



Downtown Washington



2018

STRATEGIC PLAN

Commissioned by the Washington Downtown
Development Authority and Main Street Program
Prepared and Submitted by *Georgia Downtowns*



INSIDE

Introduction	2
The Model for Planning	2
The Process for Planning	3
Strategic Work Plan ..	6
Monthly Meeting Agenda Template	11
Recommendations	13
Appendices	16

APPENDICES

- Appendix A
Community Input Data
- Appendix B
Agenda
- Appendix C
Director's Report
- Appendix D
Bios, Cordle and Sampson
- Appendix E
Leadership Survey Summary



INTRODUCTION

It has been our great pleasure to partner with the Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program to create its Strategic Plan for Downtown Washington.

We at *Georgia Downtowns* are “mission-driven,” that is, we believe strongly in what we do and seek to partner with downtown leaders who are just as serious as we are about planning the work and working the plan. It takes tremendous effort and dedication to transform a downtown. Washington is fortunate because its leadership is comprised of a great group of enthusiastic community members and leaders who have a vision for its business district. They are committed to working with the city’s stakeholders and partners to bring greater economic prosperity to Downtown Washington.

We applaud your spirit and vision, and we thank you for the opportunity to serve .

—Joel Cordle, Principal, Georgia Downtowns

“To succeed, Main Street must show visible results that can only come from completing projects – both shorter and longer-term activities that add up to meaningful change.”

- National Main Street

A NEW MODEL FOR PLANNING

The National Main Street Program is using a “refreshed” model for planning and implementing downtown work. The new Main Street Approach is not radically different, but does have a more cohesive focus, using “Transformation Strategies” (Figure 1), as a way to focus more on measurable results from high-impact economic development and less emphasis on festivals and large promotional events. It also stresses public input, because a downtown needs a shared community vision. In addition, this new planning model moves away from the “silo” approach to the Four Points of Main Street (Design, Promotion, Organization, and Economic Vitality). Instead, programs are encouraged to ensure that all four of these points are integrated throughout a project, so they will lead to the achievement of an identified “Transformation Strategy,” which is an overarching vision for creating long-lasting and powerful change to downtown.

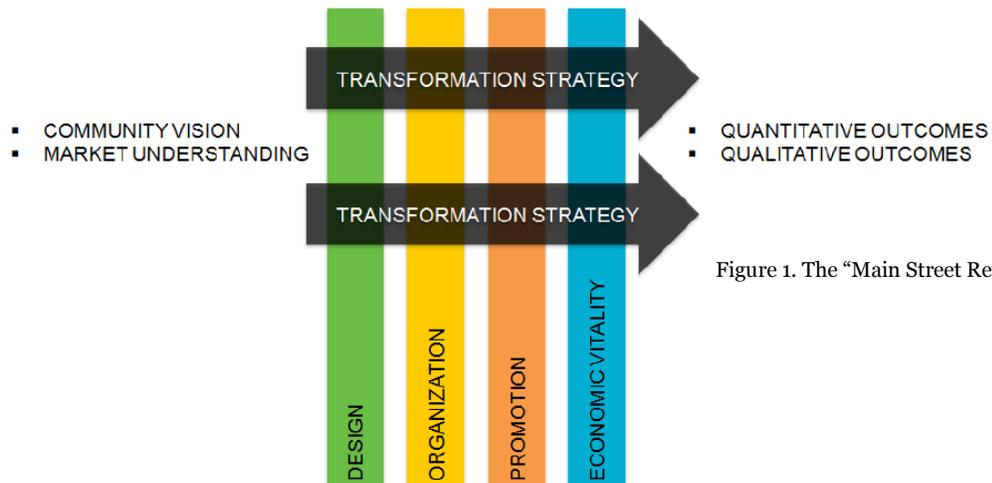


Figure 1. The “Main Street Refresh” Model



Downtown Washington Community Input

THANK YOU

We appreciate the time and talent of our partners. Specifically, we thank:

- * Elizabeth Elliott, Director
Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program
- * Ames Barnett, Mayor
City of Washington
- * Sherri Bailey, Administrator
City of Washington
- * Attendees, Board of Directors
Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program:
 - Susan Abramson
 - Bambi Arnold
 - Kelli Eisler
 - Debbie Jackson
 - Mary Newsome

THE PROCESS FOR PLANNING

The Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program Board held its strategic planning retreat on Thursday, October 19, 2017 at the Pope Center in Washington.

COMMUNITY INPUT MEETING

The Downtown office engaged Georgia Downtowns to conduct a Town Hall meeting in the community on July 25, 2017 and gather input from participants (Appendix A). Data collected was organized and presented to the board at the strategic planning retreat.

RETREAT PLANNING

Prior to the retreat, *Georgia Downtowns* conferred with Elizabeth Elliott, Director of the Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program, several times to discuss planning needs, and goals.

To assist the project, *Georgia Downtowns* designed and collected results from a leadership survey (Appendix E). These results were presented along with the community input at the retreat.

RETREAT

Georgia Downtowns facilitated Downtown Washington’s planning retreat, using its own model for creating vision, action, and results. *Georgia Downtowns* also used the Main Street Refresh model, an effective method for organizing the plan and agenda (Appendix B).

