

# WRITTEN REPORT OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

DOUGLASVILLE & DOUGLAS COUNTY  
SPRING 2016



## Y O U N G   G A M E C H A N G E R S

GeorgiaForward's Young Gamechangers is a leadership action program bringing the best and brightest minds under 40 from around the state together to focus on developing solutions to one Georgia community's most persistent challenges. In its third program, Young Gamechangers brought 50 young professionals to Douglasville/ Douglas County in the Spring of 2016 to grapple with issues including arts and culture, education, downtown, and economic development. The final recommendations to the community are found in this report.

GeorgiaForward is a statewide non-partisan non-profit working to strengthen communities, unite our state and create a talent pipeline within Georgia. To learn more, visit [georgiaforward.org](http://georgiaforward.org).

## S E C T I O N S

1. ACDC - Arts & Culture Douglas County
2. D3 - Destination Downtown Douglasville
3. Opportunity Tomorrow - Education
4. West More - Economic Development

# SECTION 1

“As a growing county in the metro Atlanta region, how can the community align their arts and cultural offerings to attract and retain Generation X and Millennials?”

ACDC

ARTS & CULTURE

# ACDC

**MARISA ANTOLINO**  
Real Estate Consultant, Ventrepid LLC  
Atlanta, Georgia

**CHRIS CANNON**  
Assistant Director of Tourism Product Development, Georgia Department of Economic Development  
Rome, Georgia

**WILL CURRY**  
President, Curry Companies  
Dublin, Georgia

**CHAD GRIFFIN**  
Community and Therapeutics Coordinator, Douglas County Parks and Recreation  
Douglasville, Georgia

**KENWIN HAYES**  
Director of Economic Development, City of Griffin  
Griffin, Georgia

**NICOLE HILTON**  
Principal Architect at Cole-Hill Architects  
Douglasville, Georgia

**KATY KLEIN**  
Executive Director, Children's Voice: CASA, Inc.  
Douglasville, Georgia

**EMILY LIGHTNER**  
Office Manager, Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville  
Douglasville, Georgia

**EMILY MACHESKI-PRESTON**  
Attorney, Coleman Talley LLP  
Roswell, Georgia

**ANGIE MARTIN**  
President & CEO, Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber of Commerce  
Milledgeville, Georgia

**WILL STANFORD**  
Principal Architect at BTBB, Inc.  
Macon, Georgia

**REBECCA WEST**  
Banking  
Athens, Georgia

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Atlanta and the surrounding metropolitan region, now at an estimated 5.7 million population, continues to gain momentum as the 9th largest metro area according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Niesse, 2016). Simultaneously, the Millennial population alone has surpassed Baby Boomers for the first time ("Millennials Outnumber," 2015) - and there's an apparent distinction in the lifestyles, tendencies and passions of this emerging collection of individuals. In order to attract and retain both Millennials as well as Generation X populations into the Douglasville/Douglas County vicinity, its leaders should recognize its history and past successes, yet strive to advance its cultural offerings with the purpose of attracting future generations. This will serve to foster an environment where these Generation X and Millennial population segments will have an opportunity to thrive and develop a sense of civic pride (Henseler, 2014).

This proposal seeks to illustrate how arts and culture will provide a unifying element which traverses racial/socio-economic class and improves the quality of life within the community, with a focus on especially boosting engagement from the X and Millennial generations. Whereas the fundamental shift toward a culture of creativity is a key element of this proposal, connectivity of the community - both tangibly and intangibly - is vital to its success.

Through our research and evaluation of survey results from the Generation X and Millennials residing in Douglas County and elsewhere, we feel that the projects proposed will position Douglasville and Douglas County to be an attractive area to live, work and play for the target subjects.

