



DOWNTOWN MACON

Urban Design Plan & Economic Development Strategy

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Foreword

Among Maconites, I've found a growing resolve that now is the time for action. Now is the time to realize the opportunity for a great mid-tier city, a livable community that will attract and sustain those who put a premium on quality of life. Downtown Macon is the civic, economic, social, and cultural center of our region, albeit old. Our community understands the necessity of preserving our history and culture, realizes the economic common sense of reusing buildings and infrastructure already here, appreciates the environmental soundness of redevelopment, density, and green-space, and discerns the power of consensus developed among our people to strengthen a downtown that belongs to all of us. The following Urban Design Plan and Economic Strategy is designed to resuscitate the center city and unleash the economic forces that allow Macon's heart to pump our community's life blood into the surrounding neighborhoods, the suburbs, even the region. As an old southern politician once remarked, "It ain't too late, but it's time!"

"Without vision, the people will perish!" the proverb says. Macon has plenty of vision; it always has! The people who've settled along the Ocmulgee describe a history and culture of incredible accomplishments; just look around us. Naturalist William Bartram was in awe upon his first encounter with the thousand year old remains of "the ancients'" civilization, known as the Ocmulgee Mounds. Our vision today flows from the same sources that attracted Native Americans, brought Ben Hawkins' trading fort and the settlement of 'NewTown' to the fall line at the Ocmulgee. The design of city planner James Webb in 1823 describes a 'city in a park'. It has been adorned and embellished by many Maconites and continues today. The 'City Beautiful' movement after the turn of the century, led by the new civic clubs and the Chamber of Commerce, championed new improvements like the Terminal Station. New office buildings, the interstates, the Centreplex, organizations such as the Macon Heritage Foundation, the Downtown Council, and our city and county governments have stemmed the tide of dis-investment in our downtown that drained dry other urban centers in the past generation. This city was built with the talents, passion, and sacrifice of a diversity of people from the very beginning, and again today, our community asks for our service. Thanks to a legacy of vision, Macon's downtown remains the heart of our region, a natural resource to drive future economic prosperity in our region.

A sincere question might be, "With all the needs and interests in our city, why does this effort focus on the Central Business District?" Visiting our city, William Hudnut, the former mayor and congressman from Indianapolis, said it best, "Cities die from the inside out and they're saved in the same way." The Central Business District provides the most visible image of this community's quality of life. Under-performance and dis-investment in the urban center must be reversed. Attracting private investment is the sustaining lifeblood of our community. Creating jobs and increasing revenues from sales and property taxes through viable enterprise will fund improvements for the public good. A vital central business district will spur new investment, more jobs, enhanced transportation and ultimately spur the return of the middle class of all races back to the neighborhoods that surround the central core. William Hudnut encourages us to avoid a city that resembles a donut and do what it takes to build a solid cookie instead.



A fair question, "Is this plan simply a rehash of ideas Maconites have said for years need to be done downtown?" Actually, the instructions NewTown Macon gave to LDR International and Basile Bauman & Prost was: "Take the visions of this community for its urban center, incorporate them into a comprehensive and coordinated plan, then work with the community to create an economic development strategy." One difference that bodes well for implementation is the public-private partnership NewTown Macon's sincere attempt to incorporate a common vision. This collaborative effort includes cultivating support from both public entities (city, county, state, and federal) and private sectors (other downtown organizations, individuals, corporations, and foundations). Beyond envisioning ideas, the most critical component in this strategy is the provision for a doable means to finance, market, and manage the plan's implementation through public-private partnerships.

Some may wonder why the vision doesn't include a "silver bullet," that large single project like an aquarium or an outlet mall. The simple but powerful strength of Macon's community vision is in its comprehensive and coordinated nature, designed to reweave the 'urban fabric' that has been weakened over the last generation or two. The "big idea" is not one singular project, but a well-developed downtown, enhancing and capitalizing on its natural assets. Simply put, Macon itself becomes the attraction. NewTown Macon believes this is a good plan because it has relied on the community for vision, harnessed the power of comprehensive planning, leveraged the power of public-private partnerships, and developed an action plan that includes means to sustain the efforts.

No one entity can achieve this ambitious community vision. Our community and its leadership understands the fundamental prerequisite "that y'all... ..are we". A civic club member asked me, "How do we counter the perception outside our community of Macon's turf battles, the belief that we place political and private egos above united fronts?" First, my experience is that Macon is little different from other communities in this regard. The salient fact is that developing consensus is difficult. This perception, real or imagined, is detrimental to a community's potential. This has caused our forward-looking community leadership to redouble their efforts in working together. Macon's public/private, city/county, black/white, suburban/urban, blue collar/white collar/no collar, or any other divisible entities, are coming together in this extraordinary effort. And isn't that what developing community is all about?

Macon's heritage in music is legendary. Maconites know well the power of poetry put to music. Though not from Macon, a favorite artist of mine was Jim Croce, and "Walking Back to Georgia" a favorite song. The lyrics ask, "Do we know what it's like to lose a dream or to dream alone?" The centuries' old dream for Macon will not be lost; our community has a vision for Macon as bold and bright as those who've gone before us.

*"Georgia, can you here me callin', I'll be home in just a while,
And if I had to I'd be crawlin', Just to share another mornin' smile."
For she's the girl who said she loved me on that hot dusty Macon Road,
And if she's still around I'm gonna settle down, with that hard lovin' Georgia girl."*

Conie Mac Darnell, President of NewTown Macon



1.0 Introduction

Macon has the potential to become a great city, not just in the State of Georgia and in the Southeast, but nationally. Downtown Macon is at the heart of this opportunity. Its unique design and wealth of historically and architecturally significant buildings set it apart. Conservation and preservation, which have been an important part of downtown Macon's heritage, must continue as it embarks on the 21st Century. At the same time, growth and change must continue to occur within the downtown area.

New visitor attractions both completed and underway provide a basis for substantial economic growth through tourism development. These include the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, Tubman African-American Museum, Children's Museum, Douglas Theatre and an expanded Centreplex. Macon's location and proximity to Atlanta's dynamic economy enhance its potential if marketed astutely as does its excellent interstate highway linkages and the potential of Macon to once again become a passenger rail hub for the State of Georgia. Macon is the geographic center of Georgia linking the urban areas around Atlanta to the north with the cities and towns of South Georgia. To take advantage of these and other opportunities, Macon must plan and foster progress. Intentional public planning and private development will play an important role in the revitalization of the region's urban center.

As Macon enters the dawn of the twenty-first century, downtown will offer a unique alternative to the development that is occurring outside of the urban center. Opportunities must be developed for new office sites, health care and medical-related services, residential uses, specialty retail and restaurants, hotels and conventions, tourism, entertainment and arts venues. Downtown offers a unique urban environment with an historic flavor that is not found elsewhere in the region. In the post-modern age, this is more than nostalgia. The growing tendency to seek out the best of the past and adapt it to the present is reflected in the interest of preservation of old houses, churches, public buildings, and public places that foster a sense of continuity and community in both the manmade and natural environments. With enhancement, Downtown Macon will provide such an experience offering a vibrant environment to live, work, play and visit.

But without guidance, new investment can create an undesirable hodgepodge of development that can potentially compromise the character that makes Downtown Macon so attractive. NewTown Macon, Inc., a public-private partnership, has sponsored the creation of this Urban Design Plan and Economic Development Strategy to guide public and private investment decisions and to provide the stimulus for continued community interest in Downtown Macon's renaissance.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Urban Design Plan and Economic Development Strategy is twofold. First, the plan illustrates how development in Downtown Macon could occur over the next five to ten years with an overall goal to enhance existing historical assets while creating new development opportunities that will secure the viability of downtown for a new century. Second, the strategy illustrates how public and private investment can be leveraged to create



a high-quality public environment that will stimulate sustainable, private economic development.

1.2 Background

Macon has gone through several planning efforts over the last two decades, from Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) initiatives to privately funded strategic plans. Some recommendations have been implemented, while others were shelved for lack of public and/or private support. This current planning initiative is being spearheaded by NewTown Macon, Inc., a dynamic group of public and private stakeholders who are wholly committed to making things happen by setting aside personal agendas and working together towards a common goal. NewTown Macon's membership is diverse, including elected public officials, local planning administrators and a wealth of private stakeholders who are deeply concerned about the viability of the region's urban center.

NewTown Macon, Inc. was formed in the summer of 1996 through the initial efforts of the Peyton Anderson Foundation. As one of its first projects, NewTown Macon commissioned LDR International to complete a "Downtown Status Report" that examined the current state of downtown from both a physical perspective (vacancies, development opportunities and so on) as well as a leadership perspective (how things get done, who are the major players, etc.).

Perhaps more important than the physical plan that came from that process was the community commitment that evolved. The level of participation in the NewTown Macon organization demonstrated that City and County leaders, as well as the multitude of downtown stakeholders, can effectively cooperate and accomplish significant progress when community vision, necessary will and resources are provided.

The draft report contained strategies and recommendations developed over a nine-month period based on dozens of one-on-one interviews as well as several public meetings including three Town Hall Meetings and regular meetings with the NewTown Macon Board of Directors.

Subsequently, NewTown Macon and its various public and private partners utilized the draft report to tie into other key projects throughout downtown including improvements to Martin Luther King Boulevard, a plan for the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway, Civic Square and improvements to Poplar Street among others. At the same time, and based on the conclusions of the draft, NewTown Macon developed a series of eight key interrelated initiatives designed to spur significant private investment in the urban center. With a challenge grant of \$6 million from the Peyton Anderson and Woodruff foundations, NewTown Macon has launched a capital campaign to raise an additional \$30 million in private and public funds (corporate, individual, foundation, city, county, state, and federal). These funds will seed the initiatives that are designed to attract significant private investment in the urban center within the next five years.

LDR, along with Basile Baumann Prost & Associates, Inc., returned to Macon in mid 1999 to augment the original study. The additions included a market study, feasibility study, and economic impact analysis of key redevelopment activities in downtown Macon focusing on key anchor sites as well as a complete update of the initial planning effort from 1997.



The subsequent report is the culmination of these efforts including the core recommendations of the 1997 plan, the eight key initiatives of NewTown Macon, a market study, feasibility study, and economic impact analysis for downtown Macon. Included are additional opportunities and/or economic catalysts that have evolved that can significantly impact downtown revitalization. Among these are a multi-modal transportation opportunity around the historic Macon's historic Terminal Station, the Macon-Bibb County Parks, Recreation, Open Space Master Plan, Downtown Industrial District Redevelopment, the Cherry Street District Business Retention and Recruitment Program, and the proposed Business Improvement District.

This *Urban Design Plan and Economic Development Strategy* is a definitive compilation of the many present and future efforts underway in the Macon Central Business District. Designed to create public and private support for the mission and capital campaign, the plan will also be used to formulate Requests for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQ's and RFP's) from private developers for small and large projects. If successfully implemented, this comprehensive and coordinated plan will provide a quality of life in Macon's urban center unsurpassed among its sister cities and Downtown Macon will have reestablished itself as the choice location in the Middle-Georgia region for present and future generations in the new century.

1.3 Scope

While Downtown Macon was considered comprehensively, the plan recognizes the critical importance of concentrating resources in coordinated key areas to be effective. For the purposes of illustrating urban design concepts the boundaries include the area of the Centreplex and the former Bibb Mill site (enveloping the Ocmulgee River and I-16 that angles through the heart of the city) to the north, Plum Street to the south, the train tracks behind Terminal Station to the east, and Spring Street to the west. From an economic analysis and tourism perspective, Downtown is placed in its larger, regional context. The scope of the study begins with an examination of Downtown Macon today that looks at both the physical and economic environment of the community. Chapters include:

1. Introduction
2. Downtown Macon's Current Market Conditions
3. Urban Design Plan
4. Feasibility and Economic Impact of Plan
5. Implementation Strategy and Action Plan





2.0 *Downtown Macon's Current Market Conditions*

Unlike many downtowns throughout the United States that suffer from significant disinvestment, crumbling infrastructure and a lack of pedestrian activity, Downtown Macon's historical character remains and attracts thousands of people everyday who bring life, vitality and economic prosperity into the area. They work in downtown's banks, professional and government offices, hospitals and clinics and restaurants. People also come to do business: they go to the bank or lawyer's office; they stop by the County Court House or City Hall; they visit the doctor or pharmacy. People are also coming downtown to be entertained. There are restaurants, theaters and museums, and increasingly, new attractions. Special events also draw thousands of visitors regularly. The Cherry Blossom Festival attracts 400,000 to 500,000 people downtown every year.

2.1 Location

Macon's location is among its greatest assets. It is centrally located in Georgia: just over an hour's drive from Atlanta and within a comfortable driving distance (150 miles) from over 8.5 million people. Two major interstates serve the area; I-75, a major interstate and tourism route from the Midwest to Florida and Interstate 16 that travels through downtown Macon connecting Atlanta to Savannah. Downtown Macon is accessed from both I-75 and I-16, with several convenient exits.

Historically Macon has been a freight and passenger rail hub for the Southeast where only a generation ago 100 passenger trains a day were greeted at Macon's Terminal Station in the heart of downtown. The reintroduction of passenger rail from Atlanta, planned to begin in 2004, will have a significant impact on downtown.

Air service is the another critical component of access. While Macon provides air service through the local Municipal Airport, one of world's largest airports is located between Macon and Atlanta only an hour away at Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport. Also, Savannah's deep-water port provides international access to Macon via rail or interstate.

2.2 Boundaries

While Macon's core civic, office and retail center is within a walkable geographic area, several surrounding major in-town uses have an impact on downtown including the Medical Center of Central Georgia, Mercer University, historic districts, Macon Centreplex, Coliseum Hospital, neighboring residential, and light industrial areas. These influences are identified as important attractors and potential beneficiaries of this effort, however, to ensure a focused planning process, a relatively compact area is defined as the downtown core.

The core study area was arrived at by consensus and is shown in Exhibit 1. The study area is bounded by the Centreplex and the former Bibb Mill site (including the Ocmulgee River and I-16) to the north, Plum Street to the south, the train tracks behind Terminal Station to the east, and Spring Street to the west. Stakeholders agreed that this area accurately represented the "downtown core" and the area where resources should be concentrated.



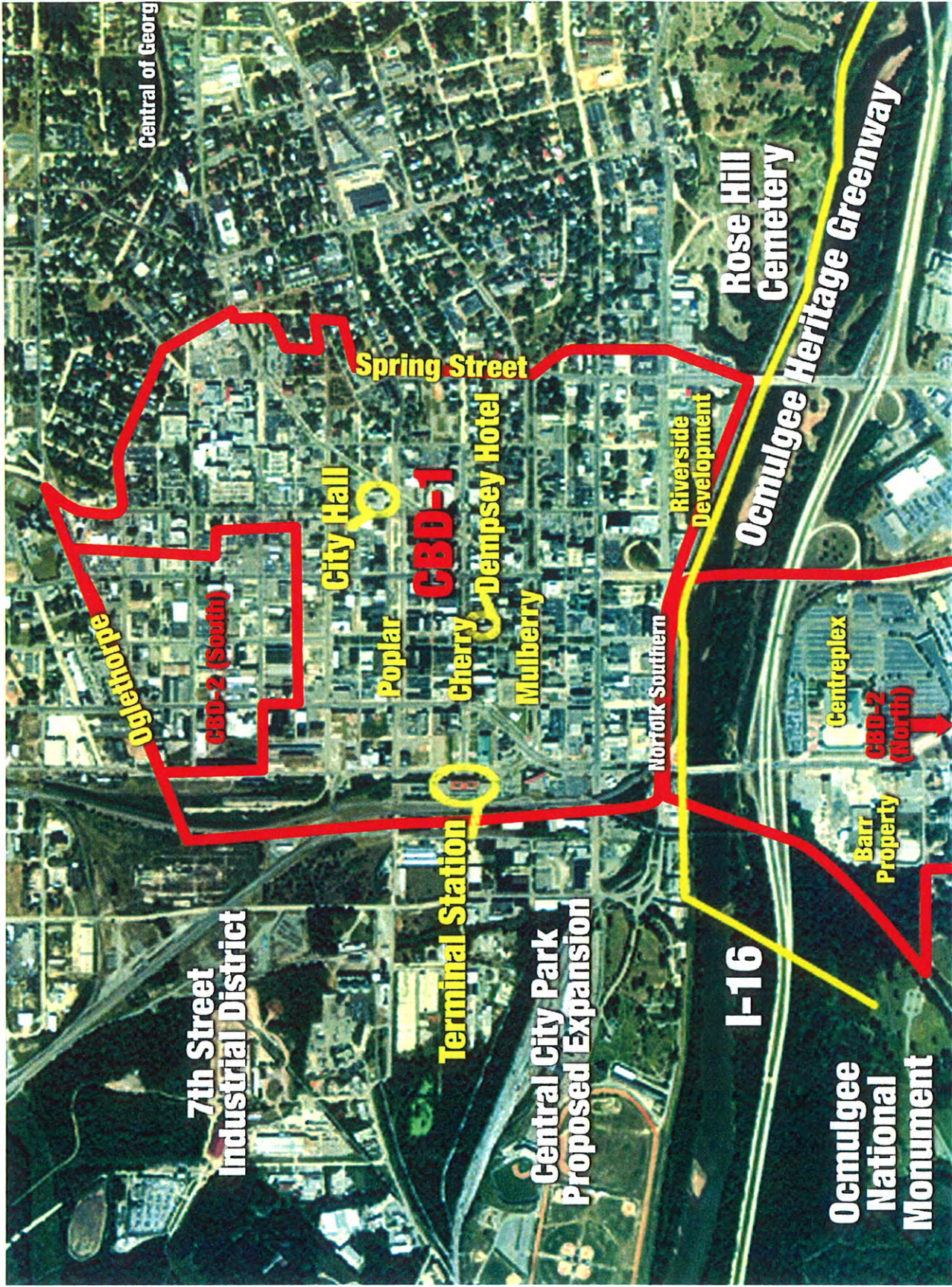
The overall study area is bounded by the area just north of the Ocmulgee River on the north including the Coliseum and Hospital; the 7th Street corridor on the east; Oglethorpe Street on the south; and College Street on the west.

2.3 Summary of Downtown Problems and Planning Issues

Downtown Macon, as in many other urban centers, has suffered from physical and social pressures in the last generation. Fortunately most of the beautiful buildings and many of urban parks remain, although vacancies and certain transitional uses, such as unimproved surface parking lots, retail uses with open storage or large, low-cost square footage requirements, demonstrate a need for more careful planning and proactive measures in the downtown area. The following list (from 1997) summarizes the major issues confronting downtown. These must be considered and appropriately addressed. Much of this list is derived from what was heard from Maconites themselves:

- ***There are several economic development organizations and planning bodies.*** Although each was established for specific purposes, they confuse the picture and make it difficult to assign roles and responsibility to affect change.
- ***Downtown is not a static entity.*** Businesses grow (or leave) and new investment / projects are initiated constantly. A comprehensive plan is needed to coordinate the dynamic nature of downtown development, otherwise public and private investment will respond to immediate demands, without working towards a larger vision.
- ***Significant transportation improvements may impact the way downtown functions.*** The Fall Line freeway, as well as major improvements to I-16 exits, will have a tremendous impact on the way people get to, or go around, downtown. These projects should be developed within a downtown context to take advantage of their economic potential. Also, state highway designations on downtown streets may work against efforts to make downtown more walk-able and pedestrian-friendly.
- ***The Macon Centreplex is isolated and lacks hotels in its immediate vicinity.*** It is difficult to walk to the Centreplex from downtown, limiting the functional linkage between downtown and the region's primary meeting and conference facility. Viable convention centers that attract overnight stays are critical in supporting hotels, tourism, retail and urban entertainment. Hotels in close proximity would enable the convention facility to market beyond the region for overnight stay conventioners. Links to the rest of downtown will enhance the experience for visitors and benefit all of downtown.
- ***Poplar Street needs improvement.*** Poplar Street is a high-profile street near major centers of activity, including City Hall. Currently, the street can be characterized as an expanse of asphalt, with few trees, high vacancies and unoccupied storefronts giving the look of "missing teeth" within key block frontages.
- ***Downtown's upper floors are almost entirely unused.*** Throughout the downtown area, upper floors are mostly boarded up or used for storage. These represent excellent opportunities for urban housing, studios and offices. Current regulations make it difficult to reuse these spaces.





Aerial Map of Macon Showing Study Boundaries and Key Projects

- ***The Bibb Mill Site is a key downtown redevelopment opportunity.*** Located adjacent to the Macon Centreplex, the former mill property currently sits vacant, although plans for its redevelopment are being formulated. The site is ideal for a master planned development that relates to the Macon Centreplex, the hospital and other nearby uses.
- ***The Ocmulgee River is blocked from downtown by an active rail line.*** As a result, its potential has gone largely untapped. While there is limited access to the northern bank for recreational purposes, there is no continuous pedestrian access. The opportunities of a developed waterfront in the heart of the city, as evidenced in other cities, is tremendous.
- ***Mulberry Street requires environmental enhancement.*** As downtown's primary office and institutional address, Mulberry Street should present a very positive image to the world. The street needs street trees and the median requires enhancement to highlight what is recognized as wonderful edges to the historic boulevard.
- ***Downtown contains abundant in-fill opportunities.*** In several places along downtown's primary streets, vacant or underutilized land holds excellent potential for new development. If left undeveloped, these areas will have a blighting influence on downtown.
- ***Investment in new attractions must be supported with enhancements to their surrounding settings.*** The Georgia Music Hall of Fame, the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame, an expanded Tubman African-American Museum and other investment in Macon's attractions must not occur in isolation. Careful attention must be paid to the entire visitor experience, from arriving downtown to having restaurants and other services within a safe and comfortable walk.
- ***Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is evolving as the primary entrance into downtown.*** Currently, this corridor contains strip commercial from the south and an unattractive railroad bridge from I-16. Most visitors will arrive via this route, so special attention must be paid to create a positive first impression. In addition, creating a suitable pedestrian environment along and across this corridor will be important to link visitor attractions near Terminal Station with the rest of downtown.
- ***Several gateways and downtown entrances need enhancement.*** Most points of arrival portray an uninviting image to downtown, unimproved, cluttered with high voltage wires, with unattractive strip commercial and billboards.
- ***Coleman Hill Park is in need of maintenance and enhancement.*** The park contains some of the best views in the city, but it is not developed to highlight and celebrate them.
- ***Several areas within downtown contain marginal uses.*** Because of lower land values and a lack of demand for land close to downtown, many properties near downtown have deteriorated and are not maintained. Likewise, many buildings throughout downtown are not being used to their highest potential, creating pockets of inactivity and disrepair that tarnish the image of downtown.