THE VISION

Joel presented an overview of the day, then led the discussion of the group’s shared vision of 2023 Downtown Washington. Reflecting the community input gathered in July, the group then listed characteristics of a successful downtown:

In 2023, Downtown Washington is a supportive collaborative community, fostering a positive “can do” energy. Residents and visitors are engaged in unique activities and community events. They are taking walking tours, using the dog park, enjoying greenspaces, parks, trails, and a splash pad. They are enjoying art and entertainment. There is access to high-speed internet and to wifi. Buildings are restored and full with a variety of dining and shopping businesses.

Continued...

*** DOWNTOWN WASHINGTON ***

SAVE THE DATE **JULY 25**
6:30pm

THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, WASHINGTON MAINSTREET
& THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY INVITE YOU TO

★ **BE A VIP PARTICIPANT!** ★

WE WANT YOUR HELP TO VISION, INFORM, AND PRIORITIZE
FOR FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN WASHINGTON

THE COURT STREET LIVERY
16 W. COURT ST. WASHINGTON, GA

BUSINESS OWNERS, RESIDENTS, PROPERTY OWNERS, AND CUSTOMERS, ALL ARE
STAKEHOLDERS IN DOWNTOWN'S FUTURE, AND EVERYONE'S INPUT IS IMPORTANT
FOR PLANNING THE PRESERVATION & DEVELOPMENT OF DOWNTOWN.

SIMPLY PUT, WE'LL ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS: YOU GIVE US YOUR THOUGHTS!

THE PROCESS FOR PLANNING (...continued)

PLANNING

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.

- Alan Lakein

Let our advance worrying become advance thinking and planning

- Winston Churchill

Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes; but no plans.

- Peter F. Drucker

The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.

- John F. Kennedy

Plan your work for today and every day, then work your plan.

- Margaret Thatcher

Everyone deserves access to a vibrant downtown or neighborhood commercial districts – a place that provides for broad economic opportunity, is rich in character, and features inviting public spaces that make residents and visitors feel that they belong.

-Patrice Frey, President
National Main Street
Center



Vision continued...

People, including retirees and growing families, are living in affordable housing; lofts are occupied with residents and businesses, including a craft brewery, gallery, and outfitters. The community has a vibrant hospital that is on sound financial ground and serving all, including the retirement community. Pedestrians are safe because of well-marked crossings. It feels comfortable living in Washington.

DOWNTOWN REPORT

Elizabeth Elliott presented a recap of 2017 activities, events, and projects and the status of other pertinent city projects. (Appendix C). She then introduced Joel Cordle and Alice Sampson to the group (Appendix D)

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Next, the group discussed:

- Rationale for the new or “refreshed” model for Main Street planning (See page 2), which emphasizes transformation strategies, work that is high impact and long-lasting;
- Community input data (Appendix A); and
- The summary of the leadership survey, including Work Plan Priorities (Appendix E).

Using the survey results and other information, the group set about listing priorities for the plan.

Board Retreat

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

Transformation Strategy One: Enrich the Village Experience for Locals and Visitors

Transformation Strategy Two: Make Downtown a Regional Center for New Businesses and Expansions

PRIORITY GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND MILESTONES

Priority Goal One: Residential and Commercial Development and Restoration

Priority Objective: One commercial and one residential development and restoration

Milestones: Signed leases or sales contracts; Ribbon-cutting for each

Priority Goal Two: Recruit Entrepreneurs and Provide System of Support

Priority Objective: Establishment of one new retail business and one new dining business
Milestone: Grand opening for each

Priority Goal Three: Destination Downtown Washington: Activities and Environment

Priority Objective: Increase tax revenues increase by 5% or more; increase Facebook and website hits by 25%

Milestone: Destination Downtown Washington Day decree





Priority Brainstorm List

- ◆ Public Restrooms
- ◆ Gateway signage improvements and visual improvements
- ◆ Support Fitzpatrick as a downtown anchor
- ◆ Business development incentives
- ◆ Bring people in from the bypass
- ◆ Restore and develop vacant property on the Square
- ◆ Recruit entrepreneurs and provide a system of support
- ◆ Destination thinking – for locals and visitors
- ◆ Affordable housing

THE PROCESS FOR PLANNING (...continued)

THE PLAN

Retreat participants were focused. They were able to use community input, survey data, the director’s report, and the group visioning process to identify goals that are high-impact, complex, and *transformative*.

Moving into the detailed planning stage, *Georgia Downtowns* facilitated discussion and recorded the steps that participants identified for project goals.

Next, using the meeting input, *Georgia Downtowns* developed a strategic work plan (see Strategic Work Plan, page 6), using the new Georgia Main Street and Office for Development *Work Plan* template. To complete the report, Washington staff will assign budget and funding sources.

CONGRATULATIONS!

This is Washington’s first strategic work plan organized under the new and “refreshed” Main Street Approach. Washington is among a few cities in the state and the nation to undertake this positive initiative.

Main Streets across the nation will be fully implementing this model by the end of 2018.

Washington is ahead of the curve!

WORK PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to organizing and reporting actions identified by meeting participants, *Georgia Downtowns* offers a set of additional recommendations in a comprehensive list (see page 12).



