



CITY OF DOUGLAS

Downtown Master Plan

May, 2016

Prepared for City of Douglas, GA

By Lord Aeck Sargent

In partnership with Re:Posit Strategies



LORD
AECK
SARGENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Douglas would like to thank residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders for their enthusiasm, creativity and ideas.

CITY OF DOUGLAS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Background	2
Planning Process / Previous Efforts	3
Study Area & Context	4

PRESENT CONDITIONS

Study Area Character	6
Existing Land Use / Ownership	10
Existing Streetscape & Openspace	12
Circulation & Parking	13

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Steering Committee & Stakeholders	16
Public Input Venues	17

VISION & IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Vision	20
Implementation Framework	
Preserve & Solidify <i>the downtown core</i>	22
<i>Identity</i>	23
<i>Land Use</i>	26
Enrich & Intensify <i>the downtown experience</i>	28
<i>Streetscapes</i>	29
<i>Open Space</i>	32
<i>Trails</i>	36
Grow & Diversify <i>the downtown experience</i>	38
<i>New Development</i>	29
<i>Street Extensions & Parking</i>	41
Implementing the Vision - Priority Tasks	43
Imagining the Vision	44
Implementation Project List	45

APPENDIX

See Supplementary Document



INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Background

Introduction

Since the arrival of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad and Georgia-Florida Railroad (now the Douglas Trail) in the early 1900's, the City of Douglas has served as a regional center for commercial and government services and has served as the Coffee County seat since 1855. Located at the intersection of U.S. 441, and Georgia 32, Downtown Douglas has worked hard to maintain a largely intact historic look and feel and continues to operate as a regional hub. Through the strong efforts of the City and its residents, Downtown Douglas was listed as a formal District in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993 based on its long list of intact historic buildings dating from the 1890s through the 1940s. Despite remaining a largely intact collection of buildings and spaces, the Downtown area has not significantly grown over the past 50 years. However, the recent revival and reinvestment in historic main streets across the nation, along with recent efforts in Downtown Douglas paint a picture of opportunity for expanding the footprint, the experience and the life of Downtown Douglas. This Downtown Master Plan seeks to capitalize on the opportunity by crafting a vision for the future within the City's historic core.



Coffee County Map 1915 (Georgia Info, University of Georgia)

Plan Overview & Process

The Douglas Downtown Master Plan was created to help establish a vision that will help Downtown accentuate its role as the heart of the City and increase its vibrancy. The plan focuses on the overarching goal of activating Downtown beyond its current “hours” while maintaining the historic character of the district. This includes tactics for generating social and economic momentum, encouraging walkability, retaining historic assets, re-introducing housing to the Downtown core, and activating the public realm through short-term and long-term projects and initiatives.

In order to conduct this study the City of Douglas hired a consultant team led by Lord Aeck Sargent, an architecture and urban design firm. The team was assisted by Re-Posit Strategies, a market, real estate and economic development strategist. The planning process consisted of approximately a 6-month time line composed of three phases as shown in the diagram below. The plan also included a robust public engagement process, described later on in this document, to ensure that the vision and recommendations put forth reflect the community’s desires.

Previous Planning Efforts

Previous planning efforts at the County and City level have helped inform this plan. The 2007-2027 Community Agenda was laid out for Coffee County and the City as a road map for future development for the next 20 years. It focused on enhancing the County’s natural and cultural resources, retaining historic assets, economic development strategies, housing strategies, transportation improvement, and enhancing community services and facilities. As an offshoot of this planning effort, the City of Douglas Greenway Trail Connectivity Assessment focused on creating connections and amenity recommendations for the City’s multi-use trail. Within Downtown Douglas, a Main Street program was developed in 1993 (one of Georgia’s First Main Street Programs) to focus on activating the core of the city, preserving/renovating/restoring historic buildings, and economic development.

A copy of City of Douglas Community Agenda report can be found at:

<http://www.dca.ga.gov/largefiles/OPQG/2007/CoffeeCo.AmbroseCi.BroxttonCi.DouglasCi.NichollsCi.CAg.pdf>

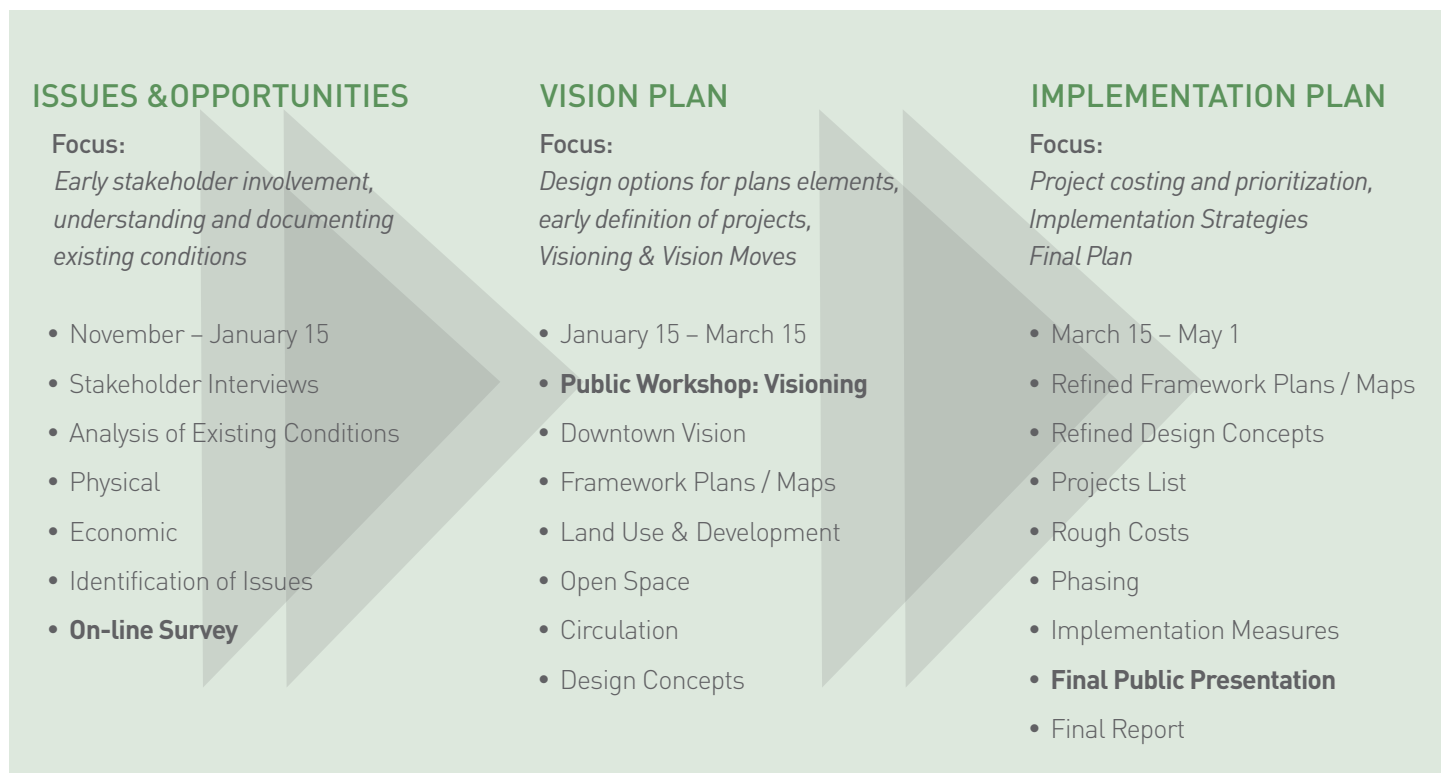
A copy of City of Douglas Greenway Trail- Bike and Pedestrian Connectivity Assessment can be found at:

<http://nebula.wsimg.com/a8777c55a83fc9e0b57bc9c09e71b172?AccessKeyId=7599C68BC55095BE1D8F&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>

More information on the Douglas Main Street program can be found at:

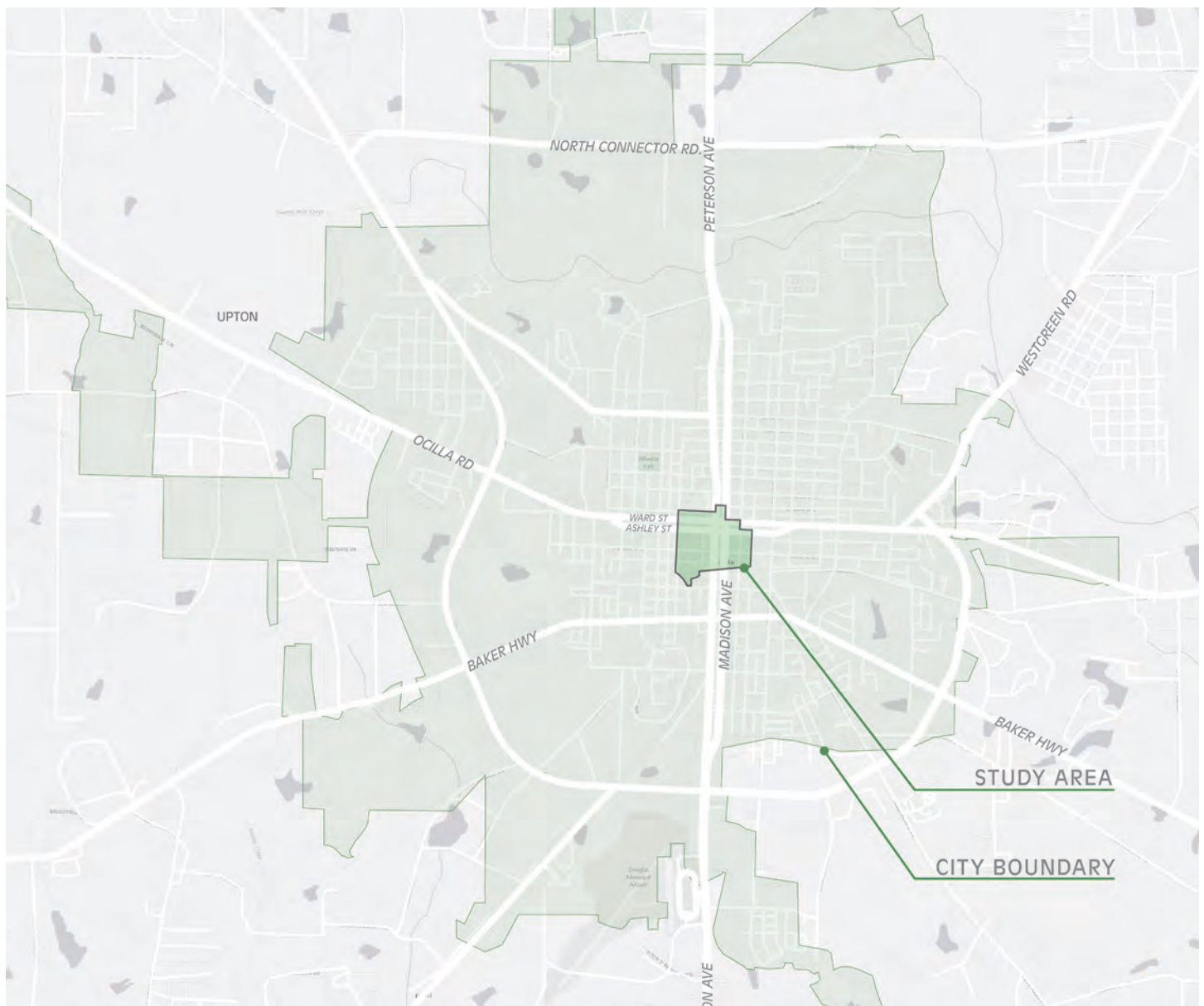
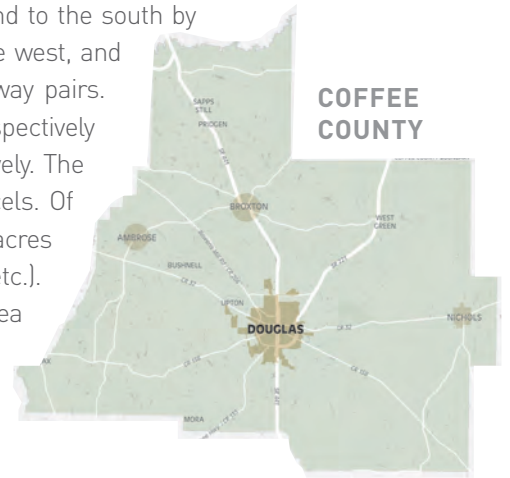
<http://www.cityofdouglas.com/index.aspx?nid=98>

PLANNING PROCESS



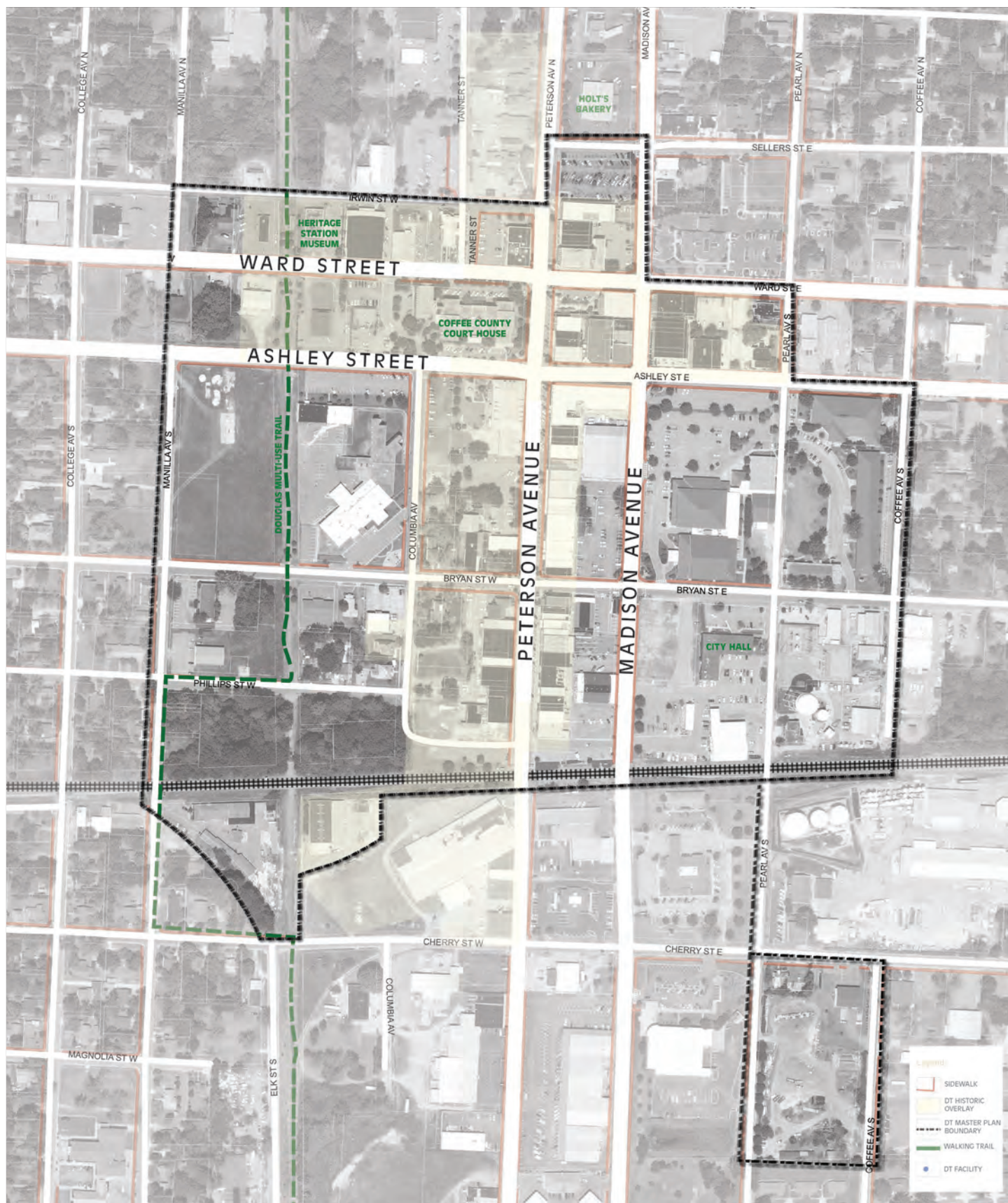
Study Area Context

Most of the major roadways in the County intersect within the City of Douglas and traverse through or near the Downtown study area. This framework assists in bringing in a large influx of visitors which further accents the City's role as a regional hub. The study area is located in the central portion of the City and is generally bound to the south by the Atlantic Coastline railroad tracks, Irwin street on the north, Manilla Avenue to the west, and Coffee avenue to the east. Downtown is bisected by City's primary system of one-way pairs. Madison Avenue (US 441) and Peterson Street (US 441) heading south and north, respectively whereas Ashley Street (GA 32) and Ward Street (GA 32) travel east and west respectively. The Downtown Master Plan Study area includes +/-83 acres and approximately 134 parcels. Of these, the Historic District overlaps approximately 37% of the study area. Of the +/-83 acres overall, there are ±60 acres of parcels and ±23 acres of right-of-way (roads, trails, etc.). Many major county and city services are located within the study area. The study area is predominantly surrounded by single family neighborhoods. Notably, South Georgia State College, which serves approximately 2,000 students, is only a few minutes away to the southwest and the Coffee Regional Medical Center, another large anchor, is less than a mile from Downtown Douglas.



