

# ***Macon-Bibb County Vision for the Future***

## **Results and Recommendations** from the ***Community Questionnaire and Visual Preference Survey™***

*Sponsored by the  
Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission*

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*Our Comprehensive Planning Process*  
Macon-Bibb County Planning and Zoning Commission



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**Appendix A: Results of the VPS**

**Appendix B: Results of the Questionnaire**

*The Visual Preference Survey and the Community Questionnaire that were administered in Macon – Bibb County respond directly to the new planning standards set forth by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.*

**Macon – Bibb County** has embarked on a revision to its Comprehensive Plan. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs has promulgated a set of rules and minimum standards and procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning. According to Chapter 110 -12 – 1 - .04 (a) 4, **Minimum Standards Applicable to Planning Levels**, five Goals and Objectives have been set for the Quality Community Objectives which relate directly to the results of the Visual Preference Survey and the Demographic, Market and Policy Questionnaire conducted in Macon – Bibb County over the past two years. These objectives will be directly referenced in the recommendations included in this report.

In Section 2 of the *Rules of Georgia Department of Community Affairs Chapter 110-12-1 Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning*, **Additional Requirements for Intermediate and Advanced Planning Levels**, it states that a Vision for the Future must be developed.

Section (i) states that:

*Community Vision. The Vision for the Future of the Community must be supported by a Community Goals and Implementation Program. The Community Vision is intended to portray a complete picture of what the community desires to become.*

*(I) The Vision must be based on public input, the assessment of current and future needs, and coordination with other elements of the plan. The Vision should generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of the community.*

*(III) The Vision must include pictures, illustrations and/or a complete description of the development pattern to be encouraged within the jurisdiction, including clear identification of areas to be developed, areas to remain as open space or rural lands, and areas where mixed-use development and similar pedestrian-friendly forms of development will be encouraged.*

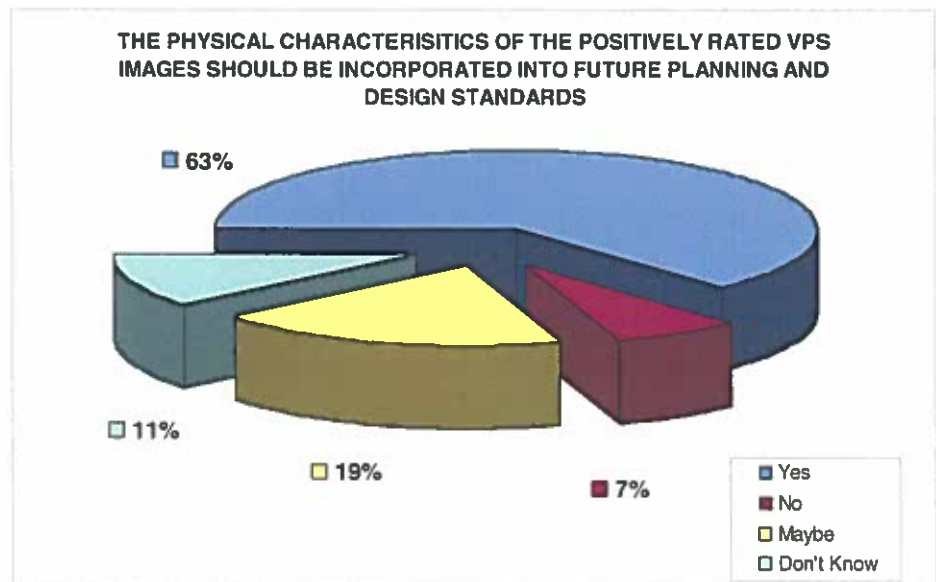
Under Section 3. Additional Recommendations (i) Community Vision, (I),i, Traditional Forms of Development, it states:

*(I) Traditional Forms of Development. The Community Vision should also identify the traditional styles of development within the community (architecture, street layout, lot size etc. and indicate how these traditional styles will be encouraged in new development.*

*(II) Community Character. Local governments should articulate a vision of the future physical appearance of the Community as a part of the comprehensive plan, using pictures, illustrations. Development of such a vision may utilize a "visual preference survey" of citizens opinions to identify the preferred types, styles, and pattern of development.*

**Development of such a vision may utilize a "visual preference survey" of citizens' opinions to identify the preferred types, styles, and patterns of development.**

**63% of the participants in the Macon-Bibb Visual Preference survey told us that the physical characteristics of the positively rated images should be incorporated into future planning and design standards**





## ***Visual Preference Survey***

The Visual Preference Survey™ (VPS) and accompanying questionnaire are a unique planning and urban design tool developed by A. Nelessen Associates, Inc., to help Macon-Bibb County envision and plan for its future. It is a process by which the people who make up this community have become the planners and designers for their future and the future of their unique community.

*Successful  
communities  
have one thing  
in common –  
a vision of  
where they  
want to go.*

The Macon-Bibb County VPS was commissioned for and uniquely developed to be applied to the City of Macon and Bibb County. The results provide guidance for the future Comprehensive Plan and redevelopment plans in Bibb County's urban, suburban and rural areas for the next twenty years. It is a critical guiding document, with images that can be directly incorporated into any future zoning recommendations. The VPS is typically the first step in the planning process; it garners public input and participation to make plans both more democratic and market-responsive.

The recommendations from this survey are generated from a careful analysis of the image results and image content, as well as the experience of hundreds of these surveys in other locations with similar issues. This survey is the culmination of nearly three years of work which was begun in 2000. The VPS was conducted in two versions – a 80 image "short version" and a 160 image "long version", with images selected to represent existing and potential conditions which could be found in Bibb County's urban, suburban and rural areas, and simulated images based on images of existing conditions. A total of 1279 respondents participated in the Visual Preference Survey. 845 people took the 80 image "short version" while 434 people took the 160 image "long version" survey.

A review of the highest and lowest rated images reveals the types of development and improvement that should be either encouraged or likewise avoided in the City of Macon and Bibb County. Policy recommendations were drawn from an analysis of all image results and the questionnaire and provide a range of options for the future.

The survey results are based on the principle that the higher the numerical rating, the more appropriate its characteristics for urban, suburban and rural areas in Macon and Bibb County, and therefore for Bibb County's future health and prosperity. Conversely, the more negative an image, the more damaging its characteristics for future prosperity.

Negative and inappropriate image characteristics inevitably reduce the potential economic value and quality of life of the places they depict. The negative images show the opportunity and direction for major redevelopment, including condemnation and rebuilding. The more negative the image value, the greater the need and potential for redevelopment. Positive images help provide the vision for future development.

Ideally, the entire perceptual experience of all areas of Macon and Bibb County should be positive, that is, as you walk or drive through the County the total experience should be rated above +1 to be considered a successful place. Spaces that engender values between -1 and +1 should be avoided as they represent the middle ground compromise and places of mediocre quality. No negative images should be allowed to remain, or be built in the future, if a municipality wishes to achieve the goal of improved quality of life and economic vitality.

Responses from the Visual Preference Survey™ and community questionnaire provide an understanding of what the community envisions as appropriate for their future. These images should guide the direction of future Master Plans or Redevelopment Plans. They are recommended as illustrations for the goals and objectives of various plans, as examples of potential development options and recommendations, but most importantly can be used to prepare specific engineering, design and construction documents and can be used as illustration in a zoning ordinance.

It is critical to remember that the downtown of Macon has the existing infrastructure and therefore the most potential to absorb new growth. If areas in the downtown are given a negative rating, there is less market appeal and the downward spiral of deterioration and marginalization will likely continue.

To reverse this trend, the positive or potentially positive types of spaces should be created and marketed. This is critical to the future of the Downtown. It is also critical that zoning encourage growth in a traditional downtown pattern with mixed-use buildings with a focus on housing. Many of the simulated mixed-use images in the survey rated highly, an indication that this type of development is desirable.

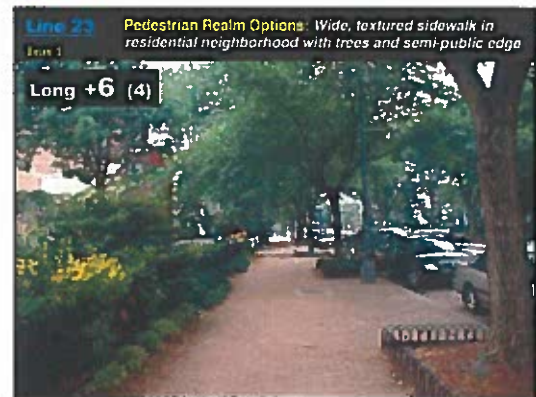
*Negative images  
have the greatest  
potential value.*

*Positive images  
have the greatest  
market value.*

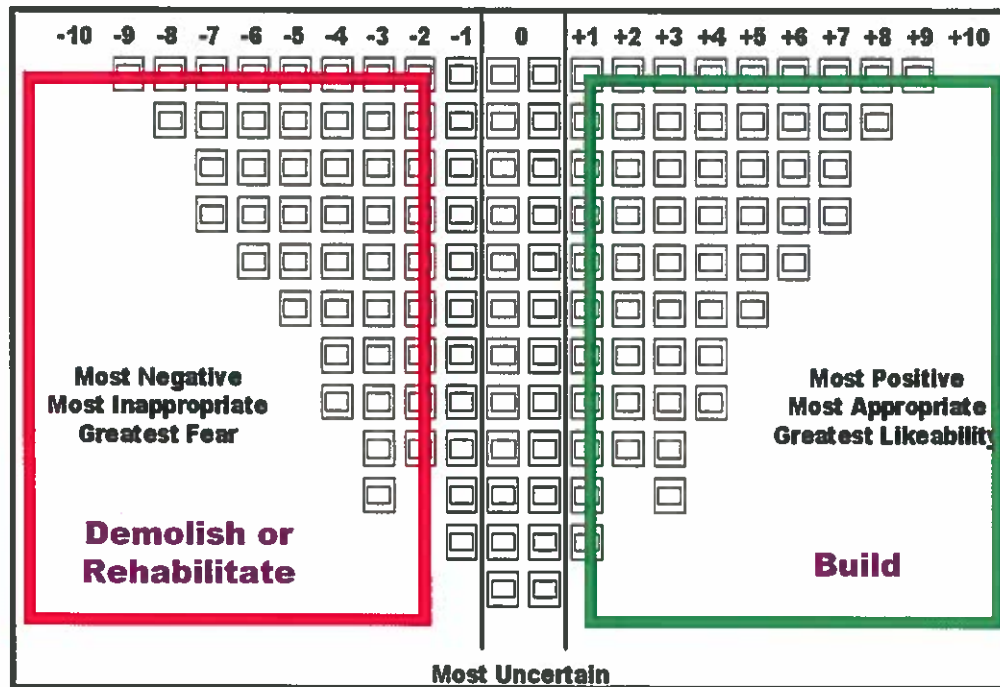
The intensity of negative or positive reactions to the various images provides direction for future planning, zoning, development, and redevelopment. Images which received the highest positive ratings in a single category were reviewed and awarded the highest priority.

Images were evaluated using two values, the mean ( average) value of an image and the standard deviation, a measure of the range of opinion values. The mean and standard deviation of each image is found in the black box in the upper left corner of each image. Images which appeared in both the long and short versions of the VPS have the individual scores separated from the overall score as well. The lower the standard deviation from the mean, the greater the agreement between participants as to value of the image. Images with high values and low standard deviation provide clear direction for the future. The most critical and problematic are images with values that fall between the  $-1$  and  $+1$  value. Typically these are the most mediocre and compromised places.

**Each image was rated from between +10 to -10 based on the question, "How appropriate or inappropriate is the image you are seeing for urban, suburban or rural areas of Macon and Bibb County?"**



The grid is a 10x10 array of cards. The top row of cards is numbered 1 to 100. The grid is divided into three main sections: 'NEGATIVE' (cards 1-50), '0' (cards 51-55), and 'POSITIVE' (cards 56-100). The 'NEGATIVE' section is further divided into 'Less appropriate' (cards 1-25) and 'More Appropriate' (cards 26-50). The '0' section is also divided into 'Less appropriate' (cards 51-55) and 'More Appropriate' (cards 56-55). The 'POSITIVE' section is divided into 'Less appropriate' (cards 56-75) and 'More Appropriate' (cards 76-100).



Images can be divided into three main categories:

Category One: Values ranging from +2 to +10

Positive images indicate places that people think are the most appropriate and desirable. The greater the positive value given to an image the more appropriate for Macon and Bibb County. Implementation of the positive images will enhance the marketability and desirability of Macon and Bibb County. Elements in this category should be included in a Master Plan and zoning code.

Category Two: Values ranging from -1 to +1

This category represents the most mediocre of results. The typical response is that this is: "as good as we can expect" or "better than what was there". Images in this category can go positive or negative depending on how much attention is given to them.

Category Three: Values below -1

Negative images create a feeling of depression and lack of hope. They also provide the greatest opportunity for increases in value. If the places they represent are appropriately redeveloped, as shown in the positive images, significant changes in the character of both Macon and Bibb County will occur.



The images in a Visual Preference Survey are selected to illustrate conceptual ideas. The images are not selected as representations of specific proposals for specific places. The Visual Preference Survey is created to help participants image what may be possible rather than to raise false expectations within a community.

The survey images used in the Macon – Bibb County VPS represent three potential development areas – **Downtown Urban Areas, Neighborhood Areas and Rural/Suburban Areas.** Each of these development options have been divided in the seven categories below

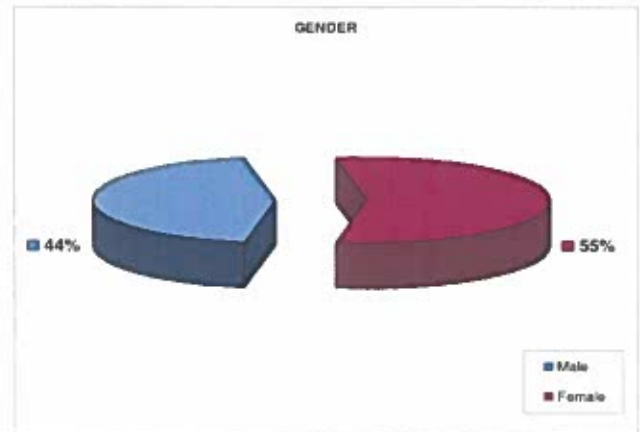
**The seven categories include:**

- **Street Types & Character**
- **Development Options –**  
*(Retail, Offices, Civic, Industrial-Manufacturing Residential)*
- **Pedestrian Realm**
- **Parks & Open Space**
- **Parking Options**
- **Signs**
- **Mobility & Transportation Options**

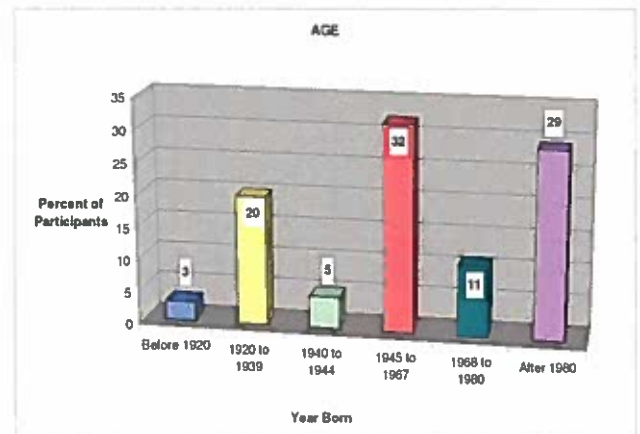
**Testing and evaluating all the images in each of these inter-related categories provides for a more specific set of recommendations.**

## Demographic Profile

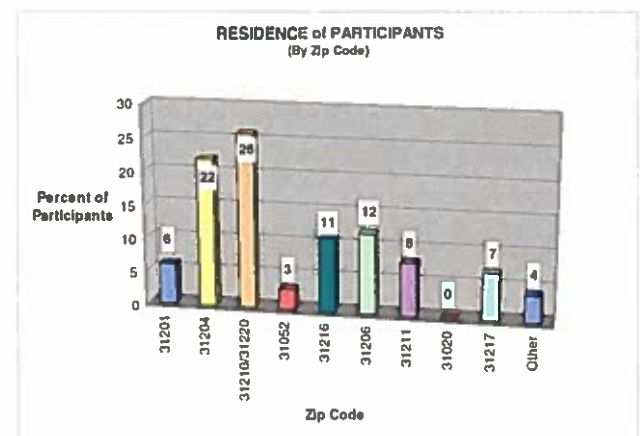
Of the 1279 people who participated in the Macon-Bibb County Visual Preference Survey, a slight majority at 56% were female, while 44% were male.



The distribution of age was fairly large in the Macon-Bibb County VPS. The largest group of VPS participants at 32%, were born between 1945 and 1967, making the Baby Boom generation the largest contributor to the survey. The second largest group at 29% were born after 1980 while the third largest group at 20% were born between 1920 and 1939.

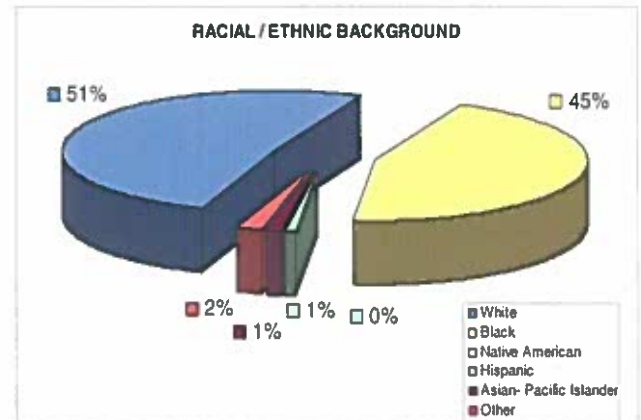


The geographic distribution of where participants live within Bibb County was also fairly spread out. The largest group of participants in the VPS at 26%, were from either the 31210 or 31220 Zip Codes. 22% of participants were from the 31204 Zip Code, 12% were from the 31206 Zip Code, while 11% were from the 31216 Zip Code. 24% were from other Zip Codes around Bibb County while only 4% were from areas not identified on the survey.

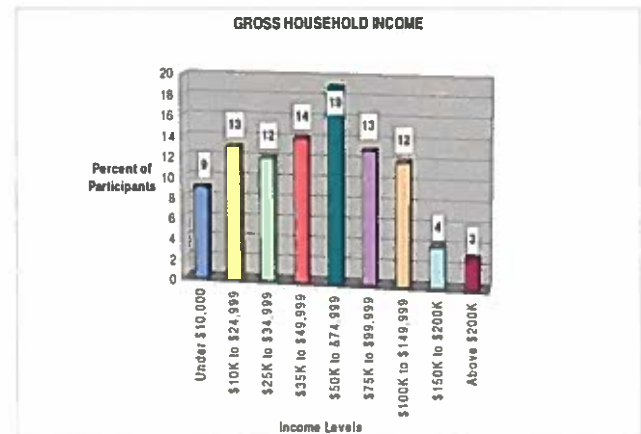


## Demographic Profile

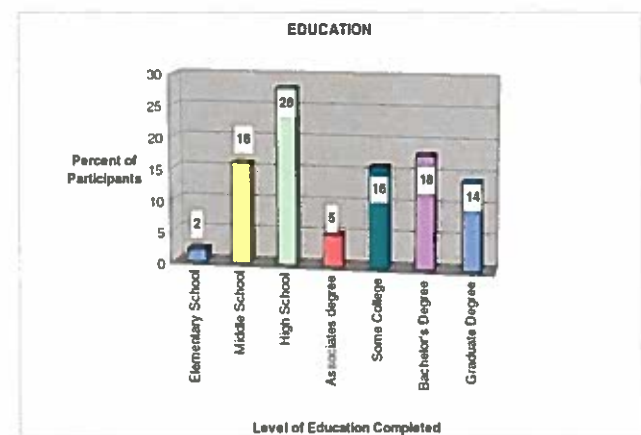
The distribution of ethnicity in the VPS followed the ethnic distribution of Macon and Bibb County in the 2000 Census. Whites made up a slight majority of the VPS at 51%. Blacks made up 45% of the VPS, while 4% of the survey was made up of American Indian, Asian, or Other ethnicities. Hispanics are the only ethnic group not represented in the survey.