Downtown Washington

2018

Work Plan

(Pullout Section)

Downtown Washington Strategic Work Plan Review Form

2018 Annual Work Plan

Vision Statement
 In 2023, Downtown Washington is a supportive collaborative community, fostering a positive “can do” energy. Residents and visitors are engaged in unique activities and community events. They are taking walking tours, using the dog park, enjoying greenspaces, parks, trails, and a splash pad. They are enjoying art and entertainment. There is access to high-speed internet and to wifi. Buildings are restored and full with a variety of dining and shopping businesses. People, including retirees and growing families, are living in affordable housing; lofts are occupied with residents and businesses, including a craft brewery, gallery, and outfitters. The community has a vibrant hospital that is on sound financial ground and serving all, including the retirement community. Pedestrians are safe because of well-marked crossings. It feels comfortable living in Washington.

Mission Statement
 Washington’s Downtown Development Authority is increasing quality development by driving economic growth while redefining the role of downtown as a crucial element in the continuing health and growth of the broader community.

Transformation (implementation) Strategies

Transformation (implementation) Strategy #1:

Make Downtown a Regional Center for New Businesses and Expansions

Transformation (implementation) Strategy #2:

Enrich the Village Experience for Locals and Visitors

Top Priorities for Year 2018

Status:		Goal(priority) #1
Achieved	In Progress	Stalled
		Recruit Entrepreneurs and Provide System of Support
		Goal(priority) #2
		Residential and Commercial Development and Restoration
		Goal (priority) #3
		Destination Downtown Washington: Activities and Environment

Comments on Goal/Priority Status

Priority One						
Transformation (implementation) Strategy						
Regional Center for New Businesses and Expansions						
Priority Goal:						
Recruit Entrepreneurs and Provide System of Support						
Priority Objective:						
Establishment of one new retail business and one new dining business within two years						
Milestone:						
Ribbon-cutting for each; Grand opening for each						
Status	Task	Responsible Party	Time Line	Budget	Partners and Resources	Four Points
	Identify businesses in similar-sized towns for duplication (models)	Bambi Arnold and board members	January 2018- July 2018		SBDC, Retail Solutions, GDA Conference, Ga Main Street, MEAG	Economic Vitality
	Provide financial and tax incentives Ongoing, as businesses develop	Kelli Eisler Elizabeth Elliott	January 2018- December 2019		Rick at UGA SBDC, Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs	Economic Vitality
	Use market study to identify priority businesses for recruiting – for example, brew pub or outdoor outfitter	Elizabeth Elliott	April 2018 - April 2019		“On the Map” program for data (Tommy Lowmon)	Economic Vitality
	Explore and implement BOOST grant program	Elizabeth Elliott Jim Baston	December 2019		Milledgeville, angel donors	Economic Vitality
	Engage in business training opportunities	Elizabeth Elliott, with board assistance	February 2018- December 2019		UGA SBDC, Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, John Schallert Boot Camp	Economic Vitality
	Hold a downtown open house (four per quarter) as a way to market available buildings to potential business start-ups	Elizabeth Elliott, Tommy Davis Bambi Arnold	February 2018- December 2019		Partner w/property owners, UGA SBDC, City license /permit/inspection staff	Organization, Economic Vitality, Promotion
Partner Involvement						
Agency Name	Primary Contact	Level of Commitment	Synopsis of Activity			
UGA Small Business Development Center	Michael Myers (Athens Office)					
Retail Solutions, Consultant						
Georgia Downtown Association and Conference	Janice Eidson					
Georgia Main Street	Jessica Reynolds					
Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia						
Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs	Grace Fricks					
Milledgeville Main Street and DDA	Carlee Shulte					
Jon Schallert Boot Camp	Jon Schallert					

Priority Two

Transformation (implementation) Strategy:

Regional Center for New Businesses and Expansions

Priority Goal:

Residential and Commercial Development and Restoration

Priority Objective:

One commercial and one residential development and restoration within two years

Milestone:

Signed leases or sales contracts

Status	Task	Responsible Party	Time Line	Budget	Partners and Resources	Four Points
	Identify and prioritize available properties and owners	Elizabeth Elliott	January 2018 – July 2018		Commercial realtors; Consultant	Organization, Economic Vitality
	Find interested investors and developers	Every board member, led by Susan Abramson	January 2018 – January 2020		Georgia Trust; local resources; Joel's list	Economic Vitality, Organization
	Encourage community partnership with Fitzpatrick	Susan, Doug, Buyer	January 2018 – December 2018		UGA MA marketing program intern; Historic Hotels of America	Organization, Promotion, Economic Vitality
	Find buyers for Old Jail and cottages (owned by Mamie Barnett) and the bank-owned buildings: Jockey Club, Cl's Pizza, and Old Southern Scratch	Jim and Debbie	January 2018 – December 2020		Georgia Cities Foundation; DCA Downtown Dev Rev Loan Fund	Economic Vitality
	Research affordable housing for artists	Susan Dave T, Debbie W, Polly F	Present – July 2020		Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village	Economic Vitality
	Conduct housing and market study	Elizabeth Elliott	January 2018 - December 2018		Consultants	Economic Vitality
	Market available properties	Elizabeth Elliott	January 2018 - December 2018		Area realtors, property inventories	Promotion, Organization
	Request tax assessor to reassess historic commercial buildings for realistic values	Elizabeth Elliott, Sherri Bailey	January 2018 – December 2018		City, County, Tax Assessor	Organization, Economic Vitality
Agency Name			Level of Commitment	Synopsis of Activity		
Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation		Mark McDonald				
Georgia Downtowns		Joel Cordle				
UGA MA Marketing Program		Jeanne Taylor				
Historic Hotels of America						
Georgia Cities Foundation		Chris Higdon				
Department of Community Affairs		Cherie Bennett				
Mill Hill: East Macon Arts Village		J.R. Olive				