City Context

STUDY AREA MAP





PRESENT CONDITIONS

Study area character

By far the most distinct character for the study area is that found within the Downtown Douglas Historic District. Consisting of an array of historic buildings dating from the 1890s through the 1940s, the largely intact building stock is what gives Downtown its unique character and sense of charm. The 19th and early 20th century masonry storefront buildings help create a consistent human-scaled environment while a few key landmark buildings such as the County Courthouse, BB&T building (formerly the Coffee County Bank), the Martin Theater and the former hospital/hotel building (now Coffee County solid waste department) help accent the beauty and importance of the district. Along with commercial and institutional buildings, there are also a few residential buildings located in the study area, most notably a Queen Anne Style house (now Sims Funeral Homes) located near the intersection of Peterson Avenue and Ward Street.

Beyond the Historic District, the building fabric is more spread out with larger buildings that generally do not encourage pedestrian activity. Additionally, these peripheral areas contain a larger concentration of parking lots and undeveloped parcels that create a disconnect from the pedestrian-focused “downtown core” and the residential neighborhoods around it. This character is more prevalent to the west of the Historic

District where there are sizeable undeveloped parcels. However, in this area the presence of the Douglas Trail along with potential future development present a great opportunity to change the character to one that supplements the existing Downtown identity.



Existing Building Fabric



Heritage Station Museum and Multi-Use Douglas Trail



East Ashley Street



Street Corner (Madison Avenue and Ashley Street)



West Ward Street Corridor



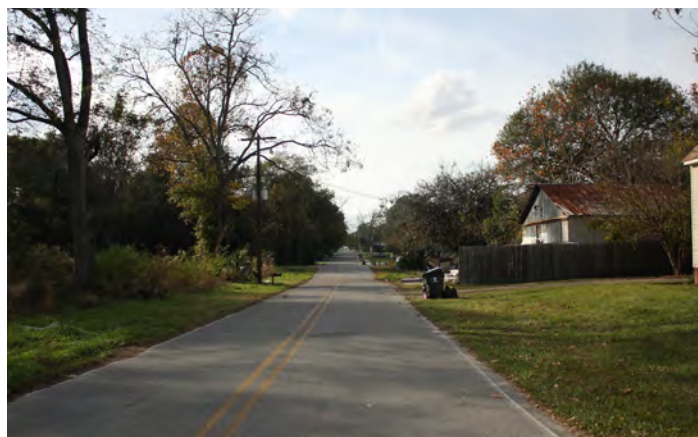
East Ashley Street (Within Downtown Historic District)



South Madison Avenue Corridor



South Peterson Avenue Streetscape



West Phillips Street Corridor

DOUGLAS GA, 1920'S



Buildings still present from 1920's era

Note: Much development occurred after the 1940's. Many buildings from that era still remain.
Sanborn Maps are not available to the general consumer post-1920's

Source: Sanborn Maps, Georgia Info (University of Georgia)



Peterson Ave, 1910 (Coffee County GA, Historical Society)



Peterson Ave, 2015 (Google Maps)



Ward Street, 1914 (Georgia Archive, University System GA)



Ward Street, 2015 (Google Maps)



Peterson Ave, 1940's (Exact Date Unknown)



Peterson Ave, 2016 (Lord Aeck Sargent, Image archive)



S Peterson Ave, 1993 (National Register of Historic Places)

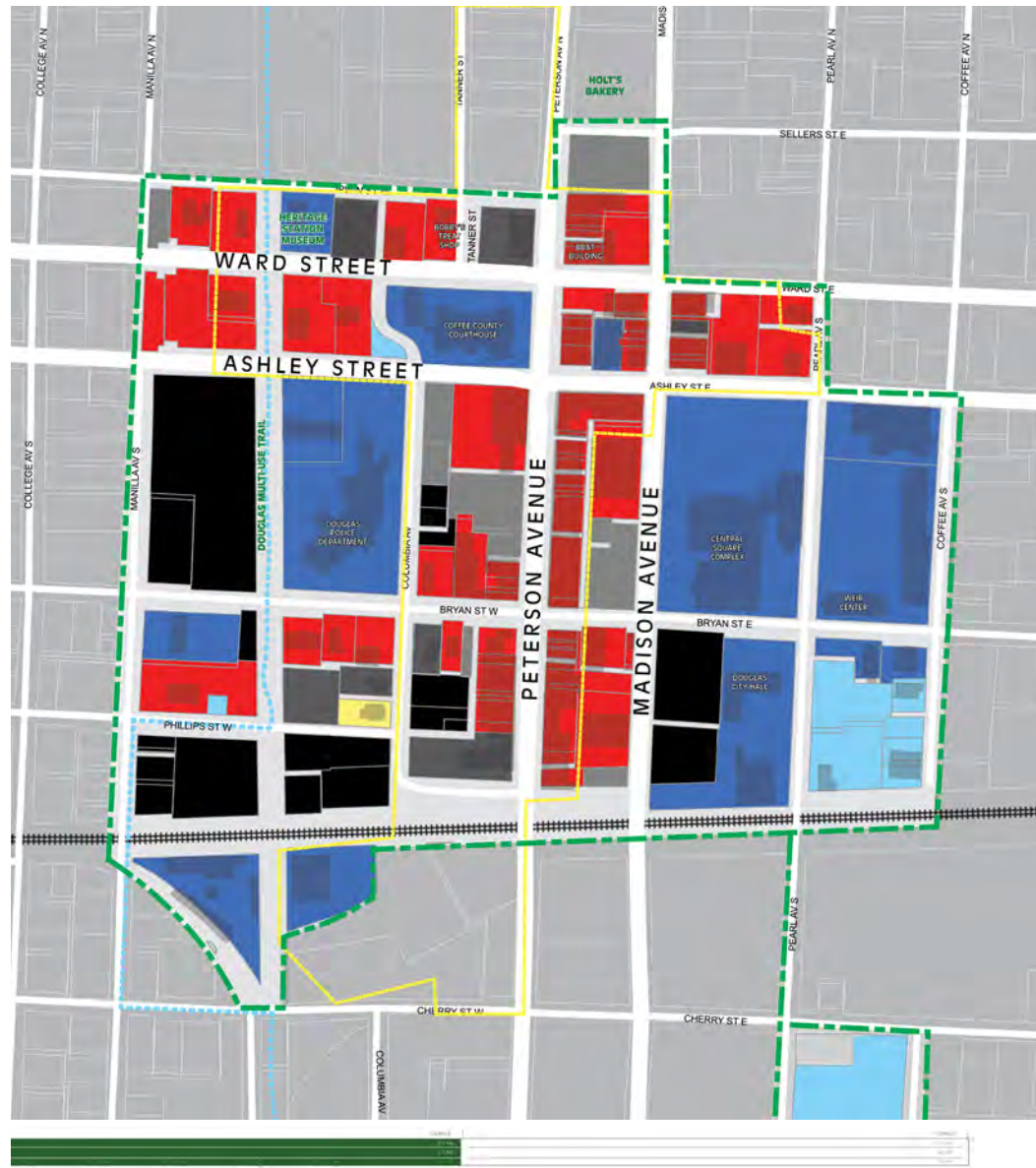


Peterson Ave, 2015 (Google Maps)

Existing Land Use

The existing land uses within the study area are representative of a commercial core that is stable and successful, but reveals opportunities for future growth and diversity of use. Most notably, there is a remarkably high amount of publicly owned land with institutional uses. Of the total 60 acres of parcels in the study area, $\pm 50\%$ (31 acres) are owned by the City of Douglas, Coffee County or the State of Georgia. This includes the Douglas City Hall, the Coffee County Courthouse, the CE Weir Senior Center, Satilla Regional Library, Coffee County Sheriff's office, among several others. While these facilities are excellent assets, the prevalence of under utilized land combined with the typical operational hours of these facilities adds to Downtown's lack of activity after normal business hours. However, this current challenge is also a longer term opportunity to convert some land to private use in a controlled and incentivized way.

EXISTING LAND USE



PUBLICLY OWNED LAND



STUDY AREA FACTS:

- 50% OF PARCELS IN STUDY AREA ARE PUBLICLY OWNED
- THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 9 ACRES OF UNDEVELOPED PARCEL AREA
- LACK OF HOUSING OR FORMALIZED GREEN SPACE

LEGEND

- CITY OWNED
- COUNTY OWNED
- STATE OWNED
- COMMERCIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- UTILITIES
- RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING ONLY
- UNOCCUPIED
- UNDEVELOPED

Beyond institutional uses, approximately 27% (16 acres) of parcel area is used for commercial activities. A closer look at the concentration of commercial uses along Peterson and Madison Avenue reveals that the “Main Street” shopping experience has a high concentration of Antique stores and Boutique shops. While a great asset unto themselves, Downtown lacks a diversity of supportive retail uses, most notably dining. Currently there are only six dining options around the study area with only one considered to be “fine dining”. Most of these restaurants cater to weekday, daytime clientele but can be future opportunities for increasing activity to all times of day within Downtown when the market matures. While there are currently strides being made to bring housing back to Downtown, there is currently only one apparent

dwelling within the study area and there are no lodging options. Increasing these types of residential/overnight uses is vital to encouraging the use of Downtown beyond its current “hours” and to create a fuller experience. Enhancing the diversity of uses and creating opportunities for infill development will help to strengthen and grown Downtown’s current make-up. Opportunities for this are widely available from a physical standpoint. There are over 9 acres of undeveloped land with an additional 5 acres of land from impending City relocations that would be excellent locations for new, slightly larger development. Within the historic core, there are relatively few vacancies at the ground level. However, there is approximately 93,000 square feet of underutilized upper floor area that could potentially be converted to uses such as loft housing.

COMMERCIAL USES



STUDY AREA FACTS:

- PETERSON IS THE PRIMARY COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR
- LARGE AMOUNT OF ANTIQUE AND SPECIALTY WOMEN / SPECIAL OCCASION SHOPS
- LIMITED DINING OPTIONS
- WEEKDAY BUSINESS HOUR FOCUS

LEGEND

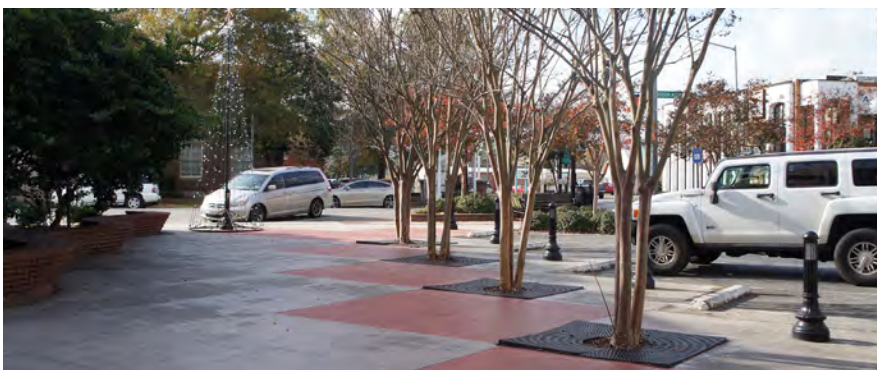
- RETAIL SERVICES
- RETAIL GOODS
- BOUTIQUE RETAIL
- ANTIQUES
- GROCERY STORE
- CASUAL DINING
- FINE DINING
- COFFEE SHOP
- BANK
- PHARMACY
- ENTERTAINMENT
- OFFICE
- UNOCCUPIED

Existing Streetscapes & Open Space

Despite having a thriving daytime commercial presence, an active daily visitor population (particularly on court days) and numerous cultural amenities (library, art center, senior center recreation center), Downtown generally lacks any significant quantities of large public open space. In particular, There is not a formal, iconic space to conduct large gatherings and special events. There are, however, a few small nooks that offer opportunities for outdoor seating including the southeast corner of Ashley Street and Madison Avenue, and the corners of Peterson at the County Courthouse. Perhaps the most interesting public plaza is located at the Southeast corner of Peterson Ave and Ward Street. This corner plaza contains good materiality, a Bell Tower water feature and is located in a prime, visible location. However, it is somewhat of a missed opportunity in that a portion of the plaza is dedicated to public parking and is therefore not celebrated to its full potential.

In addition to these small plazas, the City has been successful in improving Downtown streetscapes by establishing a consistent decorative material language and character at major intersections. While these add to the pedestrian and visual appeal of Downtown in spots, they do not fully extend beyond the intersections to create holistic streetscaping. In addition, the design of the raised planters has proven to be problematic from a maintenance perspective (constantly being hit by passing vehicles) and will need to be reconsidered going forward.