The distribution of income in the VPS was well spread out. The largest group of VPS participants at 19%, were from households with incomes between \$50,000 and \$74,999. Participants with incomes of \$35,000 to \$49,999 made up 14% of the survey while incomes of \$75,000 and \$99,999 and 10,000 to \$24,999 were 13%. Incomes of \$25,000 to \$34,999 and \$100,000 to \$149,999 were both 12% of the survey. Only 9% of the survey has income below \$10,000.



The largest group in the VPS at 28% have completed high school. 32% of the participants in the survey have either a bachelors degree or graduate degree. Participants who have either completed some college or have earned an associates or technical degree made up 21% of the survey. While 16% of participants have completed middle or junior high school, only 2% of participants have not advanced in school beyond elementary school.



## Demographic Profile

Of the 1,279 people who participated in the Macon-Bibb County Visual Preference Survey, 50% identified as “interested citizen” while 24% identified as “student”, the future generation that will inherit the plan.

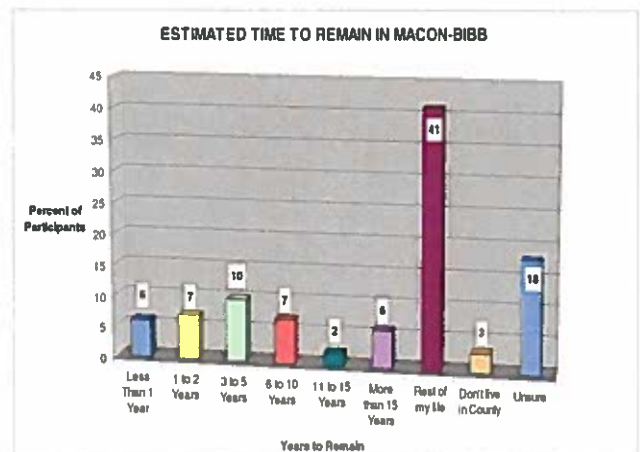
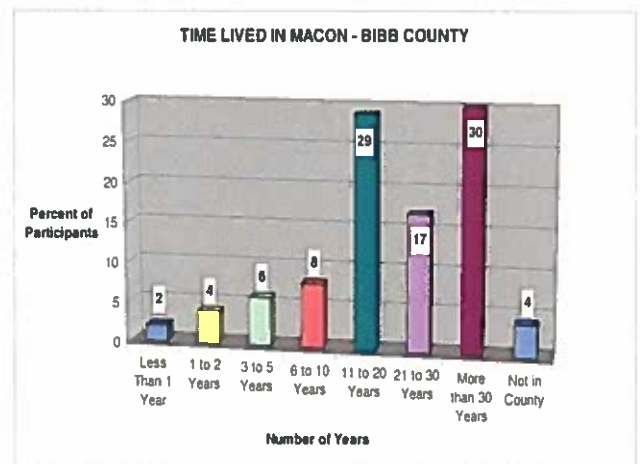
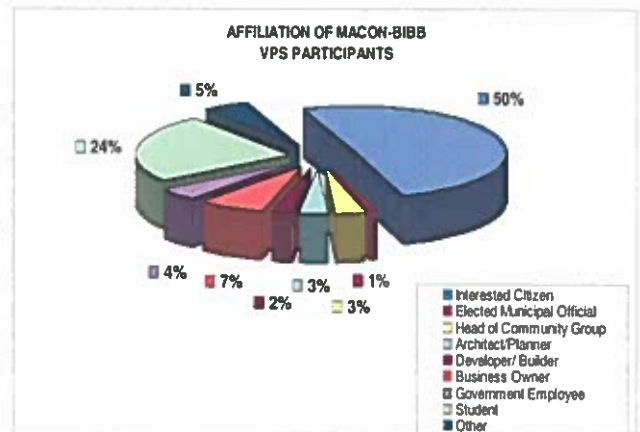
Participants working in the “retail/service” sector made up 28% of the survey. While 15% work in a field not listed in the survey, 15% were unemployed at the time of the survey. Professionals made up 14% of the survey while those in government and education made up 11% and 10% of the survey, respectively.

Participants in the VPS who have lived in Bibb County for over 30 years made up the largest group at 30%. At 29%, participants living in Bibb County for 11 to 20 years made up the second largest group while at 17%, those who have lived in Bibb County for 21 to 30 years made up the third largest group.

As the single most important reason for residing in Bibb County, 64% of participants indicated having family located in the area.

While the largest group in the VPS have lived in the county for more than 30 years, by far the largest group at 41% intends to live in Bibb County for the rest of their lives. 18% are unsure how much longer they will live in the county while 10% intend to live in Bibb County for 3 to 5 more years.

While 77% of participants currently live in single family houses, 52% would prefer to live in single family houses in 10 years while 14% would prefer to live in a condominium.





**POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

***Principal Policy Recommendations for Macon – Bibb County, as determined from the results of this visioning process:***

- 1. Map and document existing conditions of the region in a Existing Conditions Map and Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Develop and adopt Design Plans for redevelopment of Downtown Macon, its adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding suburban developments*
- 3. Develop a Street Regulating Plan for Downtown Macon, its surrounding neighborhoods, suburban developments and rural areas. The Street Regulating Plan must include street sections and figure ground plans with other design standards for all streets in the region*
- 4. Locate and develop a new Street Network for future development in rural and suburban residential and commercial areas in Bibb County as a pro-active planning effort*
- 5. Redevelopment and infill should be primarily Mixed-Use buildings at a higher density of development*
- 6. Establish design standards and guidelines to ensure uniformity of the pedestrian realm in the Downtown, neighborhood centers and residential areas and suburban rural developments*
- 7. Parks and open space should be integrated into a continuous pedestrian realm which connects the Downtown with adjacent neighborhoods and surrounding suburban development and rural open space/parks*
- 8. Establish strict design standards for commercial signage throughout the region*
- 9. Provide a range of mobility alternatives to Macon and Bibb County residents*

Section 1  
***Downtown Macon***

## Downtown Macon

Downtown Macon serves as the historic center of Bibb County. 34% of survey participants come to Downtown Macon one or two times per week while 29% only come to Downtown a few times per month. 25% of participants in the survey come to Downtown Macon daily. Only 2% indicate they never come to Downtown Macon.

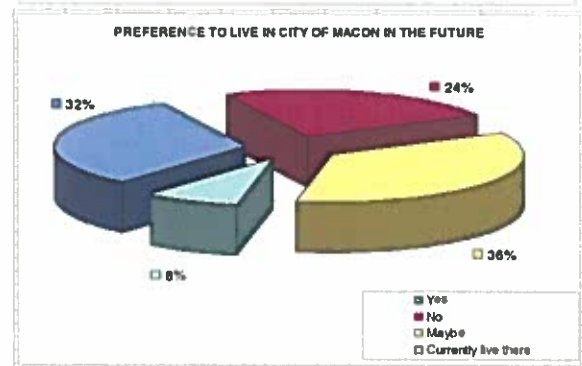
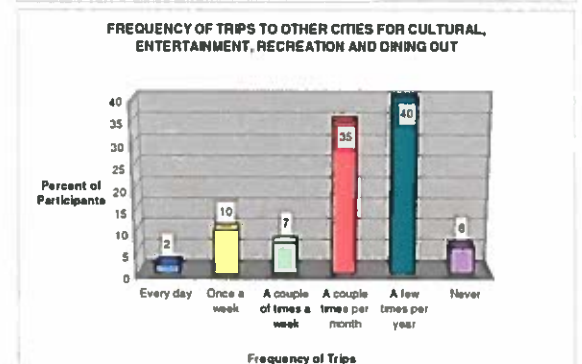
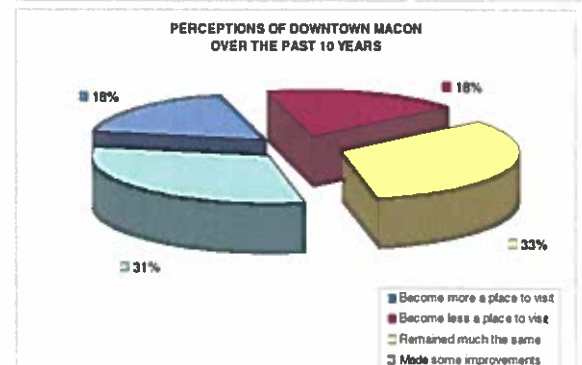
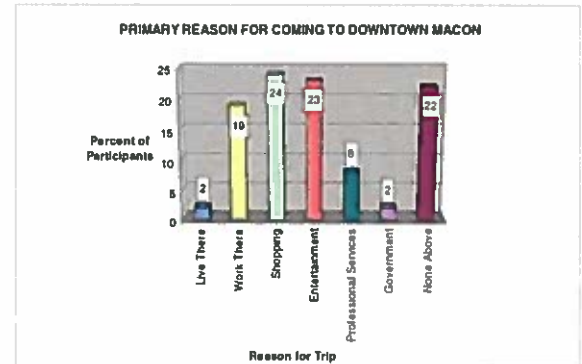
Among participants who visit downtown, the two most popular reasons participants gave for coming to Downtown Macon include Shopping, at 24%, and Entertainment, at 23%. 19% of participants come because they work in Downtown Macon while 22% of participants come to Downtown Macon for reasons other than those listed on the survey.

Only 5% of survey participants are merchants or own a business in Downtown Macon.

In the past ten years, 33% of participants feel that the character of downtown Macon has remained much the same. 31% of participants feel that there have been some improvements in the downtown and will visit occasionally. 18% of participants indicated that in the last ten years downtown Macon has become more of a place they want to visit while 18% indicated that in the last 10 years the downtown has become less of a place they want to visit.

Indicating the need for new and revitalized facilities in the downtown, 19% of participants go to other cities for their cultural, entertainment and recreational activities at least once a week while 75% of participants go to other cities from a few times per year to a couple of times per month. Only 6% never go to other cities for their leisure time activities.

Underscoring the need for revitalization of Downtown, 36% of participants were undecided whether they would live Downtown sometime in the future, while 32% indicated they would live Downtown. 24% of participants would not live Downtown in the future.



## **POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Downtown Macon must become the heart of the Bibb County and the region**

**Major development must be encouraged in Downtown Macon**

**All surface parking lots, single story buildings and under-utilized buildings must be redeveloped**

### ***Principal Policy Recommendations for Downtown Macon:***

- 1. Map and document existing conditions in a Existing Conditions Map and Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Develop and adopt an Urban Design Plan for the redevelopment of Downtown Macon*
- 3. Develop a Street Regulating Plan to include street sections and figure ground plans with other standards for all streets in the Downtown*
- 4. Redevelopment and infill should be primarily Mixed-Use buildings at a higher density of development*
- 5. Establish design standards and guidelines to ensure uniformity of the pedestrian realm in the Downtown*
- 6. Parks should be integrated into a continuous pedestrian realm within the Downtown that links to all Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods and suburban areas. Parks must be well-maintained*
- 7. Develop a phased plan to address and redevelop all marginal parking areas in the Downtown. On-street parking should be provided along with other well designed parking alternatives, such as*
- 8. Establish strict design standards for Downtown signage*
- 9. Provide a range of mobility alternatives to Macon and Bibb County residents*



## **POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Downtown must improve its attractiveness to improve the capture rate of customers. It is missing a significant market segment.

There is an insufficient number and quality of improvements in the character and uses in Downtown. The Downtown Development and Improvement District must redouble its effort to capture additional retail, cultural and entertainment venues as well as improve the physical and spatial character of the Downtown.

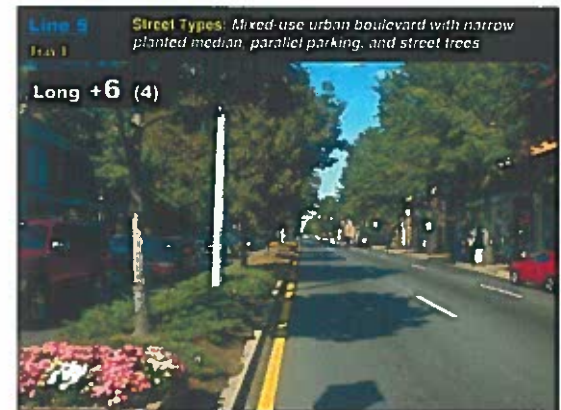
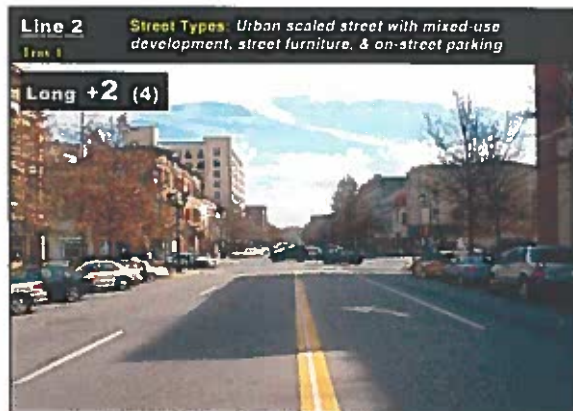
All surface parking lots must be filled with buildings and a program of streetscape improvements must be implemented.

The following pages make specific recommendations for those urban design guidelines and policy recommendations that must be implemented for Downtown.

## **Downtown Macon Street Types**

Streets form a community's most important public spaces. Both the initial and overall impressions of place are highly influenced by the perceived character of its streets.

The positive images from the Downtown Street category all represent visually attractive streets with integrated streetscape features including medians landscaped with trees and planted beds, on-street parking, pedestrian scaled lighting, street furniture and street trees. Streets without these features were valued negatively. Of critical importance is a continuous and engaging street wall composed of separate but complementing buildings with interesting and transparent ground floor retail floors.



## ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

*Downtown Streets should include the following characteristics including:*

- *lined with street trees*
- *narrow median where possible, heavily landscaped with street trees and planted beds*
- *infill mixed-use buildings*
- *on-street parking, diagonal and parallel*
- *pedestrian amenities including crosswalks, lighting and furniture*
- *buildings built up to the sidewalk edge*
- *continuous and interesting street wall of separate but complementing buildings*

## **Downtown Macon Street Types**

The negative images from the Downtown Street category all represent streets that have marginalized buildings fronts, blank facades, poorly designed, vacant or deteriorated building walls, breaks in the building street-wall – typically where there were previously buildings at the sidewalk edge and now are parking lots, few if any streetscape features like trees, pedestrian scaled lighting deteriorated sidewalks and curbs or street furniture. Streets without these features were valued negatively. These streets are not attractive for the pedestrian or the driver. They generate depression and fear thereby are avoided by both the driver and pedestrian. In a downtown, any street that exhibits any of these qualities are detrimental to market development. Because actual market value for these properties is relatively low, unless they are held for speculation, formal acquisition should be initiated through redevelopment.



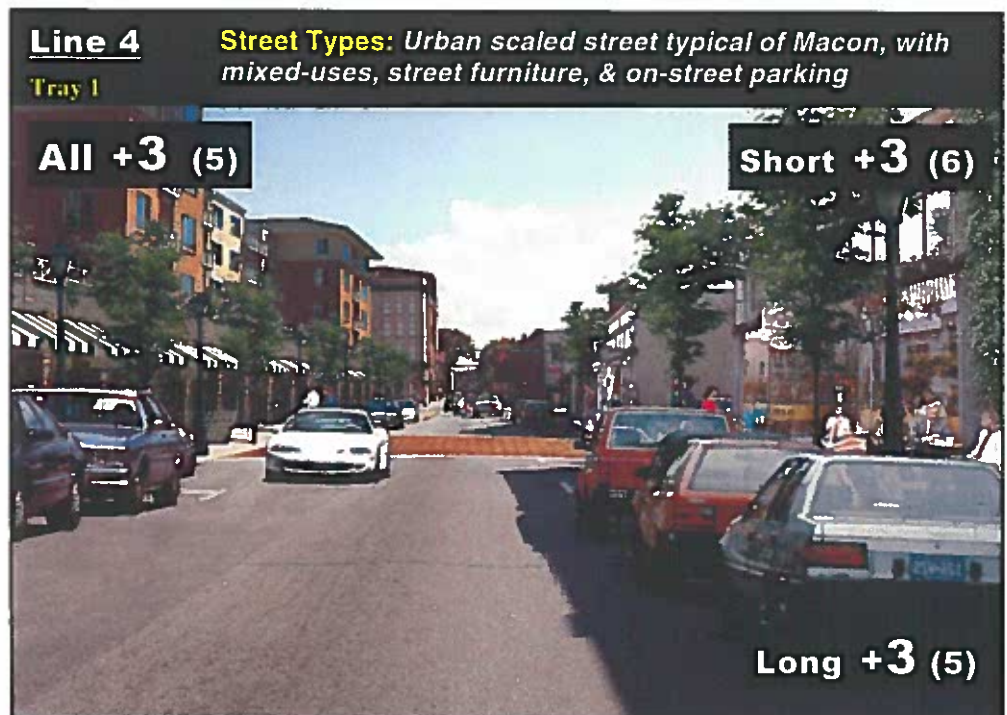
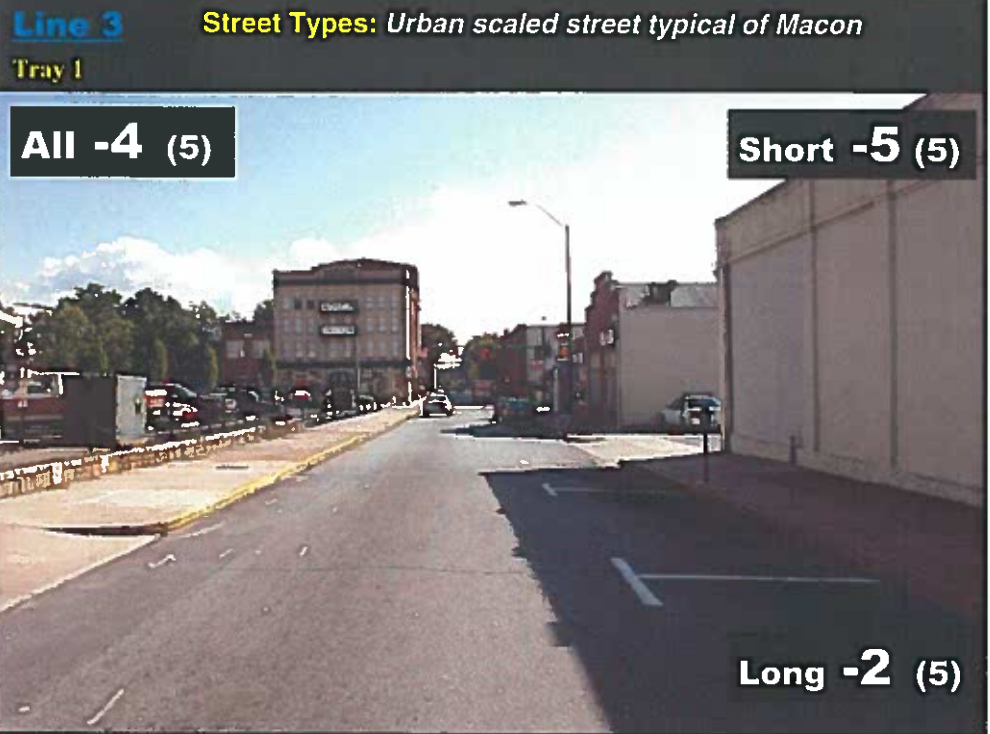
### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

- 1. Map and document all vacant properties, deteriorated or marginalized buildings in a Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Develop a phased plan to remove and redevelop all surface parking lots through a shared parking policy or integrated internal parking*
- 3. Develop and adopt an Urban Design Plan for the redevelopment of all surface parking lots, marginalized and/or deteriorated buildings and those not meeting the full potential of the site and downtown*
- 4. Develop, adopt and implement streetscape and façade improvements*
- 5. Develop an implementation and financing strategic including tax incentives and BID*



The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a typical downtown street. The large change from negative to positive image represents a visual summary of the design qualities necessary to improve and enhance downtown

Improve all downtown streets to the standards seen in the positive images.