Priority Three

Transformation (implementation) Strategy: Enrich the Village Experience for Locals and Visitors

Priority Goal: Destination Downtown Washington: Activities and Environment

Priority Objective: Increase tax revenues increase by 5% or more; increase Facebook and website hits by 25% within two-three years

Milestone:

Destination Downtown Washington Day decree						
Status	Task	Responsible Party	Time Line	Budget	Partners and Resources	Four Points
	Apply for a Tourism Product Development grant and build public restrooms	Elizabeth Elliott, Sherri Bailey, Chamber	Present - July 1, 2019		Georgia Department of Economic Development	Organization. Design
	Improve side streets	Sherri Bailey	January 2018-December 2019		Georgia Department of Transportation	Design, Organization
	Improve gateway signage; add bypass signs	Elizabeth Elliott	January 2018-January 2019		Local business sponsors	Design, Organization
	Increase social media followers	Elizabeth lead; all board members and Chamber share and promote	January 2018-January 2019		Include targets: Ga. Trust, UGA, Ga. Regents University, tech colleges	Promotion, Organization
	Streamline marketing tools	Elizabeth Elliott	Present -June 2018		Chamber, GDED Tourism Div. Rep	Promotion, Organization
	Install kiosk				City of Washington	Design, Promotion
	Restore Simpson Parks tennis courts and other aspects of the park, both passive and active	Sherri Bailey	October 2018-December 2019		City of Washington	Organization. Design
	Update Comprehensive Plan to include the planned Fort Washington walking trails, which will lead to historic homes around town	Sherri Bailey	January 2018-January 2019		Regional Commission	Organization
	Research and secure a marketing grant for the website; build Search Engine Optimization; add videos	Elizabeth Elliott	February 2018-December 2019			Organization
	Ask a group, like the John C Campbell Folk School, to conduct a workshop in town	Susan Abramson	January 2018 – December 2022			Organization, Promotion
Agency Name			Primary Contact	Level of Commitment	Synopsis of Activity	
Georgia Department of Economic Development			Cindy Eidson			
Georgia Trust			Mark McDonald			
Washington-Wilkes Chamber of Commerce			John Singleton			
CSRA Regional Commission						
John C. Campbell Folk School			Jerry Jackson			

Main Street Washington Program Monthly Meeting

Date

AGENDA

I. Approve previous month's meeting minutes - ACTION ITEM (5 minutes) – Board Chair

II. Approve financial report – ACTION ITEM (5 minutes) – Board Chair or Treasurer

III. 2017-2018 Strategic Plan Projects

Residential and Commercial Development and Restoration– (action items, tasks, reports) (10-15 minutes)
– Committee Chair

Recruit Entrepreneurs and Provide System of Support – (action items, tasks, reports) (10-15 minutes)
– Committee Chair

Destination Downtown Washington: Activities and Amenities – (action items, tasks, reports) (10-15 minutes)
– Committee Chair

IV. Staff Report (15 minutes) - Director

V. Announcements from Partner Agencies

City of Washington (5 minutes)

Chamber (2 minutes)

Historic Preservation Commission (2 minutes)

VI. Other or New Business

VII. Adjourn

ITEMS FOR YOUR CALENDAR:

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Meetings

End of Work Plan pullout section

RECOMMENDATIONS

Georgia Downtowns highly respects the planning process and the sanctity of the participant-driven visioning process; identifying critical priority issues in a short amount of time is exciting, but difficult work. As facilitators, we seek to move the discussion along, but not drive the process. Our goal is to ensure that everyone is comfortable, engaged, and inspired. This is *your* plan.

Sharing our expertise with clients in a collaborative spirit is part of our mission. During the retreat and in review, we identified specific recommendations that we present as an extension to our service to Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program.



Alone we are smart, but together we are brilliant.

- Stephen Anderson

INTRODUCTION

We applaud board members on taking responsibility for leading the action plans of the priorities and goals in this new strategic plan.

Director Elizabeth Elliott provided an exciting recap of downtown successes from 2017. The Washington Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program's economic impact during that time has been very impressive. It is evident that there is a strong business climate resulting from good partnerships between the board and staff, city leadership, business and property owners.

COMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Washington has an amazing inventory of historic residential, commercial, and institutional architecture. It has a strong brand as a community that preserves and markets its historic assets.

Washington is commended for having developed and sustained a local theatre, music concerts, boutique lodging options, and sidewalk café dining. The town is a pioneer among Georgia communities offering walking tours and house museums. There is a new era of public and private investment in business properties and public infrastructure downtown. There are visible results and a level of energy that is obvious to *Georgia Downtowns* each time the team visits.

