

2016

# DOWNTOWN CORDELE

RENAISSANCE STRATEGIC VISION & PLAN

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CAPE  
VINSON INSTITUTE  
OF GOVERNMENT  
The University of Georgia

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THANKS TO THE CITY OF CORDELE, THE CRISP COUNTY POWER COMMISSION, PLANTERS FIRST, AMERIS BANK, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE, CRIMSON AND CLOVER, AND NATIONAL REALTY FOR ALLOWING EMPLOYEES THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

*SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS, TOOK PART IN INTERVIEWS, PARTICIPATED IN THE COMMUNITY SURVEY, AND JOINED IN THE TOWN HALL MEETING.*

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# TABLE *of* CONTENTS

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4	PARTNERS
5	CORDELE RSVP USER'S GUIDE
6	INTRODUCTION
7	WHO ARE WE?
9	THE STRATEGIC VISIONING & PLANNING PROCESS
10	TIMELINE
11	PLAN REVIEW
12	PUBLIC INPUT
15	CORDELE TOP ISSUES
18	MASTER PLAN
20	<b>CORDELE WORK PLAN</b>
22	• ORGANIZATION
26	• PROMOTION
40	• DESIGN
62	• ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
80	<b>ACTION PLAN</b>
81	• ORGANIZATION
82	• PROMOTION
84	• DESIGN
88	• ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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# *The* GEORGIA DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE PARTNERS

The Georgia Downtown Renaissance Partnership facilitates the creation of strategic visions, plans and work programs for communities in Georgia. The Georgia Municipal Association, the Georgia Cities Foundation, and the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government all joined together with representatives from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and UGA's Small Business Development Center to form the partnership. By working with government leaders, chambers of commerce, downtown merchants, property owners, lending institutions, and citizens, the Georgia Downtown Renaissance Partnership helps ensure that all cities in Georgia have access to what they need in order to realize their vision and maximize their potential.

## CARL VINSON INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT

For more than 85 years, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia has worked with public officials throughout Georgia and around the world to improve governance and people's lives. From Georgia's early days as a largely agrarian state with a modest population to its modern-day status as a national and international force in business, industry, and politics with a population of over 10 million, the Institute of Government has helped government leaders navigate change and forge strong directions for a better Georgia.

## GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, nonprofit organization that provides legislative advocacy and educational, employee benefit, and technical consulting services to its members. GMA's purpose is to anticipate and influence the forces shaping Georgia's communities and to provide leadership, tools, and services that assist local governments in becoming more innovative, effective, and responsive.

## GEORGIA CITIES FOUNDATION

The Georgia Cities Foundation, founded in 1999, is a nonprofit subsidiary of the Georgia Municipal Association. The foundation's mission is to assist cities in their efforts to revitalize and enhance downtown areas by serving as a partner and facilitator in funding capital projects through the revolving loan fund. Its services include the Revolving Loan Fund Program, the Heart and Soul Bus Tour, the Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Tour, the Downtown Development Authority Basic Training, and the Renaissance Award.

## THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. On July 1, 1996, the Governor and General Assembly merged the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority (GHFA) with the Department of

Community Affairs. Today, DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs; serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development; promulgates building codes to be adopted by local governments; provides comprehensive planning, technical, and research assistance to local governments; and serves as the lead agency for the state's solid waste reduction efforts.

### UGA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provides tools, training, and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. Designated as one of Georgia's top providers of small business assistance, the SBDC has 17 offices ranging from Rome to Valdosta to serve the needs of Georgia's business community. Since 1976, the SBDC's network of partners has helped construct a statewide ecosystem to foster the spirit, support, and success of hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs and innovators. The SBDC's mission is to enhance the economic well-being of Georgians by providing a wide range of educational services for small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs.

# USER'S GUIDE

This plan is intended to be used as a living document to guide the future of Cordele. Focused on positive outcomes for downtown, the programs and action items included in the Cordele Renaissance Strategic Vision and Plan (RSVP) are intended to be used continually as an everyday resource by local officials and citizens. Completed action and work program items are designed as approachable goals and should be checked off as they are completed. As new opportunities arise, additional work program items should be added to the plan with a focus on implementation. At a minimum, local officials should undertake an annual update of the Cordele RSVP plan by answering the following questions:

- ▶ WHAT WAS COMPLETED?
- ▶ WERE ENACTED PROGRAMS SUCCESSFUL?
- ▶ WHAT NEEDS TO BE ADDED TO ACHIEVE CONTINUED SUCCESS?
- ▶ WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION?
- ▶ HOW AND WHEN SHOULD IMPLEMENTATION TAKE PLACE?

**Long-term success is achieved by continuing to update and implement the plan.**



## LOCATED IN *the* HEART of GEORGIA

The city of Cordele is the friendly and welcoming county seat of Crisp County. Known throughout Georgia and the nation as “The Watermelon Capital of the World,” Cordele and Crisp County’s fertile agricultural surroundings represent the center of Georgia’s substantial annual watermelon production. Peaches, peanuts, and pecans are also produced in generous quantities. As the home of the Cordele State Farmers Market and a major center for shipping and distribution, the city continues to support Georgia’s farmers. Throughout the community, citizens gather to honor Cordele’s agricultural heritage with annual events like the Watermelon Festival. Beyond watermelons, Cordele is known for the city’s historic architecture. In the O’Neal Historic District and other neighborhoods,

stately turn-of-the-century homes grace Cordele’s wide, tree-lined streets. In Cordele’s gridded central business district, blocks of handsome brick commercial buildings dating from the late 1800s hearken back to the city’s origin as a regional railroad hub.

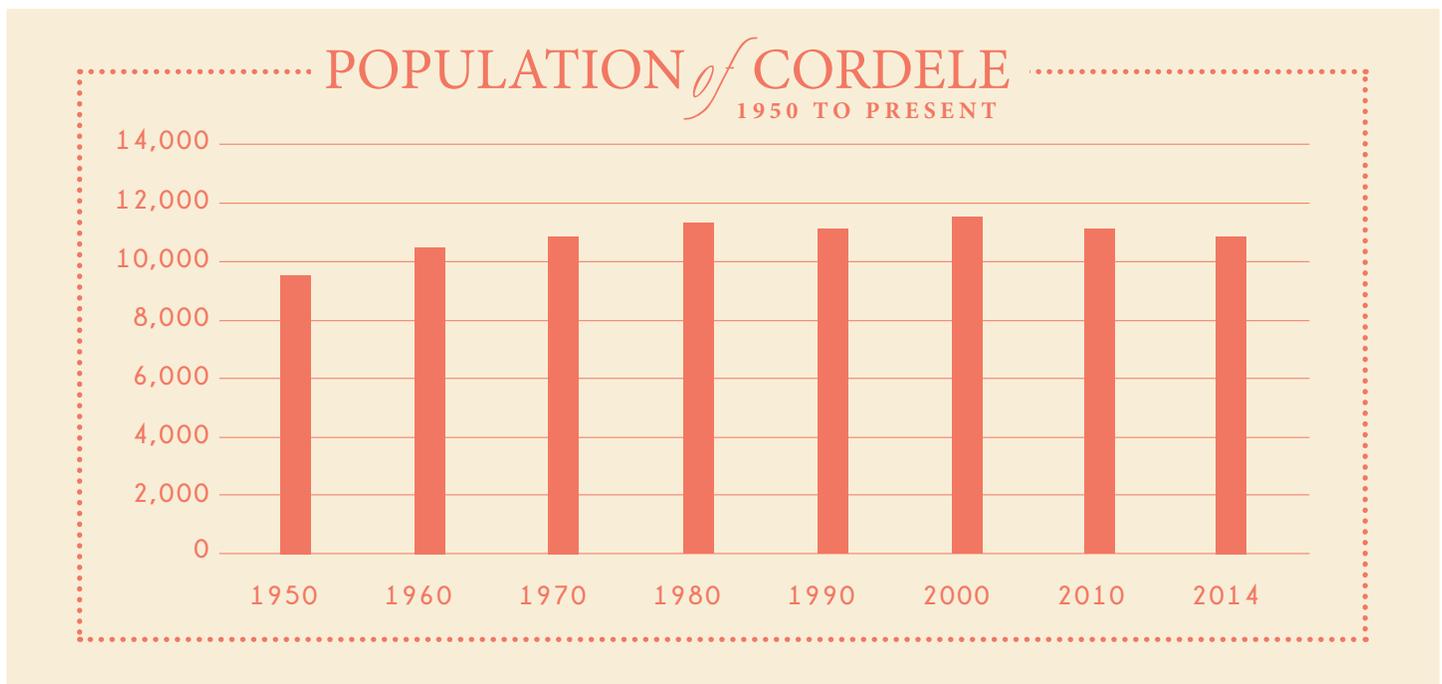
John Edgar Dawson Shipp of Americus founded Cordele in 1888 at the intersection of three major rail lines. Named for Cordelia Hawkins, daughter of Colonel Samuel Hawkins, president of the Savannah, Americus, and Montgomery (SAM) Railroad, Cordele continues to reap the benefits of the city’s railroad heritage. With an array of industries and agricultural enterprises that rely on the city’s rail lines and connect a tristate regional area to world markets through Cordele’s inland port—one of two in all of Georgia—

Cordele remains an important economic hub for all of South Georgia and beyond. The city also serves as the home of Georgia's SAM Shortline Excursion Train, a popular railroad tourism destination operated by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Through the SAM Shortline, downtown Cordele is connected to surrounding historic communities and tourist destinations including Georgia Veterans State Park, Habitat for Humanity's Global Village in Americus, and the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site in Plains. By using Cordele's railroad and agricultural heritage as a blueprint for future growth, the community has the opportunity to enhance the city's sense of place while working to re-create the vibrant downtown experience treasured by longtime residents.

## Who ARE WE?

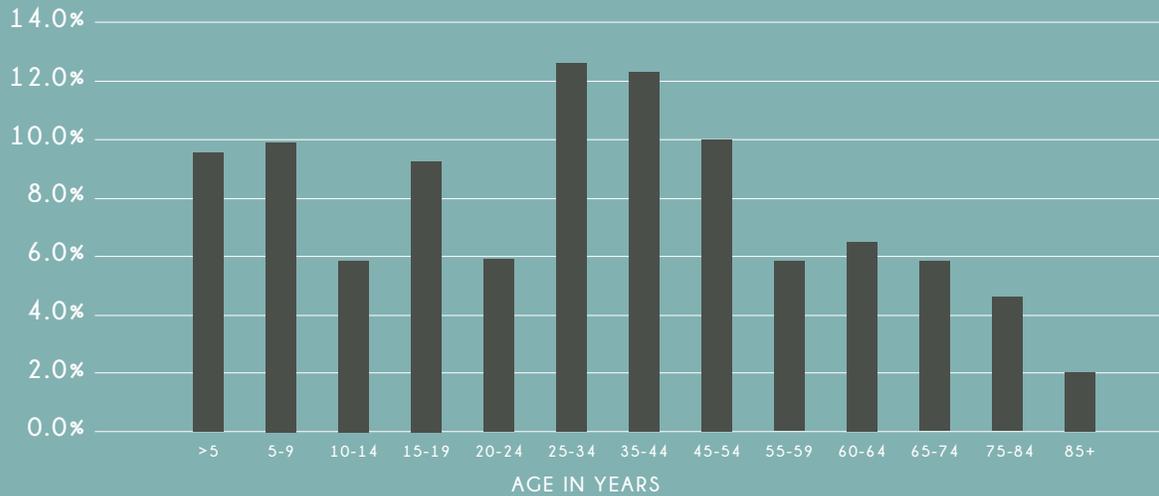
While Cordele's population has remained fairly consistent over the past fifty years, the city's boundaries have greatly expanded. Following a sprawling postwar development pattern seen in many other cities, Cordele's city limits now encompass the commercial and industrial areas that have proliferated along Interstate 75 since the 1950s. Since that period, much of downtown's commercial and economic activity has gravitated to I-75 and the busy corridors of US Highway 280 (16th Avenue) and Highway 41 (7th Street), leaving downtown with many vacant and derelict former com-

mercial buildings. During the same period, many of the community members with means have moved out of the city limits to newer subdivisions and developments along Lake Blackshear. Cordele's current demographic makeup reflects these shifts over time, leaving the city with a poverty rate of 45.4% and a median household income roughly half the Georgia average. Cordele's current demographic makeup has been greatly altered by the continued movement of more affluent residents out of the city's older neighborhoods. Although the majority of participants in the public input process were older and more economically advantaged, today Cordele is younger, more diverse, and considerably less affluent than Georgia as a whole. Many public comments focused on how downtown used to be. Baby boomers and older generations remember the thriving downtown of the 1950s and 1960s. The experiences of not being able to find a parking spot, of grabbing a burger at the Hole in the Wall, of buying Christmas gifts at Roobin's Department Store, and similar recollections of the thriving downtown Cordele of yesterday were frequently mentioned by public input participants. Unfortunately, the younger generation, the plurality of Cordele's citizens, have no such memories. Unless action is taken soon to beautify downtown and create the activities and uses demanded by these groups, the city of Cordele is unlikely to re-create the vibrant downtown treasured in the memories of local residents.