- ***Downtown bridges must facilitate pedestrian use.*** The most critical is the Otis Redding Bridge, which provides a very narrow ledge for pedestrians, but could potentially become a major pedestrian linkage between the Centreplex, the Bibb Mill site and downtown's visitor domain.
- ***Riverside Drive is too wide and traveled too heavily by trucks taking short cuts.*** As a result, traffic moves very quickly and development is auto-oriented and unattractive. A close proximity to the river, as well as plentiful underutilized land, makes Riverside Drive a logical expansion area for downtown, but its environment must be improved.
- ***City Hall lacks a civic image and setting.*** Currently, the front door of City Hall faces a confusing intersection and parking lot. City Hall should have a more dignified civic setting.
- ***There is a desire to relocate the state's farmers market back downtown.*** The farmers market was located downtown a generation ago. The urban center is the natural location and its return should be encouraged.
- ***Cherry Street requires continual investment.*** Cherry Street plays the important role of downtown's primary shopping street but still has vacancies that can be filled. While the atmosphere of Cherry Street is adequate, it must be continually maintained to encourage its viability and continued investment.
- ***Terminal Station is underused.*** Because the ownership of this landmark building had been in complex litigation, no long-term use has been identified. As the last union station remaining in the State of Georgia, it is not only an important anchor to downtown's visitor domain but it is an asset of the region, state and nation. With its location in downtown Macon, it is critical that the Terminal Station be redeveloped to its highest and best use.
- ***Downtown residential neighborhoods must be sustained and new residential development encouraged.*** Residential development plays a critical role in creating downtown activity after hours. Many of Macon's in-town residential neighborhoods contain beautiful homes and tree lined streets. In addition to protecting these existing enclaves, loft apartments and new housing should be promoted in the downtown core itself.
- ***There is no nightlife downtown.*** After business hours, most of downtown empties out, leaving little activity on the streets after dark. While there are theaters and several restaurants downtown, most complain of a lack of nighttime activities.
- ***Perceptions of downtown's safety, cleanliness, and parking issues need to be addressed.*** Even though there is evidence to the contrary, 'perception is reality' for many potential visitors so developing an informative campaign to understand these and intentional plans to address these issues will be important.

As evidence of the community's serious desire to revitalize its urban center, many of these issues from the original 1997 study are being addressed with public and private efforts including NewTown Macon's eight initiatives which will be outlined later.



2.4 Economic/Demographic Analysis

Understanding Macon's market conditions is an important component of a successful urban design plan and economic development strategy for downtown. This section of the report analyzes the Macon area market. It includes an economic and demographic analysis, real estate market research, a market assessment, and a review of competitive and comparable projects. The real estate market research studies the market for office, retail, and hotel uses in Macon, and investigates the possible impact of passenger rail and the Atlanta regional market on the proposed anchor projects.

2.4.1 Population

There is a sharp contrast between the growth rates of Macon-Bibb County and the Macon MSA. Macon-Bibb County grew at a much slower rate, 3.2%, than that of the MSA, 13.5%, from 1980-1995. A population gap has therefore developed between the city and suburbs. The challenge for downtown Macon is to tap the market that has grown in the suburbs.

From 1990 to 1998, the population of the Macon metropolitan statistical area (MSA) grew at a compound annual growth rate, 1.15%, slightly higher than that of the U.S., although it trailed the population growth of Georgia (see Table 1). This trend is not expected to change dramatically over the next four years.

Table 1: Population Growth in Macon, Georgia, and the U.S.

Area	1990	1998	2003 (projected)	Compound Annual Growth	
				1990 to 1998	1998 to 2003
Macon MSA	291,000	319,000	334,000	1.15%	0.92%
Georgia	6,478,000	7,562,000	8,224,000	1.95%	1.69%
U.S.	248,710,000	270,254,000	281,645,000	1.04%	0.83%

Sources: Sales Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power, 1991, 1998; Price Waterhouse Coopers Draft Report to NewTown Macon and Georgia State Rep. Lucas, 1999

2.4.2 Income

As shown in Table 2, median household income in the Macon Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) grew at a rate of 3.18% from 1990 to 1998, somewhat below that of Georgia, 4.35%, and the U.S., 4.65%.



Table 2: Median Household Income

Area	1990	1998 ¹	Compound Annual Growth 1990 to 1998	2003 projected	Compound Annual Growth 1998 to 2003
Macon MSA	\$27,997	\$35,971	3.18%	\$39,038	1.65%
Georgia	\$29,125	\$40,936	4.35%	\$46,799	2.71%
U.S.	\$30,367	\$43,692	4.65%	\$50,053	2.76%

Sources: Sales Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power, 1991, 1998; Price Waterhouse Coopers Draft Report to NewTown Macon and Georgia State Rep. Lucas, 1999

According to 1998 data, Table 3 shows the Macon MSA had a higher percentage of households making less than \$50,000 (65%) than Georgia (60%) and the U.S. (56%).

Table 3: Household Income – Percentage of Total Households

Area	<\$20000	\$20000 - \$49999	\$50000 - \$99999	\$100,000
Macon MSA	29%	36%	27%	8%
Georgia	25%	35%	29%	11%
U.S.	23%	33%	30%	13%

Sources: Sales Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power, 1991, 1998; Price Waterhouse Coopers Draft Report to NewTown Macon and Georgia State Rep. Lucas, 1999

Table 4 indicates that, in spite of Macon lagging in income levels, the per capita income growth trends for the City of Macon outpace the Macon MSA and the state of Georgia. These trends are expected to accelerate from 1997 to 2002.

Table 4: Per Capita Income Growth Trends and Projections

				Avg. Annual \$ 1992 to 1997	Compound Growth Rate	Avg. Annual \$ 1997 to 2002	Compound Growth Rate
	1992	1997	2002				
City of Macon	14,230	18,269	26,539	808	5.12	1,654	7.75
Macon MSA	17,689	22,306	29,266	923	4.75	1,392	5.58
Georgia	18,904	24,773	32,579	1,174	5.56	1,561	5.63

Sources: Sales Marketing Management, Survey of Buying Power, 1991, 1998; Price Waterhouse Coopers Draft Report to NewTown Macon and Georgia State Rep. Lucas, 1999

2.4.3 Education

The percentage of persons in Macon 25 year of age and older who have at least a high school diploma is slightly above the state average [see Table 5]. Among Georgia's seven largest cities, Macon ranks fifth on percentage of persons 25 years of age and older with a high school diploma. The percentage of persons in Macon with a bachelor's degree or higher is 15.8%-- 3.5% below the state average.



Table 5: Educational Attainment, Persons 25 Years of Age and Older

(Percent High School Graduate or Higher)

	1980	1990
Albany	58.0%	67.9%
Athens	61.7%	73.7%
Atlanta	65.9%	78.7%
Augusta-Aiken	57.8%	71.4%
Columbus	57.7%	69.0%
MACON	58.2%	71.1%
Savannah	58.7%	72.7%
GEORGIA	56.4%	70.9%

(Percent Bachelor's Degree/4 Years of College or Higher)

	1980	1990
Albany	13.7%	16.5%
Athens	27.8%	30.7%
Atlanta	19.7%	26.1%
Augusta-Aiken	13.8%	17.7%
Columbus	11.8%	15.0%
MACON	12.8%	15.8%
Savannah	13.0%	17.2%
GEORGIA	14.6%	19.3%

Source: Economic Yearbook of Georgia's MSAs – 1999, Selig Center for Economic Growth

2.4.4 Retail Sales

The Macon MSA's retail sales grew from 1990 to 1998 at a faster rate, 6.8%, than both the state, 5.9%, and the nation, 4.4%, as shown in Table 6. Retail sales are expected to continue to grow, from 1998 to 2002, at a faster rate than the nation, although they are expected to fall below that of the state average.

Table 6: Retail Sales (Macon MSA, Georgia, U.S.) (in thousands of dollars)

Area	1990	1998	Compound Annual Growth 1990 to 1998	2003 (projected)	1998 to 2003 Compound Annual Growth
Macon MSA	\$2,138,721	\$3,609,851	6.76%	\$4,485,495	5.58%
Georgia	\$46,748,222	\$73,998,825	5.91%	\$96,634,775	6.90%
U.S.	\$1,807,182,519	\$2,546,287,000	4.38%	\$3,103,895,000	5.08%

Source: Price Waterhouse Coopers Draft Report to NewTown Macon and Georgia State Rep. Lucas, 1999

Table 7 shows that average retail sales and annual compound growth rates for retail store groups in the Macon MSA were highest in the automotive group, \$200 million, 26.2%, followed by the general merchandise group, \$61 million, 15.4%.



Table 7: Retail Sales by Store Group (in thousands of dollars)

Store Group	1993	1994	1995	1996	Average Annual Sales	Annual Compound Growth Rate
Total Retail	\$2,438,871	N/A	\$3,218,054	\$3,459,682	\$340,270	12.36%
Food	\$419,604	N/A	\$453,267	\$469,654	\$16,683	3.83%
Eating & Drinking	\$246,453	N/A	\$279,377	\$299,965	\$17,837	4.27%
General Merch.	\$340,531	N/A	\$470,031	\$522,886	\$60,785	15.37%
F.F. & A.	\$109,377	N/A	\$131,247	\$136,085	\$8,903	7.55%
Automotive	\$593,958	N/A	\$1,119,952	\$1,195,057	\$200,366	26.24%
Drug	\$104,606	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Sources: "Macon, Georgia's Business Center," Macon Economic Development Commission, January 1998; Sales and Marketing Management, 1996 and 1997; CVI, Community Vision Implementation, April 1998.

It is projected that 2 million s.f. will be required for eating/drinking establishments in the Macon MSA by 2002, up from an estimated 1.4 million s.f. in 1997 [see Table 8]. Miscellaneous retail establishments are also expected to require 1.4 million s.f., up from an estimated 970,000 s.f. in 1997.

Table 8: Population-Driven Demand for Retail Space, (5 County Area*)

Macon MSA	1990 Census	1992 Estimate	1997 Estimate	2002 Projection
Population	291,079	307,664	316,363	348,951
Per Capita Income	-	\$17,689	\$22,306	\$29,266
Total Personal Income	100.00%	-	\$5,442,268,496	\$7,056,793,078
SIC 58	4.21%	-	\$229,273,988	\$297,291,303
Eating/Drinking	-	-	-	\$430,231,928
SIC 59/591	2.85%	-	\$155,240,901	\$201,295,272
Misc. Retail	-	-	-	\$291,309,070
Median Sales/s.f.	\$208.09	-	-	-
S.F.-SIC 58	-	-	1,428,667	2,067,528
Eating/Drinking	-	-	-	-
S.F.-SIC 59/591	-	-	967,347	1,399,919
Misc. Retail	-	-	-	-
Total S.F. of Retail	-	-	2,396,014	3,467,447

* 5-County area includes Bibb, Houston, Peach, Twiggs, and Jones Counties

Source: Dollars and Cents of Shopping Centers, 1997, Urban Land Institute; CVI, Community Vision Implementation, April 1998.



2.4.5 Employers

In 1997, the largest employer by far in the Macon MSA was the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center. The second and third largest employers were the Medical Center of Central Georgia and the Bibb County Board of Education, respectively.

Table 9: Employers with 1,000 or More Employees, Macon MSA (1997)

Major Employers	Description of Product(s) or Service(s)	1997 Employees
Warner Robbins Air Logistics Center	U.S. Air Force Base	17,060
Medical Center of Central Georgia	Hospital	3,422
Bibb County Board of Education	Public Education	3,300
Brown & Williamson Tobacco Co.	Cigarette Manufacturer	3,076
GEICO	Insurance Company	1,700
City of Macon	City Government	1,305
Englehard Corporation	Clay Products Manufacturer	1,200
Blue Bird Corporation	School Bus Manufacturer	1,100
Mercer University	Private Education	1,077
Cagle's Inc.	Poultry Wholesaler	1,000
YKK (USA) Inc.	Zipper Manufacturer	1,000

Sources: "Macon, Georgia's Business Center," Macon Economic Development Commission, January 1998; Sales and Marketing Management, 1996 and 1997; CVI, Community Vision Implementation, April 1998.

2.4.6 Tourism & Conventions

As seen in Table 10, 1998 tourist expenditures in Macon & Bibb County were \$364 million, up from \$296 million in 1997 (an increase of 23%), according to the Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau. According to a report prepared for the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade & Tourism, Bibb County now ranks 9th of 159 Georgia counties in tourist expenditures, and its rate of growth was surpassed by only 3 Georgia counties in the 1997-98 period.

Table 10: Tourism Revenues, Macon & Bibb County

Year	Amount
1994	\$230
1995	\$252
1996	\$275
1997	\$296
1998	\$364

Sources: "Annual Reports, 1995, 1996, 1997," Macon-Bibb County Convention Visitors Bureau (CCVB); CVI: Community Vision Implementation, April 1998.

The 1998 Community Vision & Implementation Study (performed by Scott Land Planning & Design, Inc. and Agency Approval & Development, Inc.) reported that trends in the Macon and Bibb County area from 1995 to 1997 showed an increasing number of conventions and meetings, delegates, and expenditures per delegate. Data from the Centreplex is consistent with this; the number of visitors to the Centreplex and Downtown Auditorium increased by



50,000 from 1997 to 1998, from approximately 730,000 to 780,000. Total spending on Centreplex concessions, in-house catering, and alcohol also increased from 1997-98 to 1998-99, from \$1.24 million to \$1.36 million.

Table 11: Visitors, Events, Spending

Food & Beverage Revenue		
	July '97-June '98	July '98-June '99
Concessions	\$422,400	\$436,769
Alcohol	\$289,416	\$275,297
In-House Catering	\$532,924	\$650,520
Total	\$1,244,740	\$1,362,586
Events	1997	1998
	981	1,033
Visitors (also Includes Downtown Auditorium)		
	731,082	779,495

Sources: "Analysis of the Marketability and Appropriateness of Mixed Land Uses, Former Bibb Mill Property..."
L.D.A. Inc.; Macon Centreplex.

2.5 Real Estate Market Research

2.5.1 Office Space

According to Fickling & Co., the downtown office market remained stable for most of 1999, with the exception of BellSouth Advertising vacating approximately 15,000 s.f. in the Wachovia Building. Leasing activity is expected to pick up in the next year as several major tenants downtown seem to be expanding and will need additional space. In 1998, the downtown office market's vacancy rate decreased due in large part to Rivoli Bank and Trust, Inc.'s purchase and renovation of the old Bank South Building. The total amount of space absorbed in the downtown market in 1998 was approximately 33,000 s.f. According to Fickling & Co., "the Charter Medical Building was the only high-profile building in downtown Macon with significant space available." All other Class A building remained 100% leased.

According to Fickling & Co., downtown Class A office space has an effective average rental rate (EARR) of \$13.50/s.f. with a full-service lease and a vacancy rate of 14%. Macon real estate specialists estimated that Class A space downtown would rent for somewhere in the range of \$14-\$18/s.f.; the average estimate was \$16-17/s.f.

New construction rental and occupancy rates for downtown office space are not available, but new office space in the suburbs is currently renting for \$17/s.f. (the highest office rents are reportedly being charged at the Arkwright Road interchange), while the rates for Class A office space in the suburbs are \$0.50 lower than the rates for Class A space downtown. This seems to indicate that lease rates for newly constructed office space downtown would not be much different than the \$17/s.f. being charged in the suburbs.



According to Fickling & Co., the most significant news for the Macon regional office market for 1998 was the 250,000 s.f. GEICO Insurance Company expansion. Fickling said that the suburban office market remained stable in 1998 with only a slight net absorption. Although Aetna and CIGNA moved out of northern Bibb County, vacancy rates have dropped since then. In the short-term, it was anticipated that Georgia College & State University and Fort Valley State University will relocate from their satellite campuses in the CIGNA Building to the Macon State College Campus. It was estimated that this would increase the available supply of office space in Macon from 60,000 s.f. to 200,000 s.f. In its 1998 office market report, Fickling noted that small office space was in short supply, but planned development at Arkwright Road and Riverside Drive was projected to increase supply.

Based on occupancy, lease rates, and corporate plans for expansion, the office market is the strongest real estate market in the downtown, and is forecast to continue growing throughout the year. It is recommended that NewTown Macon give priority to the development of office space in its downtown redevelopment projects.

2.5.2 Retail Space

Information on downtown retail space is somewhat limited, because of the dwindling performance and demand. Downtown retail space has an EARR (full-service lease) of \$4/s.f., with a range of \$4-\$8/s.f., and the vacancy rate for downtown retail space is estimated at 20% [Fickling & Co.]. Other estimates put downtown retail space lease rates within the range of \$6-\$10 (net). Estimates also indicate that new retail space in a revitalized downtown could conceivably rent for \$8-12/s.f.- full-service (with taxes and insurance paid by the management company).

Elsewhere in the Macon area, Class A retail space is reportedly leasing for \$12-\$15/s.f.- net (Northside area). Growth is continuing in the north and northwest parts of the city and south in the Hartley Bridge Road Area. Warner Robins bordering Macon to the south has also experienced significant growth. Despite minimal retail activity downtown, Fickling & Co. says the retail market is still the most active sector in the Macon area. As businesses expand, the trend has been toward freestanding locations for retailers.

One Macon real estate specialist estimated that fast food restaurant space leased for \$13-16/s.f. in the Macon area. One restaurant on Arkwright Rd., Logan's Roadhouse Grille, has a \$30/s.f. triple net lease rate. It is estimated that a new restaurant downtown or on the Bibb Mill Site could generate rents close to \$16/s.f. Upper-end and fast-food restaurants are flourishing in Macon now, while family restaurants are not doing as well.

The retail sector in downtown Macon is not very expansive, shrinking from its once dominant position. However, this presents an opportunity for retail businesses to enter the market and experience low rents. The revitalization program being advocated by NewTown Macon for the downtown will bring more tourists, office workers, hotel and convention guests, and commuters to the area, dramatically heightening demand for retailers and restaurants.



2.5.3 Hotels

BBP conducted a survey that gathered information on hotels within 15 miles of the downtown. Information gathered included: average daily room rate (ADR), average occupancy, age of the hotel, seasonal and daily variations in business, market segments, and industry trends.

The average daily room rate for hotels in the Macon area was \$50 per night, and the average occupancy rate was 61%. There was slight variability in the occupancy percentage of budget hotels (defined as those having room rates below \$50 per night) and mid-price hotels (where the ADR was \$50 per night or higher). The occupancy percentage was four percentage points higher for mid-price hotels, 63%, than for budget hotels, 59%. For mid-price hotels, the ADR ranged from \$52 to \$84 per night, while the ADR for budget hotels ranged from \$30 to \$45 per night. In Atlanta, by contrast, the ADR for a single room in a business hotel range from approximately \$60 to \$260 per night.

Peak business for the Macon hotel industry occurs primarily in the summer months. Several hotels extend their peak season into the early part of fall. Winter months were consistently reported as having the lowest demand for hotel rooms. Hotel managers reported that weekdays were the busiest part of the week, while demand usually dropped off on weekends. Of those hotels responding to a request for information on whether their primary clients were tourists or business travelers, seven said most guests were there on business, three said most guests were tourists, and two had a 50-50% split between the two groups. The preponderance of business clients at Macon's hotels corresponds with the higher demand for hotel rooms on weeknights.

The only major business-oriented hotel in the downtown area is the Crowne Plaza, where room rates start at \$61 per night. The highest starting rate in the Macon area (among those surveyed) is at the Courtyard by Marriott, where room rates started at \$84/night. The largest hotel surveyed (by number of rooms) is the Crowne Plaza, which has 298 rooms.

A 1997 study by Land Development Analysts, Inc. (LDA) found that Macon's lodging inventory consisted of some 3,800 rooms. The major markets included the I-75 and I-475 Corridors. The downtown area was considered a minor market, since the room count in that area was less than 500. The downtown also has a bed & breakfast (The 1842 Inn) and budget-rate hotel (Macon Travelodge Suites downtown). Macon experienced a growth in hotel rooms over the period 1995-1997; the number of rooms increased by 10% in that span. The hotels opening during that period were small, and averaged 64 rooms.

BBP discovered that there was a contrast in both room rates and occupancy rates between those hotels on the primary corridors, I-75, and I-475 corridor. Those on the I-75 corridor charge room rates that started at an average of \$58, compared to I-475 hotels, which charge an average of \$42 for a starting rate. The occupancy percentage for I-75 hotels averaged 64%, compared to 58% for I-475 hotels. One possible explanation for this contrast in rates and occupancies is that I-75 is closer to downtown Macon than I-475, and there is a greater demand for rooms closer to downtown.