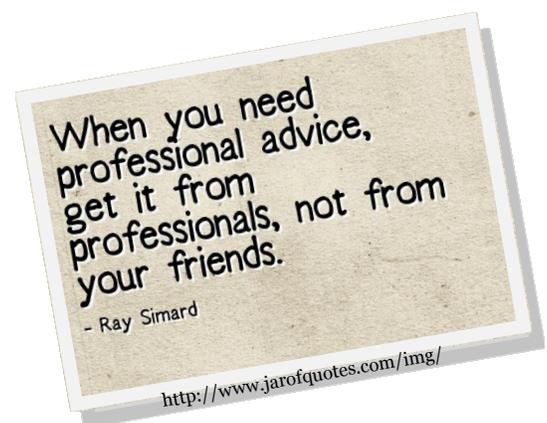
Washington's geographic location makes it a natural choice as a destination for business, an oasis in this rural region. Local leaders and community members are taking initiatives to improve downtown's position as that regional center. Creating this strategic plan and committing to its implementation are critical steps in accomplishing that vision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Business Development

- ◆ There are numerous downtown commercial buildings that have vacant second and third floor spaces, but rather than ignoring them or considering them superfluous, those spaces should be prioritized as wonderful assets that could be outstanding residential spaces (customers for businesses) or locations for professional service businesses or studios.
- ◆ Many local residents requested an adjustment of business hours to permit them to shop and dine downtown, particularly in the evenings after they get home from work. A reasonable schedule to consider could be Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. for retail businesses and 11a.m. until 8 p.m. for restaurants who offer lunch and dinner service.
- ◆ What local businesses qualify as "destination businesses?" Identify those and work with the Tourism Office and those businesses on promotion efforts, while folding in the downtown business community as a whole.

Continued...



RECOMMENDATIONS (...continued)



Business Development (...continued)

- ◆ Consider marketing the Fitzpatrick Hotel (with its great ballroom and adjacent restaurants) for small conventions, trainings, and group meetings. (i.e. Ga. Trust Board or Member meetings, Regional Commission meetings, GMA District meetings, etc.)
- ◆ Coordinate with regional tech schools and high school vocational education to recruit and develop area talent for setting up service businesses that downtown needs (i.e. a barbershop/beard grooming business – a need repeatedly expressed).
- ◆ Invite regional residents who have home businesses or business startup ideas to set up temporary “pop up” businesses in targeted vacant downtown buildings.
- ◆ Find out if any Washington-Wilkes residents are driving to other cities (Athens, Augusta, Thomson, Greensboro, McCormick) to operate or work in retail stores or restaurants. Negotiate with them to open an expansion or a new business in one of downtown’s vacant spaces.
- ◆ Set up an information booth at any high school reunions, family reunions, church homecomings, etc. to promote downtown’s numerous business and housing opportunities. Provide inventories of available buildings and houses for sale or rent. Provide market data for types of businesses that are needed and data about Washington’s business incentives. Appeal to Washington natives to “come back home” and be part of a Washington Renaissance.
- ◆ Until a deal is accomplished, coordinate efforts with current or potential service providers to offer affordable highspeed fiber optic internet service as needed for current and future business operations. This is a priority for many of your current businesses and will be needed for the businesses you want to attract. Is Washington served by the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia’s *Georgia Public Web*?

- ◆ A good option for creating new businesses is reaching out to high school business students (FBLA and youth mentoring) and recruiting emerging graduates from regional colleges, universities, and tech schools. Washington DDA/Main Street can mine these education institutions to bring new graduates for locally grown startup businesses including food and beverage, technology-oriented designers and makers, lodging, and retail.

- ◆ We heard numerous Washington residents say that your strategic geographic location and assets could help you become a regional center for outdoor recreation and related new businesses that could include retail outfitters (fishing, hiking, canoe and kayaking, camping, and biking). This retail outfitters could be a natural fit to promote cooperatively with your local unique lodging businesses.



RECOMMENDATIONS (...continued)



Business Development (...continued)

- ◆ For advertising and promotional purposes, continue building a portfolio of best photographs and videos of iconic, intimate downtown scenes. Show active people enjoying downtown's special places, shopping, dining, and celebrating.
- ◆ Some planning participants expressed interest in setting up a downtown business incubator. We recommend further consideration of this, particularly if a large empty space is available. We also recommend that you consider including multiple types of businesses such as traditional retail, technology, food/beverage/hospitality, and services.

Explore and research a model in downtown Statesboro, Georgia ("City Center") that is operated by the DDA, in cooperation with Georgia Southern University.

- ◆ Higher education partners might be UGA Small Business Development Center, the Georgia Regents University, and Athens Tech. A partner may supply the essential broadband connection to the building. Perhaps the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia's *Georgia Public Web* can serve downtown Washington, or Verizon can serve an incubator with a satellite based hotspot.

Organization

- ◆ To advance and sustain organizational excellence and critical partnerships, the DDA/Main Street Board should include important partnership leaders as ex-officio members who attend DDA/MS board meetings and work together with the board. These partner ex-officio members should include: The Mayor, the City Administrator, the Director of the Chamber/Tourism Agency, and the Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission.



GO, DOWNTOWN WASHINGTON!



APPENDICES

July 25, 2017

The purpose of the Community Input Session was to gather ideas and feedback from local community members, about the future of Downtown Washington. Sponsored by the City of Washington and its Main Street Program and Downtown Development Authority, this community gathering at the Court Livery event space drew over sixty attendees, including Mayor Barnett, City Administrator Sherri Bailey, and several members of the City Council and Development Authority. Those in attendance also included numerous business and property owners, city residents, and community leaders.