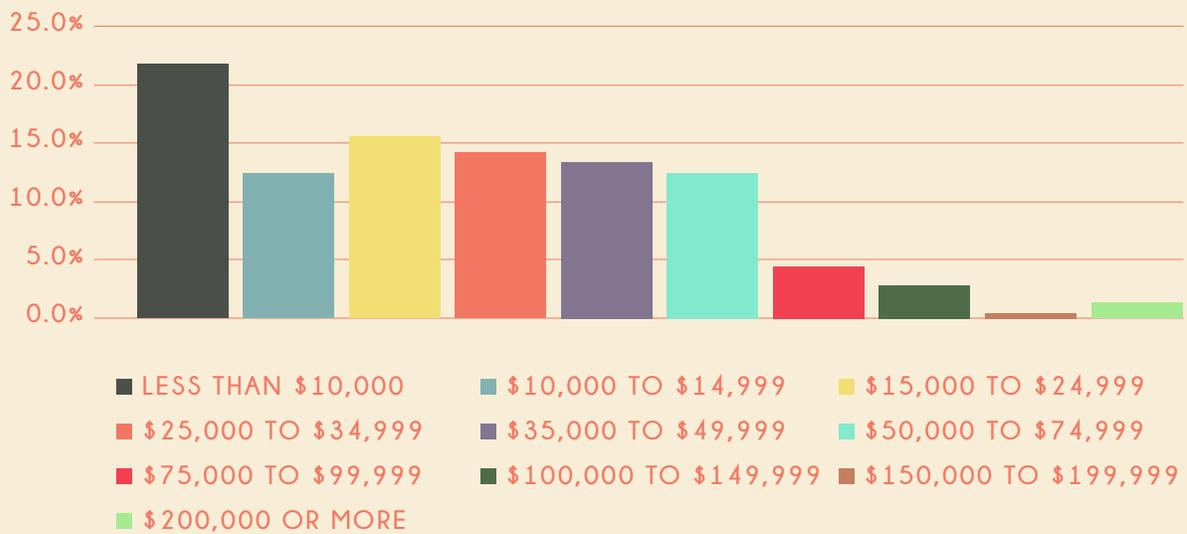
## AGE of CORDELE

2014 MEDIAN AGE: 31.9



## INCOME of CORDELE

2013 MEDIAN INCOME: \$24,337



# THE STRATEGIC VISIONING & PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic visioning is a collaborative planning and decision-making process that relies on broad stakeholder involvement and focuses on asset-based development to create a shared community vision, plan, and implementation work plan.

Strategic visioning helps citizens better understand unique community assets and more clearly identify collective priorities. Together, these become the basis for effective community-led planning. Throughout the development of the plan, the community identifies pressing issues, articulates big-picture goals, and develops short-term and long-term strategies to address neighborhood concerns.

The strategic visioning and planning process involves three steps:

## 1. WHERE ARE WE *now*?

- Plan Review
- Demographic Scan
- Visual Preference Assessment
- Steering Committee Meetings
- One-on-One Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Community Survey

It is essential to understand the current conditions of downtown Cordele. The first step involves demographic research, a review of prior plans and studies, and public engagement. Focus groups, one-on-one in-

terviews, community-wide surveys, and visual preference assessments are tools that can be used to reveal the community's story as well as current issues and opportunities.

## 2. WHERE ARE WE *going*?

- Design
- Renderings
- Visualization

In the second step of the process, the community looks to the future to shape a new vision. Built on the community desires and strengths discovered in community input sessions, Cordele's vision is then interpreted in step two through illustrations and design recommendations. The final products of step two allow all community members to experience the physical translation of the collective vision.

## 3. *How* DO WE GET THERE?

- Work Program
- Design Solutions
- Short-term (1–12 months)
- Long-term (12 months–10 years)

The final step in the strategic visioning process creates an implementation plan to move Cordele toward the community's vision for the future. Community input and effort form the foundation for the implementation plan, which is critical for successful outcomes.

# TIMELINE

- FEBRUARY ▶ SELECTED AS A RENAISSANCE STRATEGIC VISIONING AND PLANNING DOWNTOWN
- JULY ▶ FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS, STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
- AUGUST ▶ TOWN HALL MEETING, FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS
- SEPTEMBER ▶ STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, TOP ISSUE PRIORITIZATION
- OCTOBER ▶ STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, DESIGN SOLUTIONS, WORK PLAN DEVELOPMENT
- NOVEMBER ▶ STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, ACTION ITEMS DEVELOPED
- DECEMBER ▶ STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING, DESIGN SOLUTIONS FINALIZED, ACTION ITEMS
- JANUARY ▶ FINAL PRESENTATION

# PLAN REVIEW

## PLANS, STUDIES, AND SURVEYS REVIEWED:

GREATER CRISP COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2015–2019 (PREPARED BY THE RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION, JUNE 2014)

7TH STREET CORRIDOR REDEVELOPMENT PLAN (PREPARED BY RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION, JUNE 2013)

DARTON COLLEGE MASTERPLAN (PREPARED BY SP DESIGN GROUP, 2012)

Previous plans largely echo common ideas of downtown’s boundaries, assets, and top issues. Further, they reflect the community’s vision of downtown. Both the Greater Crisp Comprehensive Plan and the 7th Street Corridor Plan divide central Cordele into three distinct character areas: the Medical Community anchored by the Crisp Regional Health Services complex, South Corridor character area from 17th Avenue to 28th Avenue, and Downtown Cordele between 17th and 5th Avenue. The 7th Street Corridor Redevelopment Plan and others define downtown as the historic heart of Cordele. The downtown character area centers on the intersection of the Heart of Georgia, CSX (Seaboard Air Line Railway), and Norfolk-Southern (Atlanta, Birmingham & Atlantic Railroad) railroads and features several contiguous blocks of one- and two-story attached traditional downtown commercial buildings. Many of these structures date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, forming the basis of the Cordele Commercial Historic District. Development strategies recommend attracting a mix of high-density uses, including retail, office, service, institutional, and educational facilities. Additional strategies endorse enhancing downtown residential options, preserving the area’s historic integrity, establishing strong pedestrian options, improving the streetscape, developing parking, and seeking the adaptive reuse of buildings downtown. Previous plans envision the “restoration of economic vitality and preservation of historic integrity of the community’s original commercial core”—a widely popular vision throughout the community.

### ATTRACT A MIX OF USES

To attract a mix of uses downtown, existing plans for downtown recommend a targeted market study to determine local retail needs. These plans additionally recommend tax relief for renovation of historic structures, enhancing the façade grant program, seeking gap financing for new businesses, expanding business incubator services, enhancing tax credits for job creation, and promoting downtown.

### CREATE RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS

Previous proposals favor amending zoning to allow for loft apartments, townhouses, and multi-family housing as well as seeking tax relief for building rehabilitation.

### PRESERVE HISTORIC CHARACTER

Both the Greater Crisp Comprehensive Plan and the 7th Street Corridor Plan support developing a rehabilitation code to guide historic renovation, pursuing expanded historic designation, developing building maintenance standards, and educating the public on incentives for registered properties.

### EXPAND STREETScape/PEDESTRIAN OPTIONS

Previous plans advocate increasing pedestrian connectivity between downtown and surrounding residential areas and developing alternative transportation options. Existing plans also favor buffering parking lots and extending streetscaping improvements including planters and bump-outs.



## *phase one:* **PUBLIC INPUT**

As part of the public input phase of the visioning process, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government conducted 26 diverse focus groups, more than 20 one-on-one interviews, and a community town hall meeting to help paint a comprehensive picture of Cordele by the people who live and work there. First, focus groups discussed positive features of Cordele. During the second portion of the meetings, participants identified things that need improvement and issues that should be addressed in the future. These public input forums helped illuminate a comprehensive picture of Cordele's community priorities. Results from focus groups, interviews, the town hall, and over 400 surveys were recorded by Institute faculty. These data were further combined, analyzed, and summarized to reveal what is currently working and needs to be capitalized on in the community, as well as the elements that need improvement or are missing.

# 26

## Focus groups were conducted with the following groups and civic organizations:

- ▶ KIWANIS CLUB
- ▶ ROTARY CLUB
- ▶ HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
- ▶ CRISP COUNTY POWER
- ▶ LOCAL OFFICIALS
- ▶ LOCAL REALTORS
- ▶ WSST TV
- ▶ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD
- ▶ CORDELE HOUSING AUTHORITY
- ▶ O'NEAL DISTRICT RESIDENTS
- ▶ GILLESPIE-SELDEN HISTORIC DISTRICT
- ▶ CORDELE CODE ENFORCEMENT
- ▶ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- ▶ CRISP REGIONAL HOSPITAL
- ▶ LOCAL CHURCHES
- ▶ DARTON STATE COLLEGE STUDENTS
- ▶ DARTON STATE COLLEGE ADMINISTRATORS
- ▶ CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE
- ▶ MAIN STREET COMMITTEE
- ▶ DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
- ▶ DOWNTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS
- ▶ SAM SHORTLINE
- ▶ LOCAL BANKS
- ▶ CORDELE DISPATCH
- ▶ MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS
- ▶ TOURISM COMMITTEE

### WHAT'S WORKING WELL?

The people of Cordele love downtown's historic architecture. These historic buildings remind residents of the past and create a sense of place. Moving forward, Cordele must incentivize building renovation and highlight the city's historic assets. Downtown's historic buildings were consistently cited as community members' "favorite things" about downtown. Many residents of Cordele have long roots in the community, and the downtown area in particular holds special memories. These strong personal connections foster a unique sense of place. Many voices throughout Cordele reflected on how downtown "used to be." These recollections are important in shaping the future.

Building on Cordele's heritage as a rail hub and regional crossroads, the community overwhelmingly views the SAM Shortline Excursion Train as one of downtown's greatest assets and a major attraction to visitors. Cordele's location at the intersection of three

active rail lines is widely seen as a community strength. Many in the community expressed a desire to build on this existing asset and expand rail tourism downtown.

While the community treasures Cordele's railroad heritage, Darton State College's new downtown Cordele campus is another critical resource repeatedly addressed in discussions with the community. Many see Darton's new campus and activity along 11th Avenue as the impetus for a revival of downtown activity. In addition to Darton College, public institutions like the Crisp County Power Commission, Crisp County Board of Education, and Crisp Regional Hospital as well as working historic resources like the 1913 United States Post Office and Cordele's 1903 Carnegie Library are all seen as major community assets.

While Cordele supports (and savors) local businesses like Crimson and Clover, Carter Burgers, and the Pool Room—a downtown institution and regional

draw—the community places a high value on unique intangible assets downtown. Many see downtown as a place of history and personal memories. Local residents are drawn to Cordele’s strong sense of place and the pull of home. The community treasures Cordele’s family-friendly, small town atmosphere. Overwhelmingly, voices from throughout the community see their neighbors and friends as one of the city’s main assets.

### TOP ASSETS:

- ▶ HISTORIC BUILDINGS & RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PAST
  - ▶ RAILROAD TOURISM & HERITAGE
  - ▶ EDUCATION & PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
- ▶ WARM, FAMILY-FRIENDLY, SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE
  - ▶ RETAIL & DINING OPTIONS
  - ▶ CONVENIENCE & CONNECTIVITY

### WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

While the community appreciates the assets that create a unique sense of place in Cordele, many identified a number of issues that could be improved to create a more active, inclusive, and attractive downtown experience. Improving maintenance of historic properties and incentivizing renovation of buildings around downtown emerged as the most critical issues throughout the community. While widespread support exists to stimulate small business development and building restoration, many also desire stricter code enforcement and clearer ordinances to address standard maintenance of derelict downtown properties.

Building on the need for renovation, many community members desire a cleaner and more attractive downtown. Improving downtown streetscaping and enhancing the pedestrian experience along US 41 (7th Street) was one solution continually brought up to address the appearance of downtown. Bringing more art downtown and creating spaces for cultural expression—another top priority for the community—could also be employed to elevate the aesthetics of the area. Attractive, landscaped gateways and unified signage were also suggested to improve the landscape and lure more visitors downtown.

Voices throughout the community desire robust economic and business development assistance to boost the health and number of downtown businesses. Citizens from throughout Cordele have the desire to bring businesses back downtown to fill vacant storefronts and historic properties. The community expresses widespread support for increased retail and dining options. According to one public input participant voicing a commonly heard sentiment, “[We want] a place to take the family and get a glass of wine.” Strong demand creates a unique opportunity to incentivize new restaurants and dining options in restored buildings downtown.

Many community members believe that enhancing the real and perceived level of public safety downtown must be addressed and prioritized in order to entice more locals and businesses. Responding to the need for student housing at Darton College and changing lifestyles, many citizens also support expanding residential options downtown. Many participants suggested that incentivizing loft apartments and other residential options in rehabilitated buildings would create a more lively downtown experience while preserving beloved historic resources. In turn, these new residents could serve as valuable “eyes on the street” to help address the perception of crime downtown.