Interviews with local real estate agents revealed mixed thoughts about whether there are enough hotels in the downtown and surrounding area to serve the downtown. One Macon hotel industry specialist did think the Macon hotel market would improve as a result of a comprehensive downtown revitalization strategy. It is estimated that, in such a case, higher-quality hotels could achieve rates of \$75.00-\$100.00 per room, with an occupancy rate of 60%.

The hotel industry in Macon grew in the 1990s as a result of the growth of tourism and an increasing occupancy rate. Although the average ADR at Macon's hotels is approximately \$50/night, it is possible that this rate could be significantly increased with a comprehensive revitalization campaign that brings more business people and tourists to Macon.

2.5.4 Residential

There was limited information available on the downtown residential market. There is a wide variety of residential units downtown, ranging from Section 8 Housing, students loft housing, and apartments. There are also the beginnings of loft development with approximately 28 units with plans for more. Currently, as in many urban centers in transition, it is reported that the downtown housing market is not as widely accepted by residents as the suburban market because of negative perceptions and lack of marketing. There are, however, many older buildings downtown that are suitable for conversion to loft housing.

There are currently limited housing options downtown. NewTown Macon should investigate the possibility of increasing various housing options, as this is essential to developing a strong neighborhood identity downtown.

2.6 Market Assessment and Opportunities

Based on the data that was gathered through interviews and previously completed market studies, a market assessment has been formulated describing opportunities or gaps. Following are key findings about the Macon area real estate market:

- The market for downtown office space is better than the market for any other use in the downtown area. The absorption rate for office uses was approximately 33,000 s.f. for 1998.
- There is currently a 14% vacancy rate for office uses, as compared to a 20% vacancy rate for retail uses.
- Rental rates are also significantly higher for office uses than for retail uses. New downtown office space in a revitalized downtown is projected to rent full-service for \$16-17/s.f., as compared to \$8-\$12 for new retail space.
- The occupancy rate for hotels in Macon increased over the period 1991-1999, from 55% to 61%. The average room rate also increased over that period, from \$40 to \$50



-
- The amount of underutilized retail space and lack of restaurants in the downtown area indicate there is an opportunity for these users, particularly with the expected increase in office users and tourism in the downtown.
 - The anticipated increase in visitors to Macon resulting from the expansion of the tourism industry, transportation improvements, and the probable growth in office space is likely to increase the demand for hotel rooms as well.
 - The LDA study found that growth in visitors to Macon, from the Centreplex, museums, sports, and other events, has been impressive.
 - With conventions and meetings, the hotel market could support two new hotels on the Bibb Mill site totaling 200 rooms, according to the LDA study (1997). However, at present, the market does not support one 200-room hotel when conferences are not.
 - LDA analyzed traffic volume on Coliseum Drive at the Bibb Mill site and Centreplex, and found that its volume was higher than that of other roads that had been more popular for development in Macon. This is further evidence of the site's excellent development potential.

The available data for the two full years of Centreplex operations show increased spending on concessions and in-house catering. Figures also show the combined number of visitors to the Coliseum, Convention Center, and downtown Auditorium increased by 50,000 from 1997 to 1998, and 50 more events were held in 1998 than in 1997. Opportunities remain for more conventions with overnight stays.



3.0 *Urban Design Plan*

There are several reasons to be proactive in addressing Downtown Macon's issues. From the City and County's perspective, a successful downtown highlights Macon's prosperity and outstanding quality of life. In more practical terms, continued investment reaps direct returns through increased jobs and expanded property and retail sales taxes. From a private investment perspective, developers are more likely to invest in downtown if there is a comprehensive plan in place that clearly illustrates what is envisioned for the future. Potential developers want to minimize risk. They want to know what they are buying into and want the City and County to support their investment. They want to be assured that a clean, safe and well-maintained environment supports their investment. Finally, residents and visitors want to feel safe and cared for while in downtown, especially after business hours.

The first step in proactively affecting positive change is to understand how downtown currently functions and how it could function better. There are considerations relating to how people move through downtown: how they arrive, which streets are the most heavily used, where people park and where they tend to walk. In addition to the movement of people, it is important to understand where the major opportunities are: which uses are viable, where strong architecture exists and where vacant land presents opportunities for new development. Section 3.4, the Framework Plan, illustrates which specific streets and public places should be emphasized, and for what reason. Section 3.5 contains an analysis of vacant and underutilized property. These two should be used in tandem: the Framework Plan shows how the downtown street network would ideally function and the vacant and underutilized property diagram shows where development is likely to occur.

3.1 *Gateways and Entrances*

The arrival experience is an important one. Downtown Macon's "front door" should convey a positive image and welcome the visitor by providing sufficient guidance to find parking, attractions and important landmarks, such as the Medical Center and Bibb County Courthouse. The goal is to make downtown easy to find and use so people will want to return. Needless to say, today's visitor may be tomorrow's investor!

Most people traveling to Downtown Macon arrive by car. There are six primary points of arrival – five are relatively well defined. Visitors and many regional residents use the interstate system, while residents from the west arrive via Forsyth Street and Riverside Drive. Residents enter downtown from the south via Forsyth, First and Second Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard entrance corridor lacks a strong point of arrival, containing mostly strip commercial development up to Poplar Street. The intersection of Spring Street and Riverside Drive is another important gateway that does not portray a positive image for downtown. The river is a strong delineating element that creates a very strong sense of arrival at the three bridge crossing points. There is great potential to accentuate these crossings as gateways into downtown.

Two major gateways occur at the edge of the larger downtown area. They are the intersection of College and Forsyth Streets and the intersection of Oglethorpe and First Streets. Both areas contain potential redevelopment opportunities, capitalizing on their strategic locations.



3.2 Major Vehicular Routes

Major vehicular routes into and through downtown include Georgia Avenue to Mulberry Street; Forsyth Street to Cotton Avenue to Second Street; First Street; Broadway to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard; Spring Street; Poplar Street and Riverside Drive. Several streets within the downtown core carry substantial traffic volumes, but function primarily as local streets. These include Cherry Street; Plum Street; Third Street and portions of First and Second Streets.

A careful balance must be maintained between accommodating peak hour traffic volumes and creating a pedestrian-friendly downtown environment where one feels safe and comfortable walking throughout downtown.

3.3 Pedestrian Focus Areas

Some downtown streets contain more pedestrian activity than others. Cherry Street, for example, contains substantial pedestrian traffic, primarily due to the comfortable scale of the street and the presence of many active retail stores. Second Street, between Cherry and Mulberry Streets, functions in much the same way.

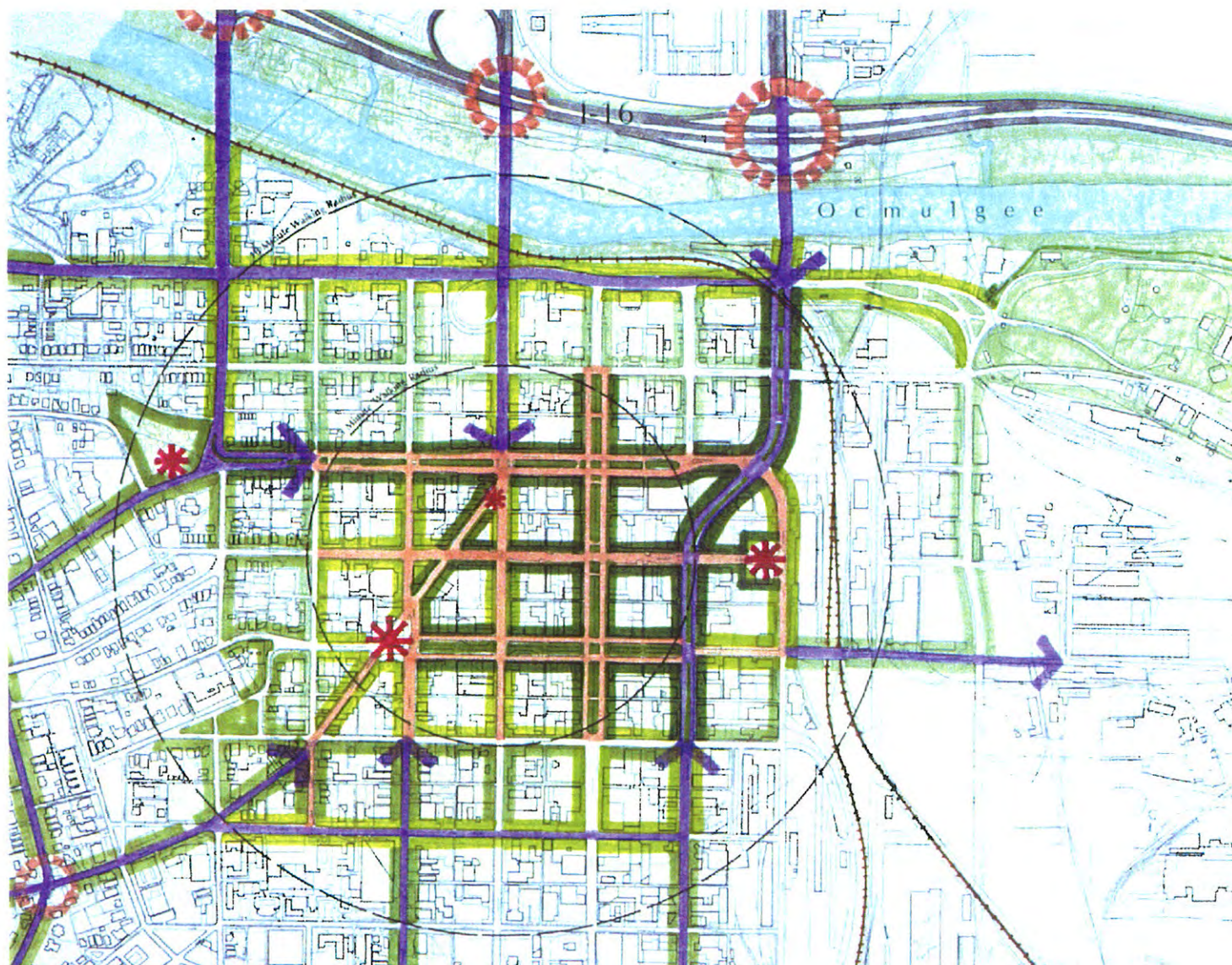
There are also important pedestrian linkages, or connections, between major centers of activity, including parking areas. Cotton Avenue, between City Hall and the Bibb County Court House is perhaps the clearest example of an important pedestrian linkage. Several other downtown streets could potentially have a pedestrian focus, but currently do not. Poplar Street and Third Street could contain more pedestrian activity if storefronts were more active and the pedestrian environment improved.

3.4 Framework Plan

When Macon was originally planned in 1822, designer James Webb envisioned a "City in a Park," with a rectangular street grid and unusually wide streets that were "named for the trees of the forest through which they were laid." This 175-year-old plan still governs the orderly layout of buildings on Macon's streets. Poplar, Mulberry and Third Streets, Macon's classic urban boulevards, continue to dictate the character and image of downtown.

The strong historic street grid and development pattern should generally dictate how future development should occur. Public money should be strategically invested to guide private development and create a positive environment that is attractive to private investors. Exhibit 2, the Downtown Framework Plan, illustrates a preferred street hierarchy for downtown Macon. This plan gives certain streets emphasis, suggesting that the level of investment and priority given a particular street should depend on the role it plays. A street that will be heavily traveled by foot and used by most visitors, for example, should receive a higher priority and different treatment than a street that will primarily be used for moving cars. Both may be important streets, but they would be detailed differently.





Legend

-  Pedestrian image Street
-  Vehicular image Street
-  Pedestrian Priority Street
-  Linkage
-  Pedestrian Park/Plaza
-  Gateway

Downtown must present and maintain a positive image at its gateways, along major thoroughfares and in areas where people spend the most time on foot. The proposed street hierarchy illustrates several types of streets and the kind of emphasis they should receive:

- **Gateways** (Peach circles). These intersections are downtown's most important points of arrival. Special consideration should be given to signage, landscaping and the image of surrounding development so that the visitor is "greeted" at these places and can sense the quality and care given to the downtown environment.
- **Vehicular Image Streets** (Purple with green edges). These streets are Macon's most important entrance corridors and will most likely be viewed from a car. Emphasis should be placed on coordinating development, screening parking areas, developing attractive signage for attractions and creating a positive and unified image for downtown with street trees, light standards and attractive traffic signals.
- **Pedestrian Image Streets** (Peach with dark green edges). These streets should receive the highest level of streetscape treatment. They are Macon's primary pedestrian areas and important pedestrian linkages. Emphasis should be placed on creating active building fronts (shops, restaurants and other activity generators), pedestrian-scaled street furnishings (lighting, trash receptacles, benches, water fountains, and the like) and creating rich surface textures for sidewalks and pedestrian crossings.
- **Pedestrian Priority Streets** (Peach with light green edges). These streets are the secondary streets of the pedestrian network. They are also important image streets, but will probably not have the same concentrations of pedestrian traffic. Emphasis should be placed on creating a safe and accessible pedestrian environment, with appropriate furnishings (benches and trash receptacles) at corners.
- **Linkages** (light green outline). These streets are routes traveled predominantly by vehicles, with little pedestrian activity. These streets have a high profile because they are within the downtown core, so most visitors will see them. Emphasis should be placed on maintenance and screening parking and service areas.
- **Pedestrian Parks and Plazas** (red asterisks). These are Macon's public gathering places and civic spaces. There is potential to reinforce civic buildings such as Terminal Station and City Hall with well-designed, pedestrian-scaled public places.

This street hierarchy has important implications for future development. If public investment is to be effectively leveraged, it should be concentrated in areas with the highest visibility and profile. In turn, these areas will be most attractive to investors, stimulating new development where public enhancements have been made.

3.5 Vacant and Underutilized Property

Portions of downtown contain commercial and industrial property that is either vacant or occupying land that could be developed for a "higher" use. Exhibit 3 generally illustrates vacant land and areas that are "in transition." Areas identified as "in transition" contain marginal uses or buildings in poor physical condition that are candidates for rehabilitation or redevelopment. The black lines identify the edges of buildings with strong architectural features. A building that is in transition, but has strong architectural character, should be



given high priority for preservation and adaptive reuse. Vacant land along vehicular and pedestrian image streets should be given high priority for infill development.

Poplar Street contains the most significant level of marginal and vacant property within the downtown core. Property along Riverside Drive also contains substantially underutilized property in close proximity to the center of downtown and the riverfront. Several individual redevelopment opportunities are spread throughout downtown.

A large concentration of industrial land lies east of the railroad tracks on Seventh Street. While outside the downtown core, this area has great potential for large-scale redevelopment including expansion of Central City Park with a new stadium, automobile parking for passenger rail facilities, in-town offices, R&D and commercial industrial park associated with the significant freight rail facilities.

When combined, the Framework Plan and the diagram of vacant and underutilized property begin to suggest where new development might occur.

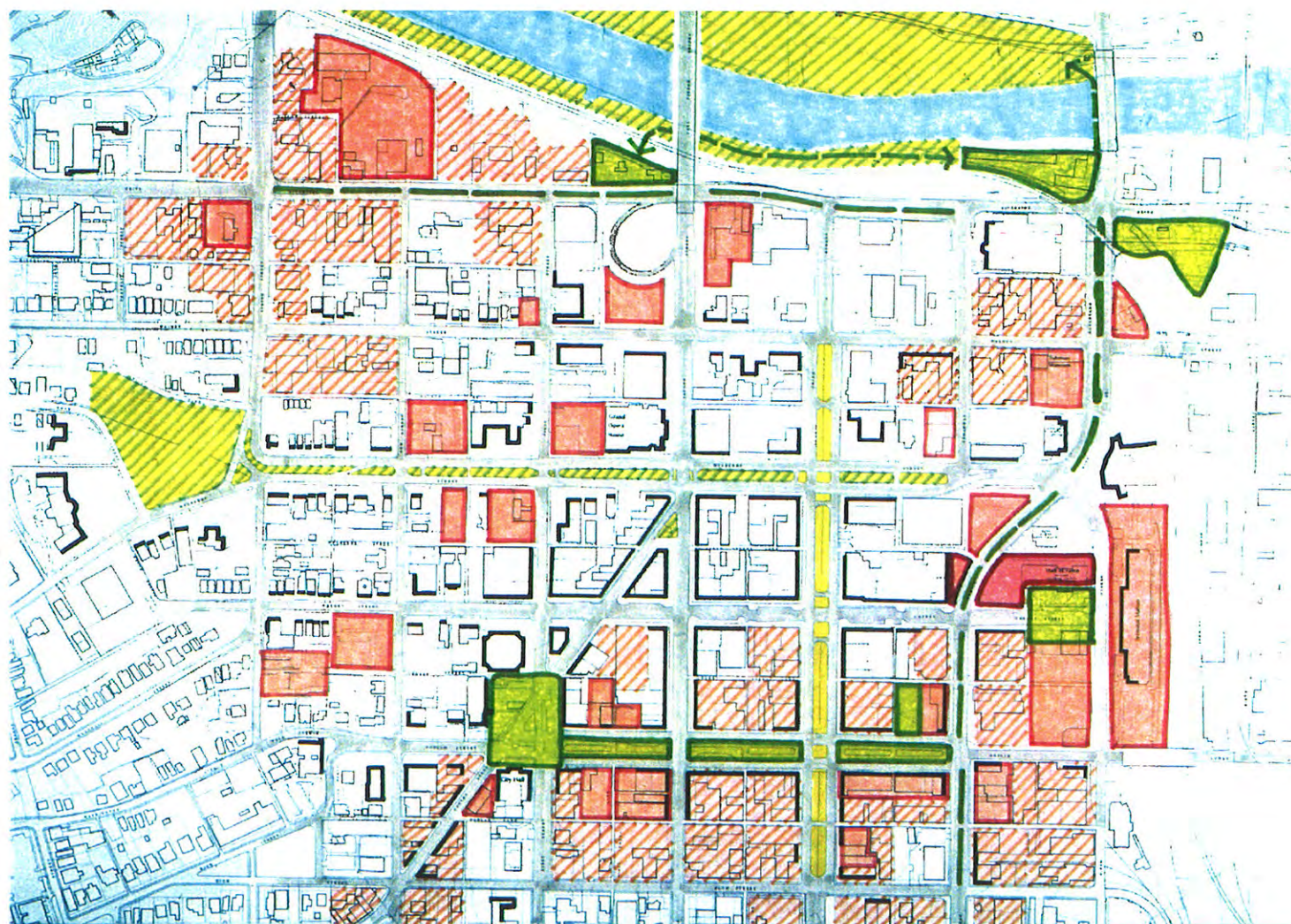
3.6 Recommended Strategies to Shape Downtown Development

The Urban Design Plan contains specific recommendations for how future development should occur in Downtown Macon. It is not expected that every recommended improvement be implemented. The Plan shows a build-out scenario that captures the many ideas and projects envisioned by downtown stakeholders and the community. It illustrates a long-term view of how new development could occur when coupled with a focused program of public and private investment. Some recommendations will take little to implement or are already underway, while others will take years to develop.