Georgia Downtowns, a downtown consulting firm, facilitated the two-hour meeting, along with Elizabeth Elliott, director of the Washington Main Street Program and Downtown Development Authority.

A Vision for Downtown Washington

To begin the input process, participants were asked to consider life in Downtown Washington in the year 2027. The facilitators asked the group: What does a thriving and active Downtown Washington look like?

Specifically, they were asked, *In 2027, when you go to Downtown Washington...*

- *What do you see?*
- *Who do you see?*
- *What are people doing?*

Participants spent several minutes thinking and recording their vision. Next, facilitators recorded their ideas on chart paper and posted them on the walls. Contributors listed the following people, projects, and activities. These items have been grouped into three themes:

- 1) Who do I see?
- 2) What do I see?
- 3.) What are people doing?

In 2027, when I am in downtown Washington, who do I see?

I see the inclusivity of visitors and locals, the old and the young. I see no brain drain as young locals are here and thriving.

What do I see?

I see buildings restored and filled with businesses including new ones like a craft brewery, a bakery, an outdoor outfitters, healthcare and other service businesses. I see outdoor cafes and nightlife. I see a larger visitor center along with good signage and information kiosks. I see a variety of housing options downtown and in the surrounding neighborhoods. I see a restored courthouse, a trolley transporting locals and visitors around town, and a splash park for the youngsters.

What are people doing?

People are being innovative and productive with thriving local businesses. Locals and visitors are spending money shopping and eating at a variety of restaurants. People are gathering together, celebrating and enjoying music and entertainment, and walking. People are enjoying historical tourism programs, and they are coming back to visit again.

Current Assets

Next, participants were asked to identify current assets, those components that presently contribute to today's Downtown Washington vision. Participants described friendly people, socializing in the downtown area and spending their time eating, shopping, playing, and enjoying themselves. They attend outdoor events, like First Friday and use green spaces for walking. Visitors sign up for history walking tours.

Participants also listed several places as assets in Downtown Washington, including:

-
- A unique and historic public library
- Beautiful churches
- Outdoor cafe ordinance
- Second floor vacancies for downtown living or services
- Events
- Theater
- Hospital
- Assisted living
- Music
- House museums
- History brand
- Boutique lodging
- Architecture
- History walking tours

Time did not allow for an exhaustive list of downtown assets. It is clear that Downtown Washington has many assets and, as discussed in the next section, great “bones” for building more.

Opportunities for Downtown Washington

The visioning exercise, as described above, provides participants with a chance to consider the ideal Downtown Washington. How to bring this vision into a reality was the next task. The facilitators asked community participants to discuss how to they might fulfill the vision.

So, rather than ask attendees to list all challenges or obstacles to achieving the Downtown Washington, an exercise that often results in a list of complaints and negative feelings, the facilitators asked participants to empower the community and contemplate the *opportunities*. Specifically, *reflect on the components of the 2027 Downtown Washington vision and think about...*

- *What is needed downtown to make your vision a reality?*
- *What additional assets are needed to make your vision a reality?*
- *What current assets, not listed, are needed to make your vision a reality?*
- *What kinds of partnerships are needed to make your vision a reality?*
- *What can downtown create to meet your vision?*

Each participant spent several minutes thinking and writing down their proposed opportunities. They then shared their ideas with those at their tables. An assigned “recorder” created a group list. Each list was shared with the larger group and posted on chart paper and posted on the walls.

Once everyone’s possible opportunities for realizing Downtown Washington’s vision were posted, participants were asked to prioritize them through voting. They used three stickers to vote for those items they considered to be the most important activities and projects. The facilitators tallied the votes and then reported and discussed the results. Eight themes are presented here. From these, two major themes emerged: *Business Development* and *Marketing and Promotion*.

Two major themes:

Business Development

<u>Item</u>	<u>Votes</u>
• Business development incentives, financing, taxes, grant writing, reduce business fees, utility rates	28
• Open businesses more days and for longer hours	11
• Maintain tourist hours	7
• Affordable internet with higher speeds	5
• Recruit small businesses	5
• Free wi-fi downtown	3
• More events at the Fitzpatrick	1
• Youth mentoring	1

Customer Development, Marketing, and Promotion to Visitors and Locals

<u>Item</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Public restrooms	11
Downtown gateway signage	9
Strategic and consistent advertising, including local, regional and international	6
Marketing kiosk	3
City branding	2
Support local market (buy local)	2

Other themes finish out the list.

Community and Lifestyle for Local Residents

<u>Item</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Dog park at Fort W park	5
Partner with veterans groups	5
Pet friendly town	3
More events at the theater	3
More programs held in green spaces	2
Splash pad	2

Area Development

Item	Votes
Revitalized depot street area	13

Streetscape and Pedestrian Improvement

Item	Votes
Improve streetscape	5
Extend brick sidewalk	4
Develop high school property	3

Regulatory

Item	Votes
Controlled open container for special events	6

Housing

Item	Votes
Mixed housing developments	1
Affordable housing	3

Monthly Festivals

Item	Votes
Monthly festivals	3

Miscellaneous

Item	Votes
Ghost marketing	0
Wayfinding signage	0
Community building	0

Downtown Washington

Work Plan Retreat

City Hall

October 19, 2017

Welcome

Retreat Overview

The Vision: Downtown Washington in 2023

- Painting the picture
- Main Street Model
- Leadership Survey Summary
- Community Input Session

The Plan

- Priority Goals
- Priority Objectives
- Milestones
- Action Steps
- Start and Complete Dates
- Assignments
- ◆ Resources

Existing Projects and Programs

- Supporting activities and events
- Calendar
- Adjustments
- Assignments

Review

- The Vision
- Next Steps

Adjourn

Thank you for your hard work and attention!