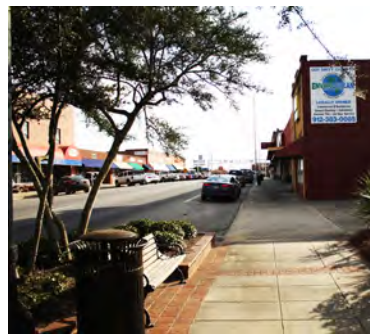
EXISTING STREETSCAPING AND GREEN SPACE



Existing plaza at Ward Street and Peterson Avenue



Streetscape corners create a good presence on the street but require some redesign to address maintenance issues



Streetscape language does not extend beyond corners



Ward St. Plaza clock tower and water feature

Circulation and Parking

The area's role as a regional commercial hub brings in large amounts of traffic on a daily basis. Combined, Peterson and Madison Avenue, have an average daily vehicle count almost as high as the existing population of Douglas. While the one-way pair system has been mostly beneficial for the City, as it brings activity and provides visibility for Downtown businesses, there are some problems with parking access along Peterson (angled parking) related to high speeds of travel. In addition, the blocks just north of the railroad

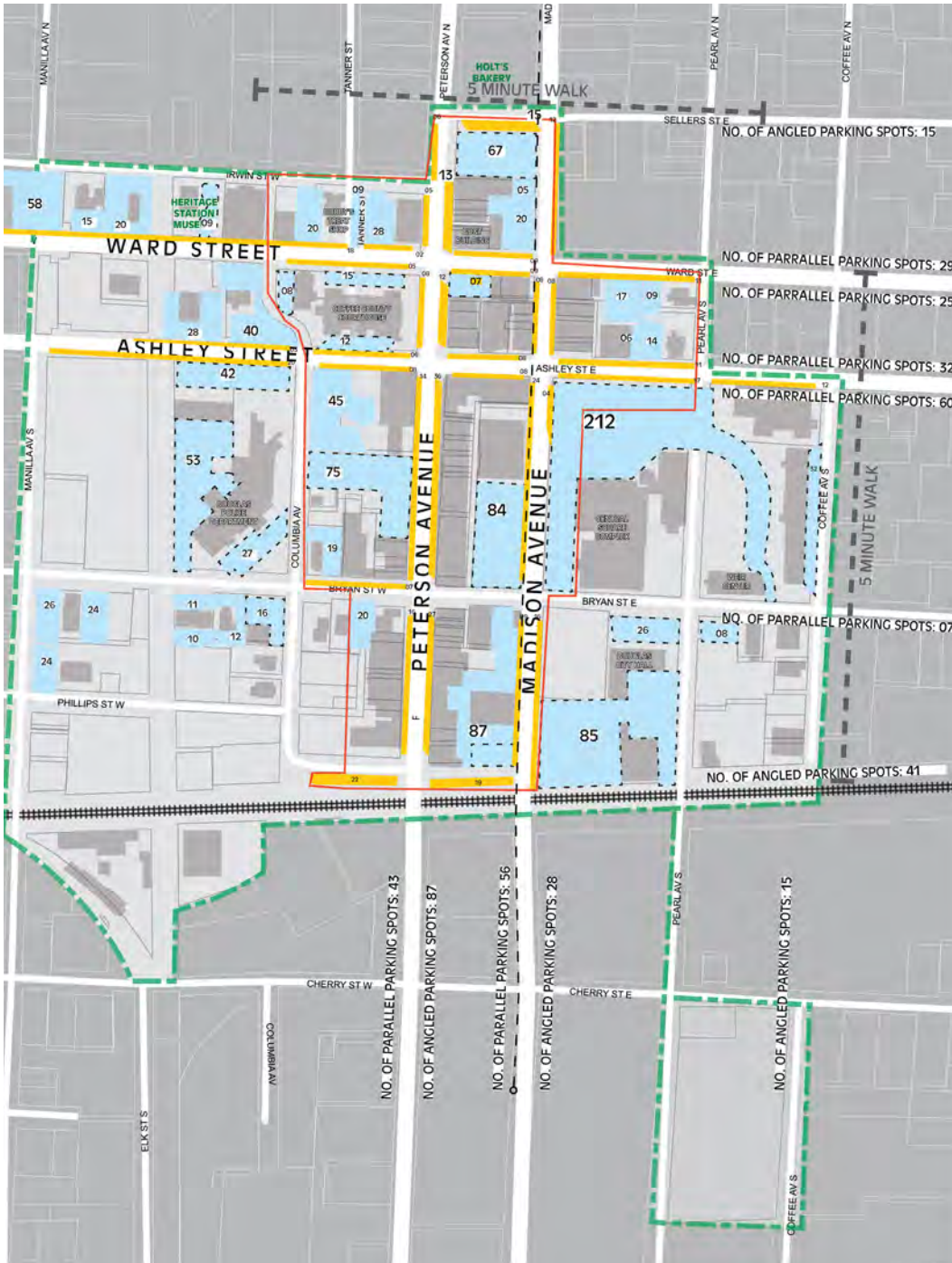
TRAFFIC COUNT



are relatively long (eg., compared to the blocks between Ashley and Madison and therefore limits options for vehicular movements during train crossings. Despite these challenges, overall traffic around Downtown functions well and does not appear to need drastic modifications.

As an alternative to vehicular traffic, the Douglas Trail (occupying land that was formerly the Georgia-Florida Railway) is a great, albeit underutilized asset that runs north south along the west side of the study area. If addressed well and tied into the Downtown core, this trail can be a great economic development tool and help provide a venue for alternative forms of transportation (especially when there are special events or festivals). Today's desires for more healthy active lifestyles, especially within urban environments, makes the Douglas trail great amenity to leverage and something that other cities are trying to emulate. Despite its overall positive contribution to Downtown, the trail could benefit from lighting, signing and access improvements.

PARKING ANALYSIS



The large influx of vehicles into downtown, particularly on court days, has encouraged the development of a relatively large quantity of parking for a city the size of Douglas. Out of the ±60 acres of study area parcels, 28% is dedicated to surface parking. Of the ±1,780 parking spots in the study area, approximately 430 are on-street (Parallel and angled) and ±1350 are surface parking spaces. This does not include some additional parking lots found just outside of the study area. When viewed overall and compared to the quantity of commercial and institutional space, Downtown does not suffer from a lack of parking. In fact, about 1,110 of the 1,780 spaces in the study area are very

convenient to the heart of the commercial core (e.g., within a 5 minute walk or less). That said, not all parking is available at all times at all door fronts, especially during court days. In order to continue being successful into the future, additional court parking may need to be considered in a way that is convenient but doesn't overwhelm Downtown. In addition, as Downtown evolves, intensifies and matures, a "park once and walk" culture will go a long way towards fighting the perception of having a "parking problem." Strategies to encourage that include better signage, enhanced technology (e.g., mobile apps) and an improved pedestrian environment.

EXISTING PARKING



Large parking lot adjacent to Arts Center and Weir Senior Center



While angled parking along Peterson Ave. creates more capacity, it does create some issues with on-coming traffic.



The peripheries of the study area contain many large underutilized surface lots



There are several instances where parking in the right-of-way faces more parking



Parking within the plaza on the corner of Ward St. and Peterson Ave. encroaches into what should feel like a pedestrian only space



Parking along Ashley Street creates a good urban environment

PROCESS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Steering Committee

As part of the public outreach process a 14 member Steering Committee was put in place to act as a “sounding board” throughout the planning process. This group consisted of local stakeholders, business owners, city staff and residents. Five Steering Committee meetings were held through the planning process where local input and guidance was provided on emerging themes and concepts presented by the planning team. The group was a key component in vetting the overall plan vision, potential public projects and strategies.

Stakeholder Interviews

Additionally, during the initial public engagement process the planning team performed 1-on-1 interviews with local stakeholders from both the private and public sector as a way to inform interested parties of the impending process and to obtain as many opinions and perspectives as possible at the outset - e.g., before planning concepts were developed. This type of input allowed participants to share their candid thoughts about the needs, issues, and opportunities for Douglas and its Downtown. These sessions were particularly important as they helped identify functional gaps in both the City’s infrastructure and market performance through local perspectives. The planning team interviewed a wide range of stakeholders ranging from business owners, property owners city staff, city council, county economic development staff, and local residents..



Public Input Venues

In order to engage with a larger audience, the planning process included two public open house sessions along with an online community survey that helped the planning team hone in on issues and ensure that their recommendations were in line with the community's thoughts. While public input is a key component in a plan's final recommendations, it is only one of the tools used in the planning team's final recommendations. Public input is synthesized with market studies, and the team's expertise on existing and future trends in urban design, architecture, and planning. A short overview of these activities is described below. A more detailed summary can be found within the appendix of this document.

Initial Public Open House

At the initial public kick-off event, the City and planning team hosted an interactive open house at the C.E. Weir Senior Center on January 19th, 2016. The event consisted of three interactive input stations focused on three subject matters as described below.

Land Use & Development (PLANNING STATION A):

This station asked participants to weigh in on the areas of Downtown they would like to see change and those they found important to preserve. Additional input was sought on the kind of land uses they would like to see more of in Downtown and the overall vision for Downtown. Results for this station focused primarily on the desire to maintain the historic building fabric and existing community assets. In addition, participants were also interested in seeking change for several vacant buildings



and undeveloped parcels. In terms of new land uses, there was a strong desire for nightlife, restaurants, housing (specifically loft housing), open space, and lodging. Overall, the feedback suggests that participants recognize the need for more activity Downtown and view these kinds of elements as necessary to achieve that.

Open space & Streetscapes (PLANNING STATION B):

Given the apparent need for additional open space and updated streetscapes within Downtown, participants were asked to choose the elements they would like to see in future streetscape improvements and open spaces. Using sample pictures, participants were asked to select five elements from a list twelve for each subject. The top streetscaping preferences reflected a desire for a more complete set of material and furniture options. This included space for outdoor dining, improved crosswalks, decorative pedestrian lighting, and street trees to provide shade. The high ranking open space elements consisted of activated alleys, pocket parks/seating nooks, an outdoor amphitheater, and a town green. All of these reinforced the message that Downtown needs more outdoor activity and street life.

Transportation & Circulation (PLANNING STATION C):

This station focused on getting feedback on parking and circulation issues within the study area. This exercise helped confirm some of the planning team's initial assessments and resulted in comments regarding lighting, signage, a better Downtown connection for the Douglas Trail, circulation issues from rail and angled parking, and Courthouse parking issues. The exercise also helped reveal potential locations for new "centralized" parking for both the courthouse and Downtown which could help alleviate the perception of parking shortages on heavily trafficked days and reduce pressure to tear down valuable historic buildings for parking.



Online Survey

Following the public kick-off meeting, an interactive online community survey was conducted in order to engage a broader audience, including those that could not attend the public workshop. This 15-minute survey was separated into two parts. Part I: the visual survey, asked participants to rate the appropriateness of character photographs that focused on development and open space styles and types. Part II: the written survey, consisted of 21 multiple-choice and short answer questions specifically about the study area. Topics ranged from general thoughts about the area to specific questions about future development, existing development, open space, streetscapes, and overall vision. Working with City staff, the survey was made available for over a month

and a half resulting in over 230 participants- a great number for the population size of Douglas. Some of the key results are illustrated below/on the next page. A more detailed set of results can be found within the appendix of this document.

Final Public Open House

On April 26th, 2016 the City along with its consultant hosted a “drop-in” style final open house to display the plan’s vision and concepts to the public. The final vision and projects received positive notes from all participants. Several stakeholders, property owners and local residents engaged the planning team on items such as the Town Green, housing opportunities, and public art- specifically within alleys.

The data below is a summary of the responses to the Community Online Image Survey

Respondents were asked to rank the following images from Not Appropriate (1) to Very Appropriate (4). The following is based on the average ranking for each image.

VERY APPROPRIATE						
APPROPRIATE						
SOMEWHAT APPROPRIATE						
NOT APPROPRIATE						

ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS

Existing Character...

What do you like best about Downtown Douglas?



What do you like least about Downtown Douglas?



What is your perception of overall look and character of Downtown Douglas



What are your thoughts on the historic building stocks within Downtown?



What will make Downtown more lively and enhance the local economy?

1 (Uses you want to see the least)- 5 (Uses you want to see the most)

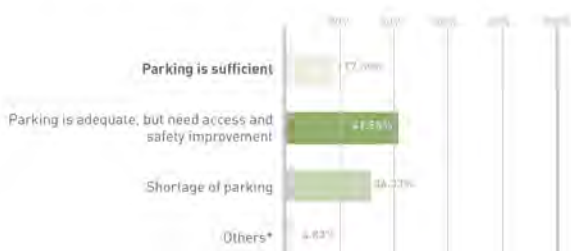


Recognizing that resources are limited, what new or enhanced measures are needed to improve the walking environment Downtown?

1 (needed the least)- 5 (needed the most)



How do you feel about parking in Downtown?



Recognize that resources are limited, what type of open spaces & features are needed Downtown?

1 (needed the least)- 5 (needed the most)





VISION & IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Vision

vision statement

“Maintain historical value...
...add more life....”

-anonymous quote from online survey

While many historic cities of this size suffer from a “gap-tooth” building fabric, Downtown Douglas has maintained a considerable amount of consistent historic urban street front with several landmark buildings that accentuate the charm and character of the historic district. This kind of asset cannot be easily recreated and, as such, is very important in preserving the identity and brand of Douglas. Therefore, this plan’s vision focuses on celebrating and supplementing Downtown’s existing assets as they ultimately are the City’s most distinguishing features and can be leveraged for economic, social, and civic gains by focusing on three over arching vision points

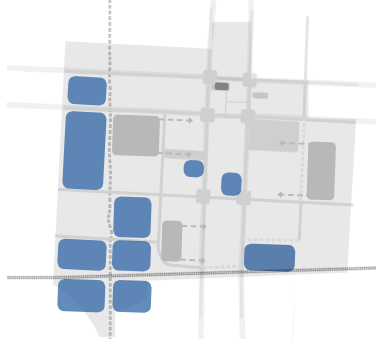
PRESERVE & SOLIDIFY
the downtown historic core...



ENRICH & INTENSIFY
the downtown experience...



GROW & DIVERSIFY
the downtown footprint...



PRESERVE & SOLIDIFY

the downtown historic core...



- As the City's identity and most unique physical asset, **keep the historic core intact as a whole** by preserving and reusing historic buildings to the greatest extent feasible
- Activate, restore, and improve the look of existing buildings to **maintain Downtown's historic charm and "storefront" character**
- Encourage and incentivize the development of **upper floor housing in existing buildings**

ENRICH & INTENSIFY

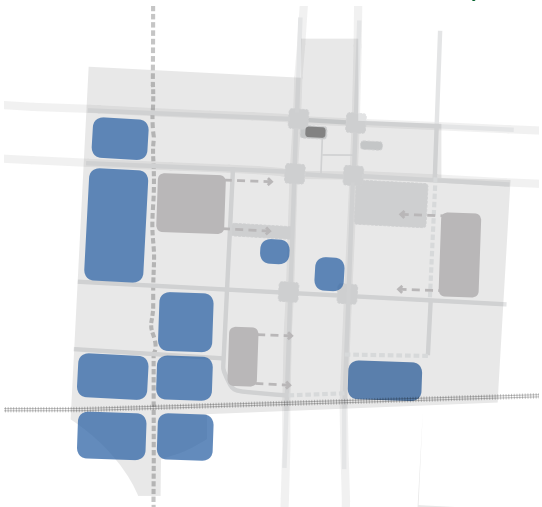
the downtown experience...



- Introduce uses, activities, and events that **expand Downtown's "active hours"** including theater events, festivals, outdoor performances, and produce markets.
- Emphasize the historic and walkable nature of Downtown through a consistently comfortable and **desirable streetscape experience**
- Create more destinations beyond retail by establishing a **network of visible and walkable open spaces** including a signature town green, pocket parks, plazas, and decorative alley ways
- **Improve the experience along the Douglas Trail and connect it to the Downtown Core** as a way to attract a wider demographic of users, including students, families, and millennials

GROW & DIVERSIFY

the downtown footprint...



