outdoor space. Bicycle infrastructure is a necessary resource for those who are essential workers and residents who otherwise rely on public transportation and rideshare. Members of our community who suffer from asthma and other underlying conditions are at a higher risk, highlighting the need for more trees, resulting in cleaner air and increased shade. And we are all desperate for community, missing the restaurants and shops, playgrounds, public events, and places of worship where we are accustomed to coming together.

This pandemic has also made the case for stronger localized economic systems. Closures have exposed the fragility of our small businesses; the losses experienced directly by employers and employees are

also felt by patrons who rely on these local goods and services and municipal governments as tax bases shrink. Local supply chains, manufacturers, makers and producers are more important than ever, and our community is rallying behind small businesses. While Macon's top-notch medical professionals work non-stop to keep people healthy, we will do everything we can to support the health of our local businesses as they adapt to a new "business as usual." Finally, this virus has revealed, even more so, the inequalities in our society, as those of us of lesser means are more vulnerable to its effects, from illness or risk of illness to loss of work and health care access to food and housing insecurity.

And so, this is precisely the time to release the Macon Action Plan Refresh. When the coronavirus pandemic passes, public space and opportunities for people to meaningfully reconnect will be critical. It will be crucial to recommit to Downtown with efforts to rebuild our local economy and support the local businesses that form the backbone of our region's economy. Cities that invest in their small businesses will be well positioned in the recovery process; 67% of net new jobs after the Great Recession were created by small businesses. The strategies outlined in this document are tailored to reinforce and grow the things that make Downtown unique - the people, places, and spaces that will bring us together again, in time. Sustained efforts to implement the Macon Action Plan Refresh will yield a healthier, greener, more resilient and more equitable Urban Core. Should stimulus or other such funds become available, the ideas in this document will guide investment strategically and position Macon to respond to these opportunities quickly. As a community, Macon, we have done our homework, and we are well positioned to take action together.