Downtown Washington Accomplishments

- Applied for and Received a Georgia Vibrant Communities Grant for 4,800 to purchase equipment to show movies on the square.
- Flower Pots
- REBC Grant Facilitation
- Regained Classic Main Street Status
- Monthly and Annual Report to Georgia Main Street
- Started Monthly Events that will run from March-Oct.
 - 2017 July: Daniel Lee Jackson Revolution
 - 2017 August: Moana
 - 2017 September: The Splitz Band
 - 2017 October: Scare on the Square and Hocus Pocus
- Assist in other events in Downtown throughout the year
- Planning Holiday Events
- Hosted Wednesday on Wheels with Tourism four times this summer
- Established Monthly Business Meetings
- Established and manage Downtown Gift Certificate Program
- Established and manage Façade Grant Program
- Helped update Sign and Alcohol Ordinance.
- Helped facilitate Square improvements (new landscaping, square extension, fountain)
- Organized Community input meeting
- Built and maintain Downtown Washington Website
- Created and maintain Downtown Washington Facebook Page: 945 Followers
- Created and maintain Downtown Washington Instagram
- New business incentive program (soon to be finalized)
- Utility rate revision (soon to be finalized)

Joel Cordle

Principal, Georgia Downtowns
Senior Downtown Development Professional



Prior to founding *Georgia Downtowns*, **Joel Cordle** served 32 years in Main Street management and economic development, city government, and cultural arts programs management.

Joel served ten years as the Executive Director of the Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program for the City of Dahlonega, where he was responsible for the development and implementation of economic development plans based on the preservation of Dahlonega's historic commercial district. His office and he promoted the downtown historic business district, working closely with local owners to retain and expand downtown businesses while assisting others in the establishment of new businesses. Joel worked with Dahlonega's city council, the downtown development authority board members, and agency partners to make downtown a thriving location for small businesses. The Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program received the 2016 *Great American Main Street Award* from the National Main Street Center and the 2010 *Award for Excellence in Downtown Development* from the Georgia Downtown Association.

Before joining the City of Dahlonega staff, Joel served four years as a regional downtown representative for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, where he provided Main Street support to 35 cities throughout the north Georgia region. For 16 years, Joel was the Arts Division Administrator for Athens-Clarke County Government. His major accomplishments included merging city and county arts programs and staff during government consolidation, supervising restoration and expansion of two historic arts facilities – the Morton Theatre and the Lyndon House Arts Center, and establishing successful community music and arts festivals.

Joel's education and training include

- Bachelor's degree in Journalism from the University of Georgia;
- Local Government Management certification from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government; and
- Georgia Downtown Association designation as a Senior Downtown Development Professional.

Joel currently volunteers as a founding board member of the Georgia Pick & Bow Traditional Music School. He has served on the Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Lumpkin County School High School Career Technology & Agricultural Education Advisory Board, and the University of North Georgia's Visual Arts Advisory Council. For many years he served as a board member of the Georgia Assembly of Community Arts Agencies and served as a grants panelist for the Georgia Council for the Arts.

Joel served as the President of the Georgia Downtown Association in 2010.

For more information, please visit the Georgia Downtowns [website](#).



Alice Sampson

Partner, Georgia Downtowns



Alice Sampson is a former professor and director at the University of North Georgia (UNG). Focusing on community engagement, education, and economic development, Alice served North Georgia and the community in several leadership roles.

She founded and directed the Georgia Appalachian Studies Center. For ten years she worked with campus and community partners to garner over a million dollars in grant awards and to complete over 20 economic and education community projects, including leading the production of a professional academic conference.

She also led the university's *Regional Education and Economic Development* project, also known as the *REED* Initiative. Alice produced a series of community meetings held across the state where participants from the public sectors of local and regional governments, schools, and planning agencies discussed and prioritized the most important challenges and opportunities for developing economic drivers in the region. The project led to the production of the *REED* document, which still serves as a guidebook for the University of North Georgia's community economic development strategies.

During her last year at the university, Alice served as the interim Associate Dean for the College of Education.

Alice received her Ph.D. from the University of Georgia. Before that, she taught public school for eight years, during which time she was awarded twice *Oglethorpe County Teacher of the Year* and nominated as a finalist for *Georgia Teacher of the Year*.

Alice is a professionally trained meeting facilitator and process planner. As a lifelong educator, she is passionate about community-building, public input, and local place-making.

When she is not working with downtowns, Alice serves on the Dahlonega Historic Preservation Commission. She can be found photographing the charm of small town living, volunteering in the community, and hanging out in the local coffee shop.



Downtown Washington Leadership Survey

What is Downtown Washington's strongest economic asset?