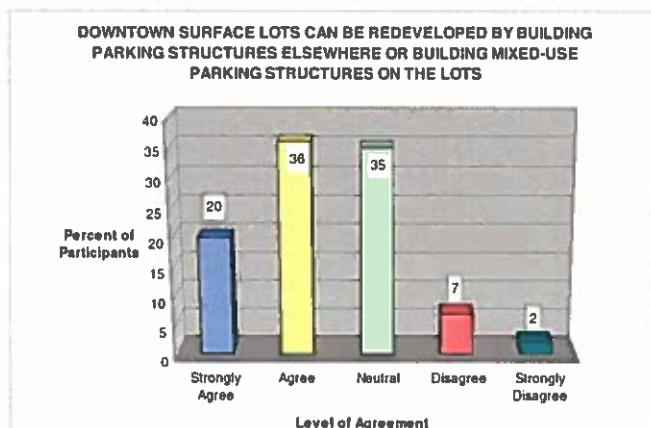
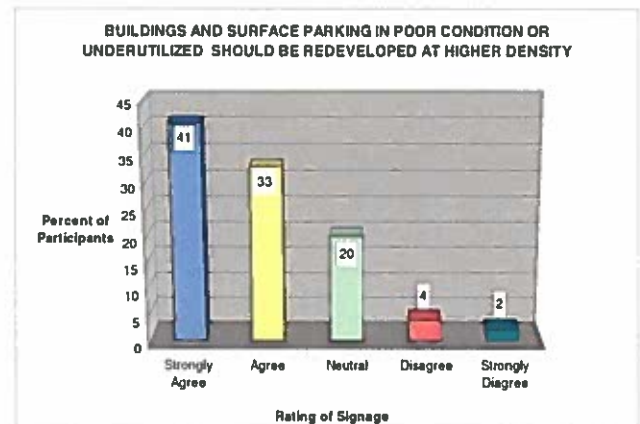


# ***Downtown Macon*** **Development Options**

## **Downtown Macon Commercial Development**

As a component of the *Development Options in Downtown Macon* category, participants were asked to identify policy and design alternatives relating to commercial and residential development which they considered appropriate for Downtown Macon.

Of participants in the survey, 74% either agreed or strongly agreed that buildings and surface parking in downtown Macon which is in poor condition or underutilized should be redeveloped at higher density. 20% of participants were neutral while 6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



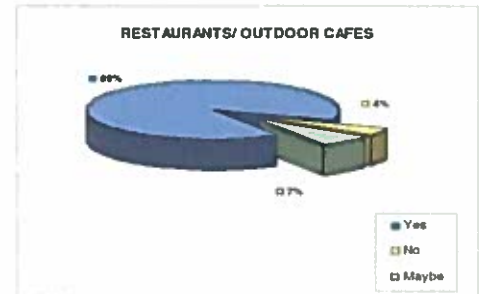
A slight majority of participants in the survey, 56%, either agreed or strongly agreed that downtown surface lots can be redeveloped by building parking structures elsewhere or by building mixed-use parking structures on the existing lots. 35% of participants were neutral while 9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Mixed-use parking structures would have ground floor retail uses with parking on the floors above.

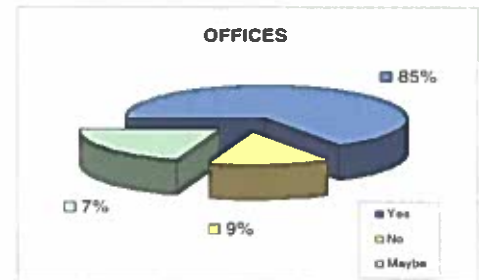
## **Downtown Macon Commercial Development**

Participants were asked to consider the appropriateness of a number of development options for Downtown Macon. The top preferred development options from the survey considered appropriate for Downtown are discussed below.

As the most highly regarded development option, *Restaurants and Outdoor Cafes* are considered appropriate as a development option for Downtown Macon by 89% of participants. Only 4% considered restaurants and outdoor cafes inappropriate for future development.



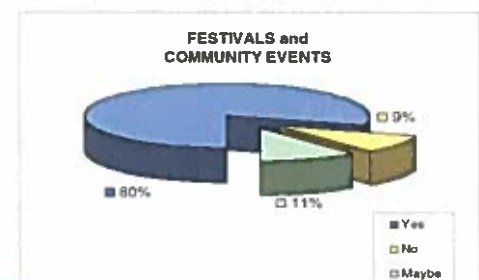
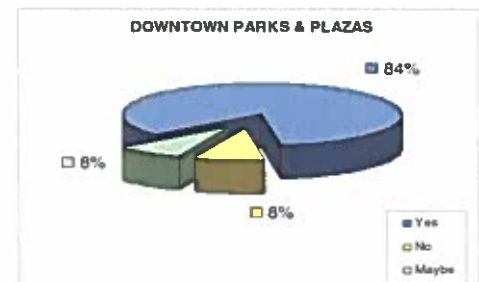
The second highest regarded development option considered appropriate for Macon was *Office Space*, considered appropriate as a development option by 85% of participants. 9% of participants considered office space to be inappropriate for future development.



The third highest regarded development option considered appropriate for Macon was *Downtown Parks and Plazas*, considered appropriate as a development option by 84% of participants. Only 8% of participants considered this category to be inappropriate for future development. Parks and plazas traditionally serve as integral public meeting spaces and help contribute to a sense of community.



Tied as the forth highest regarded development options considered appropriate for Macon were *Additional Streetscape Improvements* and *Festivals and Community Events*, both considered appropriate as a development option by 80% of participants. 8% of participants considered Additional Streetscape Improvements to be an inappropriate option for future development while 9% considered Festivals and Community Events to be inappropriate.



## **Downtown Macon Commercial Development**

The remainder of the development options presented by the survey for Downtown Macon were all favored by a majority of participants. However, the percentage of participants who favored these options was significantly lower than those presented on the previous page.

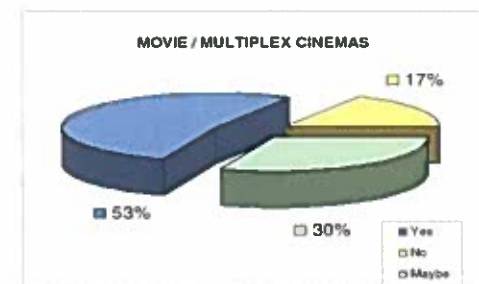
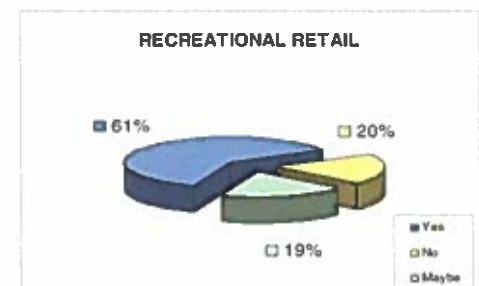
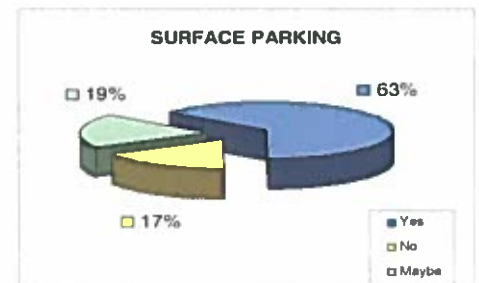
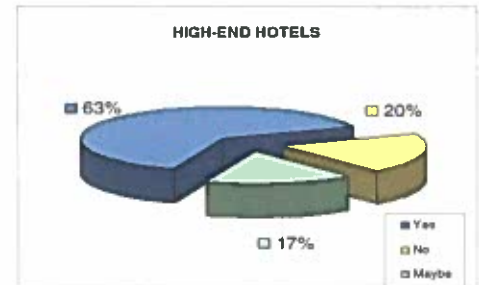
Tied as the fifth most highly regarded development options considered appropriate for Downtown Macon were *High-End Hotels* and *Surface Parking*, both considered appropriate as development options by 63% of participants.

While 17% considered *Surface Parking* as inappropriate for future development, 20% considered *High-end Hotels* as inappropriate.

As the sixth highest regarded development option considered appropriate for Macon was *Category Retail*, considered appropriate as a development option by 62% of participants. 18% of participants considered *Category Retail* to be inappropriate for future development.

As a development option considered for Downtown Macon, 61% of participants considered *Recreational Retail* appropriate for Macon. 20% of participants considered *Recreational Retail* to be inappropriate for future development.

The final development option considered for Downtown Macon, *Movie / Multiplex Cinemas*, was considered appropriate by 53% of participants. While 17% of participants considered *Movie / Multiplex Cinemas* to be inappropriate for future development, 30% of participants were undecided.





## **Downtown Macon Commercial Development**

The images from the Downtown Commercial Development category all rated positively. They represent visually attractive development characteristics with integrated features including mixed-use buildings, a three to six story street wall, 25 to 30 ft wide building bay modulation, pedestrian realm amenities including wide sidewalks and continuous awnings, large and engaging display windows, on street parking and street trees. However, the images which have fewer of these characteristics were valued less positively.



### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

*Downtown Commercial Development should include the following characteristics:*

- *buildings built up to the sidewalk edge*
- *infill mixed-use buildings*
- *retail frontage with large display windows*
- *pedestrian shelter in the form of continuous awnings*
- *lined with street trees*
- *on-street parking, diagonal and parallel*
- *pedestrian amenities including lighting and furniture*
- *3 to 6 story height*
- *masonry with 25 to 30 foot bays*
- *40 to 60 percent of the façade is transparent*
- *articulated cornice lines*

## **Downtown Macon Residential Development**

The positively rated images from the Downtown Residential Development category all represent visually attractive development characteristics with integrated features including two to three story masonry buildings, ground floors raised above grade, pedestrian realm amenities including a semi-public edge between the sidewalk and the front yard, narrow setbacks, no garages on the front façade, (parking in rear or off and alley), defined individual entrances, on street parking and street trees. Remember that 32% of the survey indicated they would live in downtown. The more housing that could be built in and within walking distance of downtown the better. The images which have fewer of these characteristics were valued less positively.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Downtown Residential Development should include the following characteristics:*

- *redevelopment should be at a higher density*
- *Single use residential should range from 2 to 4 stories*
- *the redevelopment plan should be heavily weighed towards residential*
- *infill mixed-use buildings with retail and/or services on the ground floor to provide a range of housing types and sizes to accommodate young professionals and retiring baby boomers*
- *a semi-public edge must separate urban housing from sidewalks*
- *all parking under buildings, in rear lots accessed from residential lanes*
- *residential streets lined with street trees and appropriate street lighting*



## **Downtown Macon Residential Development**

The negative images from the Downtown Residential category all represent buildings that are or appear to be vacant or are in some state of deterioration, walls and yards that are unkempt. There are few if any positive streetscape features like pedestrian scaled lighting, some lack sidewalks and the necessary semi-public edge. Deteriorated sidewalks and curbs, over grown trees and garbage in the street and even abandoned cars are the final negative elements. These buildings, unless they are historically relevant, should be either demolished or where possible rehabilitated. If people live in these buildings every consideration should be given to their relocation. These type of spaces and buildings generate depression and fear. In other locations around the country where conditions like this exist, through the VPS the community process has recommended that they be demolished and the areas held in urban forests until there is market pressure for rebuilding.



### ***Development Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

- 1. Map and document all vacant structures, deteriorated or marginalized commercial and residential buildings in a Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Developed a phased plan to remove and redevelop all marginalized and/or deteriorated housing and commercial buildings in Downtown Macon. Until there is market demand, plant the sites to create an "urban forest" (trees planted in a strict grid pattern) while preserving the right-of-ways for streets and sidewalks.*
- 3. Develop and adopt an Urban Design Plan for the inevitable redevelopment of all marginalized and/or deteriorated commercial and residential properties not meeting the full potential of Downtown Macon.*

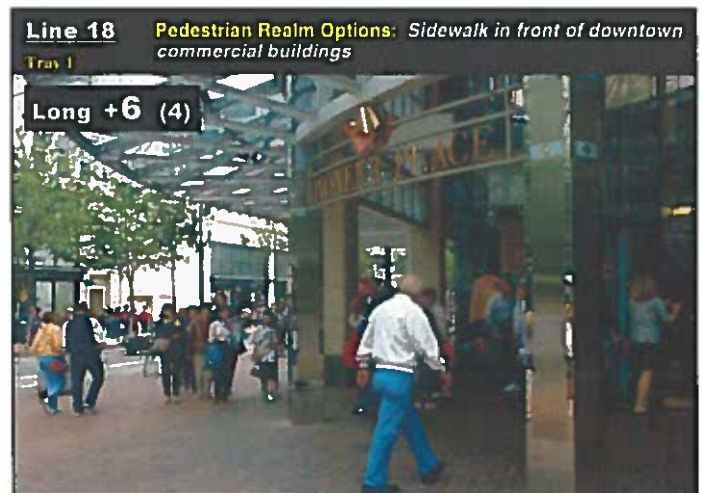
# ***Downtown Macon***

## **Pedestrian Realm Options**



## **Downtown Macon Pedestrian Realm**

The positively rated images from the Downtown Pedestrian Realm category all represent visually attractive places and paths where pedestrians want to walk. The fundamental measure of any downtown is the number of pedestrians on the sidewalks. Typically the larger number of pedestrians the more successful the downtown. The characteristics in these images are appropriate for sidewalks in Downtown Macon. Features found in these highly rated images relate to both commercial and civic uses as well as to residential uses. These features include wide well maintained sidewalks in commercial areas, textured crosswalks, continuous awnings for protection, street trees and street furniture, and pedestrian scaled lighting. The emphasis on "green" is apparent. In residential images, highly valued features include wide sidewalks, street trees and a semi-public edge such as fencing, or hedging. Pedestrian Realms which have fewer of these commercial and residential characteristics, or in which desirable characteristics are not well-coordinated, were valued less positively.



## **Downtown Macon Pedestrian Realm**



### **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Downtown Pedestrian Realm should include the following characteristics:*

- *sidewalks wide enough to accommodate projected pedestrian traffic*
- *commercial buildings built up to the sidewalk edge*
- *design guidelines to ensure uniformity of realm*
- *pedestrian furniture such as benches, trash baskets, planters, etc.*
- *street trees and on-street parking to provide protection*
- *continuous awnings in commercial areas to provide protection*
- *semi-public edge treatments such as fencing or hedging in residential areas*
- *pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures*
- *textured crosswalks*

This negative image from the Downtown Pedestrian Realm category represents pedestrian realm features which are not acceptable for Downtown Macon. This pedestrian realm is characterized by marginalized, poorly designed, vacant or deteriorated building walls, open parking lots, chain link fences, deteriorated and narrow sidewalks, lack of trees and pedestrian furniture. Pedestrian realms of this nature are valued negatively and are not attractive for the pedestrian or the driver. They generate depression and fear and thereby are avoided by pedestrians. In a downtown, any pedestrian realm which exhibits any of these qualities is a deterrent to mental health and future market development and should be ameliorated. Combined with open surface parking, the sites become ideal opportunities for redevelopment.





### Downtown Macon Pedestrian Realm

**The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a pedestrian realm in downtown Macon. The large change from the highly negative “before” image to the positive image represents a visual summary of the design qualities necessary to improve and enhance the pedestrian realm in the downtown.**



*Improve any pedestrian realm in Downtown Macon to the standards seen in the positive images from the VPS.*



# ***Downtown Macon***

## **Parks & Open Space Options**



## **Downtown Macon Parks & Open Space**

Among the highest rated images in the Visual Preference Survey, the positively rated images from the Downtown Parks and Open Spaces category all represent visually attractive “open space and park” characteristics considered appropriate for Downtown. Regardless of whether these images depict parks in Lines 28 and 29 or a plaza in Line 27, features of these highly valued open spaces include wide, textured walkways, pedestrian furniture and pedestrian edges, significant open green space and trees, and pedestrian scaled lighting. Greening of the downtown in the form of park, street trees, plazas, river walks have proven to be one of the most important design elements in “selling” returning to downtown to the typical suburbanite. Creating a “green” experience” downtown is critical in revitalization. The experience must be continuous.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Downtown Parks and Open Space should include the following characteristics:*

- *a range of parks and plazas must be provided in Downtown*
- *these parks and plazas must be designed to be part of the everyday experience not just a special event.*
- *parks and plazas must include pedestrian furniture and pedestrian scaled lighting*
- *walkways should be wide enough to accommodate several persons abreast*
- *parks should be integrated with and be part of a continuous pedestrian realm*
- *trees and parks should be well maintained*

# ***Downtown Macon***

## **Parking Options**

Parking in Downtown is a necessity, however, surface parking lots utilize a large amount of potentially valuable land. Open parking lots in a downtown are parasitical and must be considered as land banks. They rob the city of valuable resources that have higher and better uses. Finding acceptable alternatives for large on-grade surface lots presents a challenge in a car-oriented environment where downtown was forced to compete with sprawl. This has been a mistake of immense proportions.

The positively rated images from the Downtown Parking category represent visually attractive parking alternatives which are considered appropriate for Downtown Macon. Desirable parking features found in these images include screened parking decks, parking decks, diagonal on-street parking and mixed-use parking structures with ground floor retail and parking on the above levels.

The value of these highly rated images is supported by 74% of participants who support redevelopment of surface parking lots at higher density and 56% of participants who support redevelopment of surface lots by locating parking structures elsewhere or building mixed-use parking structures.

### Downtown Macon Parking Options



**The images above are a “before and after” simulation of parking alternatives in downtown Macon. Both of these images received positive ratings indicating their appropriateness for Downtown. The screened parking, however, was regarded slightly higher than the existing parking deck. These positive images, along with the two images above, represent a visual summary of the design qualities necessary to improve and enhance parking alternatives in the downtown.**



## **Downtown Macon Parking Options**

The images in the Downtown Parking category which did not include screened parking decks, parking decks, diagonal on-street parking and mixed-use parking structures were valued less positively. In some cases they received low positive values which represents a rationalization for the parking lot. The more positive the value the harder it will be to redevelop this parking lot given the "suburbanization" mentality. The longer these parking lots remain as open parking lots the more difficult it will be to revitalize the downtown. Clearly the land is more valuable for parking than building, a clear indication of decline.

Existing surface parking in Downtown received a very low positive value, indicating that participants are divided regarding the appropriateness of these parking lots. However, as discussed previously, 63% of participants support additional surface parking lots in Downtown. Marginalized parking fronting retail was valued negatively, indicating the need to ameliorate these conditions in Downtown. Only the most egregious violation of the pedestrian realm, where cars are parking on the sidewalk, received a negative score. Based on the survey, parking downtown will be one of the most contentious planning issues.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

### **Downtown Parking**

- map and document all surface parking lots and marginalized parking in a Susceptibility to Change Map.
- determine utilization over time and the destination of users
- develop a phased plan to redevelop all marginalized parking in Downtown Macon
- develop mixed use residential and office building prototypes for the incorporation of parking into the base, half levels and in mixed use predominantly parking buildings
- on-street parallel or diagonal parking provided on all downtown streets
- mixed-use parking structures encouraged as replacement for surface lots
- parking decks should be screened or constructed to hide the building type
- aggressive parking enforcement if parked on sidewalks
- All surface parking lots must be landscaped, with one tree for every 4 parking spaces and with edge screening



# ***Downtown Macon***

## **Signage Options**

## **Downtown Macon Signage Options**

Commercial signage plays a significant factor in the urban landscape and the marketing of downtown.

The positively rated images in the Downtown Signage category represent visually attractive signage alternatives which are considered appropriate for Downtown Macon. Characteristics of signage found in these images include appropriately scaled signs to the retail frontage, signage located on awnings, small hanging signs, and small signs mounted flush to the building front.

These signage characteristics are more appropriate for urban centers than monument style and large scaled commercial signage.



## ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

### ***Downtown Signage***

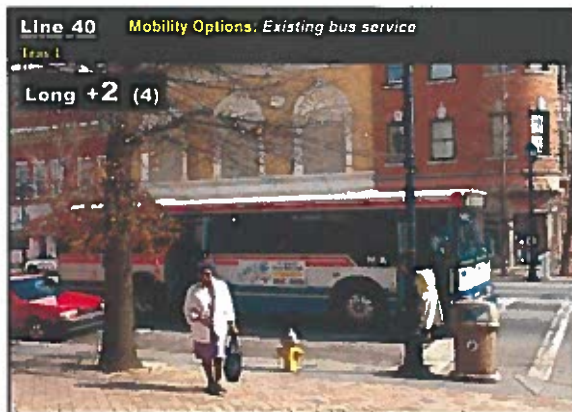
- *establish design standards for Downtown signage*
- *include awning, window, transom and small hanging signs.*
- *Coordinate signage with the architecture of the buildings*
- *Keep the signing predominantly pedestrian in scale.*
- *strict control of lighting and color*

# ***Downtown Macon***

## **Mobility Options**

## **Downtown Macon Mobility Options**

Providing mobility alternatives to Macon – Bibb County residents for travel to, from and around Downtown is a necessity. The positive images from the Downtown Mobility category represent mobility characteristics considered appropriate for Downtown Macon. Participants consider any public transit alternative but favor “decorative” buses over light rail transit or standard buses as the most visually appropriate mobility option.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

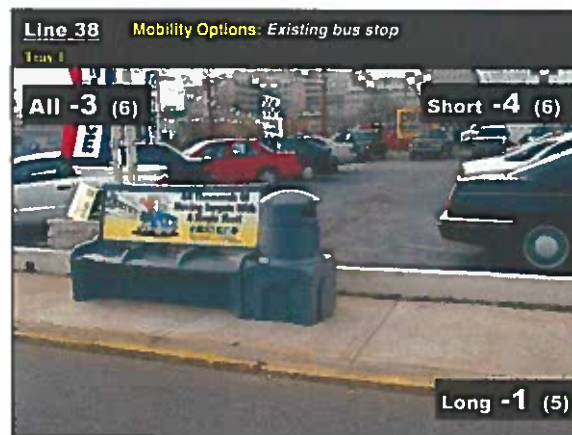
### **Downtown Mobility**

- *conduct a transportation needs assessment study and develop a transportation plan to address future transportation needs as redevelopment occurs*
- *map population centers and population density to determine the most efficient and most heavily utilized transit routes to the Downtown*
- *map pedestrian “sheds”*
- *reassess if the bus stops are serving existing and future concentrations of pedestrians*
- *consider different modes of transportation other than line haul. Other options include on-demand transit or on-demand limo.*
- *Insure that bus stops are coterminous with the most positive pedestrian realms*
- *Consider new design of new bus stops coordinated with street furniture*



**Downtown Macon**  
**Mobility Options**

This negative image from the Downtown Mobility category represents mobility features which are not acceptable for Downtown Macon. Mobility in this image is characterized by marginalized public transit bus service and automotive use. As an example of an urban bus stop, this stop lacks pedestrian amenities such as adequate shelter and lighting. The “low cost” plastic bench and trash receptacle offer no protection from passing traffic. Mobility alternatives of this nature are valued negatively and reinforce negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding transit mobility and users. Negative images discourage transit ridership.

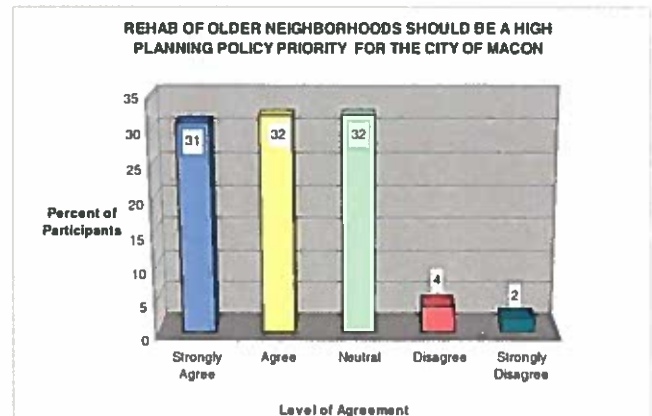


Section 2

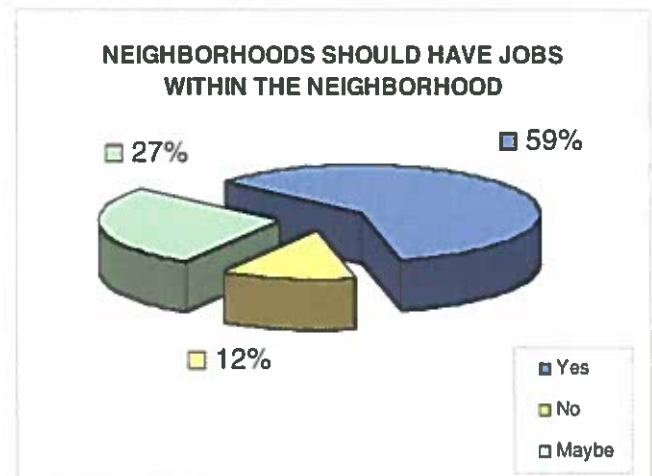
# ***Neighborhoods***

Traditional neighborhoods have a range of housing types, are primarily residential, have a core with retail serviced by a transit stop, ideally have a neighborhood school within walking distance and have a perimeter defined as a five minute walk from the center. The neighborhoods surrounding downtown areas traditionally serve as the primary consumer support for the downtown area. Positive functional neighborhoods are vital to a positive downtown. The neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon are no exception. Their future vitality as well as the future vitality of Downtown is dependent on continued and interdependent investment.

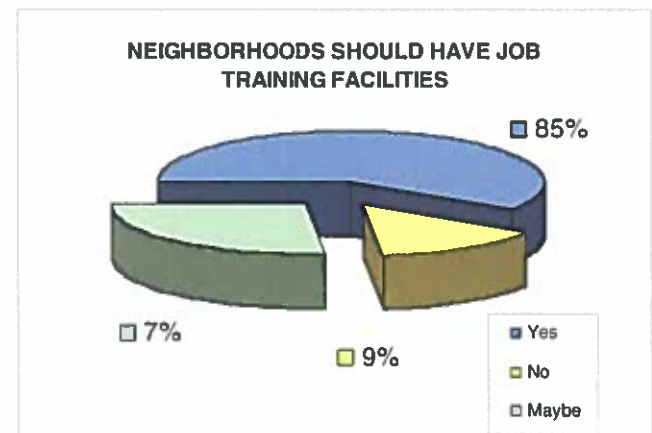
The value of older neighborhoods is understood by the majority of participants. A total of 63% of participants either agreed (32%) or strongly agreed (31%) that the rehabilitation of older neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown should be a high planning policy priority for the city of Macon. 32% of participants were undecided while 6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that rehabilitation should be a planning priority.



Understanding the importance of employment opportunities for the continued vitality of neighborhoods, 59% of participants agreed that older neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon should have jobs located within the neighborhood. While 12% of participants did not think that neighborhoods should have jobs within the neighborhood, 27% of participants were undecided.



Job training facilities are integral towards contributing to a well-trained work force for regional and local job pools. Related to the importance of employment opportunities for the continued vitality of neighborhoods, job training facilities located within neighborhoods was considered appropriate by 85% of participants. 9% of participants did not think that neighborhoods should have job training facilities while 7% were undecided.



## **POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Neighborhoods in Bibb County must be delineated from one another. The location and borders of every neighborhood within the city needs to be shown. Neighborhoods must not be confused with a subdivision of single uses. Each neighborhood must have a defined size, have a center and have access to a range of uses. The maximum size of a neighborhood is defined as a five minute walk from the center or a maximum radius of 1,500 feet.

The deficiencies in each neighborhood should be graphically notated.

Areas that cannot be defined as neighborhoods should also be shown and policies for their reconstitution as neighborhoods should be developed.

Design standards in this section relate to the areas within the neighborhood designations

### ***Principal Policy Recommendations for Neighborhoods:***

- 1. Map and document existing conditions in a Existing Conditions Map and Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Develop and adopt an Urban Design Plan for redevelopment of Neighborhood residential and commercial areas in Macon and Bibb County*
- 3. Prepare a Street Regulating Plan to include sections and figure ground plans with other standards for all commercial and residential streets*
- 4. Commercial redevelopment and infill should be Mixed-Use buildings at a higher density of development*
- 5. Establish design standards and guidelines to ensure uniformity of the pedestrian realm in neighborhood commercial centers and residential areas*
- 6. Parks should be integrated into a continuous pedestrian realm that connects to the Downtown and rural areas. Parks must be well-maintained*
- 7. Establish strict design standards for commercial signage in neighborhood centers*
- 8. Provide a range of mobility alternatives to Macon – Bibb County residents*



# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Street Options**

## Neighborhoods Street Options

Streets form a community's most important public spaces. Both the initial and overall impressions of place are highly influenced by the perceived character of its streets.

The positive images from the Neighborhood Street category represent visually attractive streets of both residential and commercial characteristics, although residential streets received the higher values.

Several preferred characteristics of residential streets emerge from these images. Residential streets are narrower, (28ft optimum) have street trees and sidewalks on both sides and are well maintained. While not as highly regarded, positive neighborhood commercial street images include on-street parking, mixed-use buildings and street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, street furniture and street trees.

Streets without these features were either valued as neutral or valued negatively.



### Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

**Neighborhood Residential Streets should include the following characteristics:**

- narrow with a 28 foot cart way
- lined with street trees in the tree planting terrace
- sidewalks along both sides of street
- on street parking and street curbs
- traffic calming where possible

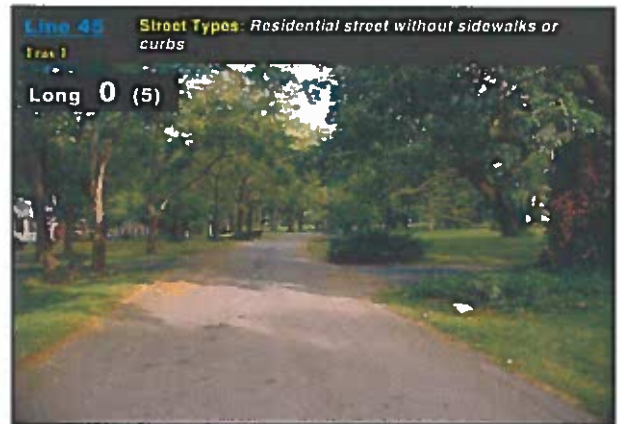
**Neighborhood Center Streets should include the following characteristics:**

- lined with street trees
- infill mixed-use buildings in neighborhood centers
- on-street parking, diagonal and parallel
- pedestrian amenities including crosswalks, lighting and furniture
- buildings built up to the sidewalk edge

## **Neighborhoods** **Street Options**

Neutral and negative images in the Neighborhood Street category represent streets considered inappropriate for older neighborhoods in Bibb County. The residential streets with a very narrow "rural" character without curbing and sidewalks are considered inappropriate for neighborhoods. Commercial neighborhood streets that received negative images include overly wide streets, creating a "sea of blacktop", marginalized and poorly designed commercial buildings fronted by surface parking,

with few streetscape features like trees and pedestrian scaled lighting. The proportions of the street do not create proper enclosure. Negative valued places are places to which people do not want to go and therefore are used primarily for convenience. They are not appropriate for neighborhood centers and are missing an opportunity to generate additional customers. In a neighborhood or neighborhood center, streets that exhibit any of these qualities deter future market development.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

- 1. Map and document all residential and commercial street sizes, sections and conditions, vacant properties, deteriorated or marginalized buildings in a Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Develop a phased improvement plan to provide curbs, sidewalks and street trees along all residential streets in neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown*
- 3. Develop and adopt a phased Urban Design Plan that locates all neighborhood centers and then prepare a plan for the redevelopment of all marginalized and/or deteriorated buildings, and those not meeting their full potential*
- 4. Develop, adopt and implement street and streetscape standards*
- 5. Prepare a Street Regulating Plan to include sections and figure ground plans with other standards for all streets*



## **Neighborhoods** **Street Options**

**The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a neighborhood center street. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve and enhance neighborhood center streets in Bibb County.**

**Line 44** **Street Types:** Wide major road through neighborhood

Tray 1

**All -1 (6)**

**Short -2 (6)**



**Long +1 (5)**

*Standards to improve streets in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon can be seen in the positive images from the VPS. By completing both sides of the street, similar to the left side of the image, the value of the image on the right would have been much higher. Even half a project is better than as is.*

**Line 50** **Street Types:** Wide major road through neighborhood center with streetscape features and parking added

Tray 1

**All +2 (5)**

**Short +1 (6)**



**Long +3 (4)**

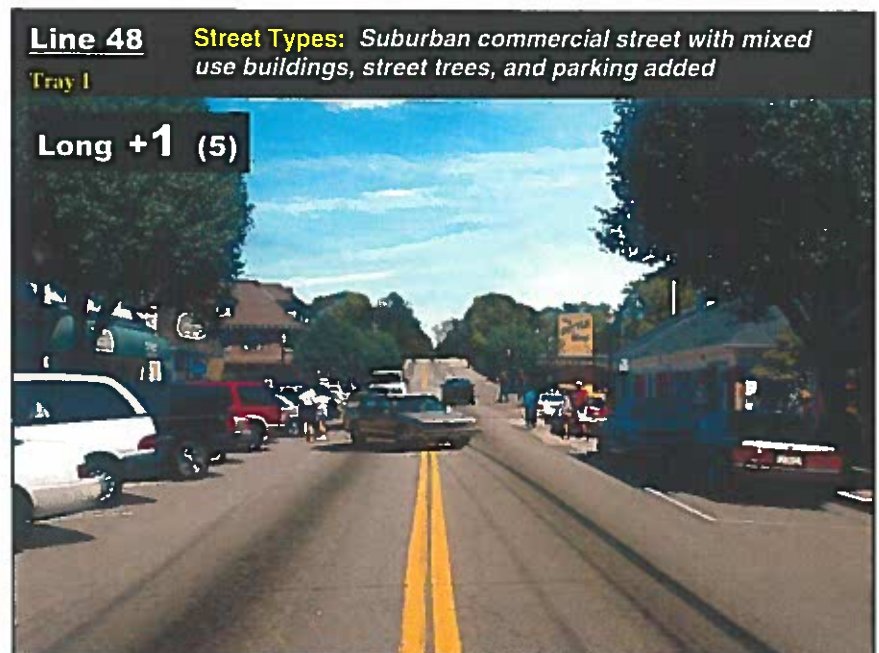


## Neighborhoods Street Options

**The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a neighborhood center street. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve and enhance neighborhood center streets in Bibb County.**



*Standards to improve streets in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon can also be seen in this image from the VPS. It is an improvement to the existing image but is still not highly rated. Clearly, design features are missing that people would like to see incorporated at this location.*



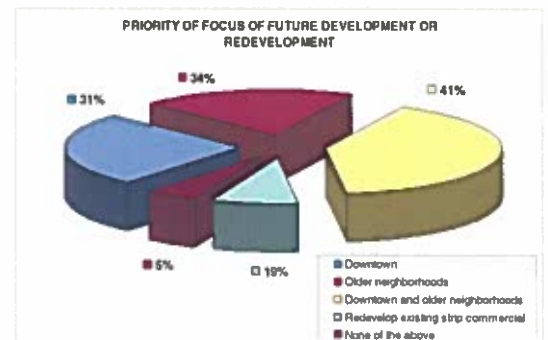
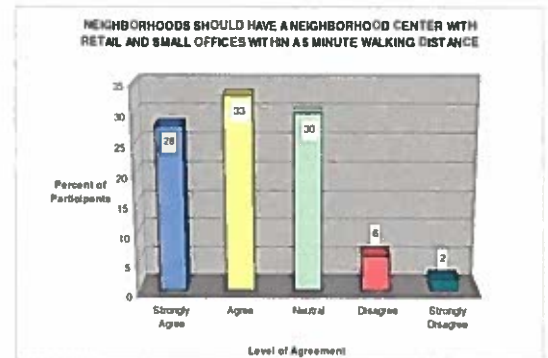
# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Development Options**

## Neighborhoods Commercial Development

The value of neighborhood centers was supported by a majority of participants. 61% of participants either agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (28%) that neighborhood centers with retail and small offices should be located within a five minute walk from all residences in the neighborhood. Of the remainder of participants, 30% were unsure of the value of neighborhood centers while 8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that neighborhood centers should be located in neighborhoods.

The positive images from the Neighborhood Commercial Development category represent the visually attractive commercial development appropriate for Macon neighborhoods. Preferred development features which emerge from the higher rated images include one to two and one half story buildings, well-landscaped, smaller scaled, stand alone pad site buildings, as well as smaller, mixed-use commercial buildings fronting on sidewalks with street trees. Landscaping treatments to screen parking is important as is pedestrian scaled lighting. Development without these features were either valued as neutral or valued negatively. It is important to note that auto dominated uses and site plans received relatively high values suggesting that creating a more traditional neighborhood center will be difficult.





**Neighborhoods**  
**Commercial Development**

**The images below are a “before and after” simulation of neighborhood commercial development. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve and enhance existing neighborhood commercial development in Bibb County.**



*Improve existing commercial development in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon to the standards seen in the positive images from the VPS.*

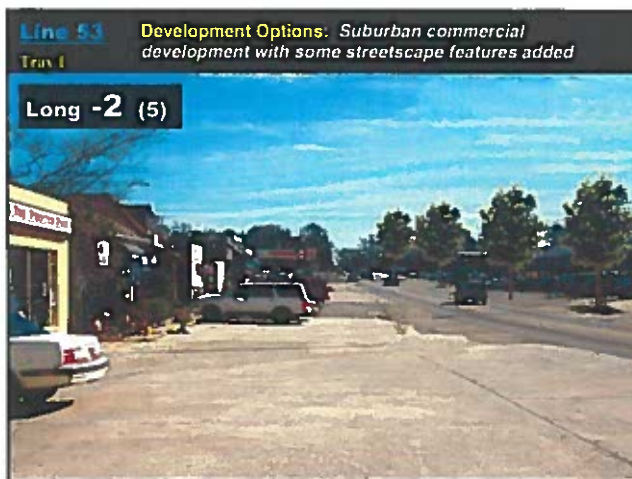




## **Neighborhoods** **Commercial Development**

Negative images in the Neighborhood Commercial Development category represent features considered inappropriate for older neighborhoods in Bibb County. The predominant feature in these images is the absence of the pedestrian realm between commercial buildings and the street, lack of landscaping and the "sea of asphalt" look.

It appears that there are no site design standards or landscape standards. Places with front yard parking that are not landscaped are clearly hurting the values and positive perception of Macon – Bibb County. The low negative values indicate that these are becoming more tolerated. Ugly, but not so ugly as to do something about it. This condition is very dangerous...a slow brooding negativity.



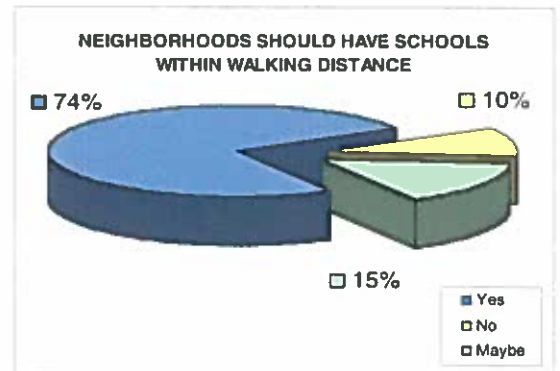
## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

### **Neighborhood Commercial Development**

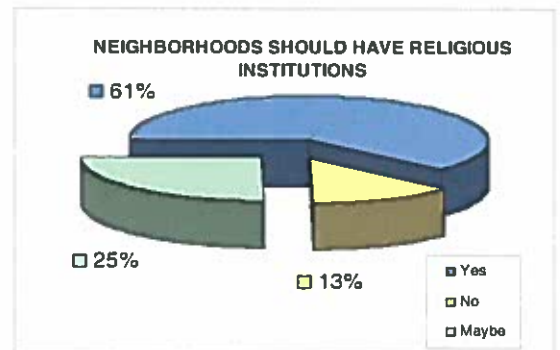
- develop design standards for buildings and parking in neighborhood commercial areas
- develop, adopt and implement commercial building façade improvements
- infill mixed-use buildings
- adopt landscaping standards including screening of parking with landscaping treatments including street trees and hedging as well as internal planting of one tree for every four parking spaces interior of each parking lot
- front commercial buildings with sidewalks and pedestrian amenities including lighting, furniture, etc.
- provide on-street parking, diagonal and parallel directly in front of buildings
- site all additional parking for commercial in the rear of the building

## Neighborhoods Civic/Institutional

Civic and institutional development is a component of traditional older neighborhoods. 74% of participants believe that neighborhoods should have schools located within walking distance of all residences within the neighborhood. Only 10% of participants did not believe that neighborhoods should have schools within walking distance, while 15% were undecided.