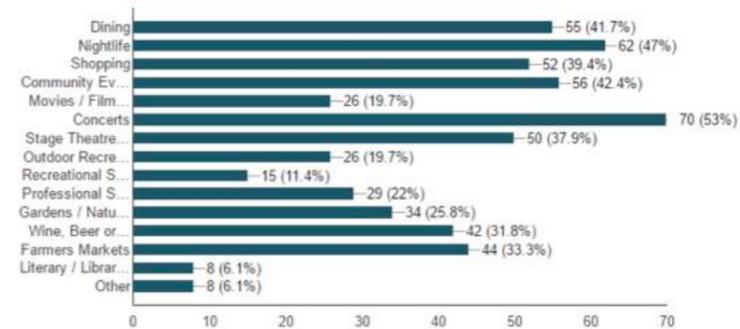
We propose the implementation of a creativity corridor in downtown Douglasville, to serve as the home base of all arts and cultural activities. We also encourage the expansion of the corridor to other key cultural areas in Douglasville and Douglas County through a connectivity pathway, to link bicycling and walking within this linked pattern. Lastly, we propose a transcendent group that encompasses all of the various groups that have a hand in the arts and cultural offerings in Douglas County and Douglasville.

## INTRODUCTION

Douglasville/Douglas County is described as an “outstanding example of a turn-of-the-century southern railroad town...” (“Preserve America,” 2010) with a “core that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places” and contains examples of “Victorian era commercial design, with details of the Romanesque, Italianate, and Queen Anne periods” (“City of Douglasville”). Douglasville has a history of celebrating its cultural heritage. As early as 1886, Douglasville celebrated its first Fourth of July celebration. In more recent years, volunteer events such as “The Penny McHenry Hydrangea Festival”, the “Juneteenth Festival”, “Octoberfest/Chili Cook-off” and “Taste of Douglasville” have created a renewed sense of place and have promoted community engagement. Nevertheless, the opportunity to capitalize on a vibrant arts and culture scene in the Metro Atlanta area to expand and develop cultural offerings will be vital to attracting and retaining Generation X & Millennials.

During the course of our team’s discovery in Douglasville and Douglas County, our group conducted a community survey which was completed by 152 respondents. When asked, “If you currently leave Douglasville for [entertainment, dining, art, etc.], would you choose to stay within Douglas County if the same quality of experience in that activity was available here?” an overwhelming 87.7% of respondents indicated that they would spend their dollars in the community. Furthermore, 69% of respondents indicated that it is somewhat or very important to have arts and cultural offerings in Douglas County. A majority of Douglasville residents never or rarely visit the downtown district. The major motivations for attending events in Douglasville/Douglas County were: (1) supporting a community organization or community cause (77.6%), (2) connecting with the community (62.9%), and (3) socializing with family or friends (59.5%). In summary, Douglas County residents desire to be connected to their community. From our survey results, the participants felt that there is a lack of leisure activities, and they are craving more cultural opportunities in Douglasville/Douglas County.

If yes, please list the activity not currently offered that you would like to stay within Douglasville / Douglas County for:  
(132 responses)



# CREATIVITY CORRIDOR

## BIG IDEA ONE





O'NEAL PLAZA - DOUGLASVILLE, GA

## CREATIVITY CORRIDOR

*Description:* Implement a Creativity Corridor through Downtown Douglasville that promotes the assets already available (i.e. existing plaza, dining, shops, museum, conference center, community theatre, etc.) and encourages development of new community centerpieces which connect residents and visitors to the community.

The Creativity Corridor will run from the old jail site (as the point of entry or gateway) to Campbellton St. This will tie existing downtown anchors of the Douglas County Museum of History and Art, O'Neal Plaza and Conference Center into the corridor, as well as implement mixed-use, arts-focused redevelopment of the 10 acre vacant jail site, as envisioned to most-likely be achieved through the government's promotion of the vision to retain a public-private partnership (PPP).

Along with redevelopment of the site promoting culture and arts in order to draw in or retain younger generations, remediation of the land will improve environmental health, new development will provide employment opportunities for local workers (thereby reducing now-prevalent commuting behaviors), and property owners adjacent to the site likely will reinvest, causing an increase in value of their properties and creating a higher tax yield in Douglasville.