- Stores, restaurants
- Its accessibility; parking is plentiful and close to the businesses.
- Quality of building stock and second story housing options/opportunities; they create a wonderful atmosphere that endears downtown to residents and visitors.
- The Fitzpatrick has the potential to fuel a major tourist economy.
- A distinct sense of place creating a unique atmosphere; I believe people love experiencing something outside the now "normal" mall, anywhere USA, conformist location.
- The renewed square
- The Square and parking availability
- Hospitality; it can employ many people
- History and small town feel.

What is Downtown Washington's greatest area of economic need?

- Filling store fronts and more foot traffic
- Our side streets off of the square. They tend to be ignored by tourist, residents and leadership.
- Downtown needs thriving businesses filling all spaces. When we are successful drawing people into visiting our city there needs to be enough for them to do to keep them busy and satisfied that the travel time is worth the trouble.
- More retail and filling empty buildings with the right mix of products
- Personal professionals. Hair dressers, barbers, tax accountants, lawyers are good for business.
- Workforce and more new business incentives and a need for new business recruitment.
- It needs more visibility outside the immediate area. We have to draw passerby (on the bypass) into town. Also need to make the access areas more attractive.
- Affordable Housing. There are very few places that younger adults just starting out can afford. If we want to attract more young adults we need to have places for them to live.
- Activities for young people and Teens

Please rank the following district descriptions, ranking highest the best fit for Washington

- Retail 3.89
- Dining 3.89
- Downtown living 3.67
- Entertainment 3.56
- Arts 3.00
- Tech start-up 3.00

What is the greatest strength of your board and organization? Why?

- Long time members who can inform us of past mistakes and successes
- Our love for the City of Washington and our ability to work together to achieve common goals. Without that we will not be able to achieve anything.
- Working together for a common goal. We have a small group so sometimes easier to agree
- We have access to funds and grants to inspire the downtown property owners to get involved in the community
- Vision

What is the greatest need of your board and organization? Why?

A clear plan to bring development experience into town

Working and engaged board members. Elizabeth shouldn't have to do everything by herself

Active participation of board members

A source of additional funding, whether it be local fundraising, grant money, or private money for obvious reasons.

Staying on target

We need a more inspired Board. Board members need to work until completion on projects

Support of other boards and community

What are the two greatest opportunities your board and organization should consider as top priorities?

- More marketing for downtown
- Branding and signage that make Washington instantly recognizable and relatable
- Marketing the Fitzpatrick as a sound financial investment
- Play on our history and make Washington a place people want to experience.
- Recruitment of a distillery or brewery
- Open storefront that quality businesses can locate in and potential second story living spaces.
- Improving building appearances
- Getting abandoned buildings on the square that are owned by the bank to be bought and restored
- Recruiting new business for open store fronts
- Recruitment of an outdoor outfitter
- Assistance to property owners to make our downtown more attractive
- Finding entrepreneurs who will invest in Washington by bringing new businesses.
- Filling empty buildings
- Trolley for tours and city transportation
- Renewed community enthusiasm about downtown. We need to engage with the community to achieve our goals.
- Public Restrooms
- Getting land owners to be involved in the town's resurgence

Please share additional questions, ideas, or concerns you may have

- Our Main Street director, Chamber, and City are doing a great job - keep it up!
- We need to focus on the positive as a business community and work together. If there is an issue we need to address it among ourselves. Airing grievances in the public eye only harms all goals we are trying to accomplish. We also need to stop looking at what worked in the past and concentrate on solutions for the future.
- I think it is vital that we create a cohesive facade redevelopment plan of action
- The opportunity to lead Washington's growth should always be in keeping with the Main Street objectives. Whatever we do should add to, not detract, from Washington's character.
- How do we stay focused?
- I think the city council makes the DDA's job more difficult. They are not an encouraging group to work with.
- Really need downtown businesses to work together and not fight amongst themselves.

Washington Work Plan Priorities

Identify a development partner and get them into town

Business recruitment and current business support

Implementing and beginning an action plan to restore and redevelop just one vacant property

Getting downtown buildings out of the hands of the banks

Recruiting new business

Rehab of a derelict building, to make it an asset to downtown instead of a detriment

Setting in place a working marketing plan to find a qualified buyer for the Fitz

Determine businesses needed to locate in Downtown

Trying to help fill vacancies

Continue to work on getting small businesses into town

Helping existing business to grow

Find additional funding

More events and promotions to get more people downtown

Trolley for tours and citywide transportation

Public Restrooms (2)

Potential Partners

Get names of developers from other towns and the Main St folks

Wilkes County Payroll Development Authority & Chamber of Commerce

Dan McRae

Wilkes County

Private investors

Parks and Recreation

Continued...

Economic Development
Private developer
The state main street program
Local civic clubs
Grants
County Government
Tourism
Civic Organizations
Department of Community Affairs & SBDC
City leadership
SBDC
County
Private Citizens
Downtown Merchants Association
Chamber

Potential Resources

State programs for rehabbing buildings and starting new economic development projects
Federal tax credits
Looking at other comparable communities and finding ideas
State grants
City of Washington/ County/ Chamber Members
Donations of time
Business database at Augusta SBDC
Farmers and merchants
DCA
Private investors
PDA
People power
University of Georgia
Contract with firm for new business recruitment