### TOP ISSUES:

#### “THE LOOK”

- ▶ BUILDING CONDITIONS
- ▶ BUILDING MAINTENANCE
  - ▶ VACANCIES
- ▶ STREETSCAPING/GATEWAYS
- ▶ 7th STREET IMPROVEMENTS

#### PROGRAMMING (WHAT PEOPLE WANT)

- ▶ FOOD & BEVERAGE INCENTIVES
- ▶ BUILD ON RAILROAD HERITAGE
  - ▶ DOWNTOWN LIVING
- ▶ LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

# CORDELE'S TOP ISSUES

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- ▶ DURING THE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS, PARTICIPANTS FROM THROUGHOUT THE COMMUNITY SHARED THEIR VISION FOR DOWNTOWN CORDELE'S FUTURE AND RAISED IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED FOR THE CITY TO ACHIEVE CONTINUED SUCCESS.

A diverse set of concerns were discussed, many of which can be compiled into broad categories. Priorities addressed in previous proposals and studies often mirrored the critical issues raised by the city's citizens. Together, these ideas laid the groundwork for a plan of action. Throughout this process, a steering committee of dedicated Cordele citizens reviewed all of the information compiled in public input sessions and previous plans, honing down the priorities to create a successful strategy for downtown. Having too many priorities equals having no priorities, and Cordele has only so much time, energy, and resources. Thus, tackling a succinct list of priorities is an essential element of a successful plan. Cordele's steering committee was instrumental in channeling public input, previous plans, and elements of responsible planning into two key categories addressed in the Cordele work plan: enhancing "the look" of downtown (including building condition, building maintenance, vacancy issues, streetscaping improvements, and gateway enhancements) and programming issues (such as food and beverage incentives, building on the city's railroad heritage, creating downtown living options, and supporting local business development). All improvements undertaken should maintain and build on the assets beloved by the community, including Cordele's unique sense of

place, friendly small town feel, sense of history, and relationship to the past. To tackle programming and "the look" of downtown, the city must first address four key components: attracting new investment and enhancing public safety by taking a tough stand on derelict downtown properties, dedicating the resources necessary to maintain a clean and attractive downtown experience, incentivizing new dining options by amending existing food and beverage restrictions, and empowering and retaining existing dedicated city staff and downtown stakeholders.

## BROKEN WINDOWS

In 1982, George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson wrote: "Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken...one unrepaired broken window is a signal that no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It has always been fun.)"

Since the early 1980s, the "broken windows" theory developed by Kelling and Wilson has helped to drastically reduce once-appalling urban crime rates and attract unprecedented levels of investment in downtowns across the United States. By addressing the importance of disorder in breeding more serious crime,

neglect, and fear among residents, the application of the broken windows theory, most notably in New York City, has helped to create urban areas where residents feel comfortable and new investment is encouraged.

To attract the investment necessary to revitalize downtown Cordele, the community overwhelmingly supports a muscular city response to substandard building maintenance and issues of abandonment and decay. Prior to any other improvements, Cordele officials must confront this critical issue head on. Without strict code enforcement and anti-bligh policies, investors will have no financial motivation for renovating downtown businesses. Public safety and the perception of crime will grow and become a major problem downtown. Prospective entrepreneurs will continue to gravitate outside of downtown, and Cordele’s historic buildings—the beloved character of the community—will continue to erode.

Sending the message that downtown is worth investing in is the first step in revitalizing downtown Cordele. As seen right up the road in Perry, Georgia’s corridor development ordinance, codes that ensure an adequate level of maintenance help incentivize the attractive new development desired by the community. At the same time, ordinances that ensure all downtown property owners play by the same rules protects the investments of downtown small businesses and stakeholders. During the process of code development and beyond.

### **DOWNTOWN INSTITUTIONS ARE ANCHORS**

Cordele officials must ensure that key downtown institutions and businesses including the Crisp County Power Commission, Board of Education, Murray Printing, Darton College, and local government offices are treated as essential assets and retained downtown. To create an environment where business owners, visitors, and local citizens all feel safe, secure, and comfortable investing time and money downtown, building maintenance and attacking blight must be Cordele’s top priority. Elements of recommended blight controls include the following:

### **DOWNTOWN CLEAN UP**

Like broken windows and peeling paint, litter sends the message that an area is uncared for and not worth

investing in. During the public input process, many Cordele citizens described downtown as dirty. Locals and visitors alike want to spend time in areas that are clean and feel cared for. Clean streets, parks, and sidewalks all send a message that a community is proud of downtown. Local officials and civic groups must prioritize cleaning up downtown Cordele. Providing adequate numbers and funding of maintenance crews is an essential step in ensuring that visiting downtown is a clean and attractive experience. Only when downtown feels worth investing in will the city be able to attract the new restaurants, businesses, housing options, and employers desired by the community.

### **ALLOW RESTAURANTS DOWNTOWN**

The community overwhelmingly favors expanded dining options downtown. Many downtown office workers would love a place to walk to lunch. Darton students and others would love to be able to grab a coffee downtown. In order to turn a profit, many restaurateurs must rely on the sale of beer and wine. Like other small businesses, restaurants only go where they believe they will make money. In many cities, higher-end local restaurants like 16 East Bar and Grill would choose to locate downtown. However, current city codes forbid the sale of beer, wine, and other beverages by restaurants in the heart of downtown Cordele. These onerous codes force local restaurants to gravitate outside of downtown, preventing the revitalization and dining options the community wants. Amending these restrictions is key to creating the downtown experience and rich variety of dining options desired by Cordele citizens. Because enhancing dining options was a popular need expressed by the community, the city could consider going further by recruiting and incentivizing restaurants to develop downtown. While targeted incentives and creative recruitment packages are an important consideration for attracting the restaurants the community wants, Cordele must first amend the codes that prevent restaurants from moving downtown.

**“The community overwhelmingly favors expanded dining options downtown.” — CORDELE PUBLIC INPUT**



### EMPOWER AND RETAIN STAFF

A community is only as good as its people. Cordele has a number of immensely dedicated local leaders, staff members, and active citizens involved in the Cordele RSVP process. Retaining these community members beyond the RSVP planning process is essential in sustaining the momentum to revitalize downtown. Turnover of city staff members represents a major stumbling block to success of this and other planning efforts. It is critical that dedicated city staff members be retained and treated like the assets they are. The hard work and sweat equity of Cordele's dedicated downtown boosters is key to the success of any plan to revitalize the city.



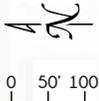
# The CORDELE MASTER PLAN

The rendered master plan below shows the proposed improvements for Downtown Cordele. “The Heart of Cordele,” an area marked by 7th Avenue to 17th Avenue and from 6th Street to 8th Street, is the main focal area for streetscaping improvements. The area highlighted in purple is another focal area owned by the city. Gateways are also major points of interest in this plan, as they are the “front doors” to downtown.





# KEY



HEART OF CORDELE



CITY-OWNED IMPROVEMENT



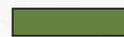
EXISTING TREE MASSES



PROPOSED BRICK PAVED PARKING



PROPOSED CROSSINGS



PROPOSED TREE PLANTINGS



PROPOSED TREE PLANTINGS

# *The* CORDELE WORK PROGRAM

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The Carl Vinson Institute of Government is using an organized and systematic approach to downtown redevelopment and revitalization modeled after the Main Street Four-Point Approach.<sup>®</sup> The process involves creating a community vision based on broad community engagement and input that leads to the development of an implementation plan with a step-by-step guide for success. The plan focuses on four program components: organization, promotion, design, and economic development. To be successful, communities must address issues and opportunities in each category, working with broad public support for the betterment of the community.

Across each of the four program components, there is one critical element: public input and engagement. Local citizens living day in and day out in Cordele know more than anyone what is needed and what is wanted. Community support and buy-in is essential to successfully address issues and seize opportunities. A commu-

nity must, first and foremost, meet the needs of residents—after that, opportunities to increase tourism and other economic opportunities will follow. Cordele has created a work plan built upon the input of local residents that addresses the following components:

## ORGANIZATION

Organization refers to working to establish accord and co-action among the various and diverse groups that have a stake in the downtown district. By getting everyone in the downtown district as well as other community stakeholders to work together toward a unified goal, change becomes possible.

## PROMOTION

The goal of promotion is two-fold: creating a positive image of downtown that will both ignite community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in the downtown. Promotion includes advertising, retail promotion, special events, and the marketing of events.



## DESIGN

Design simply means re-creating downtown to be a safe, beautiful, and welcoming space for all who visit, work, and live there. Design includes giving attention to public and private buildings, storefronts, signage, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development (referred to as “economic vitality” in the Four-Point Approach) means building on and strengthening a community’s existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base. Economic development can be achieved through techniques to retain and expand successful businesses, thus providing a balanced commercial mix. Other strategies include sharpening the competitiveness and merchandising skills of business owners and attracting new businesses the local market can support.

These four points work together, each supporting and assisting the others, to improve the social, political, physical, and economic vitality of downtown Cordele. The following work program items emerged directly from one-on-one interviews, focus group conversations, community survey responses, and previous plans for the city. All program items included in the Cordele Work Program represent different strategies designed for enacting the vision of Cordele put forward by local citizens. Community leaders and dedicated staff members should view all included work program items as potential action items geared toward full implementation of the community’s vision of Cordele.

THE *Cordele* WORK PROGRAM

# ORGANIZATION

Organization refers to working to establish accord and co-action among the various and diverse groups that have a stake in the downtown district. By getting everyone in the downtown district as well as other community stakeholders to work together toward a unified goal, change becomes possible.

## DOWNTOWN POLICE PATROL

During public input sessions, community members continually addressed crime as one of the largest deterrents to downtown activity. To combat the perception of crime downtown, the Cordele Police Department could create a dedicated downtown patrol. Designating a neighborhood foot, bicycle, or Segway patrol of even a single officer could go a long way toward combating the perception of crime downtown. Residents of areas with foot patrols feel safer and hold more favorable perceptions of law enforcement officers.

## COLLABORATE WITH DARTON SECURITY

To further address security downtown, the city could collaborate with Darton College's Department of Public Safety to improve community policing downtown. Georgia law grants campus officers jurisdiction within 500 yards in any direction from a college campus. Working with the Cordele Police Department, a dedicated Darton public safety officer could assist with a regular patrol of the blocks surrounding Darton's downtown campus. Deputizing Darton's public safety force could provide critical, localized assistance to the Cordele Police Department.

## 50 VOLUNTEERS

The Main Street Program is responsible for spearheading the effort to build a stronger local economy through revitalization of the downtown area. Many of these efforts are driven by volunteers. In order to grow the Main Street Program and its effectiveness, dedicated volunteers are needed. Developing a list of 50 volunteers and keeping the list up to date would be a tremendous resource to downtown development efforts.

## COMMUNITY YOUTH CLEAN-UP

Engage local students and youth service groups to help clean up downtown. Coordinate with groups including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Keep Crisp Beautiful, 4H, and debate club students to assist downtown businesses with maintenance and help clear litter downtown. Bringing in the next generation of Cordele citizens helps to create a feeling of community investment in the next generation—a critical move to ensure a brighter future for downtown.



### CLEANING UP THE TRASH

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows where the sidewalk could use some maintenance.

**AFTER:** The sidewalk is greatly improved by through simple repavement and by removing plants growing in the cracks.

### TRAIN GRAFFITI ART EXHIBITION

Cordele's heritage as a train hub is viewed as a major asset and contributor to the city's economic health. Currently, many local citizens would like to see public art take on a greater role downtown. Many unique and often beautiful works of graffiti art can be seen on the thirty or more trains that pass through downtown Cordele daily from across the country. To highlight better pieces of this mobile artwork, city officials, the Main Street program, or other downtown stakeholders could consider hosting an annual exhibition of graffiti art. Photographs of work on trains, exhibitions of art-covered boxcars, and local works illustrating the importance of Cordele's rail traffic could all be included and would help to create a distinctive annual attraction for downtown.

### 11th AVENUE FOOD TRUCK PARK

Public input results illustrate that the people of Cordele are clamoring for more restaurants and dining options downtown. Many also desire the experience of outdoor dining, with café tables, fresh air, and people watching. Westbrook Park on 11th Avenue is currently an underutilized resource surrounded by important assets like the Pool Room and Darton College. Encouraging food trucks within or just outside of the park could bring more activity to the area while enhancing dining options downtown. Setting up some café tables along the sidewalk and within the park could further enhance the potential for outdoor dining. If dining in the park proves successful, food trucks could also be incentivized outside of Perlis Park at 12th Avenue and 8th Street.

### CONNECT LOCAL BANKS

During public input sessions, many within the community expressed the view that local banks were refusing loans to downtown businesses. Local banks are an integral part to reviving downtown Cordele. Whether through the DDA, Chamber of Commerce, or another group, local banks should be encouraged to build relationships with the downtown business community. The city could host a workshop where local bankers and the downtown business community network with representatives of the Georgia Cities Foundation and Georgia Municipal Association. Both of these organi-

zations are tremendous resources for downtown development.