*Scope of Initiative:* Enhance Downtown Douglasville as a core destination and gathering place where residents can come together as a united Douglasville/Douglas County. The Creativity Corridor will be the catalyst for refreshing Douglasville's identity and will serve to welcome and draw younger generations, while providing economic and social benefits. It is evident that Douglasville/Douglas County realizes its cultural potential and has already set the wheels in motion - namely, the current efforts to redesign O'Neal Plaza. Should these plans be incorporated into a larger, overall redevelopment, greater success in drawing in younger generations will be attained, and with them, their ability to boost the city's economy.

Murals, structural art, concerts, displays, greenspace and other forms of artwork would be woven throughout the corridor, providing an aesthetic advantage to the community, as well as a sense of place. Proposed anchor developments would work in concert with the existing infrastructure to create versatile spaces. The Creativity Corridor would appeal to both residents and visitors alike by increasing the quality of life in Douglasville. These new investment will be attracted, and linkages will be created between existing and future community anchors. The Creativity Corridor will be anchored by four focal points throughout Downtown Douglasville; two established focal points and two proposed focal points:



- *Douglasville Conference Center* - An anchor for the community to meet and welcome visitors for business.
- *The Douglas County Museum History and Art* - An anchor for the community to reflect and learn the community's unique heritage and share the story of Douglas County with visitors.
- *O'Neal Plaza* - An outdoor anchor for the community to celebrate the arts and develop a sense of community including: performance spaces, passive pocket parks, retail spaces, food truck spaces, art installations, outdoor dining, gathering areas and play spaces.
- *The new proposed Community Core* - An arts-focused mixed used development that is recommended to be located at the site of the old Douglas County Jail. The recommended future development components include housing, retail, performing arts/open air market, and creative makerspace which are attractive to Generation X and Millennials.

## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Organize a charrette to include the redevelopment of the old jail with the assistance of development professionals (i.e. Urban Land Institute) including underutilized spaces (parcels) in the district. Site to include performance space, open-air market, retail/manufacturing spaces for new businesses. Meet with Douglas County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Director to determine the level of participation.

*Medium-term:* Apply for a Brownfield grant to clean-up site.

Review current zoning ordinance, alcohol ordinance for outdoor concerts/events, and development standards to encourage loft development; outdoor eating; business types that Millennials and Generation X contingents frequent. Consider forming a development entity of the DDA to take advantage of real estate financing opportunities. Incentivize loft development in district with density bonuses.

*Long-term:* Adopt an overlay district with corresponding zoning, development standards, and public art requirements. Adopt a public art initiative administered by the Cultural Arts Council to guide art installation throughout district (i.e. murals; street furniture, etc.). Partner with hotel developer/investor to build facility adjacent to conference center. Mixed hotel and loft development. Consider using former trailers from school system to host artist residency program.

## BUDGET

*Short-term:* (\$200,000) Artist commissions, installation, maintenance, signs, benches and other physical aspects to the art corridor (not including the mixed-use jail site anchor)

*Medium-term:* (\$600,000) Brownfield Clean-up for Former Jail Site.

*Long-term:* (\$1.5 million) Projected Public Costs for Preliminary Development (Site Planning, Feasibility Studies, Promotion for RFPs, environmental studies etc.)

## EXPECTED IMPACT

The Creativity Corridor would create activity and vibrancy throughout the downtown corridor and beyond, which would foster a greater sense of community and identity for Douglasville/Douglas County. The measurable results could be determined with real numbers such as an increase in visitors to the CVB, increase in business revenues downtown, higher occupancy rates in the local hotels and an increase in business licenses for both permanent and temporary entities. The economic impact of increased taxes will be realized not just from increased business operations, but also from an increased tax basis as property taxes rise due to investment, reinvestment and redevelopment of nearby properties due to increased demand caused by attractiveness of the Creativity Corridor.



## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* Brownfield Clean-Up Resources, Redevelopment Fund, Appalachian Regional Commission, One Georgia Authority, Georgia Downtown Renaissance Fund, Georgia Downtown Revolving Loan Fund, Georgia Job Tax Credit, Georgia Tourism Development Act.

*Resources and Partnerships:* Due to the current proposal to reconfigure/redesign O'Neal Plaza, the efforts to move forward with the corridor will need to be incorporated with those plans through the City of Douglasville, Douglasville Main Street, Douglasville Community and Downtown Development, Douglasville Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Douglasville-Douglas County Chamber. Additionally, the Old Courthouse Museum and the Cultural Arts Council are likely partnerships due to their role as two of the tourist/visitor welcome centers for downtown. Most importantly, the downtown residents, business owners, and investors should be the driving force of this community collaboration and effort - the governments and organizations within the community should understand the needs and future desires of these invested individuals and support their direction and leadership above all else. Potential incentives for growth in the downtown corridor, that the local government may implement in the short-run, would be to revise and/or develop downtown specific ordinances and zoning overlay allowing off-premises consumption within a confined area, or a redevelopment incentive plan to help shape future development in this area.

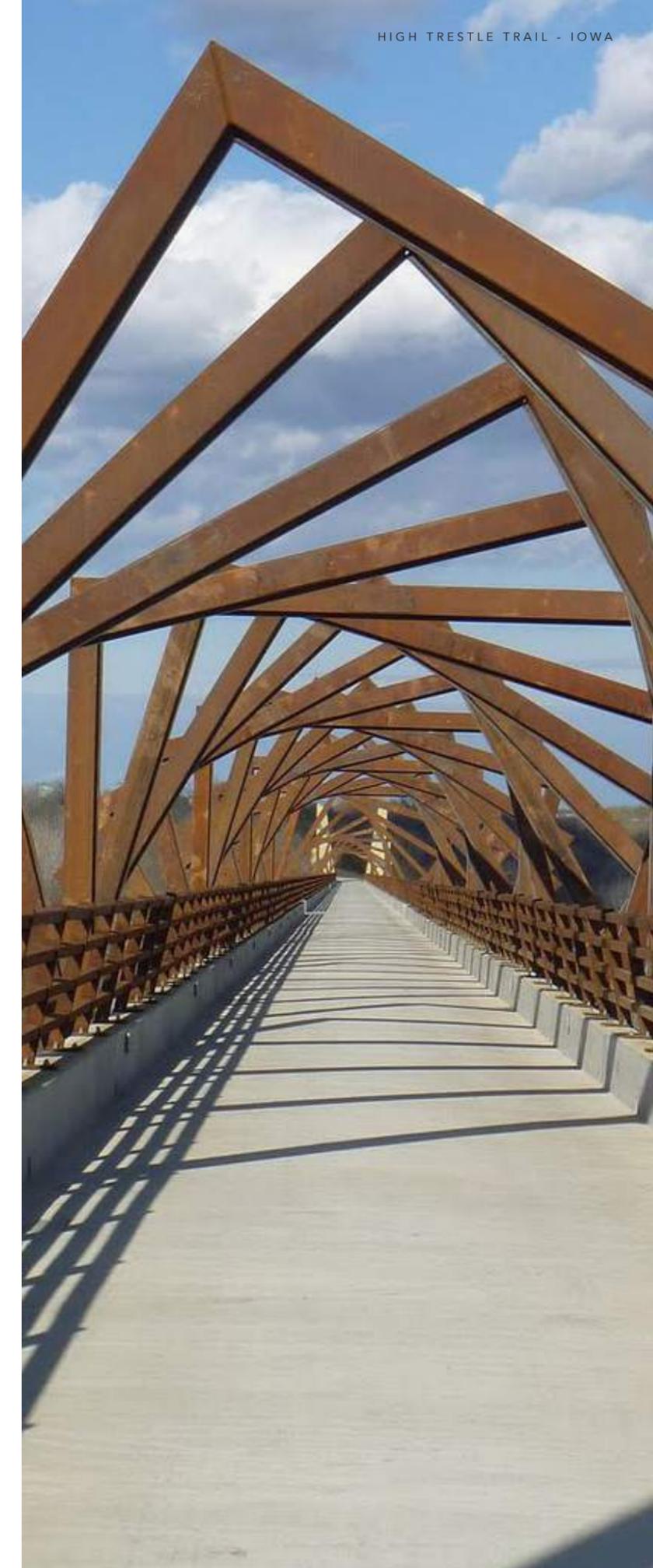
# CONNECTIVITY – TANGIBLE

## BIG IDEA TWO

### CONNECTIVITY – TANGIBLE

*Description:* Create a physical link from the Creativity Corridor downtown to the surrounding areas of Douglas County through features including bike paths, history markers, signage, sidewalks, landscaping and artwork installations throughout the County.

*Scope of Initiative:* A master plan should be developed to create bike paths and bike lanes throughout Douglasville and Douglas County which would connect parks, hotels, and key destinations throughout the area. Additionally, a bike share program would help increase foot traffic to these key destinations. Local business could invest in the program by sponsoring bikes for a logo bike wrap in the program. The master plan should also consider increasing sidewalks, landscape beautification, and LED street lighting along the existing