- As growth occurs, **encourage new development on undeveloped sites** in order to increase the Downtown's footprint. Convert some existing publicly-owned land to private development
- Ensure **infill development within the Historic District** is complimentary in scale, type, and aesthetics to its surroundings.
- As activity increases, create an environment that encourages a **"park once and walk" culture**
- **Encourage a wider diversity of land uses in Downtown** by encouraging student/senior housing and a boutique hotel/ bed and breakfast
- **Expand City Hall at the Corner of Madison Avenue and Bryan Street** in order to increase civic identity and presence

PRESERVE & SOLIDIFY the downtown historic core...



STRATEGIES

IDENTITY

- HISTORIC DISTRICT OVERLAY**
Assess and Update the overlay district policies and physical make up
- "STOREFRONT" STREET CHARACTER**
Create specific standards and incentives for storefront streets
- ACTIVITY CORE**
Focus initial energy into Downtown's most intact area
- POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL CORE INFILL**
Opportunities for new construction

LAND USE

- RE-USE OPPORTUNITIES**
Encouraged Ground-floor uses:
Dining, Coffee-shops, Nightlife, Lodging (Boutique), Retail, Office / Loft-office
- PRIORITY LOFT HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES**
Buildings better positioned for exploration of loft housing uses
- ADDITIONAL LOFT HOUSING / UPPER-LEVEL USE OPPORTUNITIES**

Identity

Historic District Overlay

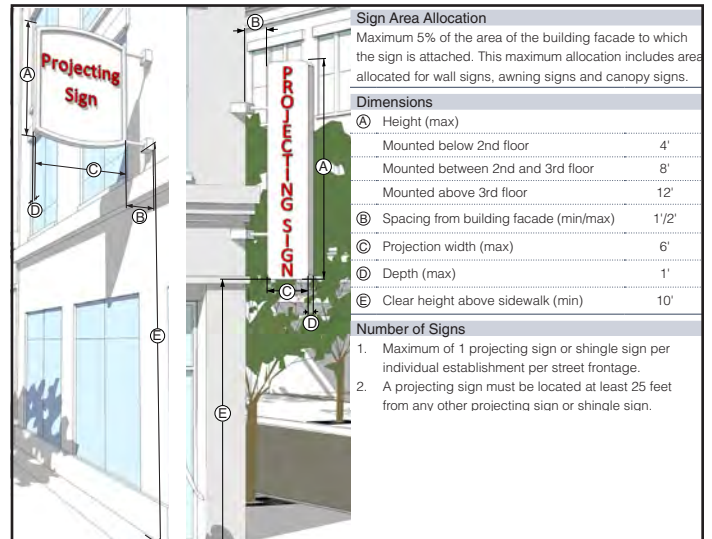
The special district regulatory framework already in place for Downtown contains excellent measures for preserving and sustaining the historic commercial core. Building on the measures in place, the City should ensure that current structures continue to be contributing assets to the greatest extent possible and are in line with the vision set forth by this plan. Specific steps can be taken to be proactive about preserving the character of Downtown including:

Assess and Update Historic Overlay Zoning:

- Ensure desired uses are not prohibited but encouraged—including specifically bed & breakfast, farmer’s markets, micro-breweries, university or college uses.
- Reassess allowable densities and lot coverages to allow slight increases
- Update Historic District Design Guidelines with more descriptive form-based language standards including “Storefront Streets” as described below
- Include Design Guideline language directly within Overlay Zoning text

Historic District Assessment:

- Assess current building conditions and update existing contributing building list.
- Assess code compliance / adherence to existing Historic District Design Guidelines, and create a master list of marketable and available properties.
- Create a work order list of recommended improvements for currently non-conforming building in the Historic District.



Example of detailed diagrammatic representations of design guideline elements



Example of Micro-brewery in a historic downtown setting



The City continue to encourage and work with property owners to restore and maintain their building fronts like the image above

“Storefront” Streets

As the defining character for the Downtown Historic fabric, the streets identified within the framework plan should be codified in a way that further protects the largely intact nature of the district, incentivizes rehabilitation, and encourages a similar pedestrian-oriented character for any future infill.

In addition to the recommendations for rehabilitation and new construction, the commercially focused portion of the design guidelines should establish more refined standards for elements that are part of the “storefront” atmosphere. Additionally, there should be descriptive language and diagrammatic explanations on the allowable types and locations for outdoor seating, exterior merchandise displays, and/or any other element potentially interacting with the public realm.

It is in the City’s best interest to encourage the restoration and celebration of Downtown’s storefronts. Potential “storefront street” incentives to be explored include:

Facade Design Assistance:

Many times it is difficult for owners to understand the proper steps necessary to restore or rehabilitate their storefronts from both a financial and design standpoint. As a way to assist owners, the City could contract an architect with historic preservation expertise to act as on-retainer consultant for design consultation or could look to fund the design portion of facade improvements for all applicable buildings (e.g., as identified in the assessment described above)

Facade Improvement Grants: Grants are a great way to incentivize and leverage private investment. Grant funds, however, can be difficult to identify and fund. Therefore, grantees should be targeted that would have the greatest impact or where existing historic resources are in the greatest threat of being lost.

Low-Interest Loan Program:

Given that some property owners may require larger initial loans for restoration depending on the uses sought for their buildings or structural implications of rehabilitation, restoration, or preservation- continuing the low-interest loan program could encourage some owners to begin or finalize improvements on their properties. Depending on program success, the loan fund and minimum grant amounts could be expanded to help bridge the gap on project economics. Given the strong desire and importance for upper floor loft housing, grant and loan programs could be paired with these efforts in order to provide priority funding.

Street Furniture Program: As low cost way to encourage street activity and aesthetic consistency, the City could look to provide some street furniture for interested business owners. This could include tables, chairs, planter boxes, and even heaters during the winter time. The program could work on a loan basis, pay-as-you-go, or as an incentive to buy in to other future Downtown initiatives.

Merchandising Assistance: Since many products can now be purchased online, many consumers now shop Downtown for the experience, both outside and inside of storefronts. Presentation can be as important as quality. The City could consider hiring a merchandising consultant for individual merchants or as a collective resource.



Example of a consistent and well maintained Store Front street from both a streetscape and building front perspective

Downtown Champion

Many of the initiatives that are part of this vision will require much time, energy and resources. Given the limited funding which is typical of most Main Street Programs, success will need to come from a larger collective effort that includes the DDA, The Main Street Program, key City staff, elected officials, residents, business owners, volunteers and other interested stakeholders. Engaging a broad audience to galvanize behind a collective vision of enriching Downtown will be critical in targeting resources. But while many advocates will be needed, it will be critical to identify a singular champion to drive the plan’s vision, ensure all parties are working towards the same goal and be accountable to the ultimate success measures. That person could be the Main Street Program director, the City’s Community Development Director or a new, yet to be identified staffer with sole responsibility. Regardless of where the responsibility lies, it will be important that the City provide the proper resources and support to give the “Downtown Champion” the tools to succeed.

Activity Core

The general area depicted within the framework map, focused around the study area's four major intersections, currently contains the most energy and opportunity. These street frontages contain some of the most prominent Downtown buildings as well as the most consistent street environment. Those attributes combined with the potential capital improvements described within the 'Enrich & Intensify' Framework create an excellent opportunity for an "Activity Core" where the City can look to first focus its energy from a programmatic and development standpoint.

In addition to implementing streetscaping elements and open space within this area, the City can look to use existing assets as the foundation for several programming opportunities including:

Events & Festivals:

As one of the most desired amenities during the public input process, future festivals, nighttime and weekend events could be focused within this area to begin to give it meaning and reintroduce the idea of visiting Downtown at all hours. The city should look to use streets, existing parking lots, and plazas as locations for outdoor events. As an example, the proposed location of the Town Green, currently a parking lot, could be a

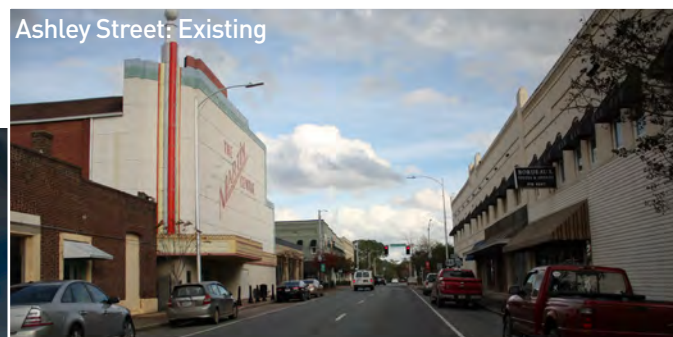
great location to begin to stage festivals or produce markets to slowly set the tone for public space and make a natural transition towards an eventual Town Green.

Martin Theater:

The future use of the Martin Theater will be paramount to activating Downtown on nights and weekends. The City should leverage opportunities for a variety of programming that can work with local businesses to take part in events. This could include programs like discounts in stores with a ticket or "Dinner and a Show" events.

Branding & Welcome Booth:

As part of accentuating the Downtown core, the City could consider using a professional marketing firm to create a branding strategy to differentiate Downtown's identity and redefine what can be expected of Downtown. As a part of this the City could develop a "pop-up" welcome center in a prominent pedestrian location to promote City and business events Downtown. Placing this within area's such as the plaza at Ward St. and Peterson Ave. will help activate and promote these types of spaces.



Activity Core Vision: Ashley Street's central location, it has the potential to be the heart of any future street festivals

Land Use

Re-use opportunities

Part of further activating the core will consist of finding opportunities to inject a wider range of uses for the Downtown core. This could include uses such as dining, coffee shops, nightlife, office/loft-office, and more specialty retail. Not only are these uses desired by the public but also needed to help supplement the existing retail within the commercial core. Additionally, the City may need to partner and support additional non-retail uses where there may be an untested market. This includes uses like upper floor residential and a small scale boutique hotel which may need public assistance when first implemented.

The buildings below offer some of the most viable opportunities for upper floor use



Upper Floor Residential Opportunities

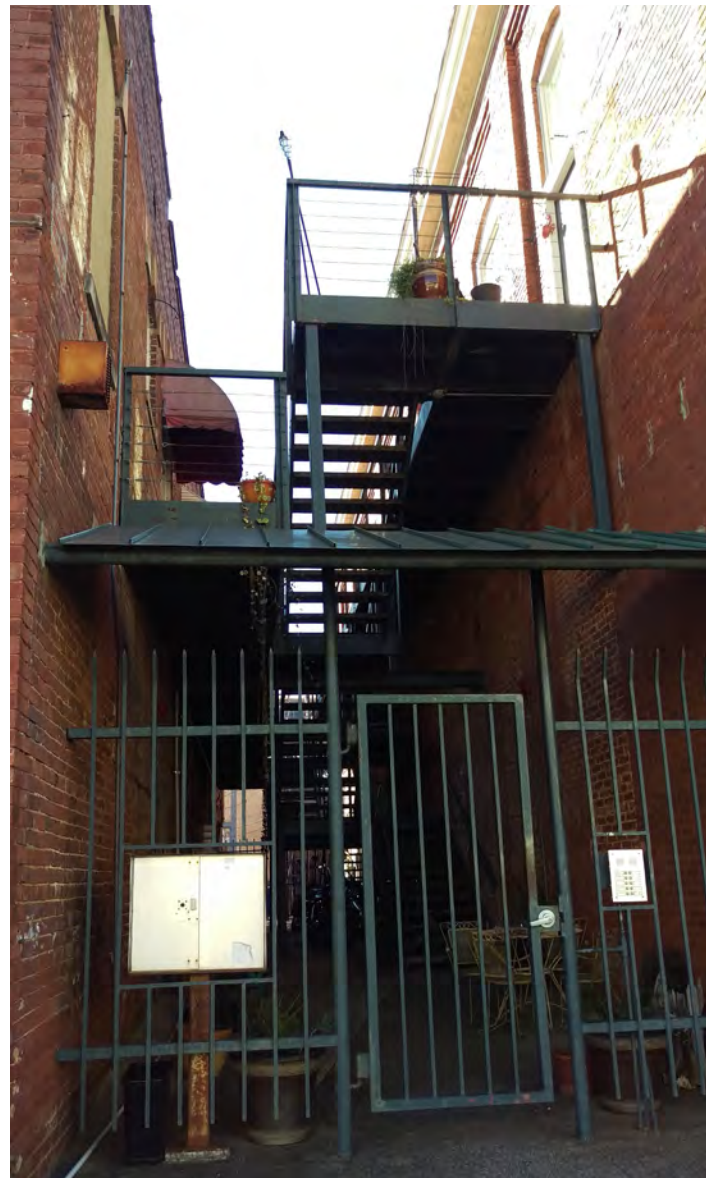
The addition of residential units within the heart of the Downtown core will bring the biggest change to the area's quality of life and, for the first time in many years, create residents that live in an urban walkable environment. These new Douglas urbanites will be a tremendous asset for the future growth of Downtown as they will help shape their own neighborhood and provide "on the ground" resources for advocacy, volunteerism and consumer spending. Most importantly, the eventual emergence of a Downtown residential environment will help encourage the growth of businesses catering to early morning, evening, nighttime and weekend uses.



As an untested market, it is difficult to determine the precise amount of residential units Downtown could sustain. However, there are existing suitable buildings, a strong local desire and signs that at least a fledgling market could be tapped. Perhaps the greatest challenge to creating loft housing is the economics related to investment required versus potential rents achievable. In order to incentivize initial housing development public assistance may be needed in order to bridge financing gaps and help prove that there is in fact a market. If serious about investing in Downtown, this strategy is perhaps at the top of the list. The City should aggressively explore ways to help potential investors to get off the ground. The longer upper floors remain vacant the harder it will be to reoccupy them which could lead to eventual degradation of the historic building stock and district.

While there is no silver bullet, there is a wide range of strategies the city could undertake to help get a few early projects off the ground.

- Proactively survey and identify which upper floor locations would be best suited for loft housing and enlist the property owners as partners.
- Once understanding the existing inventory and willing owners, actively market one or two key properties to local and external investors.
- Audit and amend existing zoning and building codes to facilitate the process for adaptive re-use to the greatest extent feasible. This could include simplifying the building permit process, reducing required off-street parking, allowing shared parking agreements, allowing code compliance across multiple properties using shared access agreements, etc.
- Be willing to proactively build consolidated block-level infrastructure so that individual buildings/developers don't have to build complicated systems unto themselves. This could include creating private/dedicated residential parking spaces in existing City lots, building consolidated rear access stairs and fire egress, providing consolidated utility tie-in locations, etc. As mentioned previously, facade improvement grant funds could be prioritized for any projects that include upper floor housing.
- Consider full property acquisition using the DDA and in turn subsidize new developments by reducing land/building costs for prospective investors.
- Proactively provide consolidated architecture and engineering services on key properties that will be marketed so as to provide "ready to go" projects that are pre-approved and pre-permitted.







Example of alley used to incorporate shared residential unit access between two adaptive re-use historic buildings in Newnan, Ga

ENRICH & INTENSIFY the downtown experience...



PROJECTS:

STREETSCAPES

-  Corner Streetscape Updates
Redesign of existing decorative corners to better utilize space
-  Corner Streetscape Additions
Intersections to implement new streetscape corner language
-  Primary streetscape improvement
Implement street lights, decorative paving, seating, and street trees
-  Secondary Streetscape Improvement
Implement street lights and street trees

Other Streetscape Improvements:
Railroad Crossings

OPEN SPACE

-  Signature town green
Feature civic space with outdoor performance space, event lawn, gathering / seating spaces, playground
-  Decorative Alley Improvements
Increase pedestrian connectivity and activate spaces through lighting, public art, decorative pavers
-  Plazas and pocket parks
Additional smaller open space locations for cafe tables & seating, dog runs, public art, etc.