### CREATE A YOUTH MAIN STREET PROGRAM

Downtown Cordele has a very active and popular Main Street Program, with strong local government, business, and community support. There is an opportunity to continue to groom this support by developing future leaders with an interest in downtown. Particularly with the new draw of Darton College, creating a Youth Main Street Program would benefit both the young participants and the downtown: youth can be actively involved, lending new and creative ideas while helping downtown Cordele understand how to better serve this sector of the population. Such a program would make the younger population active downtown stakeholders, allowing them to feel invested in the success of their downtown and their community.

### DOWNTOWN CLEAN-UP CREW

Many Cordele citizens indicated that downtown could be cleaner. Clean streets, parks, and sidewalks all send a message that a community is proud of downtown and create a place worth investing in. While a downtown maintenance team or volunteer group could help address these concerns in the long run, a short-term solution might be cooperating with Crisp County government agencies to create a work detail of community service workers. These workers could serve as a dedicated maintenance crew to clean up downtown and Cordele's gateways.

### CONVICT LABOR MAINTENANCE CREW

To further ensure adequate maintenance and improve the image of downtown, the city could consider contracting prison labor to address downtown maintenance issues. Having a dedicated and economical way of ensuring downtown cleanliness could go a long way to addressing a common negative opinion of downtown.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

### CLEANING UP DOWNTOWN

The photographs and renderings above show several areas where trash clean up and/or maintenance is needed downtown. Simple fixes like these can have a great impact on how downtown is perceived.

THE *Cordele* WORK PROGRAM

# PROMOTION

The goal of promotion is two-fold: creating a positive image of downtown that will both ignite community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in the downtown. Promotion includes advertising, retail promotion, special events, and the marketing of events.

## DOWNTOWN INSTAGRAM

Home to Darton College, Cordele’s historic Carnegie Library and post office, and the beloved Pool Room, 11th Avenue is the heart of activity downtown. To combat the perception that downtown lacks activity, the city could engage Darton students, Pool Room visitors, library patrons, and others to promote 11th Avenue on Instagram. A picture is worth a thousand words. Developing a hashtag like “#cordeleforward” could help showcase the growing activity along 11th Avenue, which could go a long way toward improving the image of downtown. The city, Main Street, and the Crisp Area Arts Alliance could also consider collaborating to develop a fun “selfie spot” sticker design for popular photo opportunities downtown like the Historic Coca-Cola mural or the main rail intersection.

## RAILROAD-THEMED CROSSWALKS

Throughout the community, Cordele citizens and visitors appreciate the city’s railroad heritage and position as a rail tourism destination. Many also expressed a desire for more local art downtown. Re-imagining downtown’s crosswalks could be a way to honor Cordele’s railroad heritage and designate space for public art downtown. The city could collaborate with the Crisp Area Arts Alliance and submit a Request for Proposals (RFP) for artist-designed crosswalks downtown. Bringing railroad-themed crosswalks downtown could brand Cordele as a rail tourism destination and bring an innovative, fresh look to the downtown streetscape.

## PARKING

Although Cordele has a surplus of on- and off-street parking, some within the community expressed the opinion that downtown lacks sufficient parking capacity. To correct this misconception, the city should consider conducting an inventory of downtown parking. Additionally, along 7th Street and elsewhere, the city should explore the possibility of reconfiguring parts of downtown for angled parking. Survey and public input results show that many Cordele residents prefer angled parking to parallel parking. In many cases, if only parallel parking is available, people feel as if there is no parking available. Prior to any regular road maintenance, the city should assess the width of downtown streets to determine the feasibility of converting parallel spaces to angled parking.

## DOWNTOWN CORDELE GATEWAYS

Gateways are the first and last opportunity a community has to communicate its values and unique sense of place. The new gateways at I-75 are an announcement to visitors and locals that the community is proud of Cordele and the city is worth investing in. Gateways to downtown, including the intersection of Highways 280 and 41 and the “Watermelon Roll” at Highway 41 do not reflect community pride or promote Cordele’s unique sense of place. The purpose of gateway signage is to announce the presence of and entry into a community. By defining the main entrances into Cordele with distinctive signage and a unified planting pattern, passersby would be more likely to recognize and access downtown. Well-styled and landscaped gateways are also public signals that the city cares about how people perceive their downtown.

- **Watermelon Roll (Highway 41 and 7th Street):** 7th Street, downtown’s “main drag,” makes a hard turn north of the Crisp Regional Medical Center. This turn is a local landmark famous for the amount of watermelons that fall off packed trucks headed to the State Farmers Market just down the highway. As a major gateway to downtown for travelers along US Highway 41 and a unique Cordele experience, the city can use this local landmark can be used to help brand downtown. Renaming the interchange the “Watermelon Roll” could help create a themed gateway and unique Cordele experience. Designing a planting pattern to emulate the look of a ripe watermelon could brand this area and create a signature downtown gateway.
- **Highway 41 / Highway 280:** The intersection of US Highways 41 (7th Street) and Highway 280 (16th Avenue) is a crossroads of South Georgia. The amount of out-of-town travelers arriving on these highways makes this intersection a sort of welcome mat for downtown. Aside from Cordele’s Community Clubhouse, the remainder of this intersection lacks aesthetic appeal. Barren parking lots, hard surfaces, and abandoned and underutilized buildings on either side of Highway 280 do little to promote the city or cultivate a sense of community investment. Additionally, no directional signage is placed to lure visitors downtown. To promote downtown and create a sense of place, the

city could install themed directional signage and plant some large-canopy trees at the intersection. The city might also consider exploring an MOU with existing property owners to create building-sized murals and a signature gateway experience at the intersection.

- **Gateway at Inland Port:** Cordele’s inland port—one of only two in Georgia—is a major asset for the city’s economic future. Currently, the Inland Port and Cordele–Crisp County Industrial Park lack an entrance befitting the area’s economic impact. Installing more attractive landscaping and directional signage could advertise the area’s role in Cordele’s economic future and lead drivers to the port. Creating a gateway experience at the site could reflect the community’s sense of pride and attract greater private investment.

### AVAILABLE BUILDING SHOWCASE

Cordele’s historic architecture is seen as the city’s greatest asset. However, the city’s high vacancy rate is also the most commonly expressed issue needing improvement downtown. To address downtown’s high vacancy rate and market available buildings to investors, the city could catalogue vacant properties and create an online available-building showcase. Staging pop-up art shows and events in available buildings could also help promote these downtown assets while bringing more arts and cultural events downtown. The city could further promote investment in these structures with a historic building tour—highlighting the architectural wealth of downtown buildings while promoting vacant properties to potential investors.

### TASTE OF CORDELE/FARM TO TABLE WALK

During public input sessions, community members often expressed the desire for more events downtown. Reflecting Cordele’s agricultural heritage and the growing draw of agritourism, planning a Farm to Table Walk could create an engaging evening activity for the entire family. Business owners could showcase local foods, and residents and visitors could walk from store to store, drinking wine and sampling local foods. A passport of locations could be created: if a person visits all of the locations within the passport, then he or she could be eligible for a raffle drawing. The Farm

to Table Walk could expose many different people to downtown stores and dining in a fun and festive atmosphere.

### DINNER AND A MOVIE

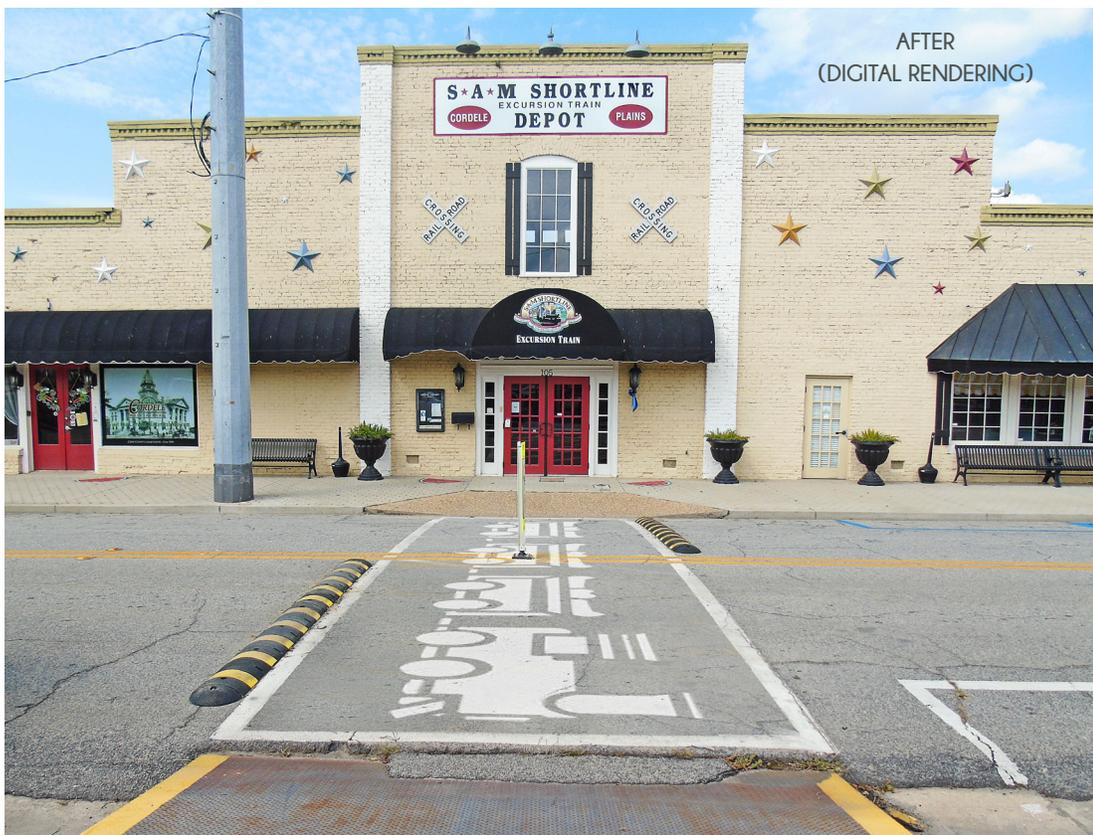
The focus groups and survey responses made it clear that people would like to have evening activities downtown. Many feel that downtown “closes” after 5:00 pm and that downtown is unsafe at night. More evening events will help to combat these perceptions and bring more activity to downtown. The old Crisp Theater is an asset for Cordele but is currently underutilized. Setting up “Dinner and a Movie” nights at the theater or former First Baptist Church in downtown would give local businesses a needed boost, bring people downtown after dark, and add some much-needed nightlife. Often through grants from the Fox Theatre Institute, many cities have turned underutilized theaters into major community attractions. Nearby Fitzgerald, Georgia’s Grand Theater was revitalized through the Fox Institute and community efforts. The theater is now a profitable asset for downtown and an anchor of the community. Cordele and private property owners should consider following Fitzgerald’s model to restore the historic Crisp Theater.

### CREATE FIRST FRIDAY EVENTS

First Fridays are a way to reintroduce residents to their downtown with family-friendly activities: shops hold extended hours, food vendors are present, and live music and other festival-like activities are provided. These events would help community members associate downtown Cordele with energy and fun, getting people excited about their downtown again.

### SHOP DOWNTOWN CAMPAIGN

Cordele Main Street or the Cordele–Crisp Chamber of Commerce could partner with Darton College, South Georgia Technical College, the public K–12 schools, and the greater community to create a “shop local” or “shop downtown” campaign as a way to integrate students into the local business community. Downtown stakeholders could consider banding together to participate in American Express’ popular Small Business Saturday campaign. A drive to support downtown merchants would also remind community members to consider spending money locally rather than at nation-



## RAILROAD-THEMED CROSSWALKS

Cordele’s unique railroad history provides a fun opportunity to celebrate the city’s heritage by incorporating train-themed painted crosswalks throughout downtown. The rendering shows what a stencil painted train crosswalk could look like on 9th Avenue in front of the SAM Shortline Excursion Train Depot downtown.

al chain stores or online retailers. For every \$100 spent in locally owned stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. For every \$100 spent in a national chain, only \$43 stays local. Spend it online, and nothing stays local.

## POINTS OF INTEREST MAP & WALKING TOUR

The SAM Shortline, Georgia Veterans State Park, and all local hotels should have an attractive and accessible map that details points of interest in Cordele, as well as a seasonal calendar of events. This map could easily be digitized and made available on the city’s website. All downtown points of interests should be arranged to create a walking tour for tourists and prospective visitors. The walking tour should highlight existing restaurants and businesses downtown of interest to tourists. These spots should include the Pool Room, El Gerisol, Crimson and Clover, and so on.

## CATER TO LITTLE LEAGUE VISITORS

Cordele is a popular destination for little league and other sports tournaments, attracting visitors from throughout South Georgia. Many of these tournaments are two-day events and visitors have limited lodging options. To retain this visitor traffic, the Cordele-Crisp Chamber of Commerce could collaborate with local hotels to create a baseball- or sports-themed

lodging package. Simultaneous downtown events could be themed to attract little leaguers and their parents.