right of ways on City and County streets. Accompanying landscaping could be provided along major roads and interstate exits to create a unique sense of identity. Additionally, strategically placing decorative or historical mile markers that are relevant to Douglas County (i.e. art sculptures, plaques, protected chestnut trees, etc) would inform residents and visitors of the many amenities of Douglas County. Finally, a long-term plan to connect Downtown Douglasville to the hike/bike trails of Chattahoochee River Corridor (8.75 miles southeast of Downtown Douglasville off Fairburn Road) and to the Silver Comet Trail (9.5 miles north of Downtown Douglasville off Hwy 92 in Hiram) would make Douglasville a destination for outdoor enthusiasts and that of Metro Atlanta. The vision calls for Downtown Douglasville reaching its potential for connecting communities, as it successfully did with the railroad depots that existed from the 1880's to 1970's.



## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Promote the availability of free WiFi downtown in public domain.

*Medium-term:* Install story boards in strategic locations Downtown (i.e. Between SR78 and railroad ROW). Upgrade signage throughout community to provide directions to primary cultural assets.

Convert pedestrian and street lighting to LED.

*Long-term:* Adopt a bike share program sponsored by local businesses. Establish a greenbelt (PATH) connecting all the natural resources in community. Key connections on SR92 at Silver Comet Trailhead and Chattahoochee Hills Regional Path system. Partner with GDOT and local landscape experts to determine ways to beautify I-20 exists. Determine if there is a possibility of creating a multi-use trail adjacent to SR92 connecting Downtown to Silver Comet Trail.

## BUDGET

*Medium-term:* (\$300,000) Upgrade and update signage with consistent, unified brand (design palette of signs for way finding: \$30,000; develop and install signage at major geographical points of interest: \$175,000). Develop/install historical interpretive displays in strategic locations: \$95,000 (considering \$2,000 to \$4,000 per sign)

*Long-term:* (\$160,000+) Highway landscaping and interstate exit plantings: design palette of landscaping and signage: \$25,000; Installation of Landscaping and signage: \$250,000/interstate exit. Bike Share Program and bike paths woven as a connector to the greater Douglasville - experience Douglasville.