TRAILS

-  Douglas Trail Railroad Crossing
Paved connection across railway to create safe passage on trail
-  Bryan Street trail connection
Extension of bike friendly facility to Downtown Core
-  Signage and Wayfinding
Opportunities for branding and directional signage to tie Downtown to Trail
-  Improved Street Crossings
Increasing safety and awareness for road crossing through striping, rapid flashing beacons and signage

Other Trail Projects: Bike Parking,
Lighting & Safety Improvements
(CCTV, Emergency Call Boxes)

Streetscapes

Streetscape Corners

Downtown's existing streetscape corners already exhibit a distinct character that enhance the area's charm. However, the existing designs could benefit from more functionality and simplification in order address problems with sight lines, vehicle impacts, and utilization of space. The concepts for Peterson and Madison below display several design options that can help achieve these goals while maintaining the existing materiality. Once a standard is selected this language can and should be extended to other intersections to expand the Downtown experience.

Overall Assets to maintain:

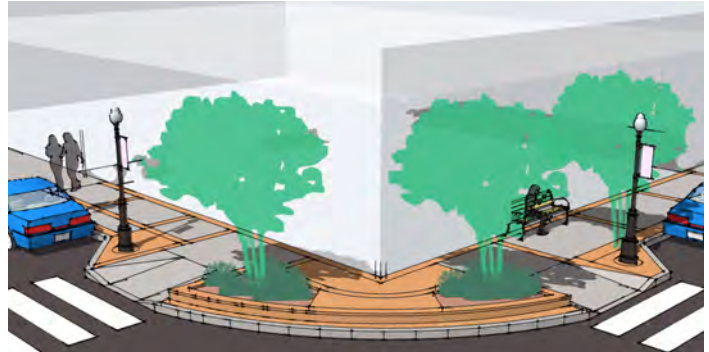
- Established Material Language- Bench Style, Pedestrian Lights, Brick Pavers and Walls, Plantings
- Bulb-outs create better pedestrian crossings

Overall Issues to Address:

- Corners are "Cluttered" - too many elements in one area
- Raised planters are too low/narrow for seating and too close to curb
- Historic buildings are hidden
- Difficult pedestrian flow



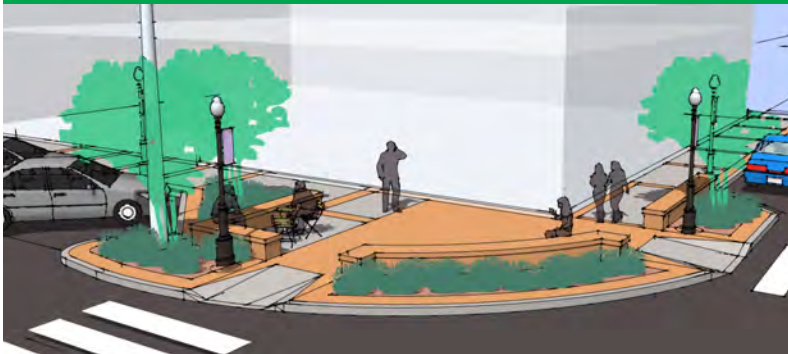
PETERSON AVE- EXISTING CONDITIONS



MADISON AVE- EXISTING CONDITIONS

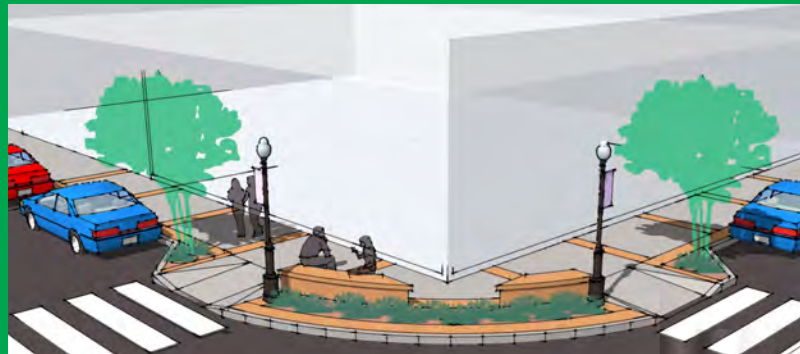
POTENTIAL OPTIONS

PETERSON AVE- OPTION A: EXPANDED SEATING



- At grade planting bed with paver band to reduce maintenance impacts
- 1.5' high x 1.5' wide seatwalls allow for more seating
- Trees & cobra-head lighting shifted to edges to allow clear view of buildings and pedestrians

MADISON AVE- OPTION A: SEATING AT CORNER



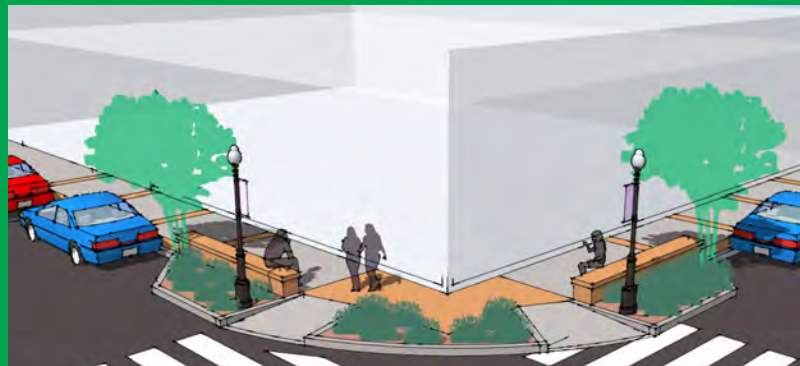
- At grade planting bed with paver band to reduce maintenance impacts
- 1.5' high x 1.5' wide seatwalls allow for more seating
- Trees & cobra-head lighting shifted to edges to allow clear view of buildings and pedestrians

PETERSON AVE- OPTION B: DROPPED CORNER



- Dropped corners create easier pedestrian crossings
- Shifted crosswalk allowed for seating nook on angled parking side
- Seatwalls, planting beds, cobra-head lighting, and trees modified the same as Option A

MADISON AVE- OPTION B: SEATING AT EDGES



- At grade planting bed with paver band to reduce maintenance impacts
- 1.5' high x 1.5' wide seatwalls allow for more seating
- Trees & cobra-head lighting shifted to edges to allow clear view of buildings and pedestrians

Primary Streetscapes

As part of the continuation of the Downtown language, a streetscape standard in between intersections should be created to maintain a desirable walkable environment that supplements the historic storefront character. The need for streetscape improvements is not simply aesthetic but also an economic development tool. Given the rise of online retailers, visitors are not coming Downtown just to shop but equally for the experience that comes with “shopping local”. To aid this experience, the design of primary streetscapes should consist of the elements highlighted in the vision image below and maintain the same material language as the existing streetscape corners. This includes: brick paver bands, seating, and decorative pedestrian lights. Additional components to consider are “U” shaped bike racks (one to two per block), decorative roadway lighting in lieu of the existing utilitarian lighting and, possibly the most important addition, street trees.



Peterson Avenue: Existing



Peterson Avenue: Potential

Outdoor seating

Extended decorative paver band language from existing street corners

Pedestrian lighting

Street trees in 4' x 8' tree wells

Secondary Streetscapes

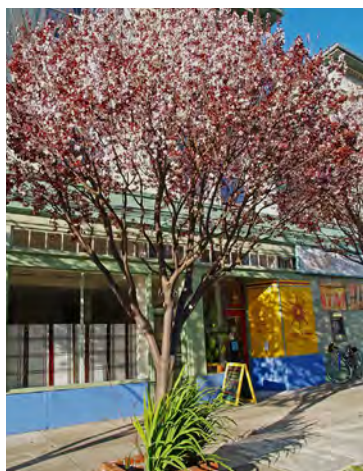
While sidewalk connectivity in the study area is quite good, Downtown lacks a continuity of aesthetic character from the historic core out to its surroundings. Secondary streetscapes identified within the framework map provide excellent opportunities to extend the Downtown atmosphere beyond its current limits. However, these streets do not see the same amount of foot traffic as primary streets and, in order to reduce costs of streetscape implementation, can be enhanced with fewer elements than those suggested for the main corridors. Important elements to implement on secondary streetscapes are pedestrian lighting equal to that of primary streetscapes and decorative signage in some areas. Where space permits, street trees should also be added but of a different species than primary streetscape trees. Overall, the focus on vertical elements helps create a consistent language that defines the district as a whole and encourages people to walk Downtown's streets.

Street Trees and Lighting

Urban street trees are not only great form-giving elements of a streetscape but are also a necessity for creating a comfortable walking experience, especially in hot climates. Along with creating a specific care and maintenance protocol, the City should work to define two to four specific tree species that shall be used solely within the Downtown area. The trees selected should be native, single-trunked, and deciduous. Size, spread, and spacing should be decided based upon the type and typical conditions of specific streets. To maintain visual consistency it is recommended that only one tree species be used per block face. In some instances, such as along Peterson and Madison Avenue, it may be desirable to maintain a single, more sculptural trees species along the entire corridor as a way to distinguish the historic core. Furthermore, trees along these corridors should frame and accent the historic building stock not hide it. This can be achieved by ensuring trees are properly maintained (but not manicured) and adequate "floor-to-canopy" heights are established to ensure visibility to storefronts.



Green Mountain Maple



Purple Plum Tree



Examples of decorative roadway lighting that can be used with existing pedestrian lighting - Manufacturer: Philips

The proper spacing for lighting is essential to creating an inviting nighttime environment. A recommended spacing of 30-40' for pedestrian lighting would reinforce a people oriented atmosphere. Decorative Roadway lighting should maintain a spacing of 80' to 100'. As is currently done on streetscape corners, the addition of decorative signage both on pedestrian and roadway lights adds an extra layer of depth to the Downtown experience and is an excellent way of advertising City events and the Historic District.

Railroad Crossings

Another key component to enriching the Downtown atmosphere is creating a transition across the railway that reduces the feeling of a divide. This includes extending ADA compliant sidewalks across the railway to encourage pedestrian travel as well as elements such as pedestrian lighting, decorative signage, and potentially decorative pavers like shown in the image below



Example of an inviting and ADA accessible railroad crossing

Open Space

Signature Town Green

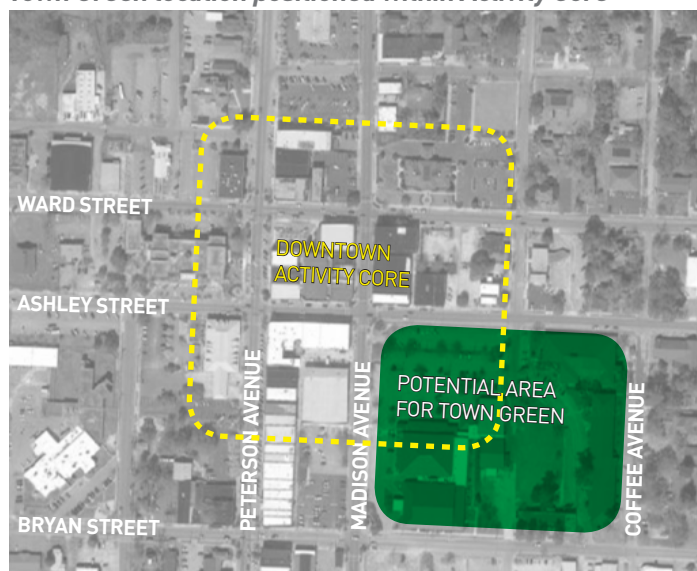
Of all the potential improvements outlined in this plan, the integration of a signature public gathering space within the Downtown core has the potential to create the most positive impact for the City in regards to civic identity and economic development. A well integrated Town Green not only stimulates activity within it but, as seen in small towns across America, that activity also radiates outward to its surroundings. Additionally, gathering spaces and outdoor performance areas along with more festivals/events and nightlife were among the most desired elements as expressed by the general public during this planning process. Designing a town green that can handle a flexible range of everyday and impromptu events, along with regularized highly planned events (of all scales) will further reinforce this space as a Downtown anchor and help generate activity at all times of the day and week.

One of the most vital tasks in establishing a town green is finding the right location. Typically, the farther a signature green space is located from a core or activity center the less it will provide multi-layered benefits to its surroundings. For these reasons, the planning team focused on finding space within Downtown that could meet the parameters listed above and ensure a positive return on investment, both culturally and economically. After exploring several sites, the area highlighted to the right proved to be an untapped opportunity that could reclaim a vital corner of the Downtown core and return it to an active and contributing use.

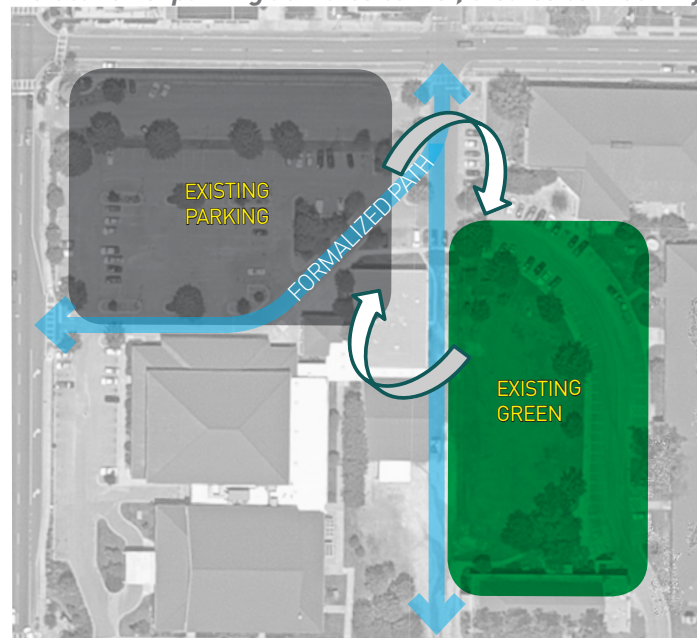
The southeast corner of Madison Avenue and Ashley Street offers several advantages:

- Located within the Downtown “activity core”, making it part of the Downtown atmosphere allowing for everyday use
- Requires no acquisition of private property- all publicly owned
- Defines the street with usable active space as opposed to the existing parking lot
- Connects Downtown Core to existing cultural and civic facilities
- The space is large enough to implement the public’s most desired programmatic elements
- Relocation of existing parking creates a net increase of parking spaces from 212 spaces to ±240-255 spaces, depending on the extent to which existing trees are saved.
- Allows for the reintroduction of Pearl Avenue creating more connectivity and a potential bike connection from the Douglas Trail to the Town Green

Town Green location positioned within Activity Core



Relocation of parking activates corner, creates connectivity

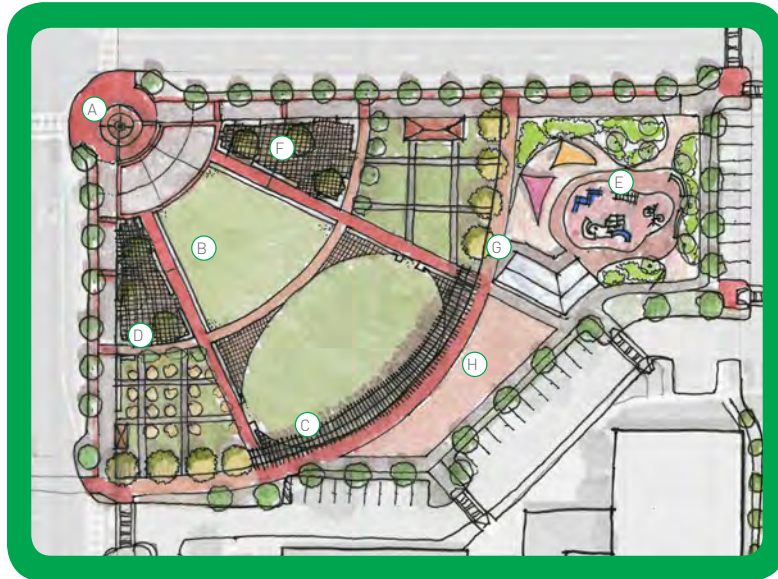


Size of parcel allows for a wide range of programming



ROOM FOR OPTIONS

It is important to note that the concept displayed below is only a vision of the type of spaces that could be implemented within an area of this size. The images below are representations of what some of those space could be. Beyond the framework of the street, parking, and open space, the ultimate style and size of the Town Green should come from a vetted public process that ensures design of this civic space stems from the vision of the community and stakeholders and is commensurate with available funding.