## DOWNTOWN CASTLE PLAYGROUND

Encouraging family-friendly programming around the SAM Shortline depot could encourage repeat visitors and capitalize on existing assets. With a few small improvements and safety measures, the unique concrete block building immediately adjacent to the SAM Shortline parking lot could become a castle-themed playground. With similar cosmetic improvements, downtown’s vacant buildings can become community assets.

# DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

## 7th STREET (US HIGHWAY 41) & 9th AVENUE

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows the busy intersection of 7th Street (US Highway 41) and 9th Avenue at the railroad tracks, where trains often stop vehicle traffic. This area is a major gateway into the city and should be taken advantage of to welcome and direct potential visitors downtown.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows the 7th Street and 9th Avenue intersection with improved landscaping and a new LED digital welcome sign. This sign could serve several purposes. Possible uses include: welcoming visitors downtown, displaying train information, announcing how many trains have come through Cordele on that day, promoting upcoming local events, or even entertaining visitors with train trivia as they wait for a train to pass.





BEFORE



AFTER



# DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

## 16th AVENUE & 7th STREET

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a property located at the corner of 16th Avenue and 7th Street, a major gateway into downtown. Currently, the building is vacant and the corner lacks a sense of arrival as visitors approach downtown Cordele.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows the corner with a large willow oak and expanded landscaping. Planting large trees along 7th Street (US Highway 41) will help calm traffic, enhance pedestrian safety, and improve the aesthetic appeal of downtown's main corridor. Taking advantage of Cordele's important role as a hub for Georgia agriculture, the rendering shows the building being re-purposed as a farmers market. Alternatively, this building could accommodate a welcome center or agritourism center among other potential uses.



BEFORE



# DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

16th AVENUE & 6th STREET

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a vacant commercial building located on 16th Avenue and 6th Street approaching a major gateway into downtown. Many potential visitors might have no idea that downtown is just a few blocks from here.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows the building painted with a simple mural directing visitors downtown. A watermelon slice points the way downtown, acknowledging Cordele's claim to fame as "Watermelon Capital of the World."

# DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

## RILEY'S DELI

**BEFORE:** The photograph (above, right) shows a popular restaurant, Riley's Deli, located at 16th Avenue (US Highway 280) near an important gateway into downtown. Currently Riley's is a well-loved local destination, but could benefit from more out-of-town visitors.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering (below, right) shows a simple promotional mural painted onto the side of the building. While serving as an artistic enhancement to this blank wall, this new mural advertises Riley's to tourists traversing busy Highway 280.

BEFORE



AFTER



# DOWNTOWN CASTLE PLAYGROUND

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a vacant concrete block building located on 9th Avenue adjacent to the SAM Shortline depot. This unused, old structure has potential to be reused.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what the structure could look like if transformed into a castle-themed playground. With some signage, medieval themed decor, and the addition of modern playground materials, this once underutilized building could easily become a unique playground with lots of character.

**AFTER, HALLOWEEN:** The digital rendering shows the structure as a haunted house on Halloween, complete with string lights, ghostly projections, and a jack-o-lantern graveyard. This is one of many ideas that could be applied to the building for events or temporary uses.





AFTER



AFTER

THE *Cordebe* WORK PROGRAM  
DESIGN

Design simply means re-creating downtown to be a safe, beautiful, and welcoming space for all who visit, work, and live there.

Design includes giving attention to public and private buildings, storefronts, signage, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials.

## STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

While portions of downtown feature street trees, well-maintained plantings, and attractive sidewalks, these improvements do not extend throughout the downtown area. Many in the community dislike parallel parking downtown, particularly along 7th Street. Speeding and pedestrian safety along this busy stretch was another commonly expressed concern. Targeting 7th Street—the backbone of downtown—for streetscaping improvements could help to incentivize redevelopment and investment throughout the area. By narrowing travel lanes and slowing traffic speeds, 7th Street could more effectively accommodate the street trees, angled parking, and planting bump-outs that make downtowns attractive and appealing places to visit and invest in. Planting street trees and improving the streetscaping in the remainder of Cordele’s downtown core, particularly 11th and 12th Avenues, could help send a message that downtown is open for business.

## SAM SHORTLINE RV SPOTS

The SAM Shortline helps make Cordele an important regional tourist destination. The city can build on this existing asset by promoting the city to weekend campers and day trippers. By re-stripping the parking lot between 9th and 10th avenues to allow for RV parking, the city could help lure more weekend tourists. Promoting the city to RV travelers as a jumping-off point to regional destinations like Georgia Veterans State Park, Andersonville National Historic Site, and the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site could help grow downtown’s tourist base.

## DOWNTOWN SPLASH PAD

Cordele has the potential to build on the attraction of the SAM Shortline to children and families by creating more family-friendly attractions. Many in the community voiced the desire for a splash pad downtown. Splash pads are a popular draw for families and could be themed to reflect Cordele’s railroad heritage or position as “Watermelon Capital of the World.” Splash pads are cost-effective investments requiring no life guards and little maintenance.

## BRING BOXCARS DOWNTOWN

To further enhance Cordele’s position as a rail tourism destination, the city could consider acquiring some antique boxcars to display on vacant lots downtown. These boxcars could serve as micro-businesses targeted toward SAM Shortline visitors. Setting up a series of boxcars downtown could create a railroad-themed marketplace and a unique attraction to visitors.

## SLEEPER CAR B&B

Several community residents voiced the desire for bed & breakfasts and other accommodations for tourists. To further promote Cordele as a rail tourism destination and create options for SAM Shortline tourists, the city could consider procuring some antique sleeper cars for downtown. Retrofitting these sleeper cars for affordable overnight accommodations could create a unique experience and keep tourists downtown. By providing a fun, unique, and affordable lodging option, a sleeper car B&B could also target the thousands of South Georgia little league baseball players and their families drawn to tournaments in the city.

## DOWNTOWN DRIVE-IN

Popular events and festivals like the Watermelon Festival help to bring residents downtown and create a sense of community. Voices throughout Cordele support these events and would like to see more of them downtown. Cordele has the potential to build on the success of existing events while activating under-performing resources downtown. Working with Cordele Main Street, the Cordele-Crisp Chamber of Commerce, or other stakeholders, the city could sponsor a monthly drive-in theater on vacant properties or parking lots downtown. While a drive-in could help support existing downtown businesses and promote the area, providing evening events would bring after-hours activity to downtown, a critical component to combat crime downtown.

## DOWNTOWN ARTS CENTER

Many residents expressed the need for more arts and cultural programming downtown. Many citizens suggested converting the historic Cordele First Baptist Church on 13th Avenue into a community arts and cultural center. The city, DDA, or another downtown stakeholder could explore purchasing the church and leasing the facility to the Crisp Area Arts Alliance. Moving the headquarters of the Arts Alliance downtown would bring citizens from around the community downtown for classes and performances and bring activity to this underutilized historic resource.

## PUBLIC ART/VACANT WINDOWS

The many vacant storefronts in downtown were continually brought up during public input sessions. Ideally, these buildings will eventually be filled by new or expanding businesses. Until then, these storefronts can temporarily display visuals that are of interest to the local community. Many expressed the desire for more arts and cultural programming downtown. Window displays could promote local artists and draw people downtown with children's art, photography, or other artistic exhibits.





# STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

## 11th AVENUE

**BEFORE:** The photograph, left, shows a view from 8th Street looking east down 11th Avenue.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering above shows what 11th Avenue could look like if some streetscaping improvements are undertaken. Similar to the 12th Avenue rendering, improvements include a railroad-themed stencil painted crosswalk, grass-planted “bump-outs” with willow oak trees planted every 6-8 parking spaces to provide shade, and sidewalks cleaned up and maintained. Also, the stop sign that was placed in the center of the street—creating visual clutter—has been removed. Instead, “STOP” has been painted onto the road pavement, making a more attractive solution.

# STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

12th AVENUE

**BEFORE:** The photograph, shown at right, captures a view from 8th Street looking east down 12th Avenue.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering below shows what 12th Avenue could look like following the instillation of active streetscaping improvements. Enhancements shown in the rendering include a railroad-themed stencil-painted crosswalk, grass-planted “bump-outs” with willow oak trees planted every 6-8 parking spaces to provide shade, and freshened sidewalks with proper maintenance.





# STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

## ON-STREET PARKING ON 7th STREET

**BEFORE:** The photograph below shows an area of 7th Street downtown. This block has very little streetscaping, parking spaces, or shade.

**AFTER, PARALLEL PARKING OPTION:** The digital rendering (above, right) shows 7th Street reconfigured to allow parallel parking on both sides of the street. Currently, the street is wide enough to allow parallel spaces but would need to be reconfigured to accommodate two driving lanes. Streetscaping improvements include a railroad-themed stencil painted crosswalk, grass-planted “bump-outs,” and willow oak trees planted every 6-8 parking spaces to provide shade.

**AFTER, ANGLED PARKING OPTION:** The digital rendering (below, right) shows the same streetscaping improvements as the parallel parking option, but grass “bump outs” are slightly larger on the corners. Traffic lanes would also be slightly narrower to allow for angled parking spaces.





AFTER, PARALLEL PARKING OPTION



AFTER, ANGLED PARKING OPTION

# STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

## 7th STREET & 14th AVENUE

**BEFORE:** The photograph below shows the 7th Street and 14th Avenue intersection. 7th Street (US Highway 41) is downtown's major corridor and an important gateway into the city.



**AFTER, OPTION 1:** The digital rendering (above, right) shows the intersection with streetscaping improvements, including:

- Repainted crosswalks to make pedestrians more visible to drivers
- New street lights with a cleaner, more attractive design help to promote public safety
- Grass buffers have been planted along the sidewalks and down 7th Street
- Corners planted with shrubbery for aesthetic and safety purposes
- Trees planted along the sidewalks to enhance the streetscape

**AFTER, OPTION 2:** The digital rendering (below, right) shows the same improvements as in Option 1, with the addition of attractive brick pavers used to define crosswalks.



AFTER, OPTION 1



AFTER, OPTION 2



BEFORE



AFTER STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

# STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

## 7th STREET / SOUTH GATE SHOPPING CENTER

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows the expansive South Gate Shopping Center parking lot and sidewalk along 7th Street, a main gateway into downtown.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows the same site following the installation of streetscaping improvements. By replacing a row of underutilized parking spaces along the sidewalk with turf and handsome willow oaks, these improvements help provide a visual buffer between 7th Street and the oversized shopping center parking lot. Trees also provide much needed shade for pedestrians along this busy corridor.

BEFORE



## STREETSCAPING IMPROVEMENTS

### 8th STREET & WALL STREET

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a vacant lot downtown located on 8th Street and Wall Street adjacent to Darton State College. Currently, there is no landscaping or public investment to complement Darton's impressive architecture.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what this prominent lot could look like after simply planting wildflowers. Although the space is currently vacant awaiting development, in the meantime the site can be beautified to create an asset for downtown and the environment. Creating a wildflower field can serve as a short-term solution until development occurs.



## SPLASH PAD

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows Perlis Park at the corner of 12th Avenue and 8th Street. Currently the park has few amenities to draw potential visitors. The lack of substantial shade makes this area uncomfortably hot during the summer months.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what a splash pad and interactive playground could look like on the property. A downtown splash pad could attract children and families already coming downtown for the SAM Shortline while potentially bringing new visitors to downtown. Splash pads are a cost-effective way to provide a safe and fun attraction for families, especially during the hot summer months.



BEFORE



# BRING BOXCARS DOWNTOWN

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a vacant lot located on 8th Street.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows a market housed in old train boxcars. Each car hosts its own small shop (the rendering shows a vintage market, ice cream parlor, and book store). Chalk board signs, potted plants, and outdoor seating make this space an attractive and unique shopping area that pays homage to Cordele's railroad heritage.





AFTER

# WATER TOWER & PERMANENT TRAIN VIEWING PLATFORM

## WATER TOWER MURAL

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows Cordele's iconic 1914 water tower adjacent to the railroad tracks on 9th Avenue.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what a train-themed mural or projected image could look like on the smokestack. The artwork and water tower could be illuminated at night to create a landmark for downtown.

## PERMANENT TRAIN VIEWING PLATFORM

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows an area located beside the railroad tracks where the CSX, Norfolk-Southern, and Heart of Georgia rail lines converge. An impressive number of trains pass by daily, creating a destination for train enthusiasts.

**AFTER:** Paying homage to the design of historic South Georgia freight depots, the digital rendering shows a permanent train viewing platform situated in an ideal location to safely watch the many trains that pass through Cordele daily. The painted water tower is shown in the background.