While 61% of participants believe that religious institutions should be located in neighborhoods, 25% were undecided whether religious institutions should be located in neighborhoods. Only 13% of participants did not believe that religious institutions should be located in neighborhoods.



The image values from the Neighborhood Civic category suggest that civic and institutional development of a more traditional design is most appropriate for Macon neighborhoods.



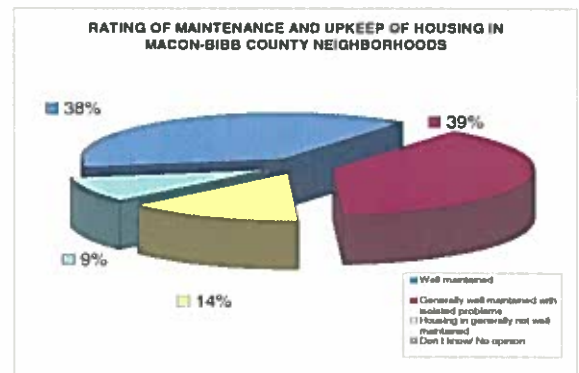
## Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

### Neighborhood Civic and Institutional Development

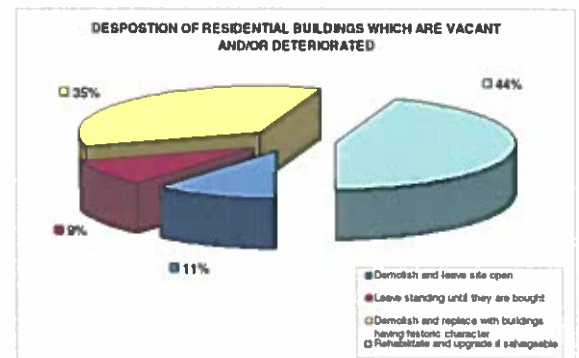
- develop and implement design standards for civic and institutional buildings in neighborhood areas
- design standards should favor more traditional civic design aesthetic

## Neighborhoods Residential Development

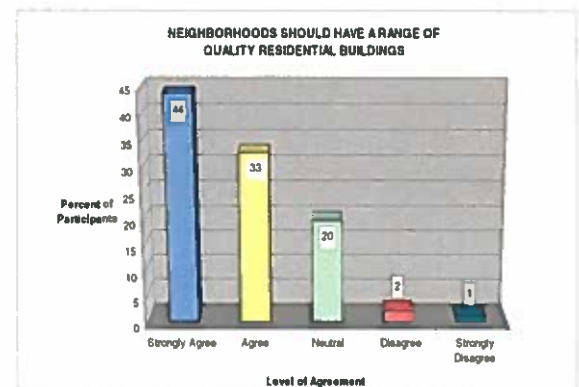
The vitality of neighborhoods in Macon and Bibb County is largely dependent on the long-range quality of residential development. 39% of participants believe that the housing stock of Macon and Bibb County is well maintained while 38% believe that the housing stock is generally well maintained with isolated problem areas. 14% of participants believe that housing is generally not well maintained while 9% were unsure as to the quality of the housing stock.



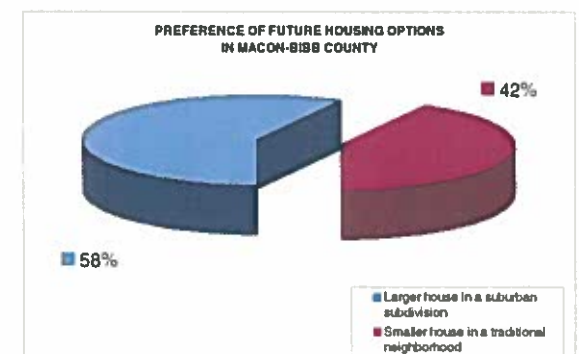
Of housing which is vacant and/or deteriorated, 44% of participants believe that residential buildings should be rehabilitated if salvageable. 35% of participants believe marginal housing should be demolished and replaced with buildings of historic character. 11% of participants believe marginal housing should be demolished with the site left open while 9% believe that marginal housing should be left standing until the property is purchased.



A range of housing alternatives contributes to neighborhood vitality. 77% of participants either strongly agreed (44%) or agreed (33%) that neighborhoods should have a range of quality residential buildings. 20% of participants did not know whether neighborhoods should have a range of residential buildings while 3% of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed.



Participants were nearly divided regarding preferences for future housing – a larger house in a suburban subdivision or a smaller house in a traditional neighborhood. 58% of participants would rather live in a larger suburban house compared to 42% who would rather live in a smaller house in a traditional neighborhood. Clearly there are many who have been programmed towards suburban sprawl and subdivisions. The opportunity for traditional neighborhoods must be allowed by the Plan and code.





## **Neighborhoods** **Residential Development**

The positive images from the Neighborhood Residential Development category all represent visually attractive residential development appropriate for Macon neighborhoods. Despite the preference of 58% of participants for larger homes in suburban subdivisions, the highest rated of the neighborhood residential development images depict housing in traditional neighborhoods. The positively rated images also feature a range of housing alternatives. Features which emerge from these higher rated images include well maintained residences, landscaping, traditional architectural elements including porches and gables, sidewalks and fencing as a semi-public edge.



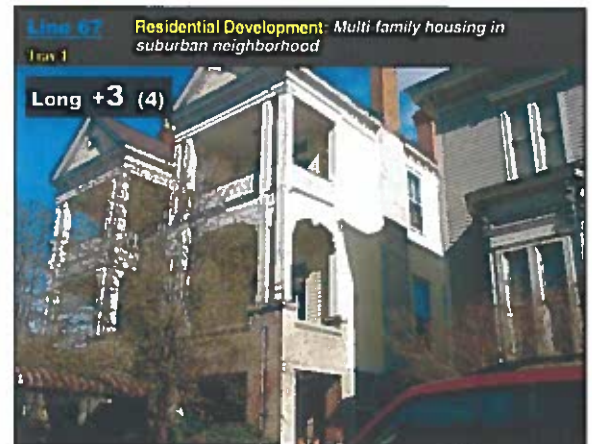
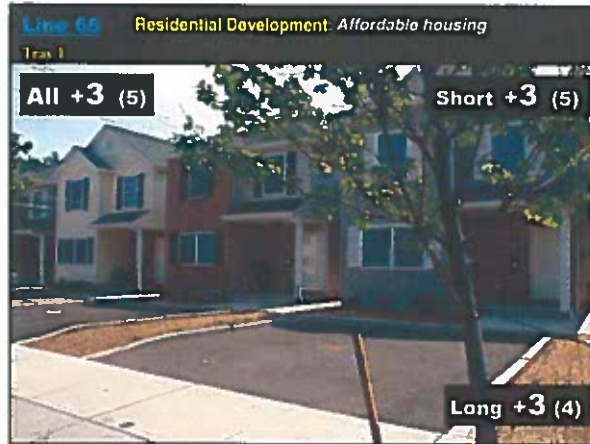
## ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

### ***Neighborhood Residential Development:***

- *redevelopment of marginalized housing should be a priority*
- *provide a range of housing types*
- *a semi-public edge ( hedges/fences) should define the property edge from sidewalks*
- *on-street parking and/or parking on rear residential lanes*
- *residential streets lined with street trees*
- *2 to 2 1/2 story homes with pitched roofs*
- *priority for porches on residential buildings*
- *net density of 4 to 5 units per acre*



## **Neighborhoods** **Residential Development**

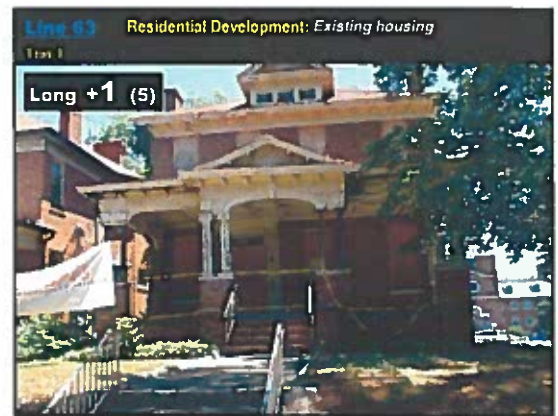


The above positive images represent the range of housing considered appropriate for neighborhoods in Macon – Bibb County, including smaller single-family housing, townhouses and multi-family housing, supporting the 77% of participants who agree that neighborhoods should have a range of quality residential buildings. Features which emerge from these positive images include well maintained residences, landscaping, traditional architectural elements including porches and gables and sidewalks.

## **Neighborhoods** **Residential Development**



The above positive images represent additional housing considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County, including single-family housing, multi-family housing and mixed-use housing. However, features of images in Line 60, Line 63 and Line 69 lack integral features found in the higher rated residential images, including well-maintained residences and landscaping. These images also lack streetscaping features such as appropriate sidewalks, street trees and lighting.





## **Neighborhoods** **Residential Development**

The negative images from the Neighborhood Residential Development category represent housing that is marginalized or deteriorated and therefore inappropriate for the future vitality of Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. These examples of housing lack the fundamental features of the positively rated residential images and are not attractive. Simple, dull and functional or deteriorated and junky both receive negative values. They generate depression and fear and are therefore dysfunctional and detrimental. Housing in any area of Macon – Bibb County which exhibits these qualities is a serious detriment to the planning and implementation of neighborhoods in the region and must be ameliorated. Low income housing and public subsidized housing is required but should be placed in a neighborhood setting. Sites that are littered, and unkempt must be cleaned up for the sake of the local area and the neighborhood.



### ***Development Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

- 1. Map and document all vacant, deteriorated or marginalized residential buildings in a Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Institute property maintenance standards*
- 3. Developed a phased plan to remove and redevelop all marginalized and/or deteriorated housing in Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods*
- 4. Develop and adopt a Design Plan for the redevelopment of all marginalized and/or deteriorated residential properties not meeting the full potential of Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods*
- 5. Adopt Hope VI basic standards for subsidized housing*

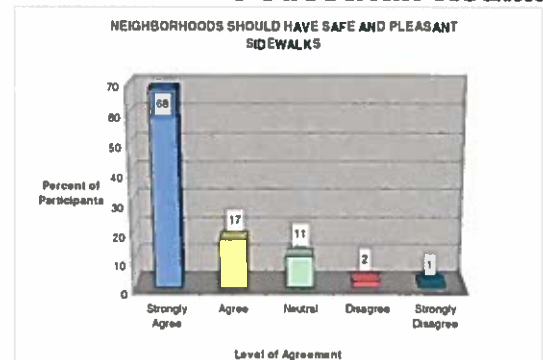
# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Pedestrian Realm Options**

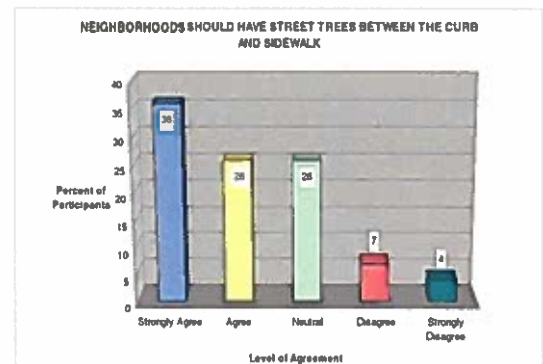


## Neighborhoods Pedestrian Realm

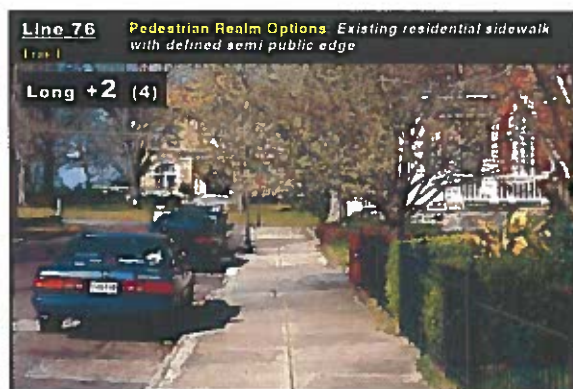
The pedestrian realm is an integral component of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods must be walkable. They must have sidewalks and places to walk to. 85% of participants either strongly agreed (68%) or agreed (17%) that neighborhoods should have safe and pleasant sidewalks as a feature of the neighborhood pedestrian realm. 11% of participants indicated no preference for or against sidewalks as a component of the pedestrian realm streetscape while 3% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that neighborhoods should have sidewalks.



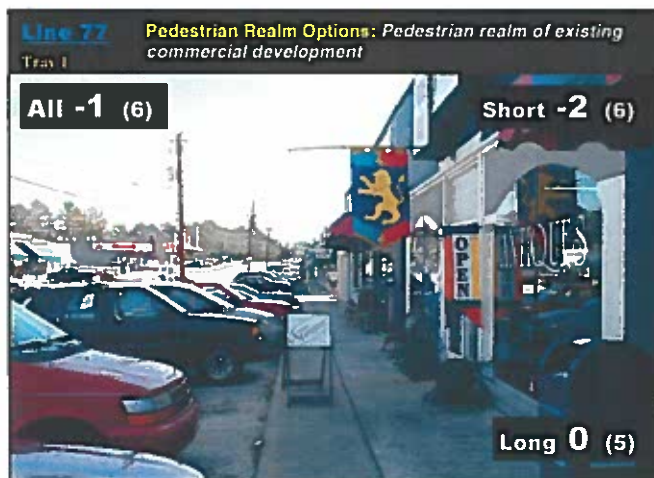
Street trees are one component of the pedestrian realm and streetscape. 62% of participants either strongly agreed (36%) or agreed (26%) that neighborhoods should have street trees between the curb and sidewalk. 26% of participants had no preference whether street trees should be part of the streetscape while 11% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that neighborhoods should have street trees.



The positive images from the Neighborhood Pedestrian Realm category represent visually desirable pedestrian realm features appropriate for Macon – Bibb County. Preferred features which emerge from these highly rated images include appropriately scaled sidewalks, pedestrian scaled lighting, street trees, a parkway separating the street from the sidewalk, curb parking as a buffer, landscaping treatments and pedestrian furniture where appropriate. Images of pedestrian realms without these features were either valued as neutral or valued negatively.



## Neighborhoods Pedestrian Realm



**The images above are “before and after” simulations of neighborhood pedestrian realms. The high values indicate the importance of the pedestrian realm. The change from the negative “before” images to the positive “after” images represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve and enhance existing neighborhood pedestrian realms in Bibb County. The greater the positive change the more positive design features that are incorporated. A list of the positive attributes should be incorporated into the design standards**



## **Neighborhoods Pedestrian Realm**



**The images above are additional “before and after” simulations of neighborhood pedestrian realms. The change from the negative “before” images to the positive “after” images represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve and enhance existing neighborhood pedestrian realms in Bibb County and should be included in future design standards. Sidewalks and semi-public edges make the largest differences.**

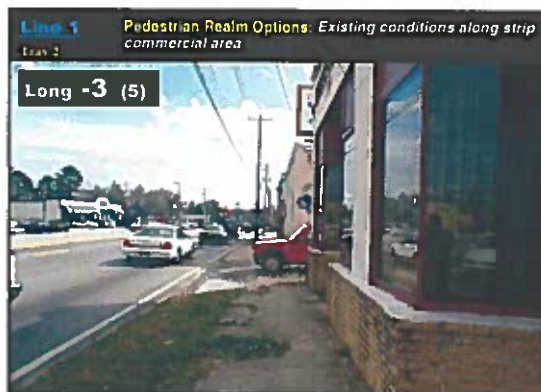
### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

*Neighborhood Pedestrian Realms should include the following characteristics:*

- *sidewalks on all streets wide enough to accommodate projected pedestrian flow*
- *commercial buildings built up to the sidewalk edge*
- *semi public edge along residential uses*
- *pedestrian furniture such as benches, trash baskets, planters, etc.*
- *street trees and on-street parking to provide protection*
- *continuous awnings in commercial areas to provide protection*
- *semi-public edge treatments such as fencing or hedging in residential areas*
- *pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures*
- *stamped or textured crosswalks*

## Neighborhoods Pedestrian Realm

The negative images from the Neighborhood Pedestrian Realm category represent features of the pedestrian realm that are poorly designed and maintained, marginalized or deteriorated, and therefore inappropriate for the future vitality of Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. These pedestrian realm examples lack the fundamental features of positive, visually acceptable pedestrian realms. They generate depression and fear and are therefore avoided by potential residents and consumers. Any neighborhood pedestrian realm in Macon – Bibb County which exhibits these qualities is a serious detriment to market development of the region and must be ameliorated.



## Development Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

1. Map and document all pedestrian realm features in an Existing Conditions Map and deteriorated or marginalized pedestrian realms in a Susceptibility to Change Map
2. Developed a phased plan to repair and redevelop all deteriorated public pedestrian realm features in Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods
3. Develop and adopt a Design Plan for the redevelopment of all deteriorated public pedestrian realm features not meeting the full potential of Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods
4. Establish maintenance standards; Regulate property maintenance and penalize property owners who fail to maintain properties per maintenance standards
5. Establish standards for design elements including sidewalks, street tree types and sizes, fence and hedge standards, window openings, signing, awnings, etc.

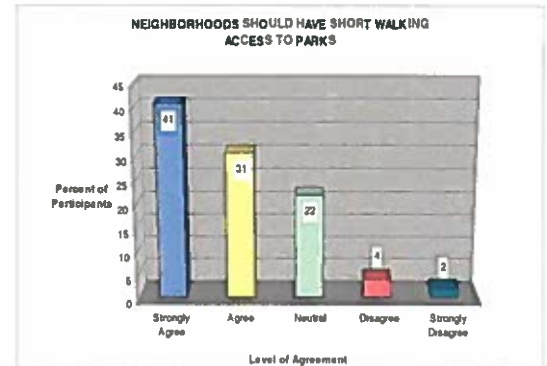


# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Parks & Open Space Options**

## **Neighborhoods Parks & Open Space**

Parks are an integral component of healthy neighborhoods, as locations for community gathering and recreation; they serve to foster a sense of community within neighborhoods. 72% of participants either strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (31%) that neighborhoods should have access to parks within short walking distance. 22% of participants were undecided as to whether neighborhoods should have access to parks within walking distance while 6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that neighborhoods should have access to parks.



The images from the Neighborhood Parks and Open Spaces category represent visually attractive open space characteristics considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. Although considered positive, their low values indicate that these parks are missing features appropriate for neighborhoods. Perhaps the inclusion of recreation facilities for a range of neighborhood children would have been appropriate. Features of these images include sidewalks, pedestrian furniture, significant greenery and trees, and pedestrian scaled lighting.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Neighborhood Parks and Open Space should include the following characteristics:*

- *a range of parks should be provided in each neighborhood*
- *small neighborhood parks should be within a three minute walk of all residents*
- *parks provided to foster sense of community and serve as focal point of neighborhood centers*
- *neighborhood parks should include pedestrian furniture and pedestrian scaled lighting*
- *access to parks should be pedestrian friendly and safe*
- *establish design and maintenance standards; trees and green areas should be well maintained*
- *larger park for field sports etc should be within a 20 minute walk*

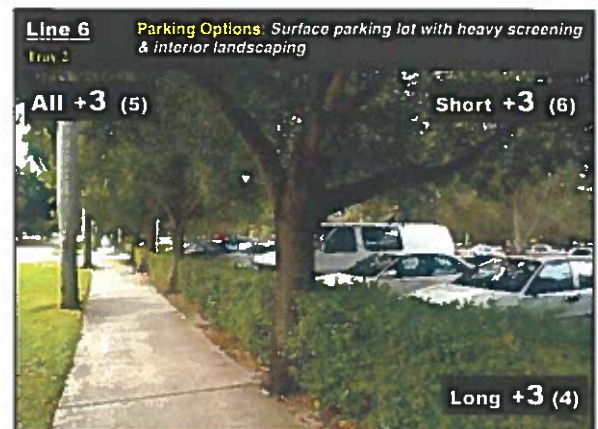
# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Parking Options**

## Neighborhoods Parking

Neighborhood parking for residential and commercial is a large determinant of the overall visual and spatial character of place, which can be translated into the value of place. Open surface parking lots and housing that has parking in the front yard, where the front of the house is dominated by “garage scape”, detract from the aesthetic quality of neighborhoods.

The positively rated images from the Neighborhood Parking category represent visually attractive and desirable parking alternatives which are considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. Residential garages and parking accessed by a rear residential lane were considered very appropriate as a parking alternative for neighborhood residential areas. For commercial areas, parking lots with significant green screening and landscaped with trees were considered desirable.



### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

#### ***Neighborhood Parking***

- *Adopt standards for rear lot “residential lanes” that provide access to garages*
- *Adopt standards that at the minimum locate garages in the rear of the lot or behind the primary façade of a residential building*
- *Adopt standards for landscaping parking lots with both interior ( one tree for every 4 parking spaces) and peripheral screening*
- *Map and document the utilization of all surface parking lots*
- *Redevelop under-utilized surface parking lots with infill mixed use buildings*
- *Encourage and promote on-street parallel or diagonal parking provided in neighborhood centers*



# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Signage Options**

## Neighborhoods Signage Options



Commercial Signage plays a significant factor in the success of neighborhood retail. The positively rated images in the Neighborhood Signage category represent visually attractive signage alternatives which are considered appropriate for neighborhoods. Characteristics of signage found in these images include small scaled, low mounted monument-type signage, small hanging signs, and small signs mounted flush to the building front. These signage characteristics are more appropriate for neighborhoods than monument style and large scaled commercial signage.

The negatively rated image in the Neighborhood Signage category represents signage alternatives which detract from the visual aesthetic of neighborhoods. The signage features in this image, namely the high, large billboard signage, relate to strip commercial uses and not to neighborhoods; Areas identified as neighborhoods (recommended on page 42) would not allow this type of signing.



## Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

### Neighborhood Signage :

- establish design standards for neighborhood commercial signage
- phase out large billboard style signage

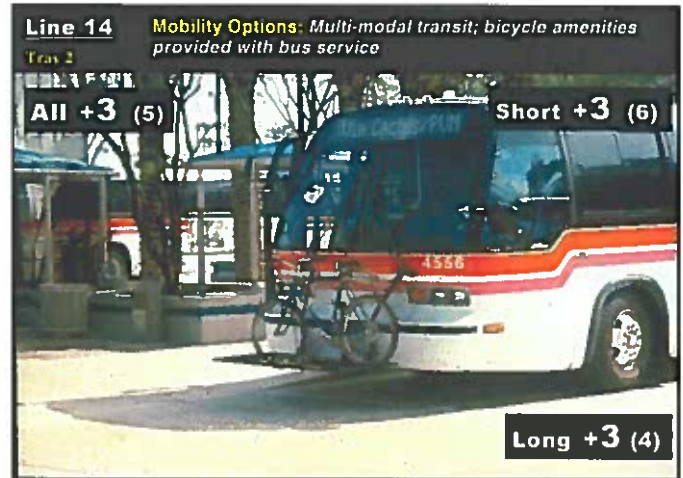
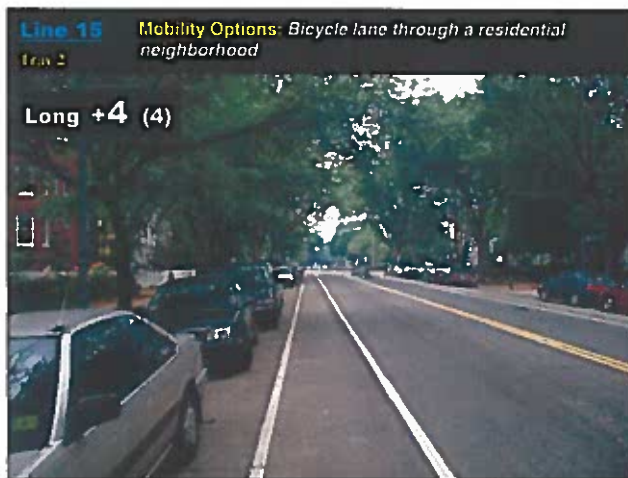
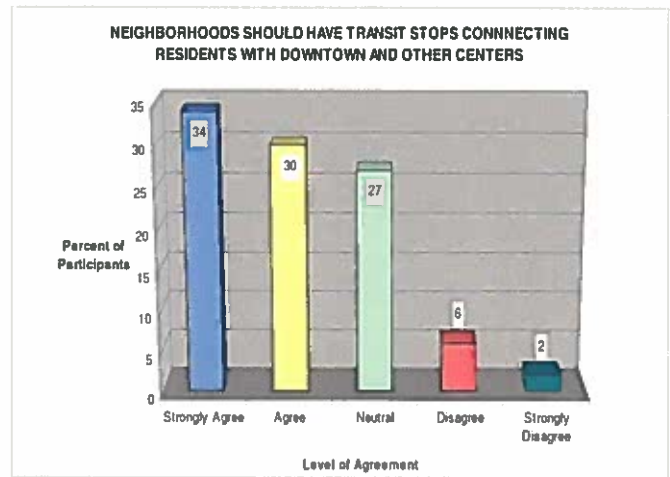
# ***Neighborhoods***

## **Mobility Options**



## Neighborhoods Mobility Options

Transit and transit alternatives are required for quality neighborhoods particularly for those below or beyond driving age or those who chose not the commute to work by car. 64% of participants either strongly agreed (34%) or agreed (30%) that neighborhoods should have transit stops connecting residents with Downtown and other activity centers. 27% of participants were undecided as to whether neighborhoods should have transit stops connecting to other destinations while 8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that neighborhoods should have transit stops connecting residents with Downtown and other activity centers.



The positive images from the Neighborhood Mobility category represent mobility characteristics considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. Bicycle paths on local streets, buses with front end bicycle hangers are highly desired. Of perhaps the most importance is the need for quality bus stops and shelters. Activation of existing rail lines for light rail application connecting downtown to larger regional venues also rated high.



## **Neighborhoods Mobility Options**

This negative image from the Neighborhood Mobility category represents mobility features which are not acceptable for neighborhoods in Macon – Bibb County. This negative image is characterized by unacceptable bus stop facilities, locations and design. There are no sidewalks, the bench is too close to the street and it is contrasted with an open parking lot. As an example of a neighborhood bus stop, this stop lacks pedestrian amenities such as adequate shelter and lighting. The placement of the bench and trash



receptacle at the curb edge offers no protection from passing traffic. Mobility alternatives of this nature are valued negatively and reinforce negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding transit mobility. These negative images discourage transit ridership and healthy neighborhood development. By discouraging ridership translates into increased auto dependence and “mom” as chauffeur mentality.

## ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

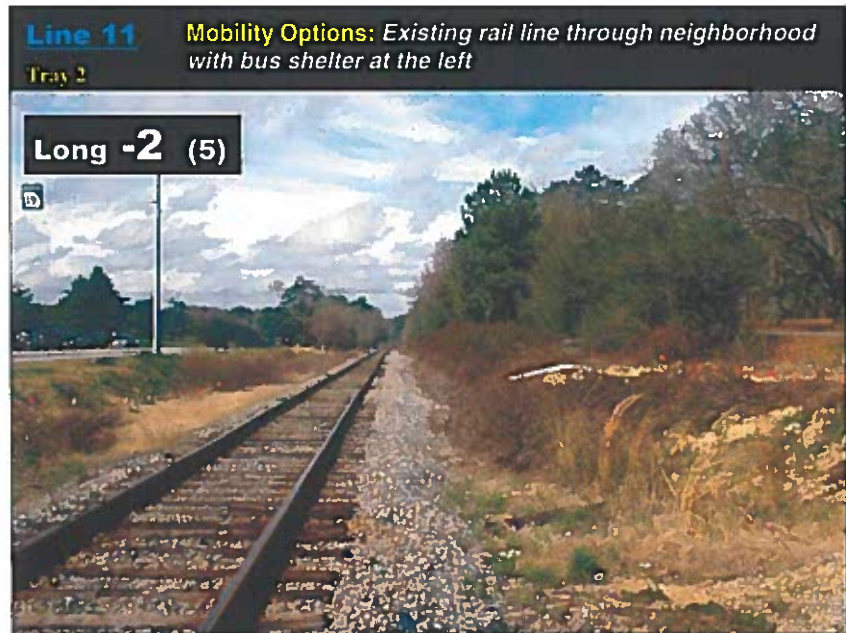
### ***Neighborhood Mobility***

- *a range of mobility alternatives should be made available to neighborhoods; it should include walkability, bicycle transit, public transit and multi-modal connections*
- *Standards for neighborhood bus stops must be adopted*
- *Bus stop should be located first at the neighborhood centers and be reinforced by immediate available retail and services*
- *Prepare a long term transit plan to include commuter light rail to connect downtown to secondary regional centers*



## **Neighborhoods Mobility Options**

**The images below are a “before and after” simulation of neighborhood mobility alternatives. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive “after” image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve existing neighborhood mobility alternatives in Bibb County.**



*Improve mobility alternatives in neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Macon; include activation of existing rail lines for light rail*





**Section 3**

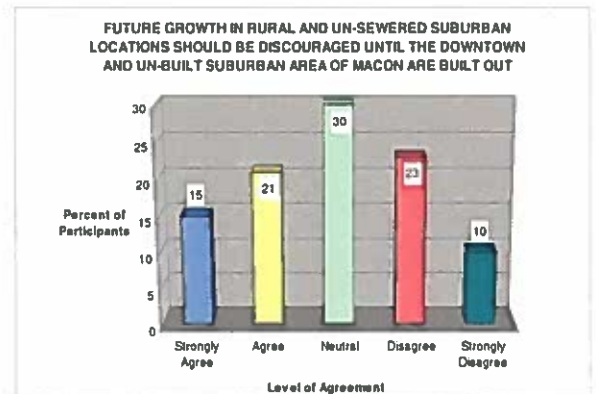
***Rural/Suburban  
Areas***

## **POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Rural and suburban areas of Bibb County must have specific standards applied to them. Road, street and buildings typologies should be developed, as well as specific site and architectural standards.

Additional sewer extensions or street improvements should be allowed for the foreseeable future only in areas in rural and un-built suburban areas where traditional neighborhoods with high walkability are encouraged.

Locate and urban design a new street network for all future development as a pro-active planning effort, as opposed to leaving this task to developers and traffic engineers.



### **Principal Policy Recommendations for Rural and Suburban Areas:**

- 1. Map and document existing conditions in a Existing Conditions Map and Susceptibility to Change Map*
- 2. Maintain rural roads in their existing condition with no expansion or widening*
- 3. Locate and develop a new Street Network for future development in rural and suburban residential and commercial areas in Bibb County as a pro-active planning effort*
- 4. Prepare a Street Regulating Plan to include sections and figure ground plans with other standards for all commercial and residential streets in rural and suburban areas*
- 5. Parks should be integrated into a continuous pedestrian realm that connects to the neighborhood and suburban areas. Parks must be well-maintained*
- 6. Establish strict design standards for commercial signage along rural and suburban roadways*

## **POLICY AND PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Development policies for rural and suburban areas are the single most important planning issue for the future of the city and county. Continued growth in a sprawled pattern of subdivisions and strip commercial, with characteristics of continued, outward growth of low density, which leap frog over empty land, is auto dependent, and is spatially and economical segregated, is a pattern that must be controlled and managed to increase the viability and redevelopment of the Downtown as well and the reinvigoration of existing neighborhoods. There must be a clean separation between those lands that are environmentally sensitive, rural and lands in rural reserve. These areas should have unique and appropriate design standards specifically geared for rural areas.

Classic suburbia is an appropriate development pattern in these areas as well, however this development pattern requires that unique and appropriate standards be applied to it. The VPS provides a unique set of recommendations for suburban areas. The images have therefore been divided in each section into those appropriate for rural areas and those appropriate for suburban areas.



# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Street Options**

## **Rural/Suburban Street Options**

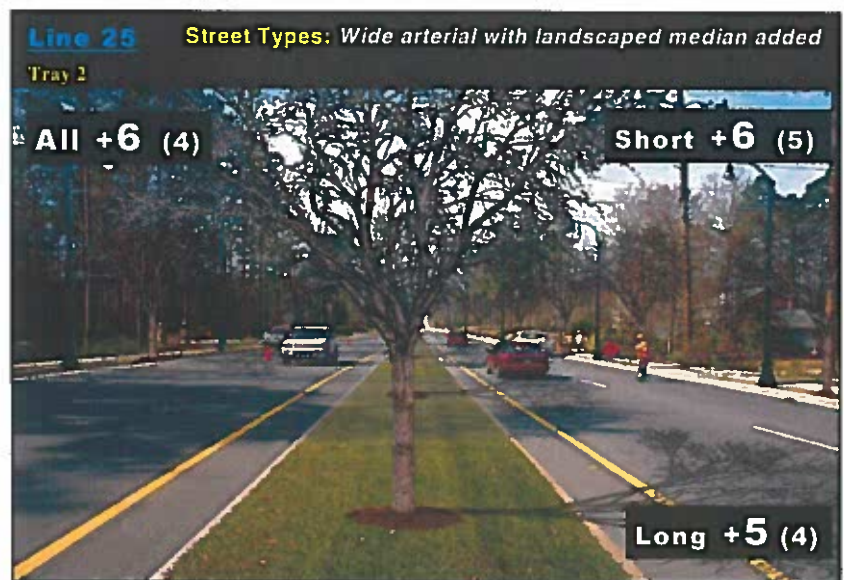
Roads and streets in rural and suburban areas are the framework for future development. The character and quality of these streets will impact the future quality of life and value of future suburban development.

The highest rated image in the VPS is a suburban street. The two images on this page represent the types of streets that are most appropriate for future suburban development and must be adopted for future suburban developments.

This street has a narrow cartway of 26 feet, flat curbs, a wide tree planting terrace that also acts as storm drainage. This is a very environmentally friendly street because the runoff is filtered through a grass filter which also promotes the growth of new trees. This street has sidewalks on both sides.



This street is, in engineering terms, a collector that is designed as a boulevard. This is an after image from a simulation set and does not currently exist. The boulevard provides a "green setting" for suburban areas, is excellent for the environment, reduces runoff, and promotes a safer street. This should be added to the street typology of the county.



These streets are most appropriately applied to areas designated as rural residential. Sprawl growth should be restricted in these areas. Only large estates or small new villages are appropriate. Retain roads in their narrow natural tree-edged condition. Where possible, “white horse fencing” will enhance the value and image.

This rural road has two narrow lanes, no curbing and is tree lined on both sides. This is the ideal road typology for rural areas.



This rural road has slightly wider lanes (estimated at 11 feet wide), no shoulders, and a grass edge with fencing on one side. The white lines on the edge of the pavement suggest that this road has high speeds.



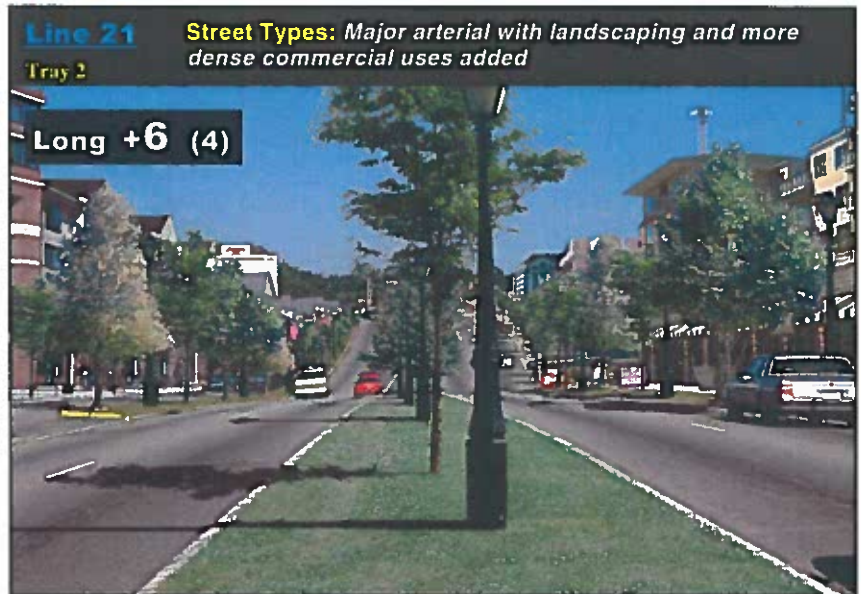
This is a wider road with curbing, a wide tree terrace and white fencing on both sides. This could be an entrance street to a rural village. Unfortunately this street, as an entrance, is wider than the collector road that connects it to other locations in the county.





These streets most appropriately apply to the area designated as rural retail or suburban centers.

This street is also a boulevard with mixed-use retail/offices/housing development on both sides. Complemented with wide sidewalks, street trees, and with parking in the rear, this is the ideal alternative to the standard strip commercial development and wide ubiquitous arterial currently found in the county.



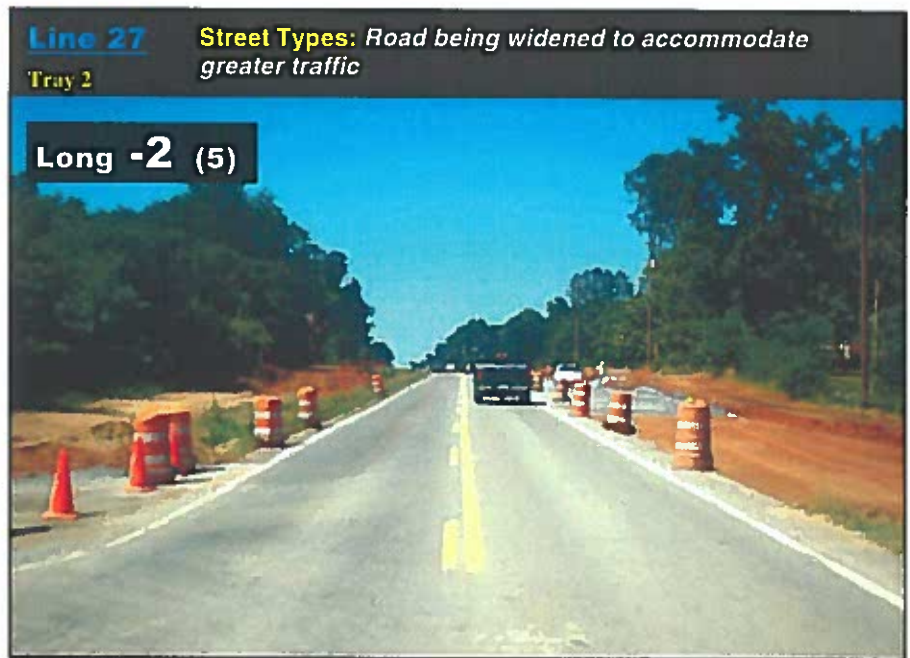
The two images to the right portray a street type called the super boulevard. The top image portrays the outside lanes of a four to eight lane arterial. The center lanes are separated by a planted median that has one or two way traffic, parallel parking, wide sidewalks and stores and shops adjacent to the sidewalk. In addition to parallel parking, the remainder of the parking is at the rear of the buildings. This "frontage street" can provide access to a grid of parallel streets providing access and egress without having to enter the lanes of faster moving thru traffic. This street type is ideally suited to become the regional sub center.

The lower image shows the "frontage street" this time with diagonal parking, bike path and planted median separating it from the busy arterial. This is an ideal prototype for the retrofit of any arterials that have large setbacks with excessive parking requirements.



## **Rural/Suburban Street Options**

Road widening and sewer extension should be limited until developed areas are built according to the recommendations, and design standards recommended as a result of the community visioning.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

### **Rural Roads**

- maintain rural roads in existing condition with no expansion or widening
- keep lanes as narrow as possible with natural edges
- recommend a design vocabulary of fences to be used

### **Suburban Commercial Streets**

- adopt a street typology of boulevards and super boulevards with appropriate street trees, lighting and sidewalks
- infill mixed-use buildings in suburban centers
- promote on-street parking, diagonal and parallel
- promote pedestrian amenities including crosswalks, lighting and furniture
- buildings built up to the sidewalk edge – no front yard parking
- create commercial frontage street from existing frontage parking, separated from traffic by landscaped median, where appropriate



## **Rural/Suburban Street Options**

Negative images in the Rural/Suburban Street category represent street features considered inappropriate for rural and suburban areas of Bibb County

This street is one of the lowest rated of the survey. Housing is marginalized and deteriorated and the street lacks any pedestrian realm features. Is this rural or suburban? It lacks the qualities of either and as such is perceived as very negative

The low negatively rated commercial suburban street represents a suburban arterial highway with strip commercial development fronted by surface parking, tall arterial related signs with few streetscape features like trees and pedestrian scaled lighting.