The Urban Design Plan illustrates site specific design concepts. Whether or not development occurs exactly as shown in the Plan, there are several guiding strategies that should be considered as downtown attracts new development:

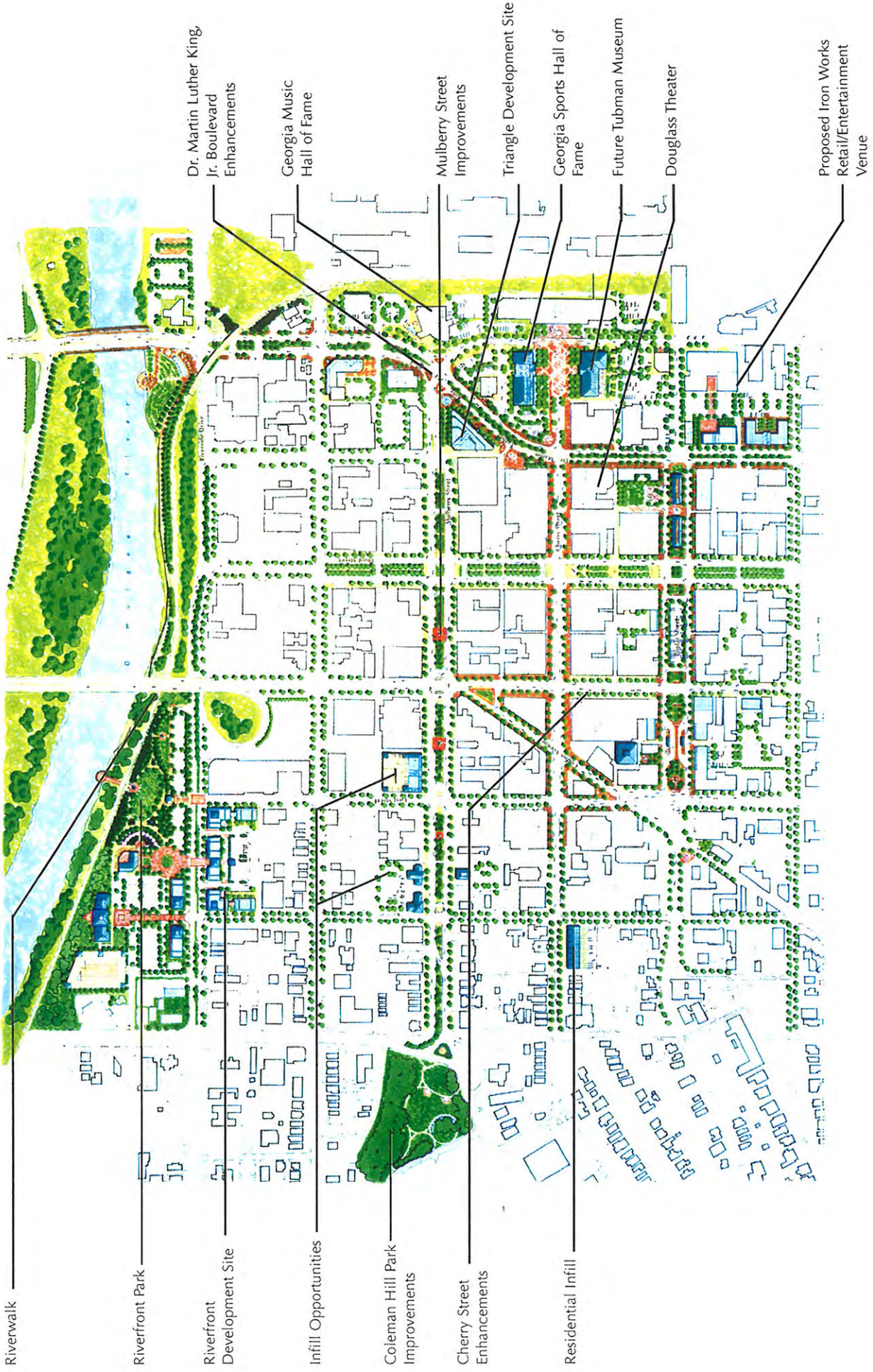
- ***New development should respect the established patterns that make Downtown Macon unique.*** Streets have evolved with a particularly comfortable human scale and a certain architectural character that evokes a sense of history. New development should fit within this historic context. It should respect the surrounding physical context in terms of building height, massing, setback, window openings and building materials.
- ***Priority should be given to new development in gaps in the existing downtown street fabric.*** This uses existing infrastructure more effectively and helps maintain a consistent level of activity along existing streets.
- ***Existing uses should be reinforced.*** While downtown Macon contains a true mixture of uses – government, institutional, commercial, office and residential -- certain streets have a clear emphasis. For example, Mulberry Street contains civic and institutional offices and minimal shopping. Cherry Street, on the other hand, contains the majority of downtown stores, creating a lively shopping street, with Poplar Street to be defined. These historic patterns of use should be respected and reinforced.





Legend

-  Committed Projects
-  Development Opportunities
-  Areas in Transition
-  Open Space Enhancements
-  Major Open Space Opportunities
-  Strong Architectural Edge



- ***Public improvements should build on existing investment.*** There is significant public and private investment already taking place, including the new visitor attractions and a variety of private initiatives. New public investment should reinforce these initiatives by creating and maintaining an attractive street environment.
- ***Parking should be located in mid-block parking lots and structures where possible.*** Surface parking lots break up the continuity of streets, causing undesirable gaps in activity. If mid-block parking is not feasible, then surface lots should be located on side streets, not downtown's image streets. Where possible, structured parking should contain active street frontages, with shops or office space on the ground level with parking above or behind.
- ***Downtown housing should be encouraged.*** Throughout the United States, cities are discovering that a key to creating a safe and active downtown is increasing the residential population. Opportunities for unique living situations are found throughout the downtown core. Residential development should be encouraged.
- ***Historic buildings should be preserved and reused whenever possible.*** The character of downtown is created by Macon's historic architecture and urban grid layout. While not every building can be preserved and reused, historic preservation should be given high priority. At a minimum, facades should be preserved and integrated into new structures.

3.7 Public Sector Improvement Plan

Exhibit 4, the Downtown Illustrative Plan, shows recommended public sector improvements and how these improvements relate to potential private development opportunities. Detailed descriptions of the proposed improvements, along with the significance of each sub-area, are as follows:

3.7.1 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

The past decade has witnessed the evolution of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard as a civic address of statewide significance with the Peyton Anderson Community Services Building, the renovated Douglas Theatre, the new Georgia Music Hall of Fame, and the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame. Additional investment in the area is anticipated with an expansion and relocation of the Tubman-African American Museum. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard should be given high priority as the center of Macon's visitor-related activities with pedestrian-friendly emphasis. Additional attractions, restaurants and limited retail are ideal uses along this high-profile corridor. Exhibit 5, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive Illustrative Plan shows how this corridor might develop over time. The letters on the plan correspond to the projects described below.

Significance:

- Gateway corridor into Downtown and the Visitor District
- Significant public investment already made
- Opportunities for additional attractions and new development



Potential Improvements/Projects:

A. Interstate Gateway: I-16 to Riverside Drive

Important first impressions are made at exit ramps from I-16. The Georgia Department of Transportation has plans to improve the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard interchange, creating an opportunity to enhance this downtown gateway. Several elements could enhance the arrival experience including brick retaining walls that define the intersection, pedestrian crossings, additional plantings on the roadway berm, a row of trees that screen utilities on the river and an entrance monument that will be visible from the interstate. Exhibit 5 shows an artist's rendition of how this gateway statement could appear.

B. Otis Redding Memorial Bridge Enhancement

The Otis Redding Memorial Bridge provides a potential pedestrian linkage between downtown visitor attractions and the Macon Centreplex. Currently, the bridge has very narrow walkways on either side and no guardrail to separate pedestrians from fast-moving traffic. The pedestrian walkways should be enhanced with expanded sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lights and decorative railings.

C. New Gateway Park

There are few places for the public to enjoy the Ocmulgee River. The corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Riverside Drive is an opportunity to capitalize on a high visibility location that is environmentally constrained. This new park would introduce a major public open space on the Ocmulgee River. The park would serve as an anchor for the proposed Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway. An artists rendering of the proposed park appears in Exhibit 5.

D. Norfolk Southern Railroad Trestle Improvements

A double set of train tracks blocks downtown from the Ocmulgee River. These tracks are elevated on a trestle as they cross Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and create an unpleasant visual experience for the visitor. The tracks are in full operation. With minimal investment, the trestle can be screened and made into an interesting gateway statement for Macon's visitor domain. Where space allows, Leyland Cypress trees, or similar species, should be planted to soften the mass of the trestle along with a possible colorful, decorative screen attached to the bridge. A sketch of how this could appear is shown in Exhibit 5.

E. MLK Street Enhancement (Riverside to Cherry Street)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard will be a major visitor entrance and thoroughfare. Over two million dollars of improvements have already been invested in Martin Luther King, Jr. boulevard including a new plaza and significant streetscape improvements.

F. New Mixed-Use Development Opportunity

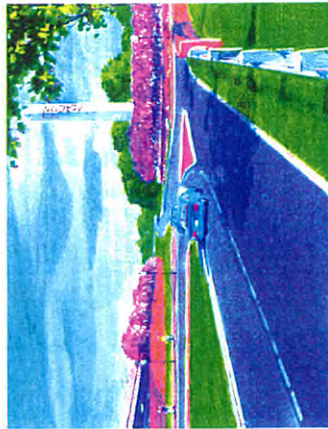
The corner of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Mulberry Street currently sits vacant. The site has excellent visibility and access, creating an economic development opportunity in the heart of Macon's visitor domain. A three- to six-story mixed-use building could take advantage of views to new visitor attractions and the rest of downtown. The Music Hall of Fame water feature and existing park will enhance the



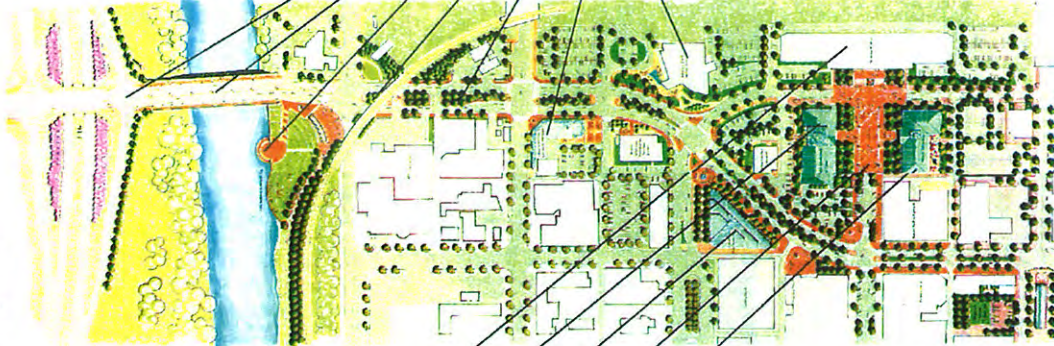
I-16 Gateway Enhancement

Important first impressions are made at exit ramps from I-16. The Georgia Department of Transportation is currently improving the I-16 exit 104 interchange. It is an opportunity to improve this downtown gateway.

Several proposed elements will enhance the arrival experience including back retaining walls that define the intersection, pedestrian crossings, additional plantings on the roadway, a row of trees that screen utilities on the river and an entrance monument that will be visible from the interstate.



Concept Plan



Proposed Gateway Music Park

There are few places for the public to enjoy the bridges over the river. A new amphitheater will introduce a new public space for the community to enjoy. The Redding Bridge will contribute to the transformation of the area. In the future, this park will serve as the anchor for an expansion of Macon's network.



Terminal Station Reuse

Georgia Sports Hall of Fame

Development Opportunity Site

Macon Civic Plaza

Visitor Attraction Opportunity

Norfolk Southern Railroad Trestle Improvements

A double set of train tracks blocks downtown from the Ocmulgee River. These tracks are elevated on a trestle as they cross Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and are unsightly.

With minimal investment, the trestle can be screened and made into an interesting entrance element. Where space allows, Leyland Cypress trees will be planted to soften the mass of the trestle. Where the trestle remains visible, a colorful, decorative screen will be attached to the bridge.



Gateway Improvements at I-16

Pedestrian Enhancement of Otis Redding Memorial Bridge

Otis Redding Gateway Park

Norfolk Southern Trestle Enhancement

New Sidewalks, Street Trees, and Lighting

Tubman Museum Expansion

Georgia Music Hall of Fame Site Improvements

Mulberry Street Development Opportunity

The corner of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and Mulberry Street currently sits vacant. The site has excellent visibility and access, creating an economic development opportunity.

A three to six story building responding to the triangular shape of the site could take advantage of views of new visitor attractions and the rest of downtown. A five building would provide a "gateway" to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. Parking would be shared with neighboring development.



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Capitalizing on Development Opportunities and Streetscape Enhancements to Reinforce Macon's Visitor Domain

development's environment. In addition the development could take advantage of some 160 available parking spaces in the neighboring parking structure. The financial feasibility of developing this site, called the Triangle site, is discussed in greater detail in section 4.4. An artists rendering and plan of this proposal appears in Exhibit 13.

C. Cherry Street Plaza

There is an opportunity to reinforce the terminus of Cherry Street with a major civic plaza in front of Terminal Station, the Sports Hall of Fame and the future Tubman African-American Museum. The plaza should be designed and programmed to provide the opportunity to host major outdoor gatherings and intimate special events. The plaza should be simple and kept uncluttered to preserve sight lines to Terminal Station and create a focal point for Macon's visitor domain.

H. Tubman African-American Museum

Plans for the expansion and relocation of the Tubman African-American Museum across from the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame will build critical mass and pedestrian activity in the heart of the visitor domain. The new building will complement the plaza with site layout and architectural mass in keeping with the Sports Hall of Fame while being of appropriate architectural design in keeping with its mission. Parking should be provided behind the building.

3.7.2 Cherry Street

Cherry Street is downtown Macon's primary retail shopping street. Cherry Street's central location, wide sidewalks and ample on-street parking make it ideal for downtown retailers. Retail stores and small-scale businesses should be encouraged to concentrate on Cherry Street and on north-south streets to either side, including Cotton Avenue and Second and Third Streets. Public improvements should be used to enhance the existing street environment and reinforce the linkage between visitor attractions on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and dining and shopping on Cherry Street.

Significance:

- Successful retail street; need to reinforce/support success
- Important functional and physical linkage to visitor attractions

Potential Improvements/Projects:

A. Streetscape Improvements (MLK to 1st Street)

While the street environment is adequate, additional maintenance and streetscape improvements will greatly enhance Cherry Street as the central shopping spine. The street trees require pruning and better maintenance. They could be placed in low planting beds to further separate the pedestrian environment from parked cars. Streetscape improvements could also include improved sidewalk paving and pedestrian amenities such as benches and new lighting.



B. Facade Improvement Program/Design Standards

Most shops take great pride in maintaining the historic character of their store fronts, however, some rehabs have been poorly executed and do not fit into their historic context. A facade improvement program could be developed to help educate business owners doing rehab work, provide free or low-cost design consultation and low-interest financing to facilitate building improvements. Design standards should be implemented to ensure that new construction and rehabs along Cherry Street help create a cohesive and pleasing environment.

3.7.3 Mulberry Street

Mulberry Street, one of three grand boulevards, contains several of Macon's civic landmarks including the Bibb County and Federal Courthouses. The street serves as Macon's office, civic and institutional address. Currently, there are no street trees or other streetscape enhancements on Mulberry, although the median is heavily planted. Several in-fill opportunities exist at key locations along the street.

Significance:

- Primary Office and Civic Address Street
- One of Macon's original grand boulevards

Potential Improvements/Projects:

A. Median Landscape Maintenance

Landscaping in the median should be simplified. Trees and shrubs are mostly overgrown and require significant thinning and pruning. By removing tall shrubs and limbing up trees in the median, views through this area could be significantly opened up. This relatively low-cost improvement would greatly enhance the image of Mulberry Street.

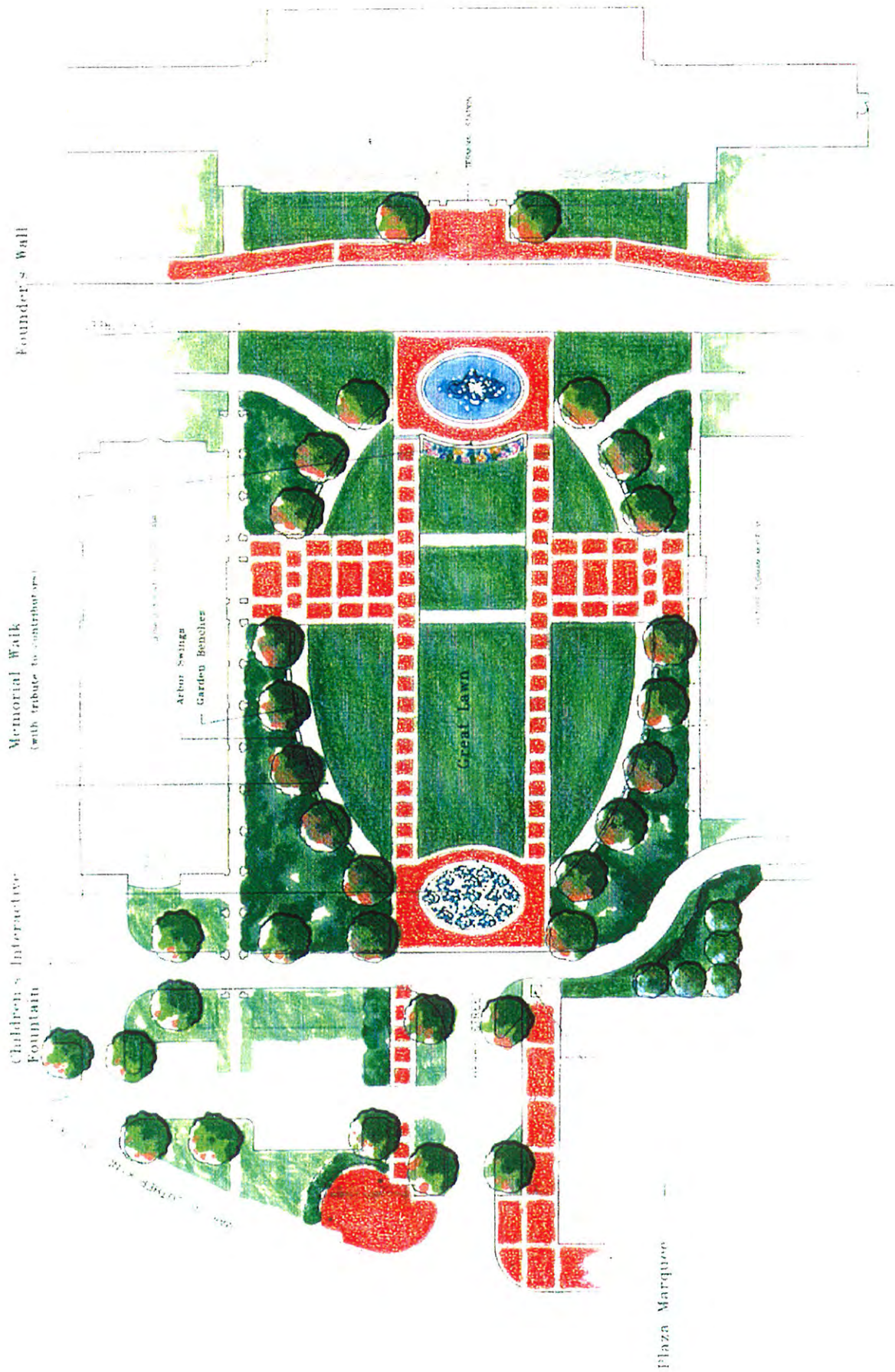
B. Pedestrian Amenities

Currently, pedestrian crossings are located at corners and at the mid-block along Mulberry. The mid-block crossings should be enhanced with bump outs and special paving to increase their visibility and provide safer pedestrian crossings. Within the median, these mid-block crossing could be expanded into mini-parks with benches and plantings. Exhibit 7 contains a sketch of how such a mid-block park could appear.

C. Streetscape

Currently, plantings in the median provide the only trees along Mulberry. Street trees should be planted on both sides of the street to soften and shade the pedestrian environment and provide additional greenery. In selected areas, special paving could be used to accentuate pedestrian crossings and other key features.





Proposed Cherry Street Plaza
By Nimrod Long and Associates



Mulberry Street - Existing Conditions



Proposed Mulberry Street Improvements
Sketch by: LDR International, Inc.

D. In-fill Opportunities

Several key intersections along Mulberry contain vacant or underutilized property, offering excellent development opportunities on one Macon's most important address streets. The northeast corner of First and Mulberry Streets, next to the Grand Opera, is currently used as a parking lot. As a key gateway intersection, this property should be given high priority for in-fill. Similar in-fill and redevelopment opportunities exist on the southwest corner of First and Mulberry and the northeast corner of Spring Street.

3.7.4 Cotton Street/Cotton Street Triangle

The intersection of Cotton Street, Second Street and Mulberry provides a center and key focal point for the west side of downtown. It is surrounded by several of Macon's architectural landmarks. The triangular park at this intersection could be expanded and redesigned.

Significance:

- Located on an important entrance corridor from the south
- Links to Cherry Street and primary retail core
- Provides focal point for shopping district

Potential Projects/Improvements

A. Streetscape Improvements between Poplar (City Hall) and Mulberry

Cotton and Second Streets contain a high volume of pedestrian traffic, including shoppers and office workers. These streets contain mature street trees that require maintenance. The area would benefit from additional street trees where there are none, as well as additional pedestrian amenities including pedestrian-level lighting and site furnishings (benches, trash receptacles, etc.).

B. Reconfiguration of Street / Park Expansion

The park located at this intersection is constrained by traffic movements along all three of its edges. There are limited paths, making the park of minimal use as a pedestrian island. The park could be significantly expanded by extending the curb line to include the area that is striped beyond the northern point of the triangle. Once it is expanded, it could function better as a pedestrian island, with additional paths, landscaping and furnishings.

3.7.5 City Hall Civic Plaza

City Hall is one of Macon's most important civic buildings. It is located at the intersection of two major entrance corridors (Forsyth and First Streets) and it anchors the western terminus of Poplar Street. Its Greek Revival architecture stands out among the surrounding 19th century brick commercial buildings. The Macon Auditorium, done in a similar architectural style, is located across the intersection to the north. Currently, City Hall lacks a dignified civic setting. The intersection in front of City Hall is a confusing array of turning lanes and parking. As it is currently configured, City Hall has no relationship to the Macon Auditorium.



Significance:

- Major Macon landmarks front the space
- At the convergence of two important entrance corridors
- At the terminus of a grand boulevard

Potential Projects/Improvements:

A. Reconfiguration of Traffic Movements

The street network should be simplified to eliminate unnecessary and redundant turning movements. Ideally, Forsyth would T into Poplar, eliminating the segment of Cotton Street (Forsyth becomes Cotton) between Poplar and First Streets. This would provide the opportunity to create a plaza in front of City Hall, as well as across the street near the Macon Auditorium. This area is currently being studied and redesigned by a local architect hired by the City.

B. Surrounding Streetscape

The area surrounding City Hall should be enhanced with additional street trees and improved pedestrian crossings. Exhibit 8 shows an artists rendition of how these improvements might develop.