BEFORE



AFTER

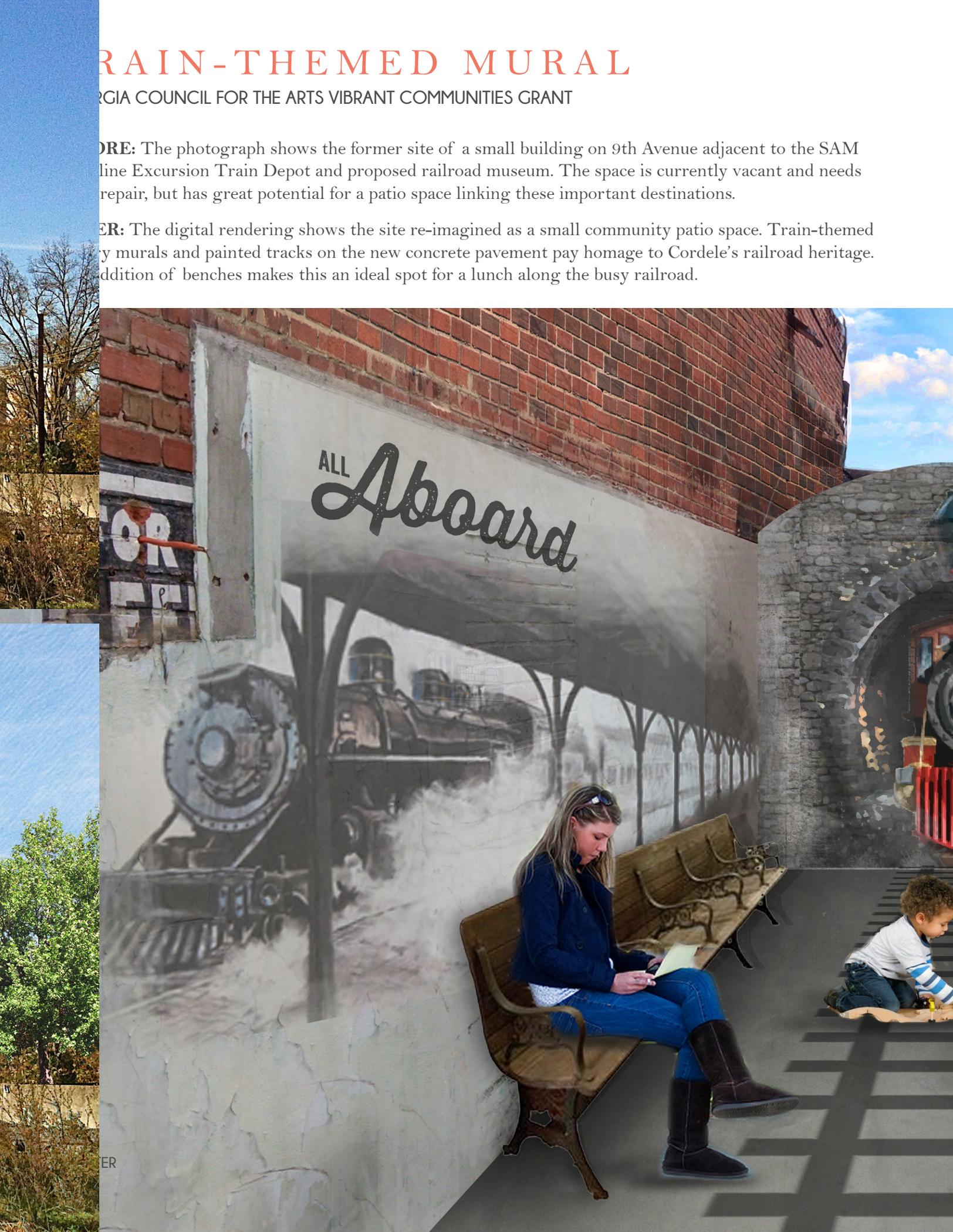


# RAIN-THEMED MURAL

GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS VIBRANT COMMUNITIES GRANT

**DESCRIPTION:** The photograph shows the former site of a small building on 9th Avenue adjacent to the SAM Line Excursion Train Depot and proposed railroad museum. The space is currently vacant and needs repair, but has great potential for a patio space linking these important destinations.

**RENDERING:** The digital rendering shows the site re-imagined as a small community patio space. Train-themed murals and painted tracks on the new concrete pavement pay homage to Cordele's railroad heritage. Addition of benches makes this an ideal spot for a lunch along the busy railroad.





THE *Cordele* WORK PROGRAM

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development means building on and strengthening a community's existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base.

## MAINTENANCE STANDARDS

The community sees building maintenance as the most critical issue downtown. For downtown Cordele to be a vibrant and successful hub, blight and substandard maintenance must be addressed. Many cities around Cordele have adopted unified, universal standards to ensure that property owners do not allow buildings to fall into disrepair. Cordele should immediately adopt relevant sections of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) and the Georgia State Amendments to the IPMC produced by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Sections 301, 302, 304, 306, 308, and 309 all deal with basic issues of property maintenance and blight. These sections should be immediately incorporated into Cordele's code of ordinances.

- **Blight Tax:** Property maintenance is by far the greatest roadblock to the success of downtown. Cordele should go further than basic standards and should look to similar cities for model blight ordinances. The city of Perry has a strong anti-blight ordinance including an ad valorem tax increase on blighted property (Sec. 5-73). Perry's code of ordinances set out the process for clearly identifying blighted property (Sec. 5-74) and standards of exterior structural maintenance (Sec. 5-33). Cordele should adopt Perry's tough take on issues of blight and property maintenance.
- **Block-by-Block Audit:** Cities have different means of tackling and identifying blight. Typically, the responsibility of determining blight falls on the city manager or a city employee designated by the city manager. Currently, Cordele's city code designates the director of community development as the public official charged with determining unsafe buildings. The director of community development is already empowered by the city to investigate the dwelling conditions to ascertain whether properties are unfit for human habitation or for current use. To determine what buildings are in violation of maintenance standards, city officials could undertake a block-by-block audit of downtown properties. A block-by-block audit would also create an inventory of vacant property downtown—a valuable resource for attracting new investment.

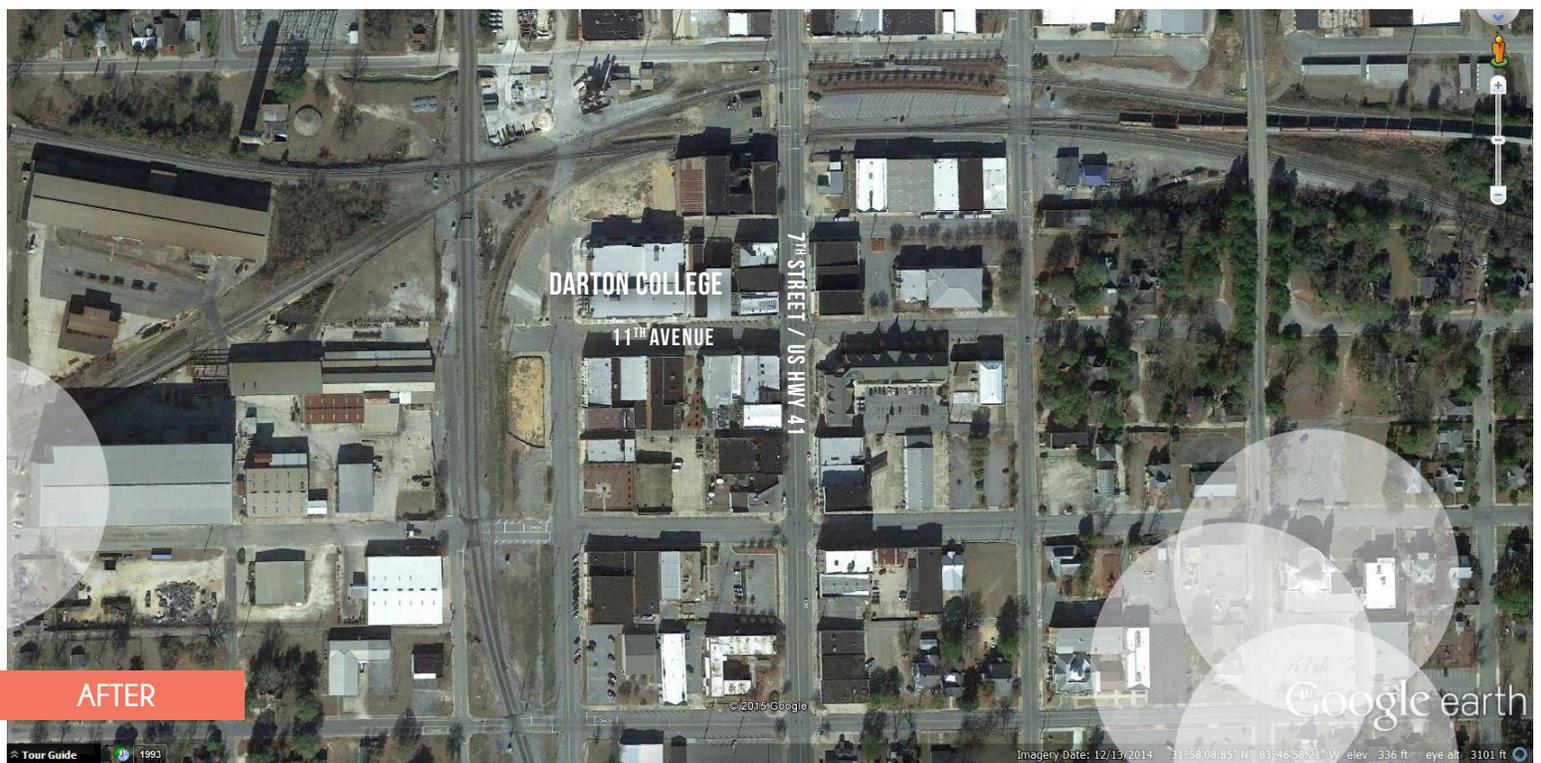
- **Remove Storage from CBD Conditional Uses:** Currently, property owners downtown are permitted to use formerly commercial buildings primarily for storage, exacerbating the negative perception that downtown is empty and lacks activity. Removing this conditional use would help to encourage more complementary uses for downtown's building stock.

## DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

The community overwhelmingly favors expanded entertainment and dining options downtown. In order for this to occur, strict limits on alcoholic beverages should be minimized in the heart of downtown. Currently, it is against city code to open a business serving alcohol within 200 yards (600 feet) of a school or college campus and within 100 yards (300 ft) of a house of worship. Proximity requirements effectively ban new restaurants on 11th Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets. As the home of Darton College and the Pool Room, this block represents the heart of downtown Cordele. Lifting the proximity requirement (Sec. 3-137) could help capitalize on these incredible assets and introduce new entertainment options downtown. Additionally, opening a business that serves alcohol requires a combined fee of \$3,750 (Sec. 3-121), a serious burden for small business owners. Such establishments are further required to make at least 60% of their revenue from dining options and are prohibited from serving alcohol on Sundays (Sec. 3-160; Sec. 3-147). Waiving these fees and restrictions in downtown could incentivize private investment and the development of the restaurant and entertainment venues that Cordele residents desire.

## TARGET TRAIN ENTHUSIASTS

If properly promoted, Cordele's position as an active rail hub and the terminus of the SAM Shortline holds great potential for downtown. To capitalize on this asset, the DDA could promote downtown Cordele and the city's historic properties in national railroad magazines and other media. Attracting groups that would appreciate Cordele's railroad heritage could draw new investors to downtown and enhance the city's existing attractions.



## ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

**BEFORE:** Current city ordinances prohibit liquor by the drink sales within 200 yards of a school or college and 100 yards of a house of worship—an onerous burden to prospective business owners. Because of this ordinance, much of downtown is currently off limits to restaurants serving beer and wine. The image above illustrates this policy, with the highlighted areas representing areas where a glass of wine with dinner is prohibited.

**AFTER:** By removing the 200-yard proximity requirement, the city could incentivize the development of new food and beverage options downtown. Easing these restrictions makes downtown Cordele a viable location for prospective restaurateurs.



### TAX INCENTIVE PACKAGE & UPPER-STORY HOUSING

Throughout the public input process, the Cordele community voiced the desire for increased support for local businesses. Developing a targeted incentives package could help support existing businesses and lure complementary businesses downtown. Cordele officials should consider working with the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) to develop a streamlined tax incentive application.

The community believes that more living options are needed to create a thriving, active downtown. As part of a targeted incentives package and building on Darton College's presence downtown, Cordele could take steps to promote upper-story housing and lofts downtown as a secondary income stream for property owners while developing other incentives for upper-story housing. For instance, cities like Dahlongega have had success implementing wiring and fire safety grants to encourage upper-story housing redevelopment. Addi-

tionally, when marketing Cordele's downtown housing, it would be the DDA's responsibility to list upper-story housing options on its website and develop a waiting list to promote the option. To make people aware of the downtown living option, the DDA could partner with civic clubs within the community to host an "Upstairs Downtown Tour" of current apartments or staged prospective spaces.

### FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

Roll-up metal doors, peeling signage, broken awnings, and other façade issues all send a message that downtown is unsafe and uncared for. The city must prioritize working with existing businesses to improve their façades when the time comes to renovate buildings. This approach will take time, but working with and assisting downtown property owners creates a win-win situation and builds healthy relationships between the city and business owners. Often the best first step



to address the negative appearance of derelict buildings is to start with a can of paint. Many downtown buildings could be vastly improved with a coat of paint and other minor exterior cosmetic fixes. Owners of derelict buildings should be contacted for their involvement in downtown improvements. However, if they are not willing to comply, the DDA and the city could step in to improve the appearance of such buildings.