Unfortunately the low negative score suggests that there is growing tolerance for the strip development aesthetic. The low negative scores have the implication that there are not other alternatives.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

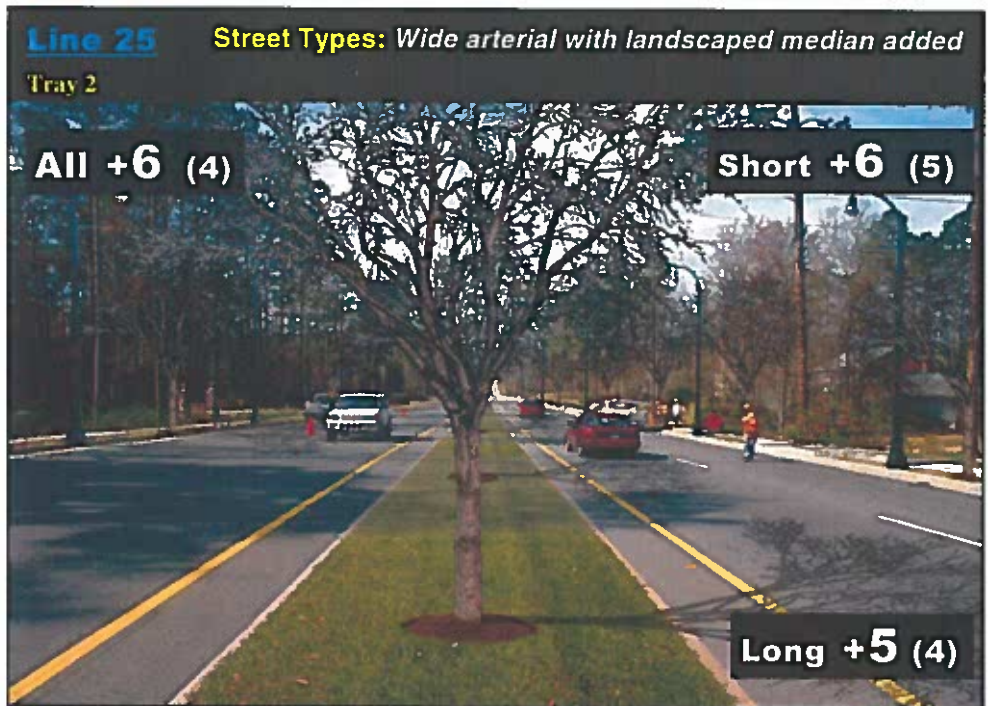
- 1. Map and document all residential and commercial street types in section and plan*
- 2. Prepare and adopt a set of road, street and boulevard standards, in section and figure ground, that respond to the positive images in the survey and will apply to the suburban and rural areas of the future plan*
- 3. Adopt a phased Urban Design Plan for the redevelopment of all marginalized and/or deteriorated buildings along arterials and apply super boulevard street, building and design standards where appropriate*
- 4. Locate new network of streets for all future development.*
- 5. Develop, adopt and implement streetscape and façade improvements*



## **Rural/Suburban Street Options**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a suburban residential street. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive “after” image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve existing suburban residential streets in Bibb County.

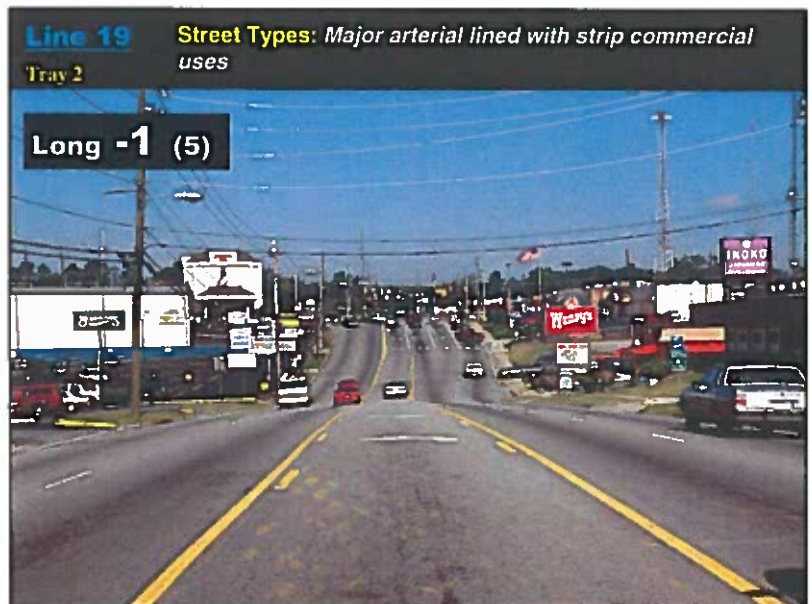
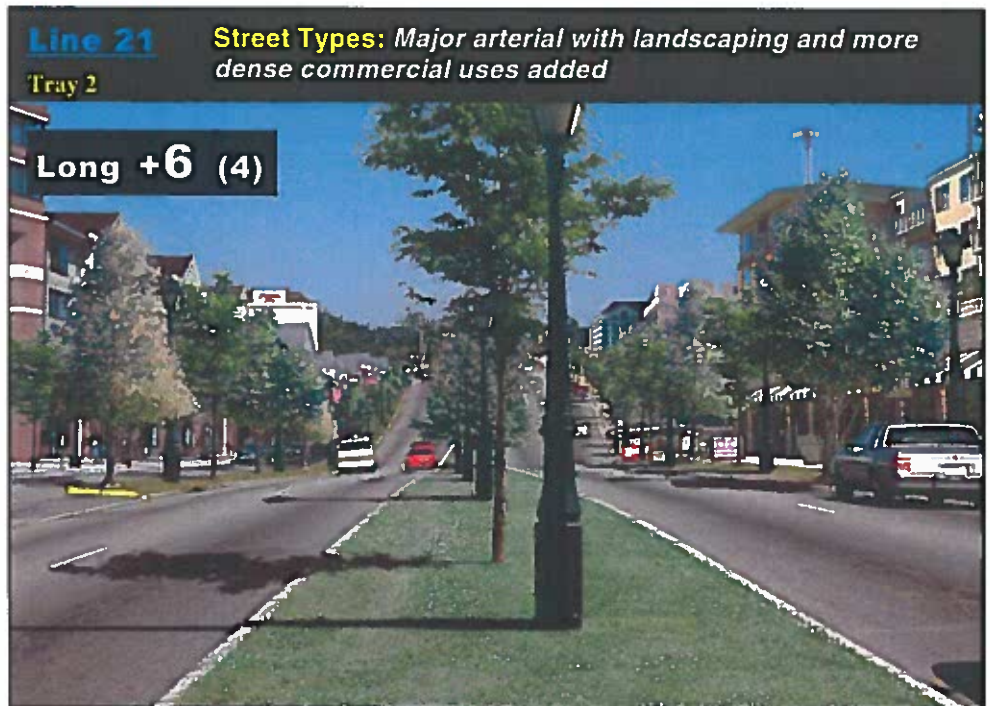
**Improve  
residential  
streets where  
appropriate in  
suburban areas  
of Bibb County to  
the standards  
seen in the  
positive images  
from the VPS.**



## **Rural/Suburban Street Options**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a suburban commercial arterial. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive “after” image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve existing commercial arterials in rural and suburban areas of Bibb County.

*There is an extraordinary improvement in this commercial street when it is transformed into a boulevard and the buildings are located on sidewalks close to the edge. The proportion of the street begins to meet the ideal height to width ratio.*



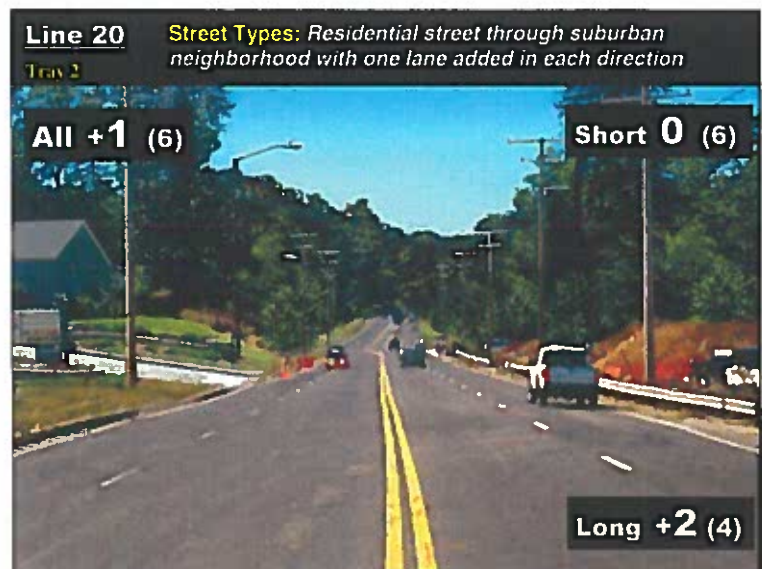


**Rural/Suburban  
Street Options**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation of an emerging suburban residential street. There is no measurable change in value which suggests that widening of these types of streets from two to four lanes is ok. Continuing to provide more auto access will only fuel the continuation of sprawl. Although acceptable in the suburban area it is negatively perceived in rural areas.



**Continuing to  
provide more auto  
access will only  
fuel the  
continuation of  
sprawl.**





**Rural/Suburban  
Street Options**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a suburban commercial arterial transformed into a Super Boulevard. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive “after” image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve existing commercial arterials in the suburban areas of Bibb County.

**Improve commercial streets where appropriate in rural and suburban areas of Bibb County to the standards seen in the positive images from the VPS.**

**Line 28**

Tray 2

**Street Types:** Major road with mixed-use frontage road, parallel parking and heavy screening added

**All +4 (5)**

**Short +4 (5)**

**Long +4 (4)**

**Line 30**

Tray 2

**Street Types:** Major road lined with strip commercial uses

**All -1 (6)**

**Short -2 (5)**

**Long +1 (5)**

**Rural/Suburban  
Street Options**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation of a rural residential street. The change from the negative “before” image to the positive “after” image represents a visual summary of design qualities necessary to improve existing rural residential streets in Bibb County.



**Improve residential streets in suburban areas of Bibb County to the standards seen in the positive “after” images; suggest that these areas become integrated into neighborhoods.**



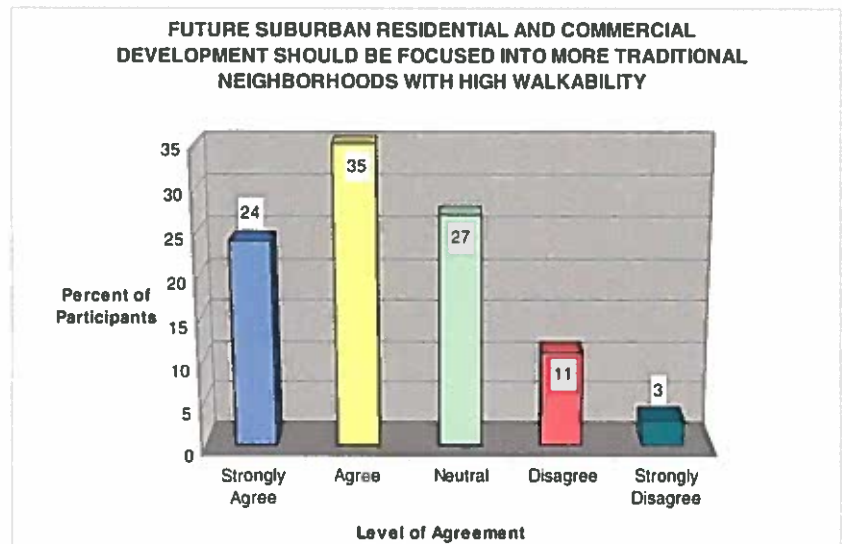
# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Development Options**

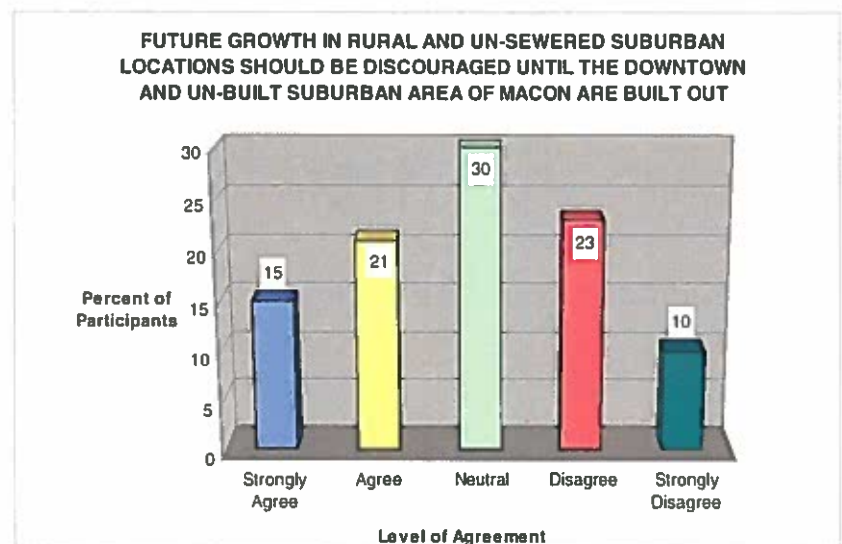


**Rural/Suburban  
Commercial Development**

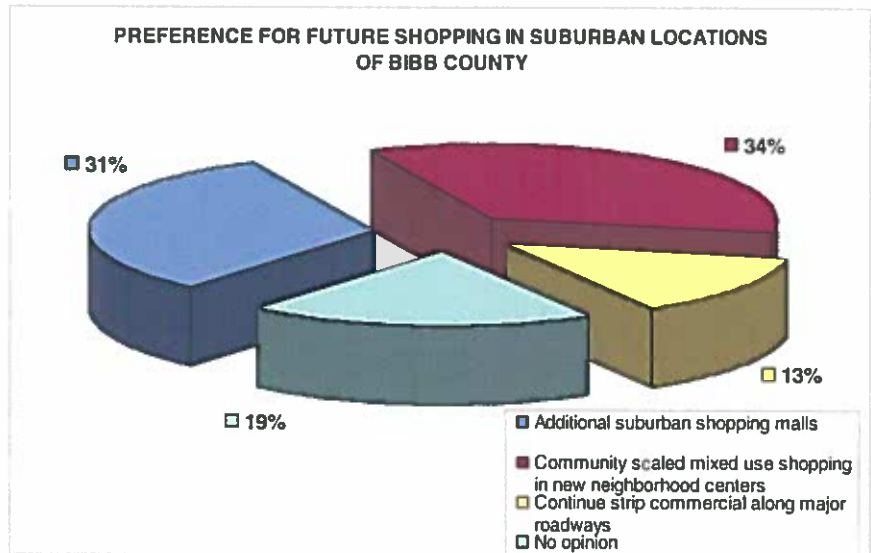
How do the rural and suburban areas develop in the future? Future suburban residential and commercial development should be focused into more traditional neighborhoods with high walkability. 24% strongly agreed with 35% in agreement. Only 3% strongly disagreed. This is an extremely important planning policy for future development



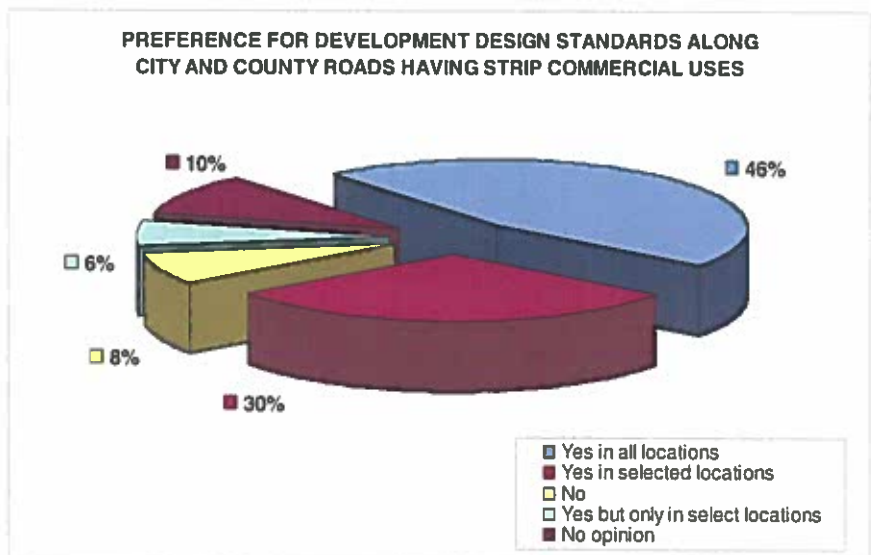
When asked if future growth in rural and un-sewered suburban locations should be discouraged until the downtown and un-built suburban areas of Macon are built out, 36% participants agreed, 33% disagreed and 30% had a neutral reaction. Those participants in the neutral area need to be shown the benefits. As a general recommendation no sewers should be extended in the foreseeable future.



Sprawl development has a strong correlation to shopping which is primarily or entirely done by private automobile. Participants were polled for future shopping in suburban locations. The largest percentage, 34%, recommended community scaled mixed use shopping in new neighborhood centers. 31% want additional suburban shopping malls while the smallest percentage, 13% want to continue strip commercial along major roadways.



The vast majority of participants want to see quality design standards along city and county roads having strip commercial uses. 46% want to see these design standards applied in all locations while 30% want the standards applied in selected locations. Only 8% did not want to see design standards applied to strip commercial roads.



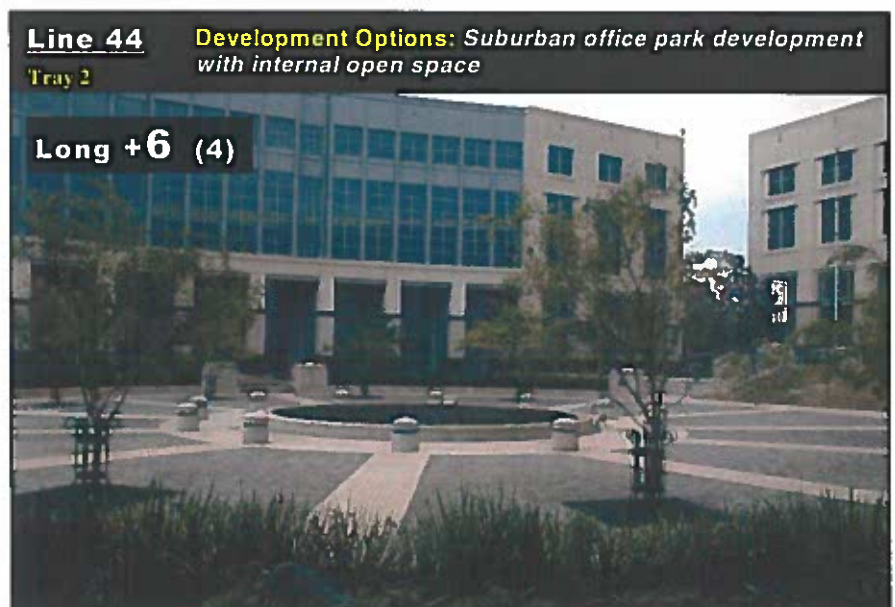
**Rural/Suburban  
Commercial Development**

The positive images from the Rural/Suburban Commercial Development category represent the visually attractive commercial development appropriate for rural and suburban areas of Macon – Bibb County. The images below represent the most appropriate retail and office development types.

This new prototype shopping center models itself after a traditional main street that incorporated three large magnet retailers including a multiplex cinema and two “big boxes” at either end. The main street has wide sidewalks, street furniture, street trees and diagonal parking. The high rating on this image suggests this is the right form of commercial development for Macon-Bibb County.