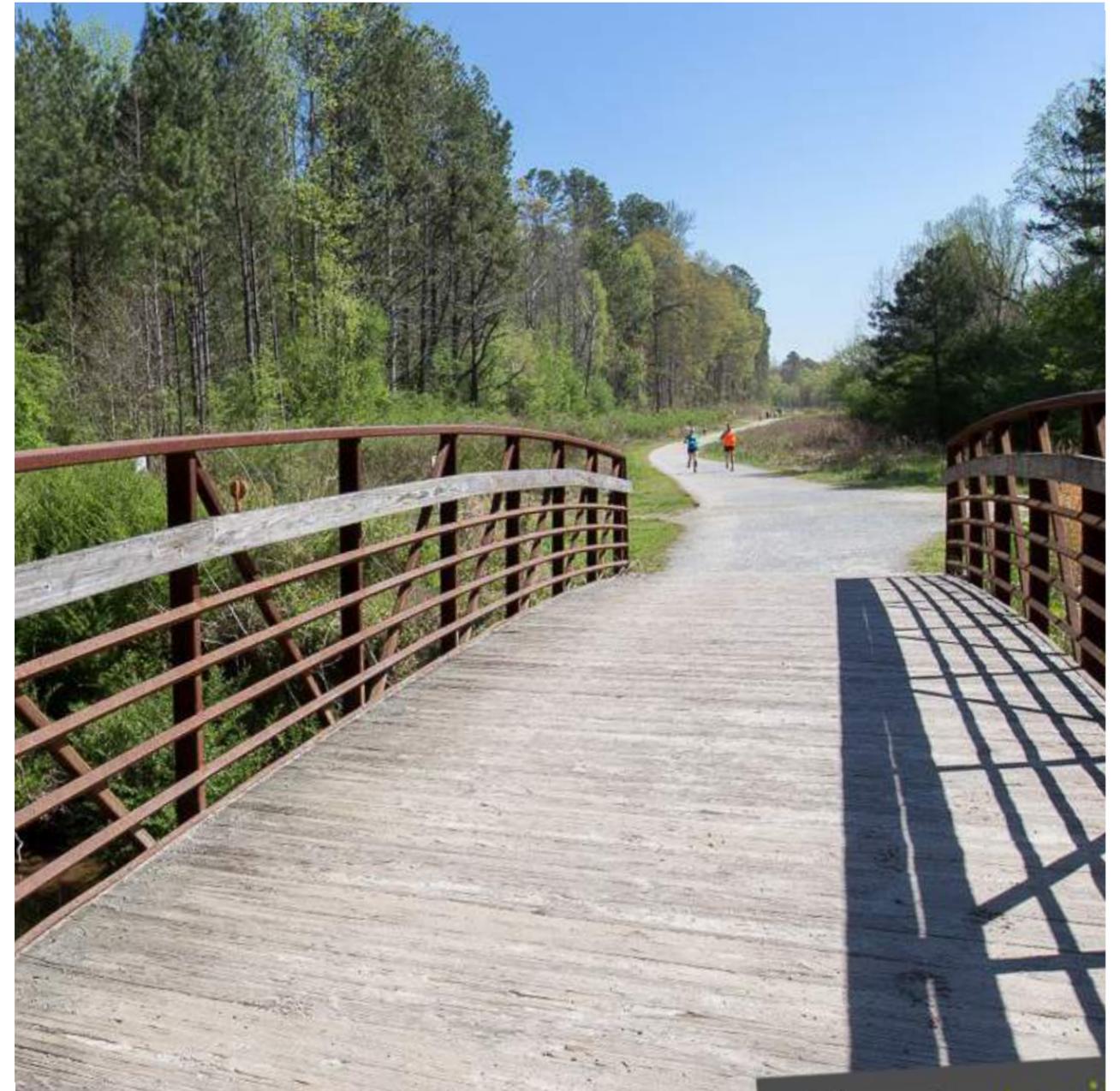
Implementation Budget Considerations:

*Option 1:* Dedicated multi-use bike/pedestrian path (12' wide) = \$600,000/mile.

*Option 2:* Buffered Bike Lanes at existing roads: \$150,000/mile.

*Option 3:* Enhance roadway shoulders to include 5' biking lane: \$100,000/mile.