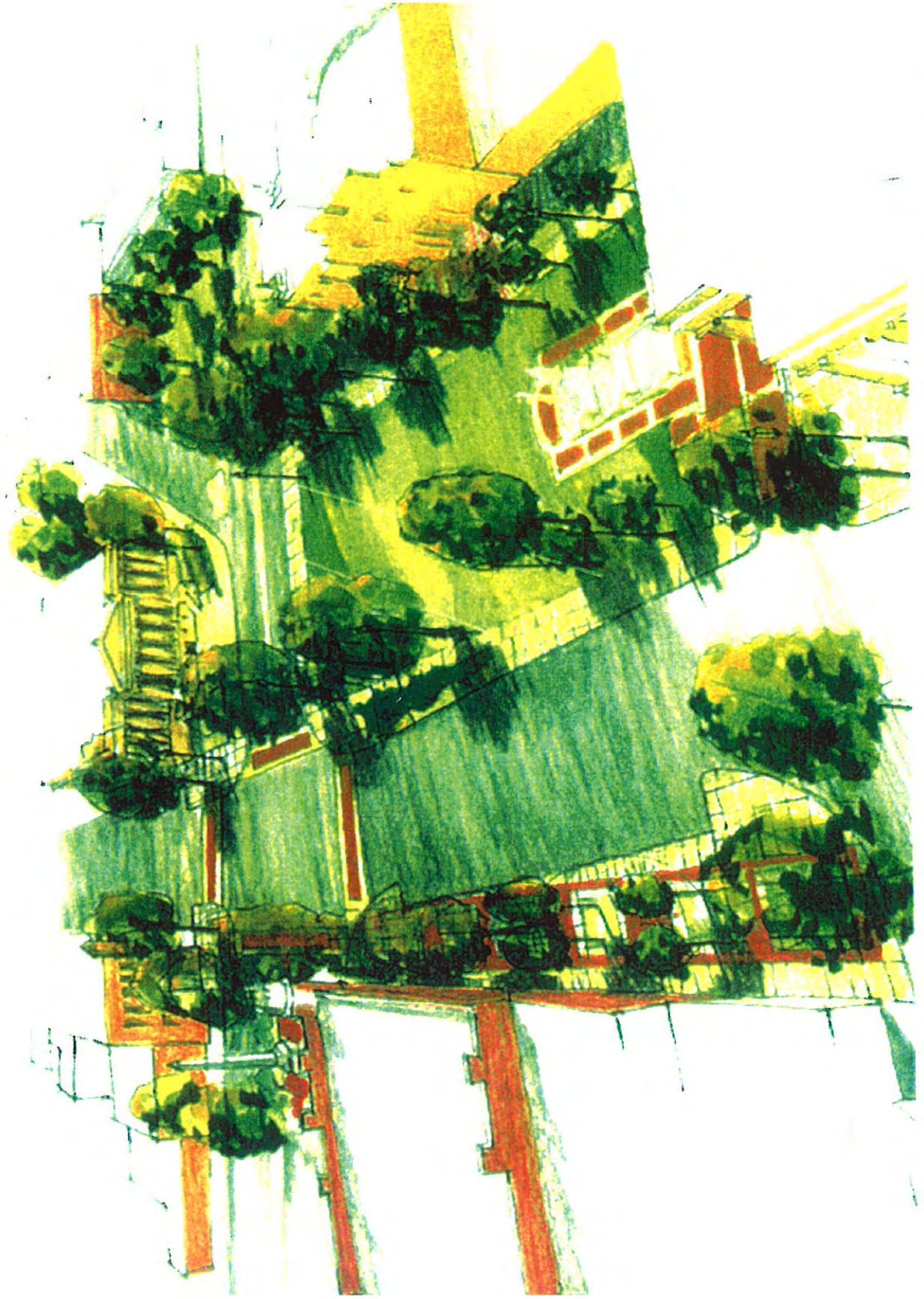
3.7.6 Poplar Street

Once a bustling urban boulevard featuring a farmers market, the three-block segment between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and City Hall has experienced steady decline and disinvestment. In the past, a typical tenant occupied a single storefront, creating a vibrant street environment geared towards shoppers on foot. The street has changed over the years. Cars now dominate. Rents have declined. As a result, upper stories go almost entirely unused and single tenants occupy multiple storefronts. These changes have reduced the compact feel of the street, and ultimately, the appeal of Poplar Street as a place to invest. But new investment and other signs of positive change are emerging. Plans for new restaurants, outdoor activity spaces and other new uses are in the pipeline. The key to stimulating continued private investment on Poplar Street is to improve the way the street appears and functions. Exhibit 9 shows a sketch of the proposed improvements to Poplar Street as envisioned by the designer, Walter Hood. These plans are currently in the implementation phase.

Significance:

- One of Macon's grand boulevards
- Major linkage between City Hall and visitor attractions
- Investment occurring; needs public support to complete
- Vacancies are detrimental to image of downtown





Aerial View of Proposed City Hall Civic Plaza

Sketch by: Claxton Architects

Potential Projects/Improvements

A. Monument Plaza / Transit Center

The median between First and Second Streets contains a monument to Civil War women and a transit plaza serving eastbound buses. Parking is provided on the opposite side of the transfer area. The median should be reconfigured to create a new setting for the monument, with a new plaza containing plantings and benches. Bus transfer facilities should be consolidated on this block in a reconfigured transit mall that would accommodate both eastbound and westbound bus transfers close to City Hall. The mall would contain waiting shelters on either side. The east end of the median would contain a new park. These changes would greatly enhance the appearance and function of the median system on Poplar Street.

B. Reconfigured Parking and Median Improvements

The median between Second and Third Street should be reconfigured to improve vehicular circulation and allow the creation of a planting strip surrounding the existing lot. Shrubs and street trees will soften the appearance of the parking area and minimize the scale of the street. Small parks would be introduced in the islands separating the U-turn lanes from the main intersections.

C. Overall Streetscape Improvements

In its current condition, Poplar Street is dominated by cars. The distance between building fronts is nearly 180', with no trees to give the street a human scale. Planting street trees and installing special paving at strategic locations will soften the street's wide dimension and promote reinvestment in the many architectural treasures of Poplar Street.

D. Infill/Adaptive Reuse Opportunities

While many old buildings are gone, the historic character of Poplar Street remains. Existing structures offer abundant opportunities for ground-floor retail and upper floor residential conversions. "Missing teeth" along Poplar should be filled in with new development that is sympathetic to the historic context of the area.

E. Mid-block Parking Opportunities

Enhancements to Poplar Street, including median improvements and new infill development, will require additional parking resources nearby. Instead of creating expansive parking lots open to the street, parking should be tucked behind buildings. Lots should be well lit and contain convenient pedestrian connections to Poplar Street.

F. Proposed Multi-purpose Activity Courtyard and Restaurant

This surface parking lot will be redesigned to contain a lawn area, attractively paved parking area, outdoor dining spaces for several restaurants and a pedestrian walkway to the Cherry Street parking garage.



3.7.7 *Riverside Drive and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway*

Riverside Drive and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway present a major open space and development opportunity for Downtown Macon. In the past, the riverfront of Macon was written off, abandoning a historic, cultural and recreational treasure. In the Town Hall Meetings held as part of the downtown planning process, citizens reinforced their desire to create new opportunities to enjoy the Ocmulgee River.

Significance:

- Significant natural resource close to downtown
- Significant underutilized land nearby
- Important “front door” to downtown

Ocmulgee means “bubbling water” in the ancient Hitchiti, one of several tribes linked to the Macon Plateau. Archeological evidence suggests that the first American Indian tribes camped on the banks of the Ocmulgee River about 10,000 years ago. The ‘ancients’ built a city on its banks over a thousand years ago with the Ocmulgee Mounds evidence of their civilization on the east side of the river. Since then, the Ocmulgee has passed through many cycles of use: from a waterway used to transport goods to an unused and hidden resource. Most recently, visions of the development potential of the Ocmulgee River have been gaining momentum in the community.

Two obstacles have prevented the full utilization of the Ocmulgee River in the past.

- ***The river floods***, making any improvements within the floodway costly and potentially unstable. The Army Corps of Engineers is studying this issue and will be recommending remedial improvements for selected riverfront properties.
- ***Access to the Ocmulgee is cut off by an active rail line***. This has given Macon’s riverfront an industrial image. While often seen as an insurmountable obstacle, many cities have found creative ways to capitalize on their riverfronts, regardless.

The Riverside Drive Illustrative Plan shows the development opportunities that are described below. Opportunities on the Ocmulgee Riverfront are two-fold: first, there is the opportunity to capitalize on the river as a regional recreational amenity by enhancing access and creating new places for the public to enjoy the river’s edge. Second, there are significantly underutilized properties in close proximity to the river on Riverside Drive. There is an opportunity to redevelop these sites and take advantage of views and linkages to the river.

Potential Projects/Improvements:

A. Riverside Drive

Riverside Drive is a fast-moving roadway that currently carries significant truck traffic through downtown to the industrial area in the east. In the future, Riverside Drive could evolve as a significant business address, with high visibility from the Interstate and dynamic views of the river. The image of Riverside Drive could be transformed





Poplar Street Design
Sketch by: Walter Hood

by introducing a new landscaped median that would create a more comfortable scale to the street.

B. Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway

The focus of the riverfront would be a one-mile-long riverwalk as part of the overall Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway between Otis Redding Memorial Bridge and Spring Street. Residents and visitors would be able to enjoy the water's edge along a pedestrian and bike path. An overlook would terminate the pedestrian connection under the railroad with a place to view the river.

The Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway project is an ambitious state initiative seeking to capture and protect several thousand acres of land in the Macon area for public use. Several large private holdings are being pursued as part of a continuous public open space along the Ocmulgee River corridor. Downtown Macon will provide the perfect launching point for a day's activities along this larger network of parks and trails. The plan for the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway is shown on Exhibit 10.

C. Pedestrian Portal

An active railroad line blocks access to the Ocmulgee River along most of downtown. A pedestrian tunnel would accommodate safe pedestrian passage to the Riverwalk and beyond.

D. Riverside Park and Botanical Gardens

A passive riverside park would provide space for festivals and events as well as room to develop an outstanding collection of flora within comfortable walking distance from other attractions. An important component of the park's layout would be the ability to accommodate motor coach parking, an essential feature for attracting group tours to Macon.

E. Riverside Restaurant

Macon lacks a riverfront dining experience. A restaurant situated well above the railroad tracks would take advantage of river views and pedestrian access to the Ocmulgee Riverwalk. Other amenities could also be introduced, as shown in the illustrative plan.

F. Mixed-Use Development

While intended as a long-term vision, consolidating land between the Second Street and Spring Street bridges is the first step in attracting a major new user to downtown Macon. As demand for new downtown office space dictates, development could be steered towards the highly visible sites along Riverside Drive. A new river-oriented office building, as shown in the illustrative plan, could take advantage of views to the river and high visibility from I-16. A parking deck would accommodate the necessary



parking. Lower-scale buildings could frame the entrance to this development at the corner of Riverside Drive and New Street Extended.

G. Long-term Redevelopment Opportunity

As demand dictates, the half block between First and New Streets fronting Riverside Drive could be redeveloped as a mixed-use building with an internal parking deck that would take advantage of naturally steep grades. This concept is shown in the illustrative plan.

3.7.8 Coleman Hill Park

Coleman Hill Park contains some of the best views of downtown from any public place, however, the park is not laid out to take advantage of them. Perched at the west end of downtown, the park represents a major opportunity to create a high-quality public open space.

Significance:

- Major in-town park; an anchor for nearby residential neighborhood
- Terminates Mulberry Street
- Located on an important entrance corridor (Spring Street)
- Good views to Downtown

Potential Projects/Improvements:

A. Walkways, Seating Areas and Landscaping

Walkways in Coleman Hill Park should be reconfigured to take advantage of views and natural topography. Special seating areas should be included at the best viewing points. Existing trees should be thinned to allow for a central green where people could have picnics and relax in full sun. Walkways should be developed to tie in existing monuments in the park. Special pedestrian furnishings including benches and pedestrian-level lighting should be installed throughout.

3.8 NewTown Macon's Eight Initiatives

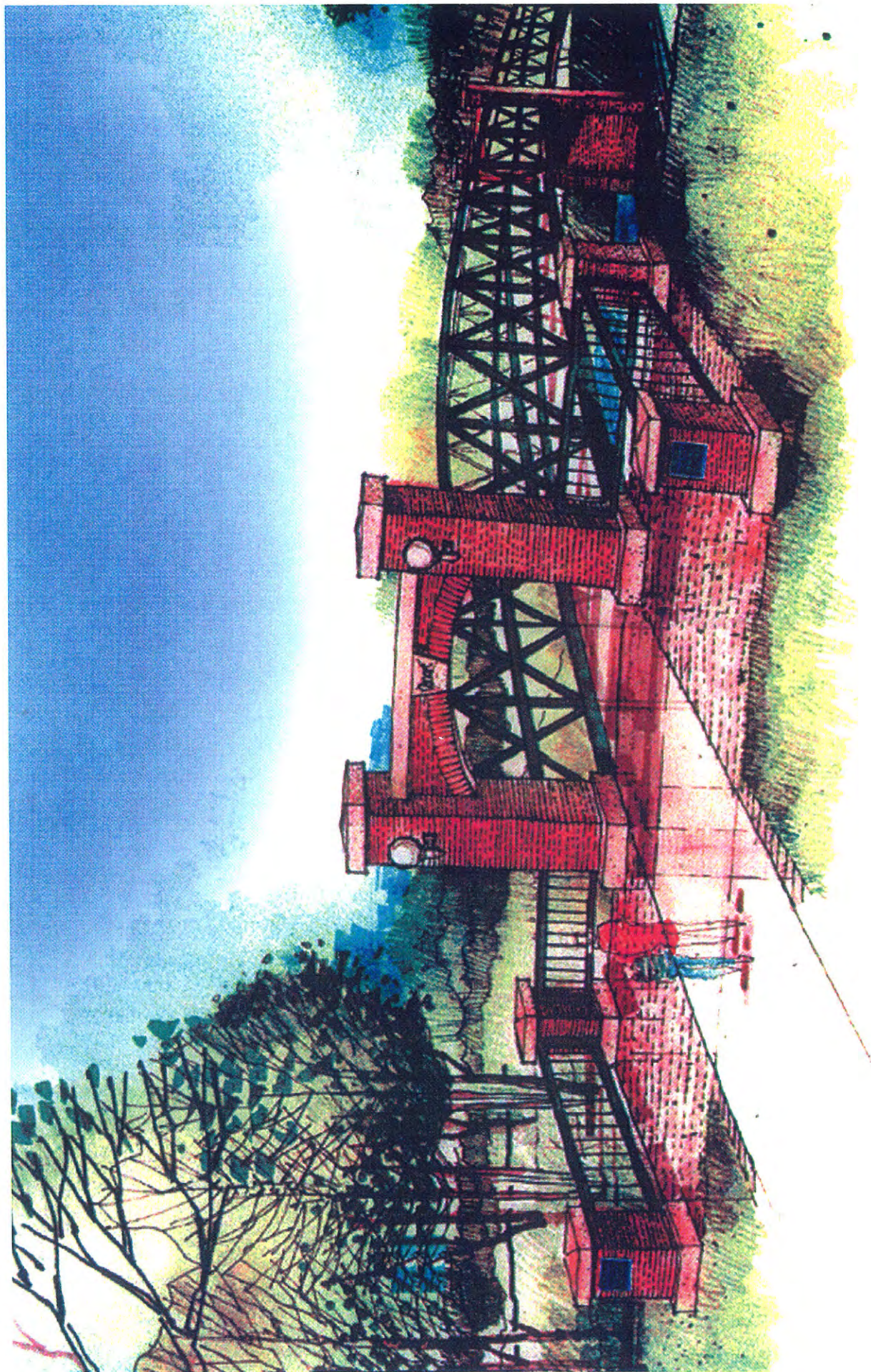
NewTown Macon, a non-profit, public private partnership, with the mission of urban revitalization has become a catalyst for change in downtown Macon. By marshaling leadership from the public and private sector, NewTown Macon has successfully worked alongside government entities, private organizations, and concerned citizens to consolidate resources and develop a common vision for the future of Macon's downtown.

In response to community's comments and LDR's recommendations NewTown Macon developed an action plan that included the following eight initiatives and a financing and management plan to implement the community's vision for Macon's downtown.

Each of the initiatives is inter-related. The purpose of the initiatives is to serve as catalysts in creating a quality urban environment for Maconites that will attract more people and businesses back downtown.







Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway

The initiatives are as follows:

3.8.1 Urban Design Center

An Urban Design Center will be developed as a resource for planning agencies, prospective commercial investors and residential developers. The Urban Design Center will focus on urban design, planning, commercial and residential expansion as well as the funding and project supervision for other initiatives. The Design Center will associate itself with university schools of architecture, urban planning and landscaping to maximize opportunities for planning and development. Professional consultation will be organized from the center. The costs to fund start up and the operation of such a center for three years is estimated to be **\$2 million**.

3.8.2 Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway

The Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway will be a seven-mile, attractive and functional riverwalk and park system. The multi-use trail will begin with a public park at the Old Water Works and extend through downtown. The riverwalk will continue to Central City Park and cross the Ocmulgee River by a pedestrian bridge to the Ocmulgee National Monument, effectively tying together several of the major downtown parks and historic landmarks. The approximate cost for this stretch of the riverwalk is **\$8.5 million**.

3.8.3 Riverfront Development

The Riverfront Development site, already mentioned, is a cornerstone in the revitalization plan. The riverfront properties extending from Spring Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard are in the process of being assembled. NewTown Macon will organize property acquisition, relocate the public transportation authority and central services, prepare the site with infrastructure, and market the development opportunity to private development. Costs associated with seeding the development are **\$10 million**.

3.8.4 Terminal Station Redevelopment

Built in 1916, the Terminal Station is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in Macon. The station, strategically located adjacent to the new Halls of Fame and the future site of the Tubman African American Museum, is at the foot of Cherry Street Plaza. The Terminal Station will be redeveloped to its optimum commercial use while anticipating the opportunity of returning to its historic position as the hub for future rail transportation. Redevelopment costs associated with the Terminal Station are estimated to be **\$4 million**.

3.8.5 City Entrances, Streetscapes, Public Places, Parking and Transportation

Gateways reinforce the memory and identity of Macon. Thus, downtown Macon's front door and public places should convey a positive image and welcome visitors. By enhancing gateways, entrances, streetscapes and public places, downtown will be easy and enjoyable to visit and to use. The implementation of a comprehensive parking and transportation study, which may include the use of intra-city trolleys, will allow the convenient flow of pedestrian



and vehicular traffic. This comprehensive and coordinated initiative is critical to the realization of Macon as a “city in a park.” Designated funds to this effort are **\$3 million**.

3.8.6 Cherry Street Plaza

Convenient to the Georgia Sports and Music Halls of Fame and the future site of the Tubman African American Museum, Cherry Street Plaza is a strategic public gathering place. Significant development is already underway. This initiative has been designated to enhance the park with the opportunity for fountains, public amenities and programming. The approximate costs are **\$1 million**.

3.8.7 Downtown Landscape and Public Amenity Maintenance Endowment

Sustainable growth is a hallmark of the “Big Picture” plan. The maintenance endowment will provide Macon with a stream of revenues to continue improvements for years to come. The fund will supplement existing city funds used for landscaping, cleaning, lighting and other issues associated with providing an inviting environment for the public good. The endowment fund has been designated to be **\$2.5 million**.

3.8.8 Transitional Property Acquisition Fund

Redevelopment of at-risk or declining properties that threaten or inhibit development opportunities is always a daunting task. The acquisition fund provides a vehicle through which such properties can be acquired and redeveloped. Plans are to develop a land trust associated with NewTown Macon to facilitate these opportunities. Funds set aside to seed the trust are **\$5 million**.



4.0 Feasibility and Economic Impact of Plan

NewTown Macon, recognizing that several of the key initiatives for downtown would require a partnership between public and private sector entities, embarked on a more thorough analysis of four key development projects that would serve as catalysts for additional investments throughout downtown. Both the City and the County governments required a creative funding strategy that avoided general funds to participate in the \$36 million Community Challenge. The creative strategy was the development of economic models for four key initiatives that would form the anchors of a Tax Allocation District (TAD). The TAD known as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in other states, is designed to leverage present dollars to fund the initiatives through bonds repaid with future increased tax revenues from enhanced property values.

Two of these projects relate directly to initiatives of the partnership – Terminal Station and the Riverfront Development. Two others – the Bibb Mill/Centreplex Sites and the Triangle Building site – are development opportunities that have come to the forefront as key projects that can significantly influence downtown Macon's renaissance.

The following sections outline the development plan, the marketing strategy, and the fiscal impacts for each of these projects. NewTown Macon can provide the detailed feasibility charts used to develop these recommendations (from detailed BBPA study).

4.1 Terminal Station

This section of the report recommends a development plan and marketing strategy, and presents a fiscal & economic impact analysis for Terminal Station.

4.1.1 Development Plan

The Terminal Station property is 3.1 acres (135,036 s.f.). The building's gross area is 89,250 s.f. BBP recommends:

1. 49,980 s.f. be allocated to office space
2. 21,420 s.f. be allocated to retail space
3. 17,850 s.f. be allocated to passenger rail services or exhibit space

Consideration is being made for allocating a portion of the space in the station to passenger rail service to complement the nearby multi-modal facility. It is likely that the non-commercial portion of the Station would experience phased development, with several stages over time. First, the space could be utilized for a tourist exhibition, highlighting Macon's tourist attractions (including the Halls of Fame, the Ocmulgee Mounds, professional sports teams, historic houses, and other sites). At a later phase, commuter train service and, possibly, high-speed rail service could be brought to the Station.