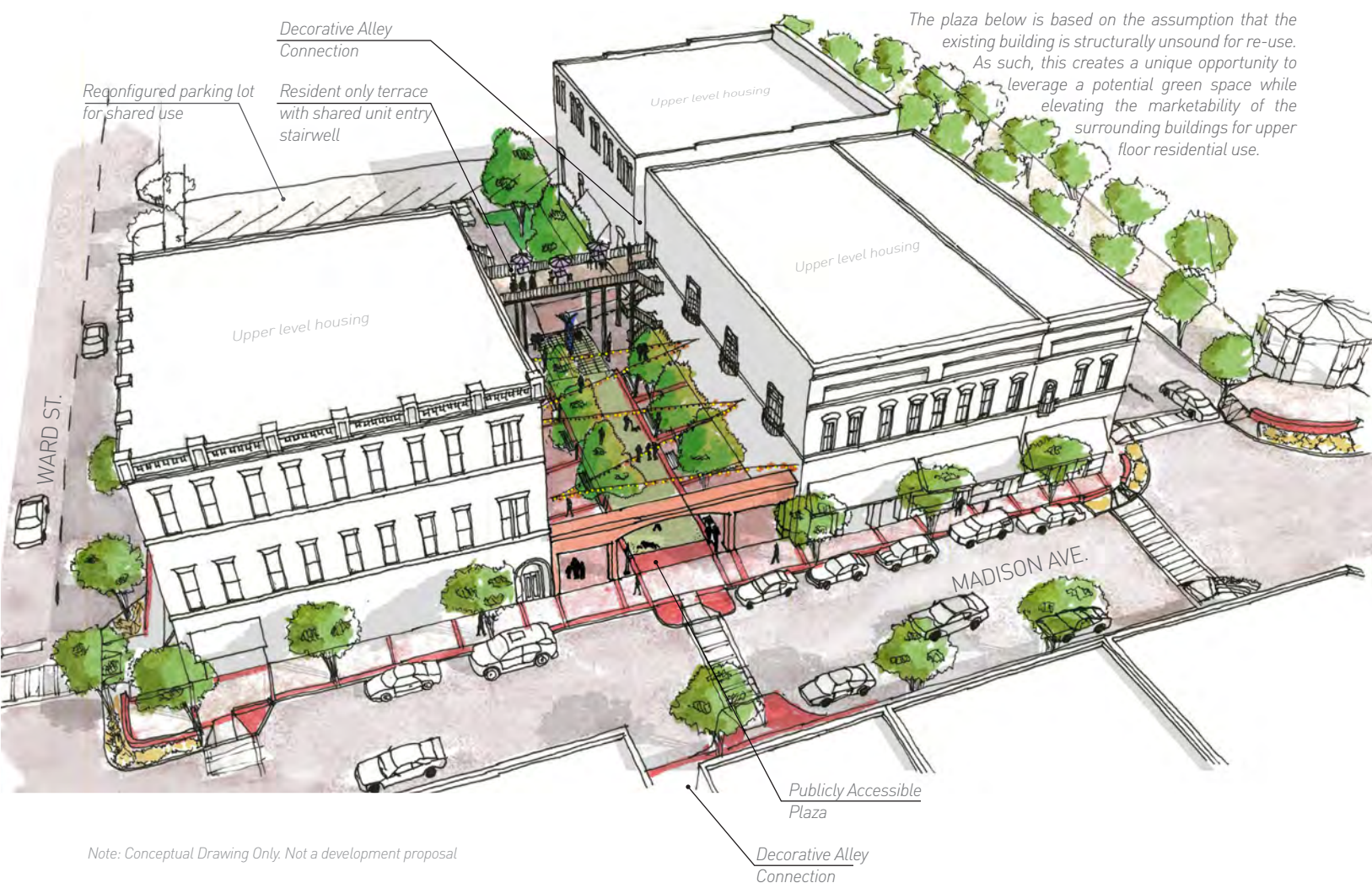
Plazas and Pocket Parks

Along with having a signature green space, a good Downtown evokes a pedestrian oriented atmosphere by establishing a network of diverse public open spaces. This includes small plazas and pocket parks of varying scales that offer opportunities for small activities, quick breaks, urban picnics/workweek lunch spots and other casual impromptu activities. There are several locations - both existing and potential - that can offer these kinds of experiences in Downtown Douglas.

As indicated in the existing conditions portion of this document, the existing plaza at the southeast corner of the Peterson Avenue and Ward Street is one of the easiest opportunities for improving and increasing open space within Downtown. In order to celebrate the full potential of this space, it is recommended that the existing off-street angled parking spaces "within" the plaza along with the curb cuts be removed. Allowing the plaza to fully embrace the corner and further expanding the existing material language will create a powerful design at a prominent intersection. The added space could allow for more shade trees, inclusion of movable "bistro style" seating, public art, and other temporal elements that could be easily moved to give the space more flexibility. Additionally, the re-design of the plaza

should seek to further activate the spaces above the arcade, especially if additional uses are implemented on the second floors of the surrounding buildings. While the existing parking spaces provide extra capacity for surrounding businesses, the prevalence of spaces within a five minute walk would not affect the availability of parking. Additionally, closing the two existing curb cuts would create opportunity to add three more on-street spaces.

Other locations to consider adding pocket parks and plazas include at streetscape corners, mid block on Peterson Ave., and in areas between buildings such like the example displayed below. Design strategies could include hardscape plazas, landscaped green spaces, dog runs, seating nooks, or any other unique elements that would add a layer of "livability" and pedestrian scale to the area. This will be increasingly important as Downtown adds more loft housing and residents in the core. Overtime, changes in building fabric or property ownership along with infill development could offer more opportunities for incorporating small open spaces. Ensuring these kinds of spaces are celebrated will only add to the richness of the Downtown experience.



Decorative Alley Improvements

The beauty of a human-sized city is that it's spaces are designed to be experienced by foot. The existing alleys within the Downtown core are excellent opportunities to increase pedestrian connectivity within Downtown. But perhaps more importantly, physically enhancing and celebrating the alleys will help further emphasize the historic urban fabric by turning some of these "back of house" areas into people spaces. The alleys indicated on the framework map are key in connecting Downtown's potential open space network and could be venues for "pedestrian only" experiences. While most are too narrow to allow for permanent seating, these spaces can be improved with simple interventions such as decorative pavers, wall or overhead string lighting, and screening of mechanical/electrical equipment. Additional improvements such as relocating air conditioning units and utilities would be more costly but may be worth considering in the future once the alleys gain popularity. Similar to the new Town Green, these enhanced alleys can be programmed for activities to help create a more unique and active experience. As an example, the improved alleys could be used as a venue for displaying public art in "linear outdoor galleries" in temporary or permanent formats or building sides could be used as canvases for curated outdoor murals. Once alleys are improved as "people spaces" there may be opportunities to encourage future restaurants or nightlife venues to have access to/from alleys during special events.

Alley looking towards Madison Avenue from Ward Street Plaza



Trails

The Douglas trail is an underutilized asset for Downtown given the non-vehicular access it provides from well beyond the Historic core. The planning team's recommendations focus on elevating the experience along the trail and ensuring additional connections to the Downtown Core.

Trail Connections

Rail Crossing

While this is something the City has previously explored, prioritizing the fluid continuation of the trail between Cherry Street and Phillips Street is of paramount importance for the trail's use, connectivity to Downtown, and its potential role as an asset to future development in the surrounding vacant and undeveloped parcels (e.g., as opposed to the "detour" to the west which now occurs). An unobstructed and smooth crossing is especially important for cyclists which should be a target demographic for Downtown given the it only takes 8-10 minutes to bike via the trail from South Georgia State College. In addition to making it easier to use, straightening the "jog" is a critical safety factor given the fact that many users currently go "off trail" and cross the railroad anyway to avoid taking the indirect route. Potential mid block railroad crossings like these require enhancements such as textured rubber rail crossing pads flush with rail along with proper signage and gates to warn users of railroad crossing. Given the likely high cost of adding this mid-block pedestrian crossing, this project may need to be longer term and in association with new development (e.g., when there are more potential trail users in Downtown).



Example of safe multi-use trail railroad crossing

Bryan Street Extension

Creating a safe east-west well defined spur connection from the Douglas Trail that connects to the heart of Downtown is another key piece of realizing the trail's potential benefits. This future connection would make the most sense along Bryan

Street where there is enough right-of-way width and unused space to introduce a bike lane or a multi-use trail. While the multi-use trail (or expanded sidewalk) will require a higher cost, investment in a bicycle and walking path that is separated from the road and buffered creates a more desirable and inclusive atmosphere which would ultimately see more use. Additionally, the potential reintroduction of Pearl Avenue between Ashley and Bryan Street may allow the multi-use trail to connect all the way to the proposed Town Green and to the existing cultural and civic amenities.

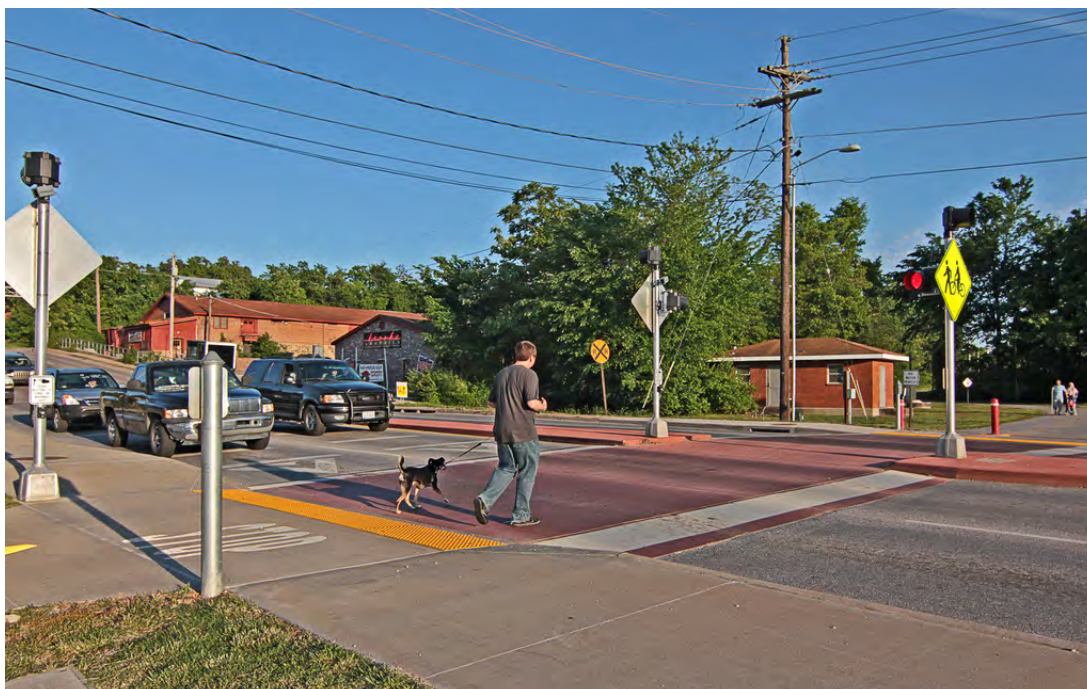
Wayfinding & Branding

One of the most important aspects of trail design is the degree to which it creates an experience and feel, beyond just being a means of getting from point to point. The strength of the Douglas trail is that it creates a connection through the City that can only be experienced from a human-scale. The trail experience consists largely of beautiful trees and vegetation along its flanks as it passes through neighborhoods and industrial areas. However, the trail's transition into the Downtown area has the opportunity to evoke a much different sense of place that can be leveraged to draw people into Downtown and increase it's identity.

With this in mind, a short-term wayfinding and signage system for the trail will greatly enhance the experience for users. While this is something that can be addressed from a trail-wide perspective, signage specific to Downtown encouraging people to stop for a bite to eat, shop, or visit cultural venues will add tremendous value. This could include elements such as directional signage or even larger signage that could include a large map of Downtown pointing out restaurants, shops, and destinations. The latter could help to pin-point a trail gateway for Downtown and enhance the trail's place-making opportunities. Conversely, it is important to have signage from Downtown to the Trail as it may be a highly desired amenity for out-of-town visitors, future residents, and employees within Downtown.



Sample Trail Wayfinding Package



Trail street crossing allowing for safe and visible passage for pedestrians and cyclist



RRFB w/ MUTCD Signage

Trail Safety

Beyond the trail experience, a trail's usage ultimately comes down to safety. The appeal of a good trail is its ability to provide a location for leisurely walks, bike rides, and exercise in a relaxed environment without interacting with vehicles. Given that, users must feel safe from personal harm from both an operations and crime aspect.

Trail crossings are one of the most important elements for trail operational safety since they are one of the few locations where users must interact with vehicles. While most of the Douglas Trail has long, uninterrupted spans, the Downtown portion crosses roadways within a short distance at six unsignalized points. While this is typical of urban trails, the current crossings at these conflict points do little to alert drivers that pedestrians may be crossing their path nor do they create a comfortable crossing environment for trail users.