### **BUSINESS RETENTION**

Prior to creating a business recruitment program, a business retention and expansion philosophy needs to be fully embraced. First, the city must determine the largest current employers in the downtown area (e.g., Crisp Regional Hospital, Harris Shredder Systems, Crisp County, Crisp County Power Commission, and the City of Cordele). Think of these identified groups as the crucial industries. Next, the city should develop a communication and partnership strategy to help them succeed. The city must play a significant role as they strategically plan for their future.

### **CAPITALIZE ON NPS DESIGNATION**

Currently, much of downtown Cordele is included in the Cordele Commercial Historic District. National Registry status grants access to certain tax benefits for rehabilitation and renovation of historic properties downtown. To leverage these benefits and promote them to downtown property owners, the city could consider retaining a tax credit consultant through the National Park Service. A dedicated point-person could assist downtown property owners with the appropriate paperwork and help guide interested investors through the process.

### **SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

The community widely supports assisting downtown small business owners. Small local businesses are critical to Cordele's economic health and create a reason for the community to come downtown. The city should consider promoting existing resources to ensure the health of downtown businesses. The University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center's (SBDC) mission is to provide the tools, training, and resources needed to help small businesses grow

and succeed. Whether this means assisting with access to capital, developing a business plan, offering business training, or providing marketing support or other needs, the SBDC can help ensure local businesses are sustainable enterprises. Bringing SBDC representatives to Cordele to talk with downtown business owners could boost the city's economic health and help promote a culture of entrepreneurship downtown.

### **EXTEND CBD ZONING**

Along the spine of 7th Street (US Highway 41), Cordele's Central Business District (CBD) zoning extends from Wall Street to 18th Avenue. At Wall Street, CBD zoning shifts suddenly to Heavy Industrial (HI), permitting a variety of inharmonious uses in the heart of downtown's most popular tourist area. Extending CBD zoning over the study area of the 7th Street Corridor Urban Redevelopment Plan would help to ensure that future development complements and contributes to the character of downtown.

### **RECRUIT DOWNTOWN RESTAURANTS**

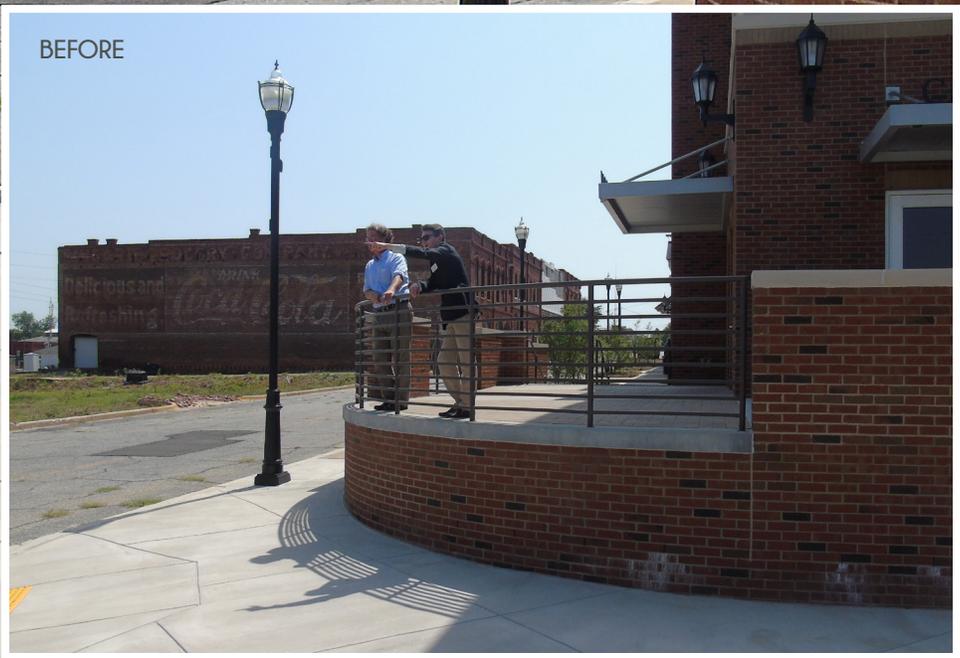
There is overwhelming public desire for more restaurants, dining options, and a place to get coffee downtown. The community also desires establishments that stay open in the evening and serve beer and wine. An incentives package to recruit new businesses must be developed. In addition, businesses in other similarly sized towns can be identified and recruited. Statesboro has been very successful bringing new restaurants downtown. Incentives they offer that could be adopted by Cordele include waiving food and beverage license fees for up to three years. The city should get creative with targeted incentives. Powder Springs, for instance, provides up to 50% matching funds, not to exceed \$10,000, for the improvement of the interior space and exterior façades of new restaurants downtown. The city offers a \$3,000 grant for façade renovation and \$7,000 for interior renovation.

# DARTON COLLEGE TRAIN VIEWING PLATFORM

## OPTION 1: KEEP IT SIMPLE

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a patio space on the Darton College property overlooking the railroad tracks at the corner of 8th Street and Wall Street.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows a simple sandwich board sign that reads, “Watch the Trains! Train Watching Platform” and people watching trains go by from the patio.







**BEFORE:** The photograph above shows a closed portion of Wall Street near the Darton College property overlooking the railroad tracks.

# DARTON COLLEGE TRAIN VIEWING PLATFORM

## OPTION 2: TENSILE SHADE STRUCTURE

**AFTER:** The digital rendering below shows the same area blocked off and allocated for train watchers and enthusiasts. Potted plants, signage, and outdoor seating cultivate a festive atmosphere and make this closed street an attractive space to spend time in. A tensile shelter shades visitors from the sun and inclement weather. All of these elements could easily be removed if trucks needed to enter or development occurs in the future.



AFTER

## FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS

### LITTLE BUILDING ON 9th AVENUE

**BEFORE:** The photograph shows a building located on 9th Avenue near the SAM Shortline depot. The building's damaged windows and doors send a negative message to tourists visiting the depot.

**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what the building could look like with new windows, doors, and exterior paint. A little bit of improvement goes a long way with this façade.

AFTER



# REDEVELOPMENT

## WATERWORKS PROPERTY EVENT VENUE ON 9th AVENUE

Cordele’s historic waterworks property has long-term programming potential. Sited adjacent to downtown at the intersection of three major railroads and serving as the home of Cordele’s turn-of-the-century waterworks building and historic water tower, the property is well suited for a combination events venue and a train viewing platform—two long-term goals of the city. The plan for the Waterworks Event Venue takes advantage of the site’s unique history and the character of the city. With intricate masonry and unique Neo-Gothic detailing, the 1914 waterworks building has been lovingly restored and re-imagined as a venue for weddings, receptions, and special events. A back patio sized to accommodate outdoor wedding canopies provides an additional option for event goers. Partially enclosed by the historic water tower and waterworks building, the two additional event lawns to the west of the structure provide a unique space for barbecues, cocktail receptions, and small gatherings. Just to the east of the waterworks building, the historic concrete reservoir has been transformed into a handsome Comitium. Similar to amphitheaters, circular Comitiums (Latin for “assembly”) served as sacred open-air meeting spaces in the ancient world. Enclosed within the reservoir’s existing walls, the Reservoir Comitium uses turf and a series of knee walls to create an intimate outdoor venue for small performances and events. Attractively shaded with low-maintenance native trees and shrubs, the grounds of the waterworks venue now enhance the historic architecture of the site while connecting the venue to the proposed train viewing platform and new shared parking area. *SEE SITE PLAN ON PAGE 76-77.*

Cordele is proud of the city’s railroad heritage, and the intersection of the CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Heart of Georgia Railroads to the southeast of the site is a critical element in the city’s allure as a railroad tourism destination. Currently, many avid train watchers cross dangerous, steep, and uneven areas around the intersection to catch glimpses of the many trains passing through the area regularly—creating a hazard for both train operators and visitors. Georgia cities like Folkston, Locust Grove, Manchester, and others have all had success drawing more railroad enthusiasts downtown with safe and attractive train viewing platforms. This proposed plan includes a handsome elevated platform on the southeast bank of the waterworks site, connected to the waterworks venue and parking lot via a wheelchair-accessible ramp. With simple timber construction and a patina-ed metal roof, the new viewing platform pays homage to historic freight depots around South Georgia while serving as a modern attraction for the city.



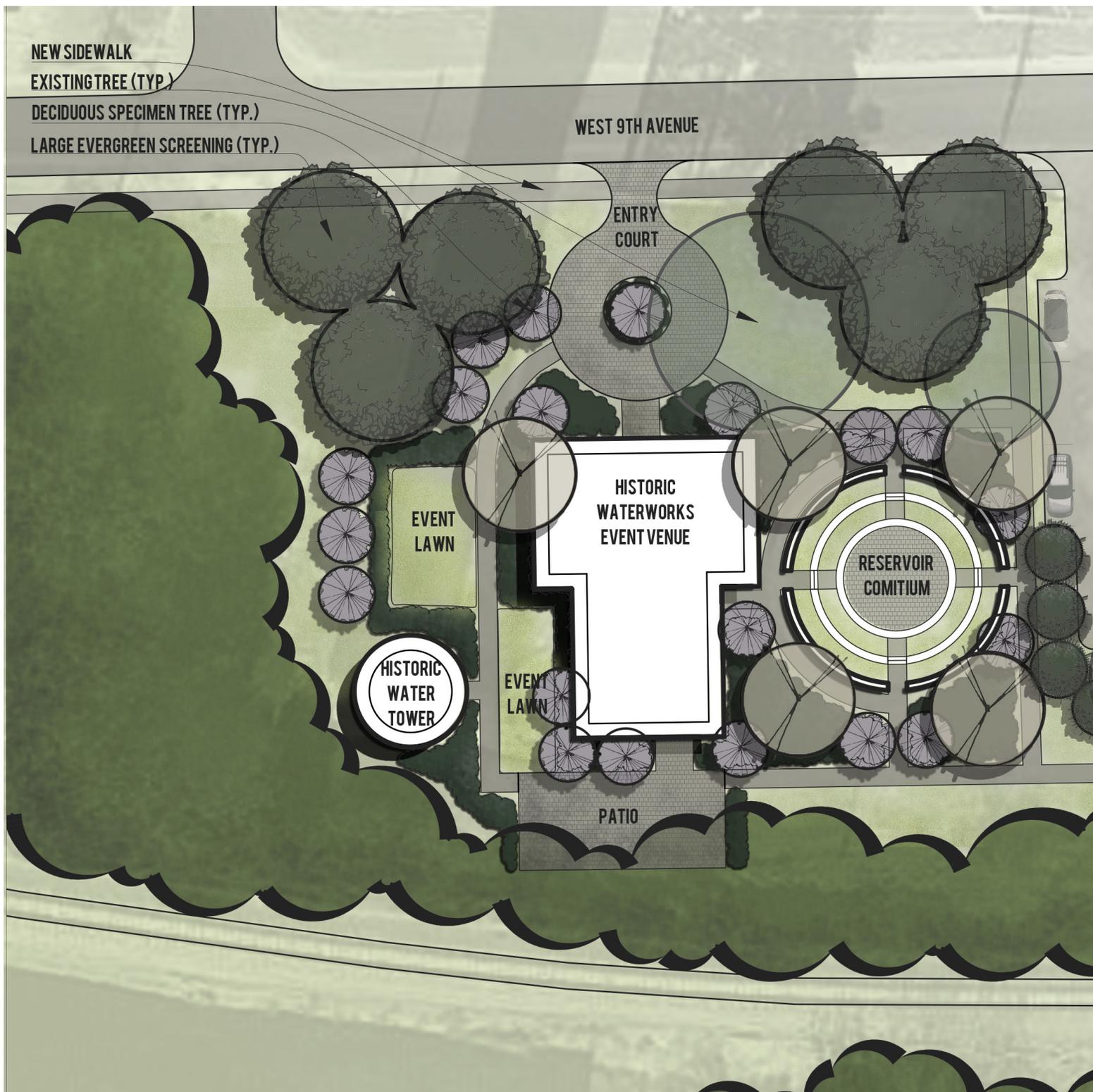
BEFORE



# REDEVELOPMENT

## WATERWORKS PROPERTY EVENT VENUE ON 9th AVENUE - PLAN VIEW

AFTER, PLAN VIEW: The rendered plan below shows the proposed waterworks building event venue site plan with landscaping improvements and a new stone driveway for vendor and guest access. Two event lawns, a backyard patio, and reservoir comitium give a variety of options for outdoor event space planning. Parking is located on-site and beautifully screened by lush plantings. Guests can make their way to the train viewing platform, a short walk from the venue.





# SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

## "HOLE IN THE WALL" ON 8th STREET

BEFORE: The photograph below shows a small alley space located between two buildings on 8th Street. Once known as "The Hole in the Wall," this business sold renowned hamburgers to Cordele citizens in the 1950s and 60s. Unfortunately this space is now an unused, unkempt alley.



HISTORIC PHOTO: "The Hole in the Wall," c. 1950 with Edison Posey at the window.