BBP's feasibility studies for office and retail uses at Terminal Station found the following:



- Office development is quite feasible and has a significant positive residual value of \$4.38/s.f. of land area (\$190,800/acre); thus, no subsidy is required. The residual value of the land would increase to \$11.27/s.f. of land area (\$490,900/acre) if parking were provided by other sources.
- Retail development at Terminal Station, however, has a weaker demand and produces a slight deficit. Funds are therefore required to subsidize parking costs. However, if parking was provided by other sources, retail would be feasible with a residual value of \$10.32/s.f., or \$450,000/acre land value. As an alternative to writing off parking costs, a modest subsidy of \$85,972 would be required to make the project feasible.

The return of passenger rail service to Terminal Station will significantly enhance office and retail development opportunities at the station. This will also reduce the need to provide parking or other development incentives to attract developers.

BBP recommends that development of the Terminal Station proceed. The City should seek funds from the Federal Transit Administration for historic train station restoration and/or an intermodal center.

4.1.2 Marketing Recommendations

BBP recommends that the following aspects of Terminal Station are highlighted when trying to attract tenants:

- The proximity of Terminal Station to the Central Business District and other Macon area tourist and cultural attractions. The Terminal Station is located at the foot of Cherry Street, Macon's traditional commercial district, and is adjacent to the Sports and Music Halls of Fame, near the Douglass Theater, and is adjacent to the future home of the Tubman Museum, the Children's Museum, and the Cherry Street Plaza.
- The area across the street or adjacent to the Terminal Station should be marketed as an intermodal center. This would provide Maconites with the ability to transfer from one mode of transportation to another, whether the modes are: car, bus, bike, People Mover, taxi, foot, and future rail. Prior to the reinstitution of passenger rail services, the station is eligible for Federal Transit Administration Funds, helping to set the stage for future rail service..
- Around the country, the value of historic train stations and their architectural characteristics is being recognized. Stations are being redeveloped and are becoming prized real estate by tenants for retail, office, and restaurant uses. Revitalization projects involving train stations have been undertaken in cities ranging from Washington, D.C., to Boston, MA, to Meridian, MS, and Tampa, FL.
- Passenger rail service's impending return to Macon would have a tremendous impact on downtown Macon. The station and city should be marketed as a hub for Georgia and the southeastern U.S.'s rail transportation system. If such a passenger rail network is constructed, trains from Macon will provide an easy alternative to the automobile for



travel to points in a variety of directions: Atlanta, Savannah, Valdosta, Columbus, Albany, Florida, and other points throughout the southeastern U.S.

4.1.3 Fiscal & Economic Impacts

BBP's study of the Terminal Station projected the following fiscal & economic impacts (to calculate capitalized revenues, a 5.6% interest rate on 20-year bonds was assumed):

- The total 71,000 s.f. project was projected to result in \$6.2 million in economic value, 243 new jobs, \$1.3 million in capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$747,000 in capitalized occupation and sales tax revenues.
- The 50,000 s.f. office portion of the project was projected to yield \$4.6 million in economic value, 200 new jobs, \$940,000 in capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$62,000 in capitalized occupation tax revenues.
- The 21,000 s.f. retail/restaurant portion of the project was projected to yield an economic value of \$1.6 million, 43 new jobs, \$324,000 in capitalized property tax revenues, and \$685,000 in capitalized sales and occupation tax revenues.

4.2 Bibb Mill and Centreplex Site

This section of the report recommends a development plan and marketing strategy, as well as a fiscal & economic impact analysis for the Bibb Mill & Centreplex Site.

4.2.1 Development Plan

The Bibb Mill site is approximately 26 acres, or 1.1 million s.f. BBP's development plan for the Bibb Mill site and Centreplex site includes:

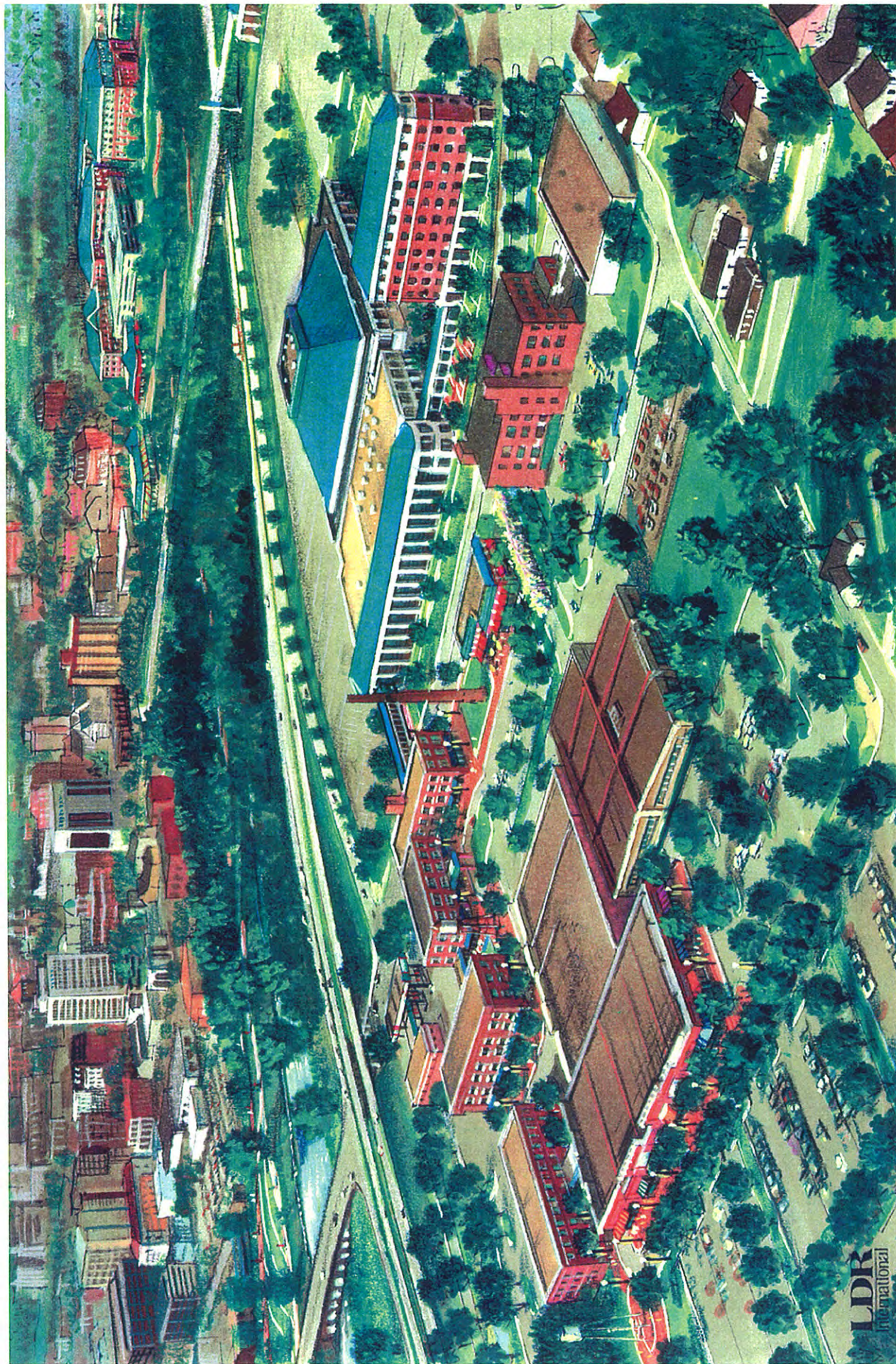
1. A 120-room, limited-service hotel (example: Hampton Inn)
2. A 60-room, extended-stay hotel (example: Residence Inn)
3. Frontage development on Coliseum Drive for a gas station and restaurant (a mid-priced family restaurant)
4. A greenway connection to the Ocmulgee Mounds (National Monument)
5. Interim uses on the rear of the site such as the continuation of the antique mall. Consideration should be given to other uses, such as warehouse space, business center or retail.
6. An 250-room, full-service hotel on the Centreplex site (this is a long-term development goal)



Bibb Mill site:

- BBP recommends that the center of the Bibb Mill site be left somewhat open, so that more intense future development may occur in the rear portion of the site, as market conditions warrant it.
- BBP recommends that a service station that is under review be positioned on the 1.5 acres at the corner of Coliseum Drive and the I-16 exit ramp. This location for the service station, along with a decorative façade and landscaping that is congruous with that of nearby buildings on the site (such as the hotel) will maximize the service station's visibility to passing motorists and enhance its overall appearance.
- BBP recommends that the existing, 3-story, 21,000 s.f. brick building on the property be used as part of a limited-service hotel. The reuse of this building would reduce construction costs and add to the aesthetic appeal of the site by preserving an historic Macon mill building with attractive architecture. The use of historic tax credits for restoration of the building is a possibility, and could raise the value of the land. The view of this building from Coliseum Drive and I-16 should be unobstructed, to highlight its attractive facade.
- BBP recommends that an additional building be constructed adjacent and connected to the existing building. The new building would contain 70 additional hotel rooms, and public space (possibly including a lobby, restaurant, conference/banquet room(s) and storage space). BBP recommends that the new building be harmonious with, but not imitative of, the existing building to maximize the possibility of obtaining historic tax credits for the existing building's redevelopment. The floor area of the entire hotel structure would be 62,000 s.f., and the footprint would be approximately 21,000 s.f.
- BBP recommends that the extended-stay hotel be built behind (to the southeast of) the location of the first new hotel. We recommend that this hotel be approximately 55,000 S.F., and have 60 rooms. Approximately 35% of this hotel would be devoted to public space, such as the lobby, restaurant, conference room, storage space, etc. This hotel could be three stories tall, with a footprint of approximately 18,000 S.F.
- BBP recommends that a mid-size, moderately priced restaurant be built directly across Coliseum Drive from the Centreplex. The restaurant would require approximately a 7,000 s.f. building footprint, and approximately a 1.2-acre lot size.
- BBP recommends allocating a portion of the land on the Bibb Mill site to a greenway that would connect Coliseum Drive to the Ocmulgee Mounds. This would improve access to the Mounds, and could increase the flow of people through the Bibb Mill site.
- As an alternative to building an extended stay hotel, a second restaurant (7,000 s.f. building footprint, 1.2 acre lot size) could be built. Yet another option would be to build a smaller restaurant inside the extended stay hotel. If the restaurant were built inside the hotel, it would be smaller, directed more at attracting clientele of the hotel itself. Its size would be approximately 3,000 s.f.





Aerial view of proposed Bibb Mill Village looking toward the Centreplex, I-16 and the Ocmulgee River



Concept Plan Bibb Mill Village

Urban Design Consultants:
LDR International, Inc.
Economic Development Consultants:
BBPA, Inc.

Scale: 1" = 100' - 0"
Date: 3.15.00



Centreplex Site:

- BBP recommends a long-term development plan for a 4-story, 133,000 s.f. full-service hotel. This hotel would have a footprint of approximately 33,250 s.f. with approximately 250 rooms.

BBP conducted feasibility studies for the following development options for the Bibb Mill site: a limited-service/value hotel, a full-service hotel, extended-stay accommodations, a mid-priced restaurant, fast-food restaurant, big box-retail, and a restaurant/bar with themed entertainment. The feasibility studies' results are as follows:

- The proposed limited-service hotel, at a \$60 room night rate (current rate) is not feasible without a subsidy (of approximately \$420,800). If the hotel could get \$64 rather than \$60 in average daily room revenue, it would have a positive residual land value and would be deemed feasible without a subsidy.
- The proposed new, extended-stay hotel is not feasible at current room rates without a subsidy. In order to have a positive residual value and be feasible without a subsidy, \$86/night room revenue would be necessary, rather than the projected \$65/night. At current rates, it would have to receive a subsidy of \$1.1 million to become feasible.
- The proposed mid-size, moderate-priced restaurant is feasible without a subsidy, and would have a \$2.44 residual land value/s.f. of land area (\$106,300/acre). This assumes a \$15/s.f. rent.
- A fast-food restaurant is feasible without a subsidy. Assuming \$20/s.f. in rent, the restaurant would have a \$4.11 residual land value/s.f. of land area (\$179,000/acre).
- A themed entertainment restaurant would be marginally feasible (\$0 residual land value) without a subsidy if it paid \$14/s.f. in rent.
- A big-box retail outlet would be feasible without a subsidy and would have a \$2.49 residual land value/s.f. of land area (\$108,500/acre) if it paid \$12/s.f. in rent.
- It is not necessary for the City of Macon to purchase the land in order to develop it. NewTown Macon should work with the current owner to reach a development solution that satisfies both parties.

The results of the feasibility study for a full-service hotel on the Centreplex site are as follows:

- There is currently not sufficient overnight demand to support a full-service hotel on the Centreplex site. However, in the future, if there was sufficient demand for a 250-room hotel, this development would be feasible without a subsidy at an average daily room rate of \$71 and 60% occupancy. This assumes the hotel would have 30,000 s.f. of public space and would be able to make use of public space available at the Centreplex. The land would be free, since it is owned by the Centreplex. The key to the development's success (assuming the Centreplex would create 100% of the demand for the proposed hotel) is for the Centreplex to generate 82,125 delegate nights of room demand per year.

In summary, a limited-service hotel and selected retail uses are currently feasible. Additional hotel development would require significant subsidies or a more mature retail/hotel market.



4.2.2 Marketing Recommendations

- The Bibb Mill site, similar to the Riverfront site, has ample parking, good access to downtown (only a few blocks from Terminal Station and the Georgia Music and Sports Halls of Fame), build-to-suit construction potential, few existing structures, and good views of the downtown across the river.
- The Bibb Mill site has the additional advantage of being directly across the street from the Centreplex. This proximity may be attractive to restaurants and hotels. BBP recommends that NewTown Macon consider the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the two properties. It is estimated that this bridge would cost \$190,000-\$220,000.
- Though all four anchor development sites have good access to the interstate, the Bibb Mill site and Centreplex are adjacent to the I-16 exit ramp and can be easily seen from the main section of the road. This quality is especially important to businesses such as hotels and fast food or family restaurants.
- The Bibb Mill site should also be tied into the downtown and Macon attractions by enhancing circulation. Efforts to extend the greenway to the Ocmulgee Mounds to allow access through the Bibb Mill site should be considered to increase the green space linkages and improve circulation. Earl Barr, the owner of the site, has already expressed interest in such an extension, which would bring more people to the area and make it easier for future hotel guests on the site and other visitors to access the Ocmulgee Mounds and downtown Macon. The Ocmulgee Mounds, in turn, will become a greater tourist amenity for Macon. Institution of a downtown electric shuttle could also mutually reinforce the Bibb Mill site, the Centreplex, and the downtown core.
- Currently, there is a development interest for a service station in a 1.5-acre parcel of the Bibb Mill site on Coliseum Drive frontage space. Earl Barr has expressed his willingness to accept this proposal, but has asked for recommendations for its location so as to best utilize the rest of the site. The BBP/LDR project team recommends that the station be constructed at the corner of Coliseum Drive and the I-16 exit ramp. This location would minimize obstructed views of other development (including hotels and restaurants) on the site, and would free up space for a central driveway into the Bibb Mill site, with an entrance directly across from the Centreplex.

4.2.3 Fiscal & Economic Impacts

BBP's fiscal & economic impact analysis of the Bibb Mill site and Centreplex projected the following impacts (to calculate capitalized revenues, a 5.6% interest rate on 20-year bonds was assumed):

The combined 124,000 s.f. development of a limited-service hotel, extended-stay hotel, and mid-price restaurant would generate an economic value of \$11.7 million, 180 hotel rooms, 194 new jobs, \$2.4 million in capitalized TAD revenues, and \$2.6 million in capitalized sales, bed/room, and occupation tax revenues.



- Of the three development projects proposed for the Bibb Mill site, the limited-service hotel would account for the greatest contribution to the TAD-- \$1.3 million in capitalized revenues. It would also account for 62,000 s.f. of development, an economic value of \$6.2 million, 120 new jobs, and capitalized occupation and bed/room taxes of \$1.4 million.
- The 55,000 s.f. extended stay hotel would create an economic value of \$4.5 million, create 60 new jobs, generate capitalized TAD revenues of \$927,000, and generate \$941,000 in capitalized occupation, bed/room, and sales tax revenues.
- The 7,000 s.f. mid-price restaurant would create an economic value of \$907,000, create 14 new jobs, generate \$186,000 in capitalized revenues for the TAD and \$224,000 in capitalized sales and occupation tax revenues.
- The 133,000 s.f. full-service hotel at the Centreplex is projected to generate an economic value of \$13.6 million, create 250 new jobs, create \$2.8 million in capitalized revenues for the TAD and \$3 million in capitalized bed/room and occupation tax revenues

A sketch and plan of the Bibb Mill and Centreplex Site are shown in Exhibits 12 and 13.

4.3 Riverfront Assemblage

This section of the report recommends a development plan, marketing strategy, and fiscal & economic impact analysis for the Riverfront Assemblage.

4.3.1 Development Plan

The Riverfront Assemblage is approximately 14 acres along the Ocmulgee River, and is bounded by Spring Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and Riverside Drive. In LDR International's 1997 study of the Riverfront Assemblage, it was estimated that 5.8 acres of the site should be developed for commercial uses (approximately 250,000 s.f.). The BBP-LDR International project team recommends that the commercial space be allocated as follows:

1. 215,000 s.f. of office space
2. 35,000 of retail/restaurant space

The opportunities for development at the Riverfront would be greatly enhanced by the relocation of the existing rail line to the opposite (north) side of the river. This action would free up more of the Riverfront for development, allow unobstructed views of the river, and allow people to get closer to the river itself. The proposed Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway that would run alongside the Ocmulgee River through this property would enhance the attractiveness of the site for development and would be made possible by the rail relocation. The move of the rail to the other side of the river would also reduce noise impacts, and enhance freight rail capacity in the area. Although this would incur expenses, savings would be realized by reducing the need for grade crossings when passenger rail is built. The rail line could then be incorporated into the Interstate-16 corridor, which makes it eligible for additional Federal funds.



BBP's feasibility study of the office space and retail/restaurant space is as follows:

- Under the most likely scenario of \$18/s.f. rent and the parking provided by the developer, office space at the Riverfront site is not feasible. In order to be feasible, the cost of parking would have to be written off (subsidized) by the City.
- Under the most likely scenario, retail space at the Riverfront site would require a zero land cost or parking provided by others (subsidized). The residual land value would reach zero if parking was subsidized, and rent was \$15/s.f. Alternatively, a \$3 million subsidy would have to be provided.

4.3.2 Marketing Recommendations

BBP recommends that the following marketing actions be undertaken with respect to the Riverfront Assemblage:

- The 14-acre Riverfront site should be marketed and advertised in such a way as to emphasize the attributes that make it competitive with suburban sites, while having all the benefits of being part of the central business district.
- Attributes that make the site competitive with a suburban location include: Ample parking, good access, good views, build-to-suit construction potential, and few existing structures.
- Office development at this location would be located in Macon's Central Business District, convenient to and visible from Interstate-16, and would be a pleasant environment for workers, with good views of the river, and proximity to restaurants, cafes, museums, theaters, and the future greenway. The planned office development at the site should be used to help obtain retail/restaurant tenants, since the office employees, together with other city residents and workers, could provide a market for retail/restaurant businesses.
- As plans continue to develop for the implementation of passenger rail service to Atlanta and other markets, the Riverfront site should also be marketed as an office site in convenient proximity to the train (as well as I-16 and I-75).

Development of the Riverfront site would be greatly facilitated by the relocation of the existing Norfolk Southern railroad line to the opposite bank of the Ocmulgee River. The relocation of the rail line would free additional space for development or a greenway and would remove an obstacle to the views and access to the River from the site. Currently, it is difficult to extend a greenway farther than the historic Rose Hill cemetery. The rail line relocation also achieves efficiencies with the future needs for multiple track expansion for freight and possible passenger rail.





Sketch of the Riverfront Assemblage



Riverfront Assemblage Concept Plan

Although BBP assumes there will be no direct subsidy to a developer, it is recommended that NewTown Macon utilize a variety of mechanisms to make the site attractive for development. BBP recommends that NewTown Macon assist the developer with:

- Land acquisition
- Environmental remediation. This may include addressing any U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' floodplain issues that may exist
- Environmental indemnification
- Site preparation and improvement. This includes relocation of the railroad to the opposite bank of the Ocmulgee River. This will open more space on the site for development and provide better access to the riverfront and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway.

In addition, Tax Allocation District funds will be used to help pay for site work and parking.

4.3.3 Fiscal & Economic Impacts

BBP's fiscal & economic impact analysis of the Riverfront Assemblage's development plan projected the following (to calculate capitalized revenues, a 5.6% interest rate on 20-year bonds was assumed):

- The total 250,000 s.f. development project at the Riverfront Assemblage would create \$24.5 million of economic value, 930 new jobs, \$5 million of capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$1.2 million of capitalized occupation and sales tax revenues.
- The office portion of the project, comprising 215,000 s.f. of development, would create \$22.2 million of economic value, 860 new jobs, \$4.5 million of capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$62,000 of capitalized occupation tax revenues.
- The 35,000 s.f. retail portion of the project was found to generate an economic value of \$2.3 million, 70 new jobs, \$470,000 of capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$1.1 million of capitalized sales and occupation tax revenues.

A sketch of the Riverfront Assemblage appears in Exhibit 15.

4.4 Triangle Building Site

This section of the report recommends a development plan, marketing strategy, and fiscal & economic impact analysis for the Triangle Building Site.