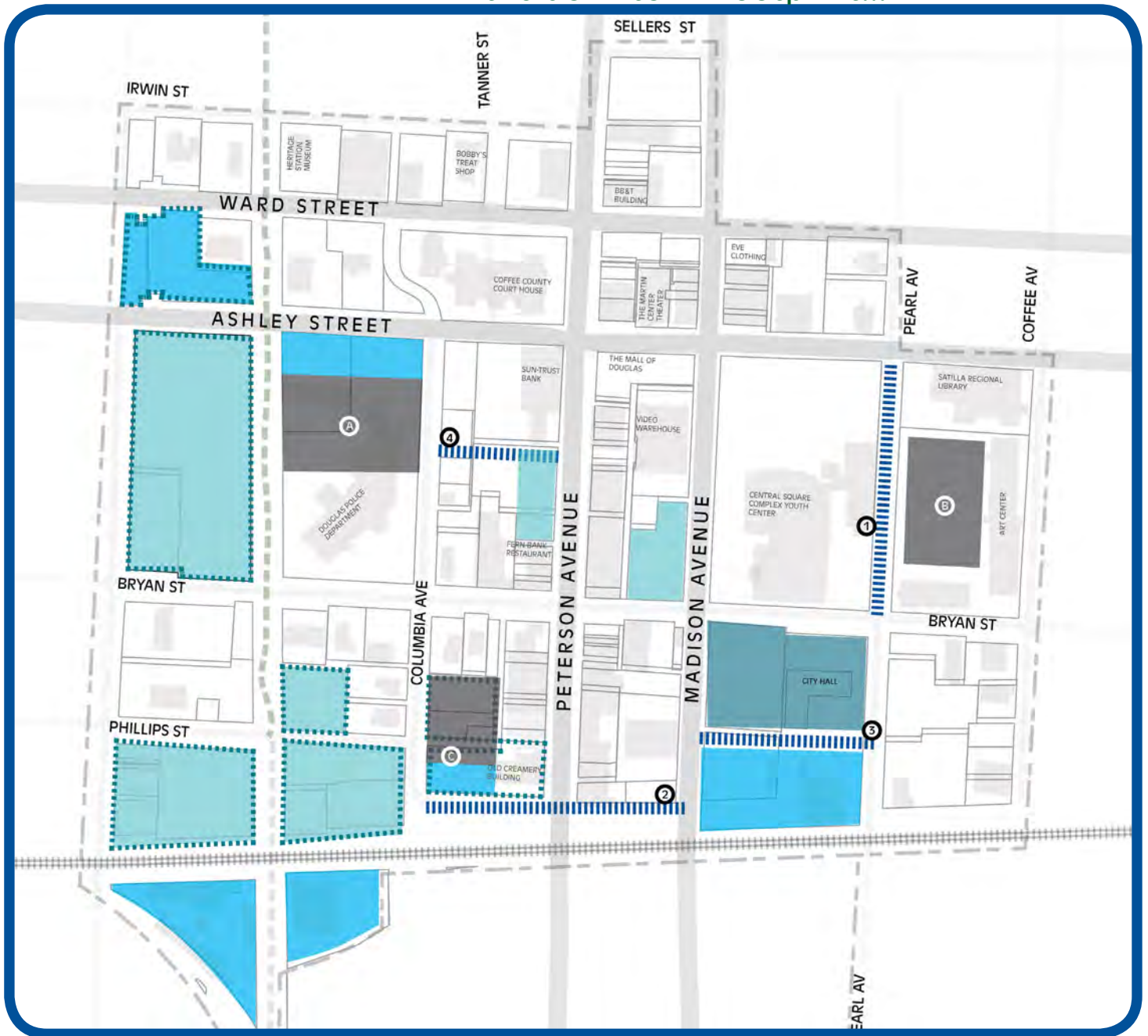
To solve this issue, there are two types of improvements recommended. At Jackson St., Irwin St., Bryan St, and Baker St., trail crossings should be clearly be striped/restriped with high visibility crosswalks and stop bars along with added MUTCD compliant signage to inform drivers of the trail crossing and the state law that requires vehicles to yield to pedestrians. (show images of signs). At intersections with much higher volumes including Ward St, Ashley St, and Baker Street, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) should be considered as an extra measure of safety and vehicle guidance. RRFBs are pedestrian-activated flashing LEDs that supplement warning signs at unsignalized intersections or mid-block

crosswalks. This type of tool has become very popular for trail crossings as they have a high vehicle yield rate and are fairly inexpensive compared to H.A.W.K. or fully signalized crossings. The implementation of these elements will bring much needed safety improvements and will also increase the appeal of using the trail itself.

In addition to safe crossings at roadways, users need to feel safe while on the trail itself. The public input process revealed a perception that trail can be unsafe from a crime perspective. While crime within the Downtown area is actually fairly minimal, it is still important for the City to explore measures such as CCTV and emergency call boxes to improve the negative perception. As the trail becomes more popular, additional public safety enhancements such as lighting in key locations should also be evaluated. Lighting will be particularly important when taken in conjunction with the vision of activating Downtown's evening activity.

as directional signage or even larger signage that could include a large map of Downtown pointing out restaurants, shops, and destinations. The latter could help to pin-point a trail gateway for Downtown and enhance the trail's place-making opportunities. Conversely, it is important to have signage from Downtown to the Trail as it may be a highly desired amenity for out-of-town visitors, future residents, and employees within Downtown.

GROW & DIVERSIFY the downtown footprint...



PROJECTS AND STRATEGIES:

NEW DEVELOPMENT

- Residential / Residential Mixed-Use Opportunity
Undeveloped areas better suited for a residential infill focus
- Commercial / Commercial-Mixed Use Opportunity
Undeveloped areas better suited for a commercial infill focus
- Privately Owned Sites
Development opportunities on non-publicly owned parcels

STREET EXTENSIONS (may not reflect exact future alignment)

- ① Pearl Avenue re-introduction between Ashley Street and Bryan Street
Addition of street as part of potential new Town Green layout, potential bike route
- ② Columbia Avenue formalized as a street between Phillips Street and Madison Avenue
Addition of curbs, sidewalks, street trees and lighting on existing right-of-way
- ③ Phillips Street Extension between Madison Avenue and Pearl Avenue
Opportunity to create new street to create development opportunities and further street
- ④ E-W Street Extension (with linear pocket park)
Peterson Ave. to Columbia Ave.
Formalize existing parking cut through as street with pedestrian focused spaces

PARKING

- Ⓐ Courthouse Parking Deck
Opportunity for a single tray parking deck for Courthouse with infill storefront development
- Ⓑ Pearl Avenue Parking Lot
New lot as part of potential Town Green implementation that would increase parking capacity within the block.
- Ⓒ Columbia Avenue Parking Lot
Formalization of "back of house" area among several parcels to create expanded parking opportunities

CITY HALL EXPANSION

Revisiting potential to expand City Hall to condense government service locations. Includes rethinking of placement and size of building to encourage embracing a prominent corner to better relate to the Downtown character.

While this plan's vision focuses largely on enhancing and further activating the historic core, over the long term, momentum generated in the core can eventually create a market for development opportunities and activity along the peripheries of Downtown's commercial core. Before that point, the City should plan ahead to ensure that future development and initiatives help extend and compliment Downtown's vision by continuing to create a more dynamic and active people-oriented environment.

New Development

Future Land Uses

There are several larger tracts of available (or soon to be available) developable land within the study area that present viable opportunities for land uses and scales that may be difficult to establish within the historic core. The proposed uses in the Grow & Diversify framework focus on development that will add life and vitality to Downtown in a way that is walkable, contains a mix of uses and is not vehicular oriented (e.g, chain retail or fast food). While the ability to insert mixed-use developments in this area will depend on market demand that is not currently present, it is important to look beyond the horizon to plan for the future.

Mixed-use or standalone multi-family housing is a recommended use within the available land on the west side of the study area as it would help transition into the single-family and multi-family housing adjacent to these parcels. Infill development could include housing above retail or office, senior housing, student housing, or typical multi-family developments (but in "urban" configurations). While the target area between Ashley Street and Bryan Street requires subsoil and utility mitigation, it is the most flexible parcel for potential long term housing. Its size could allow a range of housing types including townhomes or denser urban apartments/condos depending on

the market. Additionally, this parcel is key to creating a unique frontage along the Douglas Trail that will further assist in enhancing the trail experience Downtown. As the City looks to activate this area it should seek to work with potential investors to incentivize the use of this parcel.



Online survey high-ranking development images for non-historic district areas

The undeveloped areas between the railway and Phillips Street offer more typologically specific opportunities such as townhomes, duplexes and/or small commercial uses due to topography, hydrology, and railroad constraints. However, the less than three to five minute walk to the Downtown core along with the immediate adjacency to the Douglas Trail are assets that could make this area desirable in the future.

Parcels indicated on the framework map as commercial mixed-used such as city-owned parcels south of City Hall and south of the railroad tracks could also be targets for housing if the market eventually matures. However, their current surroundings and lot sizes make them more suitable and likely for commercial mixed-use developments. Like the addition of housing, a key component to the growth of Downtown is to incentivize the diversification of its uses. Some of these parcels, like those along Ashley Street, could be targets for office mixed-used development including University oriented uses that would help bring a higher critical mass to Downtown. Smaller parcels could focus on small offices, restaurants, and more retail where located near the commercial core.



Large undeveloped parcel adjacent to Douglas Trail

Public Land & City Hall Expansion

As the City relocates and consolidates certain facilities outside of Downtown (as currently planned), it should seek to sell some of the high amounts of publicly owned parcels to create opportunities to further diversify uses Downtown. However, this should be done in a way that will help influence and incentivize the future development of these sites. This may mean holding on to property over a long period of time until an investor that will help promote the Downtown vision is identified (e.g., rather than settling to the first or highest bidder just for cash purposes).

As a location to place relocated offices or City services, re-exploring the potential expansion of City Hall on the lot adjacent to the existing structure is an improvement that could add tremendous value to the Downtown atmosphere by creating a proper and prominent street presence for the City's central civic building. While the City's previous design studies addressed Madison Avenue, new schemes should explore two story expansions (within a smaller footprint) in order to more fully embrace the corner of Madison and Bryan Street with a primary entrance at the corner. This move will continue Downtown's tradition of locating landmark buildings at major intersections. Additionally, the building itself should maintain a character

that is complementary to the Downtown core without trying to precisely replicate the styles found within the rest of the historic district.

Zoning

While the existing TC-C (Town Center Commercial) zoning district establishes good development requirements for this area, the City could look into specific zoning modifications for the areas surrounding the Historic Overlay district as a way to help incentivize development immediately adjacent to the historic core. From a form-based standpoint, most if not all of the requirements of the TC-C zoning could be used. However, there may be a few items from a land use perspective that could help aid in achieving the vision laid out for this Grow & Diversify strategy.

Potential modifications could include:

- Reduce parking requirements if development ties into a broader district parking strategy
- Allow uses such as Bed & Breakfast, University or College, and limited light industrial uses such as micro-breweries.
- Increase allowable lot coverage above 50%
- Increase allowable units per acre above 10



Sample layout of potential City Hall expansion

Street Extensions & Parking

As part of the eventual growth of Downtown, managing parking strategies and finding opportunities for additional street connectivity will be important strategies to accommodate future development with walkable pedestrian sized blocks, improving access, and improving connectivity. As Downtown begins to see consistent day and night activity, it is of paramount importance to ensure that parking is managed in a way that does not take away from the pedestrian nature of Downtown. A strategy for this includes finding locations for larger concentrations of parking that can help establish a “park once and walk” culture. These parking areas should be easily accessible but should not be visually dominant as “seas of parking” and therefore should not front primary streets, replace valuable building stock, or be placed in areas that could potentially be used for infill development.



Pearl Avenue Re-introduction & Parking Lot

Establishing a Town Green at the corner of Ashley and Madison Avenue creates opportunities to better organize and expand the parking within the block along with re-introducing Pearl Avenue between Ashley and Bryan Street. Reestablishing the historic street and block pattern here would allow for better vehicular circulation as well as provide pedestrian and cyclist access to the future town green. Shifting existing parking to middle of the block creates space for an efficient layout of parking. Additionally, parking can be added around the periphery of the future town green. Depending on the amount of existing trees that are preserved and the size of the new Town Green, this revised layout could actually increase off-street parking from approximately 212 spaces to 240-255 spaces.

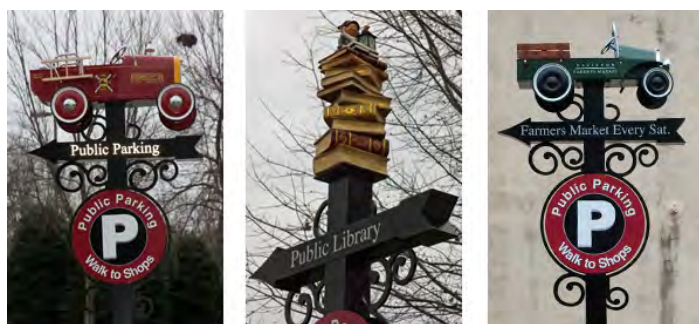


Potential Town Green implementation with parking expansion in center of block

Columbia Avenue & Parking Lot

The Columbia Avenue extension depicted on the framework map running near Phillips St. to Madison Avenue is already a designated right-of-way. However, its current treatment makes it feel more like a cut-through rather than a Downtown street. If treated properly with curbs, full sidewalks, and streetscape elements this street will assist in creating a more cohesive atmosphere and promote pedestrian circulation that loops rather than dead-ends at the rail road tracks.

Near Phillips Street, there are several parcels with unoccupied land behind the primary buildings. As part of treating Downtown parking as a district strategy, the City could work with landowners to help formalize a parking lot that would create enough parking for those businesses, other Downtown visitors, and parking for potential upper-floor uses of the Creamery Building. Subsequently, a centralized, managed approach to parking would allow for an additional infill building at the rear of the Creamery building parcel that would hide the parking and have great visibility onto Columbia Avenue.



Examples of Parking Maps and Signage

New Street Extension with reconfigured parking (Columbia Ave. to Peterson Ave.)

The mid block parking area between Bryan and Ashley Streets is already laid out as a cut through path, however, it does not promote connectivity beyond vehicular access. Additionally, the makeup of the area to the south of this lot is unformalized and could be reconfigured to allow more parking. Given these parameters, the insertion of an actual street with sidewalks, lighting, and paver treatments could be easily done in the short-term with only minor loss of parking. An additional layer to the implementation of this street would be the creation of a linear park depicted in the Enrich & Intensify Framework along with a formalized parking lot within the properties to the south. Given this project's location within the Historic Core, it has multi-layered benefits that could help with Downtown's connectivity, open space needs, and overall aesthetic appeal.

Courthouse Parking Lot/Deck

The Coffee County Courthouse currently creates significant strain on the parking availability within Downtown on court days and increased activity of a more vibrant Downtown will only add to the parking demand. To address this issue, an area of dedicated parking for the courthouse and this area of Downtown should be sought. Initial data gathering revealed that the existing Coffee County Sheriff's Office / Douglas Police Department building is only partially occupied and its function as a jail is now obsolete with no need for adaptive re-use. As such, the existence of this portion of the building is not only unnecessary but - along with the perimeter security fence - also creates an unsightly, negative impression not fitting with Downtown's existing charm and character. The removal of the fencing should be a priority project regardless of the associated building demolition/reconfiguration effort.

While further architectural study is needed to determine how this building could be reduced in size, redeveloping the area depicted on the framework map, located below Ashley Street, may allow for the addition of a very large parking area. Additionally, there may be an opportunity for infill development along Ashley Street and Columbia Avenue as a way of hiding parking behind the storefront buildings that could house retail, office, or restaurants. The size of the parking area could accommodate approximately 132 parking spaces within the footprint. Depending on the success of Downtown, this area could be a surface lot or a multi-level parking deck. Given the height of surrounding buildings and cost implications, it is recommended that only one level of parking above the ground level be provided allowing for approximately 250 spaces overall. (add picture of example) Along with buffering visibility from public streets, parking facing the Douglas Trail and public amenities should also be buffered with landscaped areas and/or potentially amenitized to promote utilization of unused space.

Phillips Street Extension

The creation of the City Hall extension would allow a new alignment of Phillips Street to be formed between Madison Avenue and Pearl Avenue. Having similar benefits in terms of connectivity and aesthetic improvements, the implementation of this streetscape is also vital to the marketability and accessibility of the currently city-owned parcel to the south of the alignment. As the City looks to sell this parcel in the long run, it should create this new right-of-way alignment to help incentivize its sale or work to ensure it is implemented as part of the development process.



Sample rendering of low parking deck tucked behind infill development

IMPLEMENTING THE VISION - Priority Tasks

One of the key measures to ensuring the implementation of the vision set forth by this plan is to maintain the momentum developed during the planning process. As such the tasks listed below are geared toward ensuring forward movement during the first year of adoption in order to set the stage for changes of the next 5-10 years.