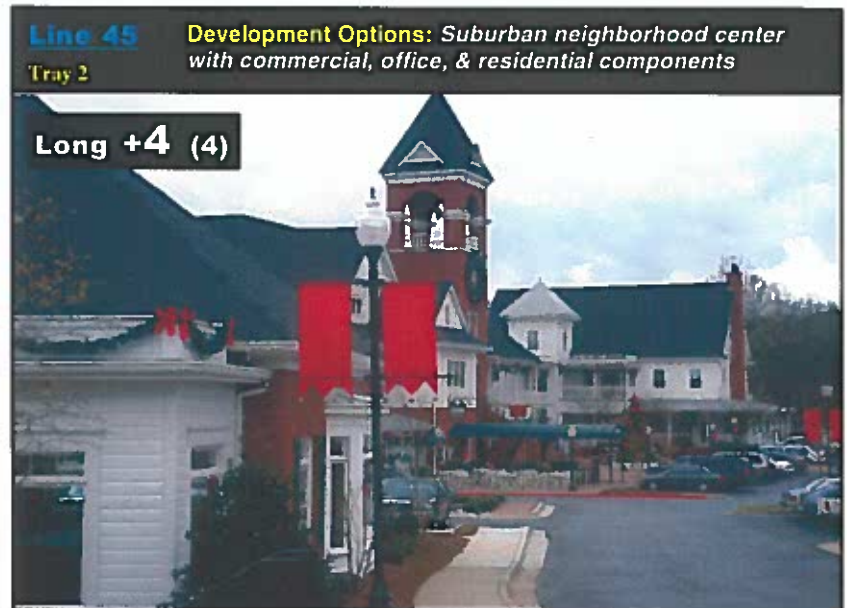
This new office block is another highly rated image. Three and four story offices surround a landscaped interior courtyard.





**Other acceptable forms of commercial development include the images below.**

This commercial development includes a mixed-use center having a more traditional architectural character. It has sidewalks, diagonal parking and an outdoor café. Building heights vary from one to two and one half stories with emphasis on full roofs, more like a small village center.



In this positively rated image, a chain drugstore typically found on a concrete pad site is incorporated into a strip mall, with front yard parking that is screened with landscaping.



Pad and "big box" sites are acceptable to participants, although they received lower values by half when compared to more traditional main street type development images. This type of site plan is usually considered auto-dominated commercial associated with sprawl. Clearly this is considered acceptable by survey participants in Macon – Bibb County and therefore specific locations within future plans should be made for this type of commercial development. This represents a pro-sprawl bias or tolerance and indicates the need for both traditional and contemporary sprawl directions for the new plan. Perhaps more importantly, it indicates that the levels of expectation are low and tolerance is high, for participants will accept any new development. This will make it much harder to insist on higher design and planning standards.



No other image represents a pro-sprawl tolerant bias than the image to the right.





**Rural/Suburban  
Commercial Development**

Even the seemingly egregious strip commercial development image below received a minimally negative value of -1. The important fact is that it is negative and therefore must be used as an example of what not to do in the future.



The possibility of new strip commercial is even more unacceptable.



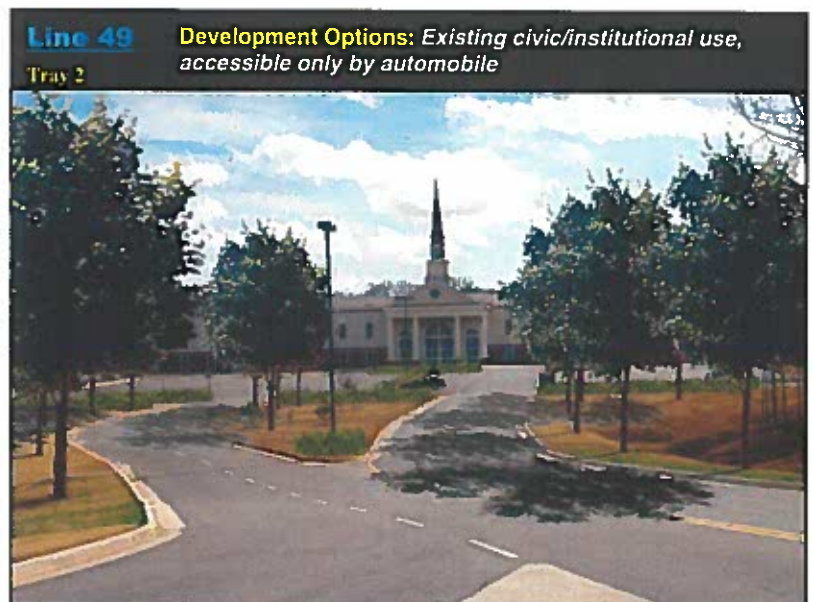


**Rural/Suburban**  
**Civic/ Institutional**

***The images below are a “before and after” simulation illustrating how this church can further improve its image by landscaping the parking lots.***



Without landscaping



With landscaping

**Rural/Suburban**  
**Civic/ Institutional**

Civic and institutional buildings built in “solid box” forms received negative or neutral values.

This contemporary suburban school is a solid masonry block resembling a prison. Schools should be more integrated into a neighborhood and should have an architectural form which is more inviting and which generates civic pride for the tax money that is spent to build it.



This institutional building is also a block with few windows. The large un-landscaped parking lot does not improve the value.



***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

***Commercial/Civic/Institutional Development***

*Locate new Main Street Commercial areas as the center of new traditional neighborhoods*

*Promote and locate new office block adjacent to Main street centers*

*Promote the redevelopment of older commercial areas into mixed use centers*

*Allow limited pad sites*

*Discourage additional strip commercial development*



## **Rural/Suburban Residential Development**

The top rated positive images from the Rural and Suburban Residential Development category illustrate visually attractive appropriate residential development. These represent a range of types, sizes and densities. This range of housing types can best be integrated into a traditional neighborhood form of development.



Large lot single family one unit per acre



Small lot single family one unit per 1/4 to 3/4 acre



While it is considered unacceptable in most places, houses with front garages, or "garage-scapes", with extra wide streets, are acceptable to Macon – Bibb County participants.



**Rural/Suburban  
 Residential Development**

**Line 54** **Residential Development:** Single-family housing on smaller lots surrounding small park  
 Tray 2

**Long +5 (4)**

Small lot single family  
 one unit per ½ acre



Appropriate housing types extend to townhouses, condominiums, apartments and senior citizen housing. All of these typologies can be incorporated into a traditional neighborhood in rural and suburban areas. It is important to note that most of the multi-family housing fronts onto traditional streets, have garages in the rear and incorporate public or semiprivate park space.

**Line 62** **Residential Development:** Garden apartment & townhouse development with large public green  
 Tray 2

**Long +5 (4)**



**Line 61** **Residential Development:** New senior citizen housing typical in suburban areas.  
 Tray 2

**Long +3 (4)**



**Line 63** **Residential Development:** New three-story apartment buildings  
 Tray 2

**All +4 (5)**

**Short +3 (6)**

**Long +5 (4)**



**Rural/Suburban  
Residential Development**

The images below are a “before and after” simulation that in fills a suburban lot. The values become positive with infill of buildings of similar character and scale.

*By infilling a vacant lot the image value increases, reinforcing the policy of infill development before leap-frog development of rural land.*

**Line 58** Residential Development: Existing neighborhood

Tray 2

Long +2 (4)



**Line 57**

Residential Development: Infill housing in existing neighborhood

Tray 2

Long +3 (4)





**Rural/Suburban  
Residential Development**

**Line 50**

Tray 2

**Residential Development:** *Very large lot rural/suburban single-family housing*

**Long +1 (5)**



Farm houses with companion barns belong on rural lands

***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

***Residential Development***

- 1. Create new neighborhoods in rural and suburban areas with a range of residential building types, with higher densities located in the center of the neighborhood, decreasing in density towards the periphery with the large lots located on the periphery*
- 2. Surround new neighborhoods in suburban and rural areas with very large lot farms*
- 3. Infill empty lots as a first priority*

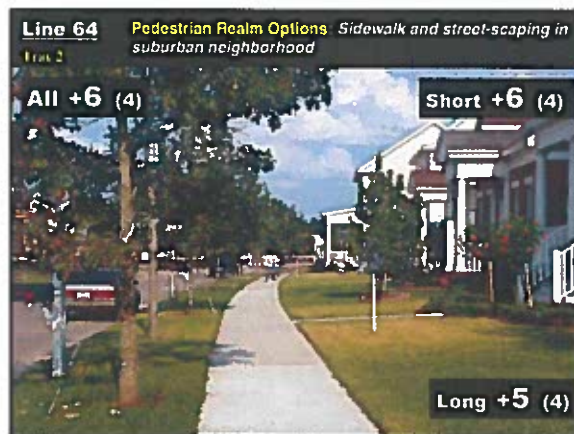
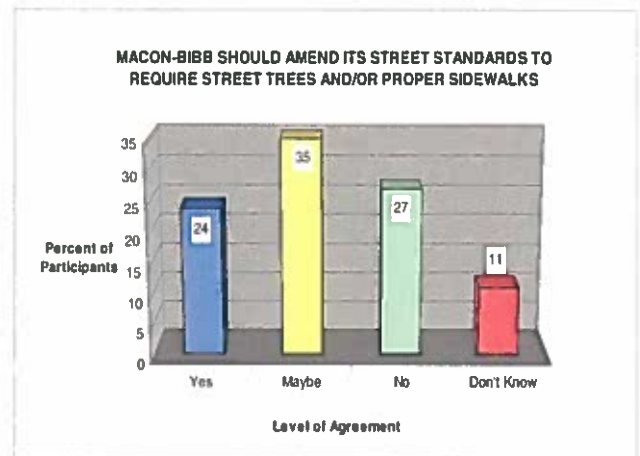


# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Pedestrian Realm Options**

## Rural/Suburban Pedestrian Realm

The pedestrian realm is an important component of rural and suburban areas and neighborhoods. However, 35% of participants indicated “maybe” regarding street trees and sidewalks along streets in rural and suburban areas. 27% did not want street standards amended to require street trees and sidewalks in these areas while 24% did want standards amended to include these pedestrian realm amenities. 11% were undecided.

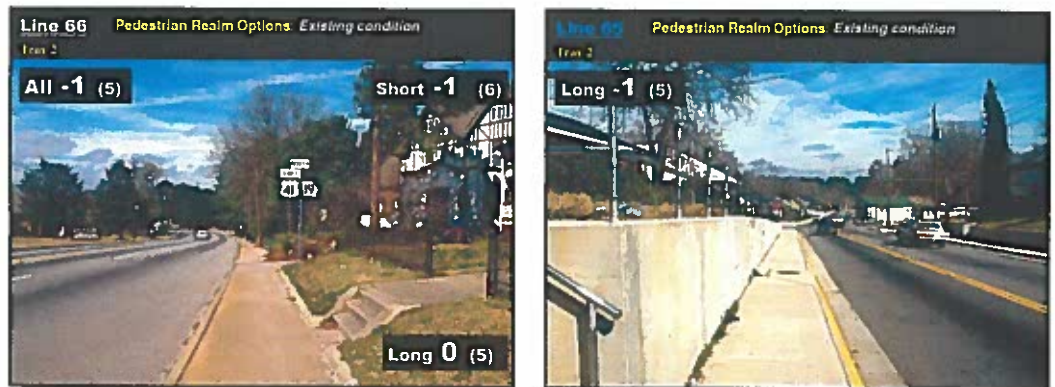


The positive images from the Rural/Suburban Pedestrian Realm category represent visually desirable pedestrian realm features appropriate for Macon – Bibb County. Preferred features which emerge from these highly rated images include appropriately scaled sidewalks for either residential or commercial areas, pedestrian scaled lighting, street trees, a parkway separating the street from the sidewalk, curbing as a buffer, landscaping treatments and pedestrian furniture where appropriate. Images of rural and suburban pedestrian realms without these features were either valued as neutral or valued negatively.



## **Rural/Suburban Pedestrian Realm**

The negative images from the Rural/Suburban Pedestrian Realm category represent features of the pedestrian realm that are poorly designed and maintained and/or deteriorated and therefore are inappropriate for the future vitality of Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods. These pedestrian realm examples lack the fundamental features of positive, visually acceptable pedestrian realms and are therefore avoided by potential residents and consumers. Any appropriate pedestrian realm in Macon – Bibb County which exhibits these qualities is a serious detriment to market development of the region and must be ameliorated.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Rural/ Suburban Pedestrian Realms should include the following characteristics:*

- *sidewalks on all streets wide enough to accommodate projected pedestrian flow*
- *commercial buildings built up to the sidewalk edge in commercial areas*
- *pedestrian furniture such as benches, trash baskets, planters, etc. in commercial areas*
- *street trees and on-street parking to provide protection*
- *continuous awnings in commercial areas to provide protection*
- *semi-public edge treatments such as fencing or hedging in residential areas*
- *pedestrian scaled lighting fixtures*

## **Development Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

- 1. Map and document all pedestrian realm features in an Existing Conditions Map and deteriorated or marginalized pedestrian realms in a Susceptibility to Change Map.*
- 2. Developed a phased plan to repair and redevelop all deteriorated public pedestrian realm features in Macon – Bibb County neighborhoods.*
- 3. Establish maintenance standards; Regulate property maintenance and penalize property owners who fail to maintain properties per maintenance standards.*
- 4. Establish standards for design elements including sidewalks, street tree types and sizes, fence and hedge standards, window openings, signing, awnings etc.*



# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Parks & Open Space Options**

## **Rural/Suburban Parks & Open Space**

The images from the Rural and Suburban Parks and Open Spaces category represent visually attractive open space characteristics considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County rural and suburban areas. A disturbing feature about the ratings of these open space images is the fact that the images depicting developed open space rated as higher by participants than images of open space in its naturalized state. Never-the-less, the inclusion of parks and plazas is considered desirable by participants in suburban office and commercial development and naturalized areas along roadway edges is desirable.



## **Guidelines and Policy Recommendations**

*Rural/Suburban Parks and Open Space should include the following characteristics:*

- *preserve open spaces in their natural state to the greatest extent possible*
- *a range of parks should be provided in rural and suburban areas to meet the needs of existing residential and commercial development*
- *neighborhood parks should be located in rural and suburban neighborhoods within a three minute walk of all residents*
- *parks should include pedestrian furniture and pedestrian scaled lighting*
- *access to parks should be pedestrian friendly and safe*
- *establish design and maintenance standards; trees and green areas should be well maintained*
- *larger park for field sports etc should be within a 20 minute walk*

# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

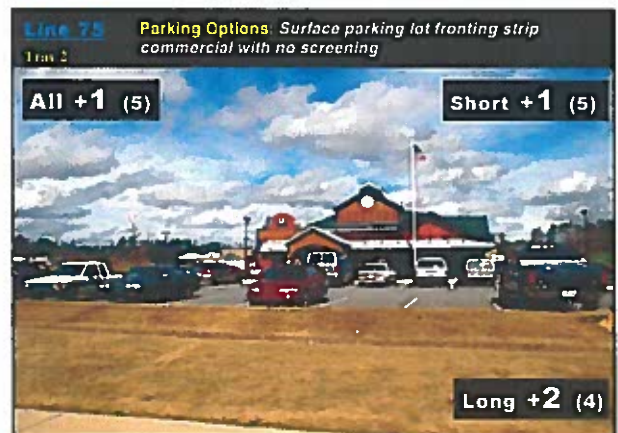
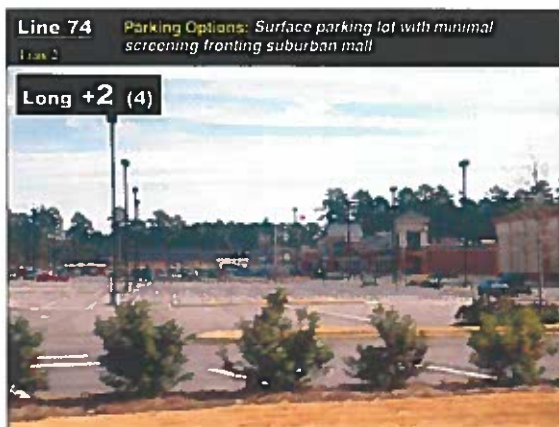
## **Parking Options**



## **Rural/Suburban Parking**

Parking for residential and commercial rural and suburban areas is a large determinant of the overall visual and spatial character and value of place. Open commercial surface parking lots detract from the aesthetic quality of rural and suburban commercial areas in Macon – Bibb County.

The positively rated images from the Rural and Suburban Parking category represent visually attractive and desirable parking alternatives which are considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County commercial uses. The greater the amount of landscaping and screening of parking lots the higher its rating by participants. Parking lots with significant green screening and landscaped with trees is the most appropriate alternative for rural and suburban areas.



### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

*Rural and Suburban Parking should include:*

- *Adopt standards that, at the minimum, locate garages in the rear of the lot or behind the primary façade of a residential building.*
- *Adopt standards for landscaping parking lots with both interior ( one tree for every 4 parking spaces) and peripheral screening in commercial rural and suburban areas*
- *Map and document the utilization of all surface parking lots*

# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Signage Options**

## **Rural/Suburban Signage**

Commercial signage plays a significant factor in the success of retail. The positively rated images in the Rural/Suburban Signage category represent signage alternatives which are considered appropriate for neighborhoods. Characteristics of signage found in the higher rated image include small scaled, low mounted monument-type signage. It is problematic that the large billboard style in the image to the lower right received even a low positive score. This indicates that participants, and most likely the community at large, are becoming more tolerant of these conditions.



The negatively rated image to the left above represents signage alternatives which detract from the visual aesthetic of commercial districts in the rural and suburban areas of the county. The signage features in this image, large billboard signage, relate to strip commercial uses and are not considered appropriate for the county.

### ***Guidelines and Policy Recommendations***

#### ***Neighborhood Signage :***

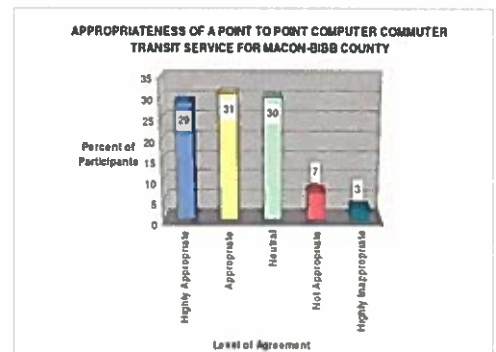
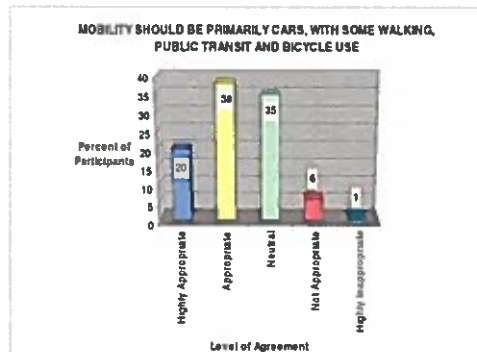
- *establish design standards for commercial signage in rural and suburban areas of Bibb County*
- *phase out all billboard style signage in rural and suburban areas of Bibb County*



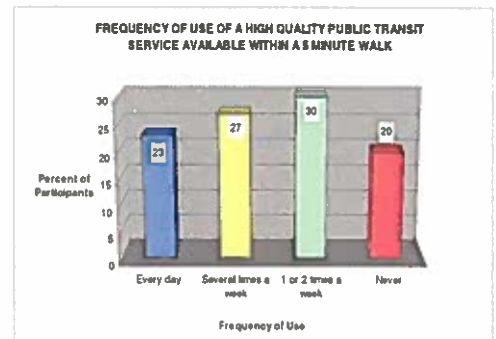
# ***Rural/Suburban Areas***

## **Mobility Options**

## Rural/Suburban Mobility



38% of participants believe that mobility in rural and suburban areas should be primarily by car with some walking, public transit and bicycle use, while 35% were undecided. 20% strongly supported a mix of mobility options. 60% consider a point to point computer transit service as either highly appropriate (29%) or appropriate (31%), while 30% were undecided. 30% of participants would use a high quality public transit service one or two times a week, while 27% would use it several times per week. 23% would use it everyday while only 20% would never use it.



The image from the Rural/Suburban Mobility category represents mobility characteristics considered appropriate for Macon – Bibb County rural and suburban areas. The value of this image supports the distribution of responses to the questions above. Bicycle lanes and paths should complement automobiles as a mobility alternative.



## Guidelines and Policy Recommendations

### Rural/Suburban Mobility

*a range of mobility alternatives should be made available in rural and suburban areas including walkability, bicycle transit, public transit and multi-modal connections*

*Standards for suburban transit stops must be adopted*

*Transit stops should be located at rural neighborhood centers and be reinforced by immediately available retail and services*

*Prepare a long range transit plan to include commuter light rail to connect downtown to secondary regional centers*

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