4.4.1 Development Plan

BBP recommends constructing a 6-story, mixed-use building on the Triangle Site. This building would have a footprint of approximately 12,600 s.f., and 69,600 s.f. total gross leasable space. It would feature retail space on the first floor and in the adjacent parking garage, and office space on the other five floors for a total of 60,600 gross s.f. of office.



Tenants would be able to utilize free parking in the existing parking garage adjacent to the building. A bank and an insurance company have already expressed interest in leasing space if a building were constructed on this site.

BBP recommends that the building be constructed so as to mask the parking garage behind it. This will create the most aesthetically appealing facade. The fountain and park will complement the mixed-use development accentuating the 'city in a park'.

BBP's feasibility study of the Triangle Building is as follows:

- Under Scenario A for the office space, the most likely scenario, with rent at \$18.00/s.f., the project requires a subsidy of \$523,604 to become feasible. This is a modest amount considering the benefits of the office complex's development for the downtown.
- Under Scenario B for the office space, which assumes that rents increased to \$19.78/s.f., the project is feasible without a subsidy. It should be noted that \$19.78 is not greatly different than the \$18.00/s.f. used in the best case scenario, therefore, there is a reasonable chance that this scenario could occur.
- Under Scenario A for the retail/restaurant space, the most likely scenario, the project requires a \$663,000 subsidy to become feasible (rent is \$10/s.f.).
- Scenario B for the retail/restaurant space, shows that a rent of \$14.78/s.f. is required for the project to become feasible without a subsidy.

4.4.2 Marketing Recommendations

BBP recommends that the following attributes of the Triangle Site be highlighted as part of the marketing strategy for the site:

- Free parking for tenants of the site
- Central business district location, near other downtown amenities, attractions, restaurants, and offices
- Signature location with maximum exposure. This is an opportunity to enhance Macon's reputation as a "city in the park" -- use of the property's green space should complement use of the building, and vice versa
- Development promotes mixture of uses, and uses will support each other (office clients will support retail/restaurant development, and retail/restaurant development will make office space more appealing)
- Helps city achieve urban character by building close to street
- Excellent access (near interstates, other major roads, and in the future, passenger rail)



Although BBP assumes there will be no direct subsidy to a developer, it is recommended that NewTown Macon utilize a variety of mechanisms to make the site attractive for development. BBP recommends that NewTown Macon assist the developer with:

- Obtaining required development approval
- Negotiating with the Urban Development Authority on acquiring the property
- Obtaining attractive financing

4.4.3 Fiscal & Economic Impacts

BBP's fiscal & economic impact analysis of the Triangle Site Building show the following (to calculate capitalized revenues, a 5.6% interest rate on 20-year bonds was assumed):

- The 69,600 gross s.f. (60,510 net s.f.) development would create an economic value of \$6.2 million, 260 new jobs, \$1.3 million in capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$350,000 in capitalized occupation and sales tax revenues.
- The office portion of the project would account for 60,600 gross s.f. (51,510 net s.f.) of development, a \$5.2 million economic value, 242 new jobs, \$1.1 million of capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$62,000 of capitalized occupation tax revenues.
- The retail portion of the project would account for 9,000 s.f. of development, \$980,000 of economic value, 18 new jobs, \$201,000 of capitalized revenues for the TAD, and \$288,000 of capitalized occupation tax and sales tax revenues.

Exhibit 16 shows the potential development of the Triangle Site as envisioned by Claxton Architects.

4.5 Additional Economic Catalysts

In addition to the urban design planning and the eight initiatives of NewTown Macon, there are several key efforts and opportunities that can dramatically influence the future of downtown Macon. The following are economic catalysts that will create greater viability in jobs and quality of life for citizens and increase substantially the investment base for downtown Macon's Tax Allocation District.

4.5.1 Impact of Transportation Improvements

Currently plans are underway to examine passenger rail service for Macon. In fact, early indications point to Macon as the logical choice for a passenger rail hub through a true multi-modal facility that would serve the entire state of Georgia.

The transportation component of the revitalization program is the one that will have the greatest impact on the downtown. The implementation of passenger rail (high-speed or commuter), the downtown People Mover electric shuttle, the intermodal transportation



facility, and the Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway are all ways that NewTown Macon could improve transportation options available in the downtown area.

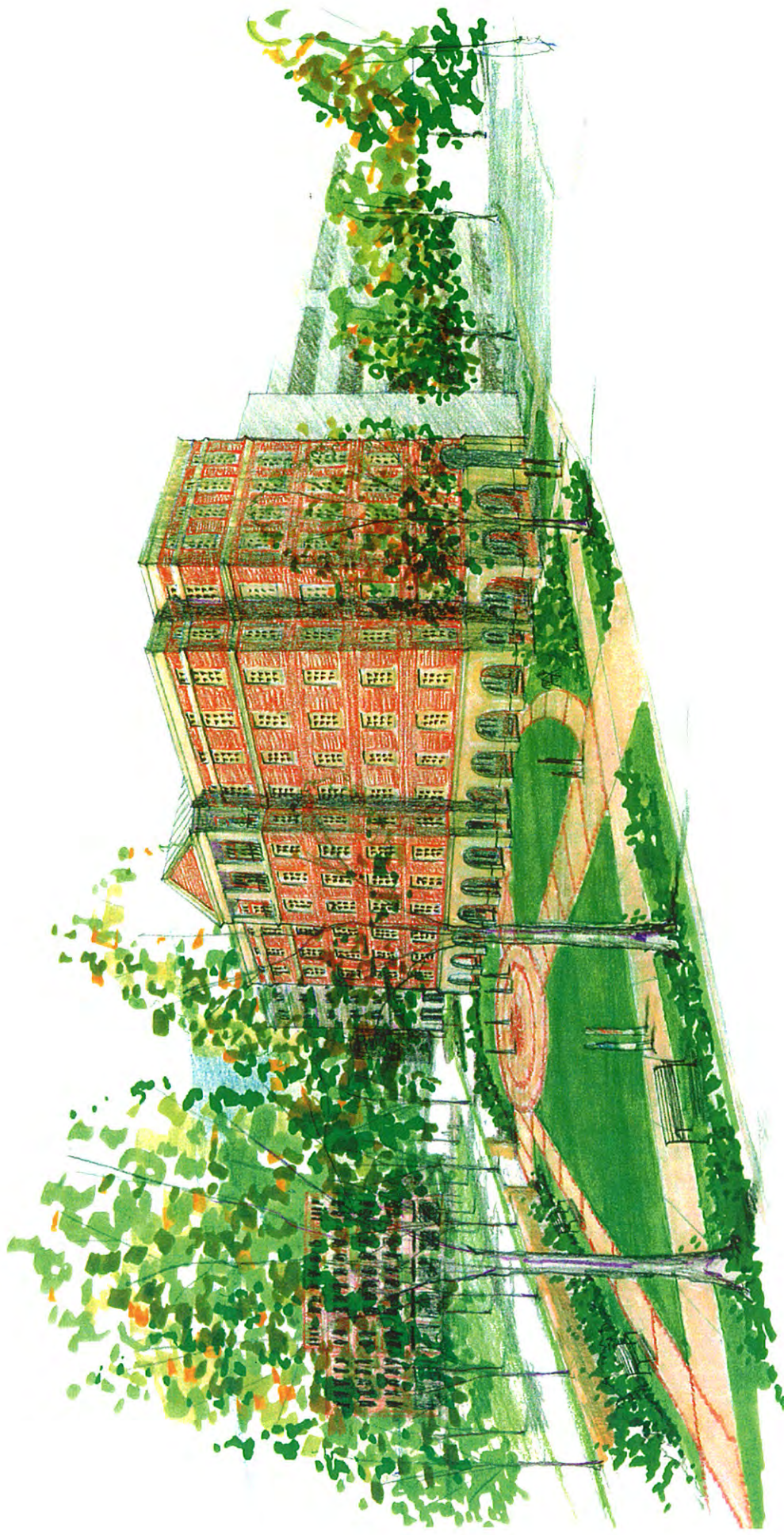
Transportation improvements could revitalize the downtown by making it easier and faster for workers and tourists to get to Macon from other points, and for inter-city commuters who live in Macon to get to work in other cities. It could attract residents who want to live in a city that has an excellent quality of life like Macon, but who need have a convenient transportation option to get to their jobs in Atlanta. A high-speed train might help persuade businesses that Macon is an excellent location, since rents are lower than in Atlanta, but they are still within an easy drive of both Macon amenities and Atlanta Hartsfield International Airport. Transportation improvements would also enhance traffic flow and alternative travel options within the downtown itself. A People Mover system could help attract tourists and shoppers to the downtown, eliminating the concern over street parking availability. The electric or hybrid power shuttle would help make the downtown a more pleasant place to visit by reducing pollution and taking cars off the street.

The use of the Terminal Station for passenger rail service would make it eligible to receive federal transportation funds for the renovation of the building. It should be noted that federal transportation funds can be used to facilitate pedestrian transportation improvements as well. Actions taken to facilitate pedestrian safety and make the downtown more attractive and easier to walk around will also increase the potential for success of the revitalization projects.

Real estate agents and Atlanta and Macon Chamber of Commerce representatives generally agree that a high-speed passenger rail line and a slower, commuter rail line (with a one hour, 40 minute commute time) would have quite different impacts on the Macon area. A high-speed passenger rail line with a travel time of an hour or less from Macon to Atlanta is considered much more likely to attract businesses and residents to Macon. This would allow people to reside in the Macon area and commute to jobs in Atlanta. The frequency of trains was also cited as a factor that could affect how many riders the train might attract. The train is also considered an alternative which could be appealing to commuters who would prefer to read, work, relax or sleep on a train instead of contend with the Atlanta region's traffic.

The potential of the train to attract riders to Hartsfield International Airport depends in part on the speed of the train, the ease of connection at the airport, and the money saved from taking the train (since taking the train allows one to save on parking and other travel costs). Currently, the going rate for a Grooms Shuttle trip from Macon to Hartsfield International is \$40.





Triangle Site
Sketch by: Claxton Architects

There are numerous examples of passenger rail stations having significant economic impacts on adjacent areas. These impacts include a 10% greater average annual increase in value of residential units proximate to commuter rail stations. In addition, the following selected projects have shown how passenger rail creates opportunities for major 5-used development:

- Alexandria, VA
- Baltimore, MD
- Boston, MA
- Chattanooga, TN
- Los Angeles, CA
- Memphis, TN
- Meridian, MS
- Metropark, NJ
- Nashville, TN
- Newark, NJ
- Philadelphia, PA
- Portland, OR
- Richmond, VA
- San Diego, CA
- Seattle, WA
- Springfield, MA
- Stamford, CT
- Trenton, NJ
- Washington, DC
- West Windsor, NJ
- Wilmington, DE

Passenger rail could have a significant impact on residential areas, office development, retail businesses, and tourist attractions in downtown Macon. The frequency, quality, and speed of the train will influence the degree of economic impact as well as the gateway image of Macon and the creation of a true, intermodal center.

4.5.2 Impact of Atlanta

Atlanta's real estate market is very strong, driven by business expansion, population growth, and job formation. The Atlanta region's population continues to grow by 100,000 each year. A 1998 estimate by the Census Bureau put the Atlanta metropolitan area's population at 3.7 million.

In the office sector, 2.2 million s.f. of new projects started construction in the first half of 1999 in Atlanta, driven in part by the high demand for expansion from current tenants. The market was expected to absorb 4.5 million s.f. in 1999, with 5 million s.f. planned in the CBD, midtown, and perimeter central areas. The vacancy rate for Class-A space dropped from 11.1% at the end of 1998 to 10.0% by mid-1999.

Approximately 2.5 million s.f. of retail development opened in the Atlanta area in 1998, and 6.7 million s.f. more will come on-line by the end of 1999. Significant portions of the new retail space were the Mall of Georgia (1.7 million s.f.) and the 1.2 million s.f. Arbor Place mall in Douglasville (west of Atlanta). The Mall of Georgia spurred development of other retail centers around the mall. New construction should push retail vacancies to more than 8% by year's end, according to Marcus & Millichap Real Estate Investment Brokerage Co. Rental rates are predicted to increase slightly as the market absorbs new space.

Atlanta's rapid growth has led to significant increases in traffic congestion and air pollution. There is however, evidence that the city's revitalization of its urban areas and developers' willingness to consider infill development could work against these trends. The downtown is



now undergoing large-scale redevelopment, which includes hotel, loft residential, retail and office development.

Some local real estate specialists consider the potential for Macon to attract residents and businesses from Atlanta to be limited, due to the contrasting nature of the two cities. According to the interviewees, people choose to reside or do business in Atlanta to a large extent because it offers amenities smaller cities cannot: a large workforce, proximity to Hartsfield International, and a cosmopolitan environment with a wide array of entertainment options, for example. Furthermore, there is only a small amount of evidence of business or residential flight from the Atlanta area. On the contrary, Atlanta's residential and commercial real estate markets (both downtown and in the suburbs) are currently very strong.

Atlanta specialists, on the other hand, described Macon as having tremendous potential. Its location, transportation system both rail system of freight and passenger and interstates, proximity to Atlanta and Hartsfield were noted but the most consistent quality described was the historic downtown and quality of life. Many stated that Macon, if properly marketed, could attract some Atlantans specifically because of the contrasting nature of the cities.

Although it does not appear that Macon could compete with Atlanta directly for businesses and residents, Macon can market itself as a contrast to Atlanta, which is getting ever more crowded, with the concomitant problems of traffic congestion and air pollution. Macon can market itself by emphasizing its quality of life and its more intimate scale. Macon can highlight the fact that lease rates and hotel room rates in Macon are lower than in Atlanta, where office space leases for \$25.40/s.f., and hotel room starting rates range from \$60-\$240. Macon can emphasize the fact that its average commuting time of 18 minutes, which is below the national average. Macon can also take advantage of available development incentives and potential high-speed rail access.

4.5.3 Macon/Bibb County Parks, Recreation and Greenspace Master Plan

A 'city in a park' is one of the early phrases describing Macon and an appropriate mission of creating a vital center city. One of the critical concepts of a livable community is to preserve green space that promotes clean air and clean water, sustains wildlife, and provides families with places to walk, play, and relax. The Macon/Bibb County Parks, Recreation and Greenspace Master Plan strives to accomplish this goal.

When NewTown Macon was approached with the need for funding this Masterplan it seemed a natural fit for the non-profit public-private partnership's mission. NewTown Macon saw in the plan a comprehensive and coordinated approach and one that included community input and support.

Even though the plan is countywide and NewTown Macon's focus is on Downtown, the partnership saw the opportunity for the network of parks and bike and pedestrian pathways to actually connect Downtown Macon-Bibb County together in a exciting way. There were also downtown streetscapes, pedestrian pathways, and significant plans to expand and enhance Central City Park, the oldest and largest community park. The plan for the park as developed by Gladding Jackson is shown in Exhibit 17.



4.5.4 Fall Line Freeway Extension

The Fall Line Freeway will follow the Eisenhower Parkway Extension to continue to provide the much-needed connection between south and west Bibb County with the east and between Columbus, Macon, and Augusta. The extension of the Fall Line Freeway serves as an economic catalyst for the region, particularly aiding the revitalization and development of downtown Macon. The extension improves access to the area for visitors and workers, enhancing access to jobs and the market. In addition, the new road will divert trucks from MLK Blvd., allowing the street again to be restored to a visitor entrance and thoroughfare. The Fall Line Freeway also serves to open up new economic opportunities including currently undevelopable land or unmarketable sites. The Freeway improves access to brownfield sites, aiding their redevelopment. Additionally, the Terminal Station redevelopment will be facilitated by expanding parking options on the site. Amenities, such as parks and recreation facilities, are also able to be expanded.

4.5.5 Dempsey Hotel

The Dempsey Hotel is an excellent opportunity for reuse of an existing building downtown. This 9-story building, located on Cherry Street, is in a prime location for a hotel or loft apartments or both. Development of such residential units would contribute to a mixed-use development pattern in the downtown and would provide an attractive housing option that is convenient to the workplace for downtown employees, whether they be new to the area or local residents.

4.5.6 Infill Development

Infill development is an important concept for NewTown Macon to advocate. Infill development is development of real estate that is vacant or underused, and leads to higher densities. This in turn helps to foster more livable, safer, walkable communities that are more interesting for pedestrians. Infill development could help the anchor projects succeed by linking them together. Pedestrians might be more inclined to walk from one of the projects to another or to other attractions in Macon if there were not as many gaps between buildings. When people get out of their cars, they are also more likely to make casual stops and increase retail spending.

4.5.7 Brownfield Redevelopment

The feasibility of using Brownfield redevelopment funds to restore, clean, and redevelop former industrial land in Macon is now being investigated. NewTown Macon should aggressively pursue this opportunity to obtain funds and redevelop a strategic location in the downtown. Several uses for potential brownfield redevelopment sites include expansion of Central City Park, future stadium, passenger rail maintenance yard, and redevelopment of Downtown Industrial District including new light-industrial associated with freight rail.



4.5.8 Historic Buildings

Macon should also capitalize on its historic nature. There are many fine, attractive, historic houses in the City. These resources must be protected and marketed so as to maximize their capacity for attracting tourists. The Terminal Station itself is an historic structure that began operations in 1916. The restoration of these structures could be assisted by federal and state historic tax credits.

4.5.9 Cherry Street District

NewTown Macon has made one of its priorities business retention and recruitment in Downtown Macon's traditional retail and urban entertainment district. To this effort NewTown Macon is engaging experienced consultants to help develop a realistic lease plan and strategy for the area along three blocks of Mulberry, Cherry, and Poplar including cross streets known as the Cherry Street Retail District.

The strategy will include ideal tenant mix, location characteristics for cross shopping, ideal box size of certain retail and restaurants, estimated sales volumes, suggested regional and national retailers, parking strategy, pedestrian shopping circulation, façade, signage and visual merchandising guidelines, and finally a conceptual lease plan. A business retention and recruitment director will be hired as part of the Urban Design Center to work property owners, merchants, and real estate brokers to implement the plan.

4.5.10 Urban Design Center

The Urban Design Center for Macon is envisioned as a non-profit development corporation with the proactive mission of attracting private development through a comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous smart growth design.

An Urban Planner will be a part of a team that will be a resource for comprehensive, coordinated, and continuous smart growth. The planner will work closely with existing city and county planning/zoning and other regulatory bodies for coordinated macro planning and design and also be a resource for potential and existing private development through micro planning and design. The design center will allow for an effective partnership between public regulatory bodies and the private interests, which will drive redevelopment and increase prosperity. In effect the design center will be a part of a sales team with the objective of spurring economic growth in Macon's urban center.

As a catalyst in urban redevelopment, team members will include an Urban Design Director, Business Retention and Recruitment Director, and project directors as needed under the auspices of the public private partnership – NewTown Macon. The Urban Design Center will be a part of an overall marketing plan to attract private capital by providing in house design and consultation for initiative coordination, new project planning, design review, and assistance to existing businesses.



The Urban Design Center would be organized and developed with university liaison similar to the model started in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The unprecedented \$1 million gift from the Knight Foundation will allow NewTown Macon to open the Urban Design Center as early as spring 2000. Discussions have begun with Mercer University, Georgia Tech's School of Architecture, the University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design and the University of Tennessee's School of Architecture involving opportunities for partnerships among several disciplines that affect urban design and revitalization. In addition, discussions have begun with the Planning and Zoning Commission and staff concerning coordinated planning.

4.5.11 Downtown Inventory

Essential to the development of a Tax Allocation District, Business Improvement District, and Business Retention and Recruitment is knowing the condition and opportunities of the product being redeveloped. NewTown Macon presently has property values and history of approximately fifty blocks in downtown Macon. The database is presently being layered with additional fields of detail that will benefit public agencies such as Planning and Zoning, and the Transit Authority, and private entities such as property owners, potential investors and local real estate agents. The inventory will be a powerful tool in the improvement of downtown Macon.

4.5.12 Continuing Investment

The Macon community has continually invested in its downtown with over \$55 million in public sector investment on a variety of projects in the past decade including the expansion to the Macon Centreplex and investments in the Music and Sports Halls of Fame. In addition, investment has gone into improving the public areas of Macon including investments on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. The private sector has also responded with over \$31 million invested in renovation projects and improvements in downtown.



5.0 Implementation Strategy and Action Plan

5.1 NewTown Macon Role

NewTown Macon, Inc. a public-private partnership was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit membership based organization, in 1997 to advance the revitalization of downtown Macon. Today, the organization's primary focus is mobilizing capital and implementing an ambitious \$36 million downtown planning and capital improvement program. NewTown Macon's present structure resembles a community development corporation which is consistent with its 501(c)(3) tax status and organizational by-laws. NewTown Macon's efforts in raising funds for improvement projects, facilitating and seeding commercial and/or housing development, and rehabilitating underutilized and/or blighted real estate describe a CDC role. The development of an Urban Design Center in the spring of 2000 will organize these efforts in an effective and efficient model. NewTown Macon's broad-based membership board of directors serve its mission of developing consensus and raising funds for overhead costs well, including the partnering and leveraging resources and talents of other public and private organizations within the Macon community.