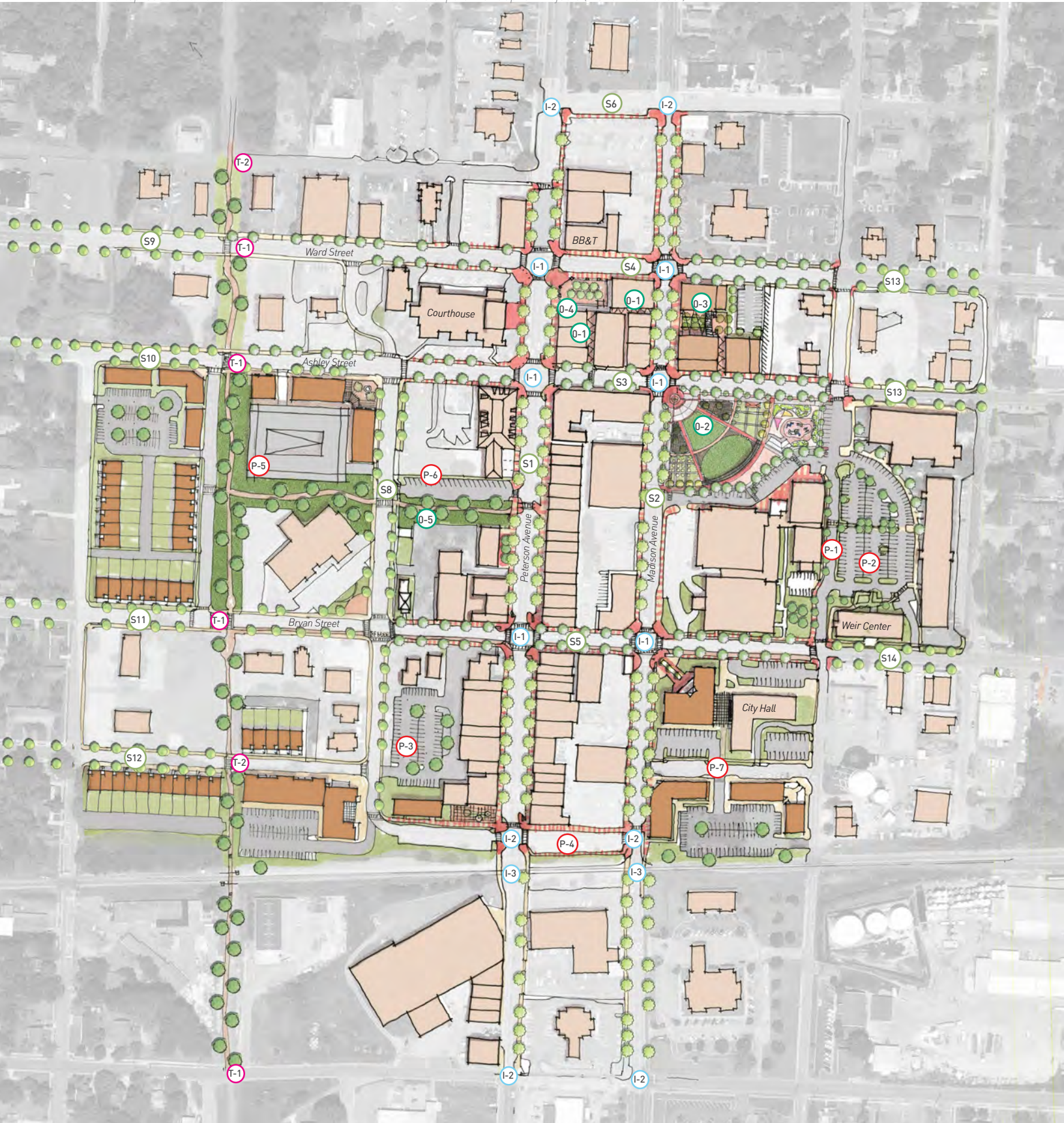
Top 10 First Year Tasks after plan adoption:

- 1. Establish a Downtown Champion.** Provide support to succeed.
(Preserve & Solidify)
- 2. Regularize stakeholder / departmental outreach.** Create accountability.
(Preserve & Solidify)
- 3. Begin Downtown assessment.** Assess building stock / code compliance.
(Preserve & Solidify)
- 4. Establish one new additional weeknight / weekend event.** Start small.
(Preserve & Solidify)
- 5. Plan for priority capital projects.** Identify funding.
(Enrich & Intensify)
- 6. Establish your Streetscape Standards.** Install a pilot streetscape corner.
(Enrich & Intensify)
- 7. Plan for Town Green now.** Begin visioning and establish phasing timeline.
(Enrich & Intensify)
- 8. Agree on plan for future of jail building.** Start with chain link fence.
(Grow & Diversify)
- 9. Identify potential priority DDA acquisition site.** Incentivize loft housing.
(Preserve & Solidify)
- 10. Assess & update TC-C / Historic Overlay zoning.** Set the stage.
(Preserve & Solidify)

IMAGINING THE VISION

Illustrative Plan below shows the potential of Downtown's developable land for infill development and open space that could occur as this plan is implemented. While much of this reflects potentially a very long term approach, it is key to maintain this vision in mind in the short-term so that it can be realized in the future.

Illustrative representation of realized Downtown Vision with call outs of potential Capital Projects (List on next sheet)



IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT LIST

ID#	Project	Description	Implementation Partners	Implementation Timeline	Estimated Cost			
	Indicates a Priority Project				Size	Units	Cost/Unit	Cost
CAPITAL PROJECTS								
PRIMARY STREETSCAPES								
S-1	Peterson Avenue Streetscape	From Ward St. to Columbia Ave Extension.	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Short-term	1250	linear feet	\$ 250	\$ 312,500
S-2	Ashley Street Streetscape	From Douglas Trail to Pearl Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Short-term	1350	linear feet	\$ 225	\$ 303,750
S-3	Ward Street Streescap	From Douglas Trail to Pearl Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Mid-term	1350	linear feet	\$ 250	\$ 337,500
S-4	Madison Avenue Streetscape	From Ward St. to Bryan Street	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Mid-term	825	linear feet	\$ 250	\$ 206,250
S-5	Peterson/Madison North Streetscape	Peterson Ave, Sellers St. Madison Avenue loop	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Mid-term	900	linear feet	\$ 250	\$ 225,000
S-6	Bryan Street Streetscape	From Douglas Trail to Pearl Ave. with off-street bike improvements	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Mid-term	1350	linear feet	\$ 275	\$ 371,250
SECONDARY STREETSCAPES								
S-7	Columbia Avenue Streetscape	From Ashley Street to Phillips Street	Community Dev., Public Works	Mid-term	950	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 190,000
S-8	Peterson / Madison South Streetscape	Peterson, Madison from Railroad to Cherry Street-includes Cherry St.	Community Dev., Public Works	Mid-term	1250	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 250,000
S-9	Ward Street West Streetscape	From Douglas Trail to North College Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	600	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 120,000
S-10	Ashley Street West Streetscape	From Douglas Trail to North College Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	600	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 120,000
S-11	Bryan Street West Streetscape	From Douglas Trail to North College Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	600	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 120,000
S-12	Phillips Street West Streetscape	From Columbia Ave. to North College Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	900	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 180,000
S-13	Ward Street / Ashley Street East Streetscape	Ward St. and Ashley St. between Pearl Ave. & Coffee Ave. - includes Pearl Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	600	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 120,000
S-14	Bryan Street / Pearl Avenue East Streetscape	Bryan St. and Pearl Ave between railroad and Coffee Ave.	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	600	linear feet	\$ 200	\$ 120,000
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS								
I-1	Corner Improvements	Streetscape Corner Improvements per intersection (includes all corners)	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Short-term	6	per intersection	\$ 80,000	\$ 480,000
I-2	Corner Improvement Additions	Additional Streetscape corners with decorative treatment	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Short-term	9	per intersection	\$ 90,000	\$ 810,000
I-3	Improved Rail Road Crossings	ADA accessibility, decorative pavers, concrete sidewalks, lighting (both sides)	Community Dev., Public Works, Main Street	Mid-term	2	per crossing	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000
TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS								
T-1	Major Trail Intersection Crossings	(2) Rapid Flashing Beacons per intersection along with signage & striping.	Public Works	Short-term	3	per intersection	\$ 25,000	\$ 75,000
T-2	Minor Trail Intersection Crossings	Signage & Striping Improvements	Public Works	Short-term	4	per intersection	\$ 1,200	\$ 4,800
T-3	Bike Parking	1 to 2 "U" Bike racks per block. Installed parallel to curb. 1.5 to 2.5 feet on-center from curb	Public Works	Short-term	12	each	\$ 125	\$ 1,500
T-4	Downtown Signage & Wayfnding	(2) Map Kiosks, (2) interpretive signs, mile markers every quarter mile, misc. signs	Community Dev., Public Works	Mid-term	1	lump sum	\$ 85,000	\$ 85,000
T-5	On Trail Safety Measures	(10)CCTV,(5) Emergency Call Boxes from Jackson Street to South Georgia State College	Public Works	Mid-term	1	lump sum	\$ 125,000	\$ 125,000
T-6	Bryan Street Trail Connection	See S-6						
T-7	Rail Road Crossing	Paving, safety arms / lighting	Community Dev., Public Works	Long-term	1	lump sum	\$ 115,000	\$ 115,000
T-8	Lighting	Lighting only along Downtown area from Jackson Street to South Georgia State College. 80' O.C. Conduit and Fixture Costs	Public Works	Long-term	1	lump sum	\$ 525,000	\$ 525,000
OPEN SPACE								
0-1	Alley Improvements	Decorative alley improvements including decorative pavers, decorative screens and sconce lighting. Shifting of utilities not included.	Community Dev., Public Works	Short-term / Mid-term	3	Per Alley	\$ 10,000	\$ 30,000
0-2	Signature Town Green Construction	Demolition of Existing Parking Lot. Implementation of Signature Town Green. Cost to be determined by future visioning available funding (See I-2). Town Green elements are implementable in phases. (See P-1, P-2 for initial work)	Community Dev., Parks & Recreation, Public Works	Mid-term		lump sum	\$1,500,000 to \$5,000,000	
0-3	Madison Avenue Pocket Park	Pocket Park adjacent to Sweat-Dent Building. Potential for public-private partnership. Contingent upon structural integrity and demolition of existing building. Does not include demolition costs	DDA, Community Dev., Parks & Recreation, Public Works	Mid-term	1	lump sum	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000
0-4	Ward St. Plaza Improvements	Removal of existing parking spaces along with expansion of plaza including decorative pavers, lighting, movable seating & shade trees.	Community Dev., Parks & Recreation, Public Works	Mid-term	1	lump sum	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000
0-5	Peterson Ave. Linear Park	Small linear park space after implementation of P-6	Community Dev., Parks & Recreation, Public Works	Long-Term	1	lump sum	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000

- NOTES:
1. Short-term = 1-5 years; Medium-term = 6-10 years; Long-term = 11+ years
 2. Action plan items listed herein are recommendations only and are individually subject to available funding and approval by implementation partners.
 3. Costs are estimates only based on best practices and conceptual level of study. Further engineering and more detailed study will be required to refine cost and funding parameters.

PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

ID#	Project	Description	Implementation Partners	Implementation Timeline	Estimated Cost			
	Indicates a Priority Project				Size	Units	Cost/Unit	Cost
PARKING & STREET EXTENSIONS								
P-1	Pearl Avenue Reintroduction	Reintroduction of Pearl Avenue between Bryan St & Ashley St allow for preparation of Town Green site.	DDA, Community Dev., Public Works	Short-term	600	linear feet	\$ 350	\$ 210,000
P-2	Pearl Avenue Parking Lot	Expanded parking lot adjacent to Pearl Avenue reintroduction to allow for preparation of Town	DDA, Community Dev., Public Works	Short-term	240	per space	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,200,000
P-3	Columbia Avenue Parking Lot	Formalized parking lot between several properties. Will require coordination with property owners. Potential for 75-85 spaces	DDA, Community Dev., Public Works	Short-term	75	per space	\$ 4,000	\$ 300,000
P-4	Columbia Avenue Formalization	Between Madison Ave. & Phillips St. - Addition of curbs, sidewalks, street trees and lighting on existing right-of-way	Public Works	Mid-term	600	linear feet	\$ 325	\$ 195,000
P-5.1	Courthouse Parking Lot	New parking lot replacing unused Sheriff's Office structure. Potentially 125 spaces. Does not	DDA, Public Works	Mid-term	125	per space	\$ 5,000	\$ 625,000
P-5.2	Courthouse Parking Tray	Future parking tray on top of Courthouse lot to add an additional 125 spaces.	DDA, Public Works	Long-term	125	per space	\$ 18,000	\$ 2,250,000
P-6	Peterson Avenue New Mid-Block Street	New Street from Columbia Avenue to Peterson Avenue midblock between Ashley & Bryan. Reworks existing cut-through to make way for linear park. See O-5	Public Works	Long-term	330	linear feet	\$ 350	\$ 115,500
P-7	Phillips Street Extension	Phillips Street extension from Madison Avenue to Pearl Avenue. Creates developable parcel to the south.	Public Works	Long-term	400	linear feet	\$ 350	\$ 140,000
OTHER IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES								
I-1	Downtown Champion: Dedicated person to push Downtown vision	Accountable for pushing the shared vision, ensuring coordination between City/County departments in regards to Downtown initiatives, could also coordinate Downtown events and marketing. Position could be an existing City employee or new staffer sole dedicated to Downtown growth	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-2	Town Green Planning and Design	Visioning, public outreach, planning, design for Town Green	Community Dev., Main Street, Public Works					
I-3	Update TC-C and Historic District Overlay Zoning	Update TC-C zoning to address areas immediately surrounding the Downtown Historic District (could follow study area boundaries). Ensure TC-C and Historic Overlay zoning are inline with Downtown Vision	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-4	Historic District Assessment	Assess building conditions, create work order list of recommended improvements for non-conforming buildings, create a master list of marketable and available properties.	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-5	Incentivize Upper Floor Housing	Proactively market buildings available for upper-floor housing, consider full property acquisition use the DDA for potential subsidy of new developments, study potential for consolidated block-level infrastructure.						
I-6	Events & Branding	Increase the number of nighttime and weekend events by activating the Martin Theater, create a brand for Downtown, and utilize other existing assets to increase activity within the Downtown "Core"	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-7	Grant / Low Interest Low Program	Incentivize exterior renovations by facilitating first step. Look for ways to provide seed-level matching grants. City should actively assist building owners to access loans from DCA & GA Cities	Community Dev., Main Street, DDA					
I-8	Façade Design Assistance	City to utilize state programs or hire consulting architect to assist in façade improvements for multiple historic buildings	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-9	Street Furniture Program	City could look to provide street furniture for interested business owners including tables, chairs, planter boxes. Could work as loan basis, pay-as-you-go, or incentive for other Downtown programs	Community Dev., Main Street					
I-10	Downtown Parking Management Program	Operations, Cleanup, Signage, Parking Map, PR & Communications	Community Dev., Main Street, Public Works					

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2. Action plan items listed herein are recommendations only and are individually subject to available funding and approval by implementation partners.
3. Costs are estimates only based on best practices and conceptual level of study. Further engineering and more detailed study will be required to refine cost and funding parameters.