*Future Expansion:* Adjacent to SR 92 connecting downtown to Silver Comet Trail: \$150,000/mile; enhancement of vehicular intersections: \$3,000/intersection; bike route signage: \$300/sign; bike parking: \$500/rack; update pedestrian and street lighting to LED: \$2,000.00/fixture.



## EXPECTED IMPACT

Connectivity will create better access to Arts and Culture to all residents and visitors in the County. This will create energy and an environment which fosters new ideas that Millennials and Generation X demand. The building of the arts/culture community will be from the common vision of creating “one” Douglasville/Douglas County. The residents and visitors in the County that are currently not exposed to art will have a newfound connection to the County. This creates personal growth, civic pride and better engagement for all throughout the community. Additionally, residents will be able to access a better quality of life by the abundance of outdoor activities.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* Collaborative effort of the City of Douglasville and Douglas County. Planned connectivity encompasses the entire city and county and provides the opportunity for a shared vision from both governments for the future of the entire community. The Parks and Recreation Department has the same opportunity for collaboration and is needed as the connectivity initiative involves the departments' services which are currently operated separately without a master plan.

Northwest Georgia Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA) provides an opportunity to promote the bicycling portion of Connectivity. Their mission is to organize, promote trail preservation and development, mountain bike racing, touring, fun and fellowship for all mountain bicyclists. The group currently rides the Clinton Park trails ("NWGA"). The infamous Silver Comet Trail falls just outside the reaches of the County, and currently there is no entryway to the Trail west of the I-285 Loop. An entrance to the Trail could be achieved through partnership with Paulding County for a connection trail tying the Silver Comet Trail to Douglas County. PATH Foundation is a second biking partnership. PATH forms partnerships with local governments to build greenway trails. It provides staff to design, build and maintain the projects and has the potential to provide matching funds to finance the development of trails.

A partnership can be created with the Douglasville Medical Center-WellStar Health System by creating a "Live Well Douglasville" and WellStar's "Speaking about Wellness for the Workplace" as are in place for Cobb County's WellStar Hospital ("WellStar health").

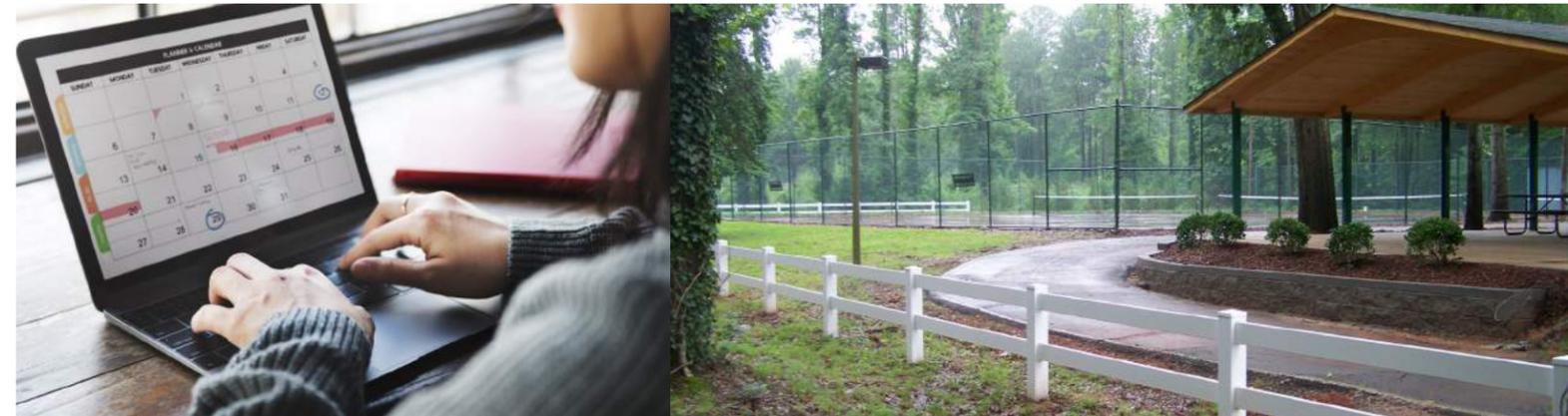
The recently approved Foxhall development could provide a valuable partnership for connecting recreational trails to the proposed development which includes residential development, resorts, education, and outdoor sporting. Furthermore, if the "Aerotropolis Corridor" (promoted by Foxhall's developer, extending from Foxhall to the airport) takes off, it would provide the opportunity for additional regional partnership.