5.1.1 Business Improvement District (BID)

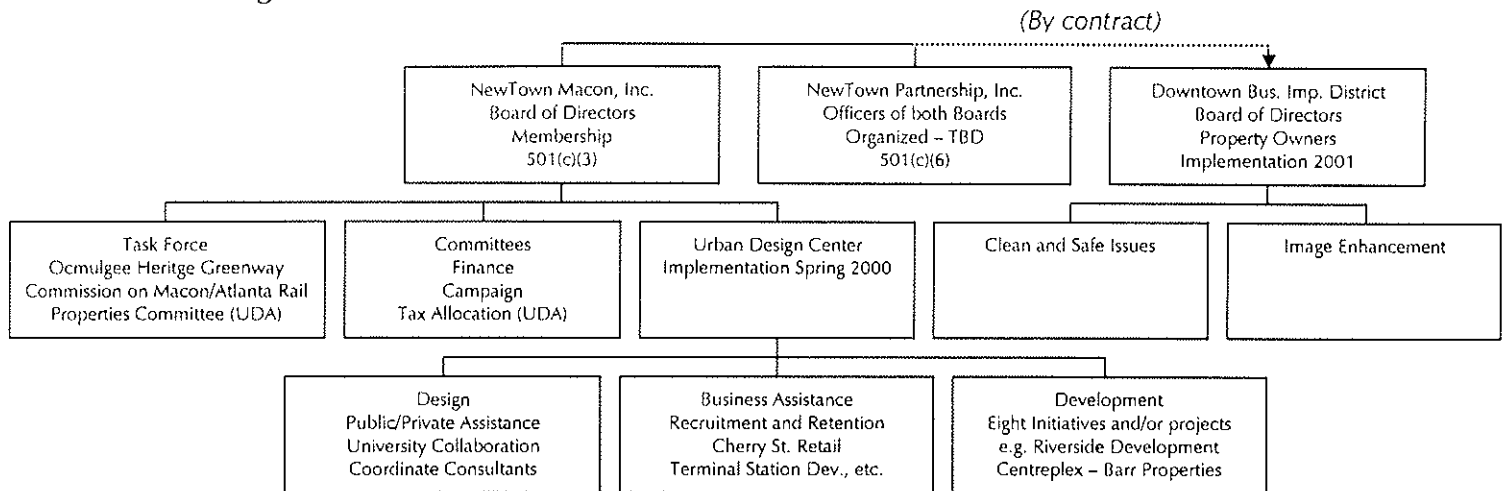
Downtown property and business owners are currently exploring the development of a business improvement district (BID). The BID with property owner approval would establish an assessment on commercial property that would support enhanced services in the downtown, including security, maintenance and marketing which complements the efforts of the CDC. The BID would be governed by its own property and business owner board of directors who would contract with NewTown Macon to deliver services. A steering committee has been organized with a petition campaign expected to begin in the spring of 2000 and, if successful, implementation in January 2001.

5.1.2 NewTown Macon Partnership

Upon the successful BID development, a streamlined cost-effective management model has been suggested by consultants. NewTown Macon Partnership (NMP) would be an umbrella holding company proposed for a unified management organization. NMP provides staffing for the NewTown Macon programs and for subsidiary or per contract organizations such as a BID. This allows for one overall centralized administrative function and accounting, efficiently administering NewTown Macon's (CDC) mission of design and development including the Urban Design Center and the BID's mission of management and marketing of downtown: "If you build it they will come, if you manage it they will stay." The board of directors of NMP would be composed of the officers from NewTown Macon, Inc. and the officers of the proposed BID. NMP would be incorporated as a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization, allowing it flexibility to advocate strongly (lobby) on behalf of downtown interests. NMP would provide economies of scale by centralizing staffing and administration.

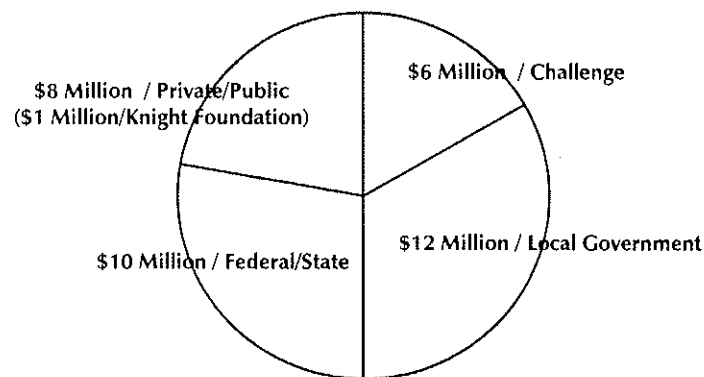


Organizational Model – 2000



5.2 \$36 Million Capital Campaign

The Robert W. Woodruff and Peyton Anderson Foundations have issued a challenge to the Macon Community and others outside the community who are interested in the revitalization of Macon's urban center. The challenge calls upon the entire community including governments, individual citizens, corporations and foundations to come together for the greater good of the city and its future. Each foundation has issued a \$3 million challenge grant toward the renaissance of downtown Macon. To claim this \$6 million, the community must raise an additional \$30 million. The \$36 million capital campaign designed to fund the eight initiatives has raised several million in private money already and the Tax Allocation District development is designed to allow government participation in a creative way. The capital campaign underscores the community's public-private partnership.



5.3 Community Partners

There are many initiatives in Macon's urban center that are being forwarded by NewTown Macon's community partners that has produced significant momentum in downtown Macon. Community partners include in alphabetical order: Bibb County, City of Macon, Cherry Blossom Festival, Downtown Council, Downtown Merchants and Friends, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce, Keep Macon-Bibb County Beautiful, Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Macon Centreplex, Macon Economic Development Commission, Macon Heritage Foundation, Macon Transit Authority, Regional Development Commission, local delegation of the State of Georgia, Urban Development Authority, and several State Agencies and Georgia State Departments.

5.4 Tax Allocation District (TAD)

Discussions with both the city and county governments revealed the difficulty of the local governments in sharing significantly financially in the eight initiatives even though the desire to leverage the private funds and support for the efforts were overwhelming. Both the city and county governments encouraged NewTown Macon to pursue the development of a tax allocation district (TAD) that would provide a win/win opportunity for the public private partnership.

The primary local government matching funding source for the eight initiatives including participation in the anchor site projects would come from bonds. The debt service and interest on the bonds would be paid for from revenue raised from a tax allocation district (TAD). Following is a description of the procedures for instituting and operating a TAD in the State of Georgia.

Under the redevelopment law (Section 36-44), a tax allocation district may be created by a resolution of the local legislative body. The tax allocation district must be a contiguous geographic area within a defined redevelopment area. The purpose of creating a tax allocation district is to issue tax allocation bonds to finance wholly or in part redevelopment costs within the tax allocation district.

The tax allocation district is designated based on the preparation of a redevelopment plan by the designated local redevelopment agency and the consent of the political subdivision. The area of a tax allocation district is limited to less than 10% of the total current taxable value of all taxable property located within the political subdivision.

The local enabling legislation has to clearly describe the boundaries of the tax allocation district, which must include whole units of property assessed for property tax purposes.

In order to be a redevelopment area, the area must have structured buildings or improvements which are dilapidated, deteriorated, aged or obsolete and are detrimental to public health safety welfare models. In addition, any combination of slum, inadequate street layout, inadequate parking, inadequate lot layout, diversity of ownership, tax delinquency and any combination which "substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of a community, retards the provision of housing accommodations or employment opportunities



or constitutes an economic or social liability” . . . is also eligible. Similarly any open area with similar factors or combinations of factors which substantially impair or arrest sound growth of a community are also eligible. Substantial under utilization of lots or parcels of land or those containing a substantial number of buildings which are 40 years or older of relatively low value also may constitute a redevelopment area.

A redevelopment plan must be prepared which specifies the following: the boundaries of the area; the grounds for finding of need; proposed uses after redevelopment; the estimated costs and proposed methods of financing of projects; any contracts or agreements exceeding one year; types of relocation proposed; assurance that the redevelopment plan conforms with other local plan; estimates of the redevelopment cost; documentation of last known assessed value and estimated assessed value after redevelopment; and assurances that historic properties will not be negatively affected.

The effective date of the tax allocation district and its proposed termination date must be identified. Maps identifying boundaries and showing existing conditions and use of real property must be prepared. The estimated tax allocation increment base and the specific property tax used for computing the allocation along with any supporting resolution needs to be delineated. Information on any proposed tax allocation bond issue including term and assumed rate of interest and estimates of positive tax allocation increments for the period, which the bonds will be issued, should be prepared. The property proposed for payment or security of bonds must be identified and can include the tax allocation bonds as part of general funds derived from within the tax allocation district (i.e. the jurisdiction may pledge general funds from the designated tax allocation district if the positive tax increment is insufficient to pay principle or interest due on any bonds).

The redevelopment plan is subject to a public hearing within 60 days of planned submission and the local body must act within 45 days after completing public hearings. Amendments to the plan can only be done by the local legislative body. A redevelopment agency must be created or an existing urban redevelopment agency or authority could serve as a redevelopment agency for the tax allocation district. It is important to note that the creation of a tax allocation district must contain findings that the redevelopment in the area has not been subject to growth and development through private enterprise and would not reasonably be anticipated to be developed without the approved plan. The improvement of the area is likely to enhance the value of a substantial portion of real property within the district.

5.5 Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization

The development projects discussed would best be packaged together; parts comprising a whole. These projects should be strongly linked to the many other revitalization projects in downtown along with the eight NewTown Macon initiatives to achieve the desired goals. With a successful capital campaign of which the Tax Allocation District is an integral part, NewTown Macon’s planned investment of \$36 million in the eight initiatives will create significant momentum in attracting private investment in the urban center thereby reversing the disinvestment trends in downtown Macon.



The idea is to combine a mix of development options, including office, retail, hotel, restaurant, housing, tourist attractions, infrastructure improvements, city beautification, and transportation improvements. This great mix of improvements will fundamentally transform the image of downtown Macon. Image is extremely important if downtown Macon is to attract the large market that has grown in the suburbs, surrounding counties and Atlanta over the last two decades. The four anchor projects recommended need to be implemented to realize the \$12.7 million in TAD revenues, the \$7.9 million in occupation, bed/room, and sales tax revenues, and the \$62 million in economic value.

The existing property value for the tax allocation district has remained essentially "flat" at approximately \$150 million generating combined city and county tax revenue of almost \$2.5 million per year. The new development value created by the TAD and the NewTown Macon capital investment totals approximately \$62 million. In addition, it is conservatively estimated that the TAD should enhance the value of the downtown tax base at an annual rate of approximately 3.5 percent. At the end of ten years the value of property in the TAD would rise to a total of approximately \$274 million, a gain of \$124 million or 83 percent. Similarly, annual tax revenues would rise from almost \$2.5 million to \$4.6 million, a gain of \$2.1 million, or 83 percent.

It is crucial that all of these projects be undertaken in order to reach a critical mass of redevelopment that enhance Macon's image. Each of these programs will reinforce the others. For example, the transportation improvements will prevent gridlock on city streets and increase pedestrian traffic, both of which are good for businesses and tourism. New housing will bring new customers to downtown's restaurants and shops, just as new offices will make more people want to live downtown to be closer to their jobs. A greenway for jogging, walking, and biking will make the downtown a more attractive area for both residents and visitors. The development of the Centreplex has increased the demand for hotels in the area.

5.6 Packaging Development

The hotels proposed for the Barr Property and Centreplex site can be packaged together to become a more appealing development prospect for potential developers. BBP recommends that NewTown Macon consider offering incentives to developers who propose development of all three (non-competing) hotels together. Hotel developers may also be offered control over management of the hotels. This should make the development opportunity more attractive.

5.7 Development Schedule

BBP recommends that the anchor projects be developed as soon as possible, with the exception of the proposed full-service hotel on the Centreplex site. When the other development comes on-line and if demographic and economic trends continue, there will be more of a market for such a hotel. This is particularly true if the Centreplex attracts overnight visitors and spending.



The transportation components of the anchor projects will be phased. The proposed intermodal facility next to or across the street from the Terminal Station should be built as soon as possible. This funding will set the stage for rail service, and will enable federal transportation funds to be obtained that can be used to prepare Terminal Station for use as a passenger rail facility.

If passenger rail use at the Terminal Station happens farther into the future, BBP recommends that an interim, non-commercial use be developed for a part of the first-floor of Terminal Station. We suggest that tourist exhibitions highlighting Macon's attractions be considered.

Residential development is crucial to the mixed-use program for revitalizing downtown. A strong residential base will help the inner core become a safer place, with a stronger sense of community, and increased pedestrian activity. This, in turn, could make retail, restaurant, and entertainment options more feasible. There are many older buildings downtown, which might be suitable for loft housing. One particular structure which NewTown Macon should consider for redevelopment is the Dempsey Hotel.

5.8 Supporting Actions

BBP recommends that NewTown Macon pursue the following supporting actions to best prepare for the successful development of the anchor projects:

ACTION	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
Confirm Findings of Report	X			
Undertake Marketing Program	X	X	X	X
Initiate TAD Redevelopment Program		X	X	X
Pursue Federal Transit Funds For Intermodal Center			X	X

Confirm Findings, 1st Quarter

NewTown Macon should thoroughly review and consider this report and the recommendations it has made. As appropriate, the findings and recommendations should be adopted by NewTown Macon.

Undertake Marketing Programs, 1st-4th Quarters

NewTown Macon should continue and accelerate marketing programs aimed at improving the downtown's image to potential residents, businesses, tourists and hotel/convention center guests. The program should highlight the comprehensive downtown revitalization program, led by the development of the anchor sites, and enhanced by major transportation improvements.



Initiate Redevelopment Plan for the Tax Allocation District (TAD), 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Quarters

NewTown Macon should next begin to formulate a redevelopment plan for the tax allocation district (TAD). This step is a necessary prerequisite for implementation of the TAD, and needs to gain approval from Bibb County, the City of Macon, and the Board of Education. This step includes the clear description of the boundaries of the TAD.

Pursue Federal Transit Funds for Intermodal Center, 3rd and 4th Quarters

NewTown Macon should place a high priority on pursuing federal Transit Funds for the downtown's Intermodal Center. This funding could greatly assist the development of Terminal Station, pedestrian areas, and the intermodal center itself.

Implement NewTown Macon Initiatives

NewTown Macon should continue to move forward with the implementation of its major redevelopment initiatives for the downtown:

- The four anchor site projects
- High-speed passenger rail
- Parking and the downtown electric shuttle
- The Intermodal Center
- City streetscape and gateway improvements
- The Ocmulgee Heritage Greenway
- Tubman African-American Museum
- The Urban Design Center
- The park and green space program in the Parks and Open Space Master Plan
- Cherry Street Plaza
- Civic Square Plaza
- Downtown Landscape and Public Amenity Maintenance Endowment
- Transitional Property Acquisition Fund
- The Children's' Museum
- Downtown Industrial Development

All of these projects are intricately interrelated; each project will help achieve the successful development and use of the others. We strongly urge NewTown Macon to continue to work in partnership with local organizations and public entities to implement these initiatives and restore Macon's Downtown.

"A continued public-private partnership will be needed for reasons other than finances as well. Downtowns still need to be managed, and public private cooperation is required to do so. Downtown plans must be developed and implemented. The retail core must be leased, maintained, and managed just like any shopping center. Programs to reduce automobile trips and parking spaces must be promoted and monitored. Social problems must be solved. New businesses must be cultivated, and cultural institutions must be encouraged." *Last paragraph from Downtown Development Handbook, Urban Land Institute (1992)*



5.9 Recommended Actions and Conclusions

- The City of Macon and Bibb County should move forward with the creation of a tax allocation district (TAD) as soon as possible.
- NewTown Macon should undertake additional steps to formally create a TAD for adoption by the City of Macon and Bibb County.
- A \$10 million TAD has been proposed, which would be the City and County's cash contribution to an overall capital campaign totaling \$36 million which includes matching funds from other sources as well as \$6 million in challenge grants from the Peyton Anderson and Woodruff Foundations.
- These matching grants could help facilitate and leverage private investment. Based on other cities' experience, it is common for \$1.00 of public investment to leverage \$2.50 of private investment.
- The four development projects focused on in this study could amortize \$12.7 million in TAD bonds.
- Under Georgia law, TAD bonds need not have City and County financial backing nor moral obligation.
- The TAD, however, needs to be in place in order to undertake necessary pre-development packaging, which would attract new investment, which in turn would support additional TAD bonds.
- TAD funds could also be used for the local match of federal and state programs toward the eight initiatives. Assuming these programs require a 20 percent match, each dollar of TAD funding could support \$4 of state and federal funding. The TAD is projected to raise \$12.7 million in revenues, which in turn could leverage a much greater amount. For example, if federal funds with an 80/20 match were utilized, the TAD \$12.7 million TAD funds could leverage \$50.8 million.
- The existing property value for the tax allocation district has remained essentially "flat" at approximately \$150 million generating combined city and county tax revenue of almost \$2.5 million per year.

The new development value created by the TAD and the NewTown Macon capital investment totals approximately \$62 million. In addition, it is conservatively estimated that the TAD should enhance the value of the downtown tax base at an annual rate of approximately 3.5 percent. At the end of ten years the value of property in the TAD would rise to a total of approximately \$274 million, a gain of \$124 million or 83 percent. Similarly, annual tax revenues would rise from almost \$2.5 million to \$4.6 million, a gain of \$2.1 million, or 83 percent.



Glossary

Residual Land Value – The difference between the value of a project, calculated by capitalizing the net income, and the capital cost of producing or replacing it. The remainder, or residual, represents the maximum value of the land itself. Analyzing the residual value of the land can establish the proper value to be used for the “writedown” (the reduction of price to a level the proposed development can support).

Tax Allocation District (TAD) – Formed to finance, wholly or in part, costs of redevelopment projects within district area. Bonds are issued to pay for redevelopment projects, and the projected increase in district property tax revenues is pledged to pay off the debt service on the bonds.

Market Study – Examines economic, demographic, and real estate conditions and trends in project area. This includes an investigation of the market for possible development projects.

Economic Impact Study – Estimates the impacts resulting from development projects in the areas of tax revenue, economic value, new employment, sales revenues, number of new hotel rooms, etc.

Feasibility Study – Evaluates the financial attractiveness of various development scenarios by using the costs, revenues, and capitalization rate of potential projects to calculate a residual land value.

Capitalization Rate – Factor derived in marketplace used for determining the economic value of a project. It is used to determine the economic worth of a project based on the net operating income.



Appendix: Additional Resources and Information

Resources/Interviews:

Aldridge, Michael; C.B. Richard Ellis
Barr, Earl and Wanda; Bibb Mill Property
Battin, Maryel; Macon Heritage Foundation
Bissonette, Barry; Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
Bibb County Commissioners
Cass, Lynn; Transit Authority, Chairperson and *Macon Magazine*
Chambliss, Rep. Saxby; 8th District, U.S. House of Representatives.
Cherry, Sid; Urban Development Authority and Downtown Council
Crumbley, Larry; Fickling & Co.
Darnell, Conie Mac; New Town Macon, Inc.
Dunwoody, Gene, Jr.; Dunwoody, Beeland, Azar, Walsh and Matthews
Dunwoody, Gene, Sr.; Dunwoody, Beeland, Azar, Walsh and Matthews
Ellis, C. Jack; Mayor of the City of Macon
Fickling, Roy; Fickling & Co.
Frank, John; SunTrust Bank
Gillman, John; Metropolitan Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
Grant, Wes; Williams & Associates
Godsey, Dr. R. Kirby; Mercer University
Harper, Hal, Caldwell Banker
Harris, Patrick; Richard Bowers & Co.
Hatcher, Bob; First Liberty Bank
Hicks, Calvin; Bibb County Tax Assessor
Hudler, Carol; Macon Telegraph
Jordan, Juanita; The Peyton Anderson Foundation
Langstaff, J. Pope; City of Macon
Lewis, Bob; Bob Lewis & Associates
Macon City Council
Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Macon Centreplex Management Office
Macon Urban Development Authority
Marshall, Jim; Former Mayor of City of Macon
McDonald, John; Wachovia Bank
McDuffie, Regina; Macon Centreplex
Nagle, Paul; Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce
Pickett, Robert; State Representative
Reichert, Robert; State Representative
Roberts, Anna; Macon Real Estate
Ryle, Vernon, III; Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
Sell, Edward, III; Macon-Atlanta Rail Commission
Stapleton, Mather; Georgia Rail Passenger Authority
Thompson, J. Daniel; City of Macon



Vaughn II, William C.; Bibb County
Walsh, Edward; The Summit Group
Wilbanks, Jo; Georgia Power
Wilcher, Tal; Leggett, Wilcher & Gates
Williams, Tol; Williams & Associates

Reports/Publications Reviewed:

Basile Baumann Prost & Associates. Detailed Market Study, Financial Feasibility Study and Economic Impact Analysis, March 2000.

CVI: Community Vision & Implementation. Union Terminal Building Macro Market Study; Phase I Study.

Downtown Macon Riverfront Plan/DeSoto Landing Plan.

L.D.A. Inc. *Land Development Analysts*: "Analysis of the Marketability and Appropriateness of Mixed Land Uses, Former Bibb Mill Property- Northeast Corner of I-16 and Coliseum Drive. June 1997.

LDR International, Inc. "Downtown Macon Economic Development Strategy and Urban Design Plan (Draft, for Board Review). Prepared for NewTown Macon, Inc. June 1997

Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission- Downtown Parking Analysis (Current and Future Needs), March 1995.

National Real Estate Investor. "Are These Markets Too Hot to Handle: With Office, Industrial and Retail All Falling into Line, the Southeast is Hotter than Hot," Sept. 1, 1999.

PriceWaterhouseCoopers: Final Draft Report to Juanita Jordan, The Peyton Anderson Foundation, September 1999

Selig Center for Economic Growth, University of Georgia: Economic Yearbook for Georgia's MSAs, 1999.

Shopping Center World. "Southeast Riding Strong Demographic Wave," October 1999.