## AFTER

NIGHT VIEW: The digital rendering shows the restaurant at night with festive string lights and outdoor seating. The seating area functions as a parklet, or temporary seating area occupying a few parking spaces in front of the business.





**AFTER:** The digital rendering shows what the space would look like if a new version of “The Hole in the Wall” occupied the space. With new signage to accompany the small restaurant build-out, the space is transformed once again into a fun place to grab a bite to eat.

# *The* CORDELE ACTION PLAN

Cordele's action plan guides Cordele's commissioners and local officials by clarifying what resources are required to reach the community's vision for downtown. Through a series of action items, the action plan communicates the "when, what, and who" questions critical to community implementation. These steps include when action items need to be completed, what resources are required, and who is responsible for implementation. A well-developed action plan serves as a blueprint for the project managers, Cordele's city manager, and the main street director to break down a sweeping community vision into smaller, more manageable action items. These action items should meet the criteria for SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-based) goals. By following the SMART process, Cordele's future vision becomes a reality through practical and achievable steps.

# 1

## *Action Item:*

### **COMMUNITY YOUTH CLEAN-UP**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** TRACI GRIFFEN, DARTON COLLEGE

**TIMELINE:** APRIL-MAY 2016

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

#### **STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH TRACI GRIFFEN AT DARTON COLLEGE TO PLAN YOUTH CLEAN-UP EVENT.
2. SELECT A DATE AND BLOCKS TO TARGET.
3. PROMOTE EVENT TO YOUTH ON SOCIAL MEDIA.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.
6. GATHER YOUTH AND STUDENTS AT DARTON COLLEGE ON THE MORNING OF THE EVENT.
7. FORM GROUPS OF FOUR AND ASSIGN BLOCKS TO EACH GROUP.
8. TAKE PICTURES TO POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA. KEEP GROUP CONTACTS TO REPEAT EVENT ANNUALLY.

# 1

## *Action Item:*

### **AVAILABLE BUILDING SHOWCASE**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** MIRIAM EDWARDS, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE; EMPIRE PERFORMING ARTS; DOWNTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-MAY 2016

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** PARTICIPATION OF DOWNTOWN PROPERTY OWNERS

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH MIRIAM AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO PLAN EVENT AND BRAINSTORM.
2. SELECT A DATE AND BUILDINGS TO TARGET. COMPILE A LIST OF PROPERTY OWNERS TO CALL.
3. CALL TO SOLICIT PROPERTY OWNER PARTICIPATION.
4. PLAN EVENT WITH EMPIRE PERFORMING ARTS.
5. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
6. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
7. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
8. HAVE AVAILABLE BUILDING SHOWCASE. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

## 2 *Action Item:* **POLAR EXPRESS PROGRAM**

**LEAD:** TERRY MILLER, SAM SHORTLINE

**PARTNERS:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET; CORDELE-CRISP CARNEGIE LIBRARY

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-DECEMBER 2016

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

### **STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH MONICA AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO DETERMINE DETAILS OF POLAR EXPRESS PROGRAM.
2. CONTACT CORDELE-CRISP CARNEGIE LIBRARY AND OFFICIALS WITH THE LAKE BLACKSHEAR REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM.
3. COORDINATE WITH LIBRARY TO CREATE A POLAR EXPRESS PROGRAM.
4. IDENTIFY A POTENTIAL SANTA AND OTHER VOLUNTEERS.
5. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
6. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
7. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
8. BEGIN POLAR EXPRESS READING AND HOLIDAY EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

# 1

## *Action Item:*

### **RAILROAD-THEMED CROSSWALK**

**LEAD:** MIRIAM EDWARDS, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE; STEVE FULFORD, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

**PARTNERS:** EMORY EDWARDS; CITY OF CORDELE PUBLIC WORKS

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-JANUARY 2016

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. ASK EMORY TO HELP WITH CUTTING TEMPLATE.
2. SET TEMPLATE WITH FILE FROM UGA.
3. TRANSFER IMAGE TO STENCIL.
4. PURCHASE AND CUT WOOD.
5. DRAW DESIGN AND CUT.
6. CONTACT THE CITY OF CORDELE PUBLIC WORKS TO PAINT DESIGN ON CROSSWALKS.

# 2

## *Action Item:*

### **ARTS & EATS EVENT**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** MIRIAM EDWARDS, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE

**TIMELINE:** NOVEMBER 2015

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH MIRIAM AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO PLAN EVENT AND BRAINSTORM.
2. SELECT A DATE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS.
3. CONTACT DIANE LANGSTON AT FOOD FETISH CATERING.
4. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
5. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
6. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
7. HAVE ARTS & EATS EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

## 3 *Action Item:*

### **DOWNTOWN SPOOKTACULAR**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** CITY OF CORDELE; MIRIAM EDWARDS, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE; CORDELE POLICE DEPARTMENT

**TIMELINE:** SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2015

**FUNDING:** CRISP COUNTY POWER COMMISSION, CITY OF CORDELE, COLONY BANK, CRIMSON AND CLOVER, PLANTERS FIRST, AMERIS BANK, SOUTHERN MUSIC

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH PARTNERS AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO PLAN EVENT.
2. SELECT A DATE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS.
3. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
6. HAVE DOWNTOWN SPOOKTACULAR EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

## 4 *Action Item:*

### **DOWNTOWN WINTER WONDERLAND**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** CITY OF CORDELE

**TIMELINE:** AUGUST–DECEMBER 2015

**FUNDING:** CORDELE-CRISP CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CORDELE-CRISP TOURISM BOARD, CITY OF CORDELE, WSST-TV, PLANTERS FIRST, CRISP COUNTY POWER COMMISSION

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH PARTNERS AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO PLAN EVENT.
2. SELECT A DATE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS.
3. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
6. HAVE DOWNTOWN WINTER WONDERLAND EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

## 5 *Action Item:* **HAPPY FALL Y'ALL**

**LEAD:** MIRIAM EDWARDS, CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE

**PARTNERS:** 4H; MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET

**TIMELINE:** ONGOING

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH MIRIAM AT CORDELE MAIN STREET.
2. COMPILE A LIST OF VACANT STOREFRONTS TO TARGET.
3. SELECT A DATE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO PAINT BANNERS.
6. PLACE BANNERS IN EMPTY STOREFRONTS.
7. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

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## 6 *Action Item:* **LUNCH IN THE PARK**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** N/A

**TIMELINE:** NOVEMBER 2015

**FUNDING:** TO BE DETERMINED

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. CONTACT DIANE LANGSTON AT FOOD FETISH CATERING.
2. SELECT A DATE AND REACH OUT TO POSSIBLE LOCAL ENTERTAINERS.
3. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
6. HAVE LUNCH IN THE PARK EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

## 7 *Action Item:*

### **DOWNTOWN BLOCK PARTY & DISCO NIGHT**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** CITY OF CORDELE; CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE; COLONY BANK; SAM SHORTLINE; AMERIS BANK; CORDELE POLICE DEPARTMENT; CORDELE 311

**TIMELINE:** MAY-JUNE 2015

**FUNDING:** CITY OF CORDELE; CRISP AREA ARTS ALLIANCE; COLONY BANK; SAM SHORTLINE; AMERIS BANK; CORDELE POLICE DEPARTMENT; CORDELE 311

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH PARTNERS AT CORDELE MAIN STREET TO PLAN EVENT.
2. SELECT A DATE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTORS.
3. PROMOTE EVENT ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.
4. GATHER SUPPLIES AND SOLICIT LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR DONATIONS.
5. GATHER VOLUNTEERS TO DECORATE SPACES AND PHOTOGRAPH TO PROMOTE THE EVENT.
6. HOLD DOWNTOWN BLOCK PARTY AND DISCO NIGHT EVENT. CONTACT LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS TO PUBLICIZE EVENT.

# 1 *Action Item:* **ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT**

**LEAD:** ANNA HURT

**PARTNERS:** EDWARD BEACH, CITY MANAGER; JAMIE FERNANDEZ, CITY COMMISSIONER

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-JANUARY 2016

**FUNDING:** N/A

**OBSTACLES:** GETTING ALL COMMISSIONERS ON BOARD

**STEPS:**

1. CONTACT CITY COMMISSIONER JAMIE FERNANDEZ.
  2. DISCUSS WITH OTHER COMMISSIONERS. GET ALL COMMISSIONERS ON BOARD.
  3. EDWARD REPORTED THAT THE ORDINANCE WAS DISCUSSED FAVORABLY AT CITY COMMISSION MEETING IN NOVEMBER.
  4. CONTINUE TO LOBBY COMMISSION MEMBERS.
  5. ASK COMMISSIONERS TO INTRODUCE AND VOTE ON ORDINANCE IN THEIR DECEMBER MEETING.
- 

# 2 *Action Item:* **TARGET TRAIN ENTHUSIASTS**

**LEAD:** MONICA MITCHELL, CORDELE MAIN STREET DIRECTOR

**PARTNERS:** TERRY MILLER, SAM SHORTLINE

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-DECEMBER 2016

**FUNDING:** LOCAL DONATIONS, TOURISM, GRANTS, IN-KIND LABOR

**OBSTACLES:** RAISING THE FUNDS; LOCAL PARTICIPATION

**STEPS:**

1. MEET WITH TERRY MILLER AT CORDELE MAIN STREET. BRAINSTORM WAYS TO TARGET TRAIN COMMUNITY.
2. START ON RAILROAD MUSEUM AND RAILROAD-THEMED MURALS.
3. RESEARCH POLAR EXPRESS.
4. JOIN RAIL TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS.
5. RESEARCH TO ATTRACT RAIL FANS.
6. ACQUIRE PERMISSION FROM RAILROADS FOR TEMPORARY VIEWING PLATFORM.
7. START CONSTRUCTION OF TEMPORARY VIEWING PLATFORM.
8. BEAUTIFY TEMPORARY PLATFORM AREA.

## 3 *Action Item:* **ENACT MAINTENANCE STANDARDS**

**LEAD:** EDWARD BEACH, CITY MANAGER

**PARTNERS:** CITY STAFF, CITY COMMISSION

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-JUNE 2016

**FUNDING:** N/A

**OBSTACLES:** GETTING CITY COMMISSIONERS ON BOARD

**STEPS:**

1. CONTACT CITY COMMISSIONERS AND IDENTIFY KEY PROPERTY OWNERS.
  2. DISCUSS WITH OTHER COMMISSIONERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS. GET ALL COMMISSIONERS ON BOARD.
  3. EDWARD REPORTED THAT THE ORDINANCE WAS DISCUSSED FAVORABLY AT CITY COMMISSION MEETING IN NOVEMBER.
  4. CONTINUE TO LOBBY COMMISSION MEMBERS.
  5. ASK COMMISSIONERS TO INTRODUCE AND VOTE ON ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT ORDINANCE IN THEIR DECEMBER MEETING.
  6. CONTINUE TO LOBBY COMMISSION MEMBERS AND PROPERTY OWNERS.
  7. ASK COMMISSIONERS TO INTRODUCE AND VOTE ON MAINTENANCE STANDARDS ORDINANCE IN THEIR JUNE MEETING.
- 

## 4 *Action Item:* **DEVELOP INCENTIVES PACKAGE**

**LEAD:** PATTI DEAL

**PARTNERS:** JO CHILDERS, GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS; RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION

**TIMELINE:** IMMEDIATELY-JUNE 2016

**FUNDING:** N/A

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. COMMUNICATE WITH JO CHILDERS AND GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS.
2. CONTACT RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION AND RESEARCH APPLICABLE INCENTIVES IN OTHER CITIES.

## DEVELOP INCENTIVE PACKAGE (CONTINUED)

3. CONTACT CITY GOVERNMENT AND SOLICIT IDEAS FROM DDA MEMBERS.
4. DEVELOP A DRAFT OF INCENTIVES PACKAGE.
5. SEND DRAFT OF INCENTIVES PACKAGE ORDINANCE TO CITY COMMISSIONERS.
6. CONTINUE TO LOBBY COMMISSION MEMBERS.
7. ASK COMMISSIONERS TO INTRODUCE AND ENACT INCENTIVES PACKAGE IN THEIR UPCOMING MEETING.

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# 5 *Action Item:* GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS VIBRANT COMMUNITIES GRANT

**LEAD:** DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**PARTNERS:** CITY OF CORDELE; CORDELE MAIN STREET

**TIMELINE:** ONGOING

**FUNDING:** MATCHING FUNDING FROM THE CITY OF CORDELE

**OBSTACLES:** N/A

**STEPS:**

1. APPLY FOR FUNDING BEFORE OCTOBER 29 DEADLINE.
2. CLEAN UP AND REMOVE DEBRIS FROM AREA.
3. CONTRACT TO RAISE FLOOR DUE TO DRAINAGE ISSUES.
4. SELECT AND CONTRACT A LOCAL ARTIST.
5. PAINT ALL WALLS A SOLID BASE COLOR.
6. BEGIN PAINTING MURALS.
7. PROMOTE THE GRANT AND NEW MURAL ON WSST-TV, THE CORDELE DISPATCH, AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