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is a potential partner in providing data needed for housing developments along the Connectivity trail.

Resources that are essential to create the needed energy for this connectivity plan will involve all components of the community: city/county government, downtown, the County Parks and Recreation Department, possibly GDOT concerning the gateways into town, public transportation and the rails to trails conversion by way of Paths. The three gateways into town offer opportunities to artistically decorate and create an inviting, innovative and attractive entrance into Douglasville. The new Highway 92 could be created pedestrian and bike friendly. In addition to the creation of hike/bike paths, public transportation should be considered in order to further link the community.

# CONNECTIVITY – INTANGIBLE

## BIG IDEA THREE





## CONNECTIVITY – INTANGIBLE

*Description:* Create an overarching culture, arts, tourism and recreation advisory organization within Douglasville and Douglas County to increase collaboration between governments, businesses, organizations and individuals in these crucial quality-of-life fields. This organization may be key to implementation of tangible proposed recommendations, as well as maintenance of them once activated and in place.

*Scope of Initiative:* Research has shown that arts and culture has the ability to connect people of various demographics within a community, as well as draw outsiders into a community. The sound of music or the beauty of art attracts individuals from diverse backgrounds, helping to build a more vibrant, prosperous and sustainable community. Douglasville/Douglas County has many opportunities for collaboration between governments, community development organizations, tourism organizations and arts/cultural organizations; however, it appears that many organizations are acting on their own and without the collaboration that would wield the greatest benefit.

There are many organizations that would benefit from a group tasked with forming partnerships for the future of the community. The proposed Cultural Collaboration Commission could build relationships between the following groups: Douglas County, City of Douglasville, City of Villa Rica, City of Austell, Douglasville Downtown Development Authority, Douglasville Main Street, Downtown Merchants Association, Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, Douglasville Convention & Visitors Bureau, Douglas County Convention & Visitors Bureau/Courthouse Museum, Cultural Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County, Douglasville Parks and Recreation, Douglas County Parks and Recreation, Friends of Sweetwater Creek State Park.



*Scope of Initiative Continued:* The list of potential member governments and organizations is simply a starting point of communication and collaboration. From initial conversations, additional organizations and individuals should be brought in to achieve the goal of complete collaboration.

While each of the above organizations has a different mission, objective and target audience, the overall goal of each is to increase quality of life within Douglas County and enhance the community.

Within a community, each of these groups plays an important part in the overall economic and social development of residents and visitors; however, work appears to overlap, the multitude of different websites and organizations working toward the same goal fragments the public perception, and these factors limit the opportunities to truly engage individuals within the community and that of potential visitors. It is recommended that the commission work to unify the various community organizations under a single strategic mission and plan to disseminate a clear and consistent image and brand about life in Douglasville and Douglas County.

The team recommends establishing this new commission as a collaborative of all the above organizations, but above all, a collaborative of the citizens of this community. Communities function best when focused on the needs and desires of those who live, work and play within the community every day. This committee should come together as a function of the citizens of Douglas County with the goal of finding a sense of collaboration and function among the many disparate groups within the community.

Once the Cultural Collaborative Commission is established, the team recommends the following initiatives:

Rebranding and Marketing of Douglasville and Douglas County as the arts and cultural community. The community needs a strong, unified voice to compete within the metro-Atlanta economy. This voice should be a professionally branded, unified voice of the new collaborative established; unified Tourism Marketing Program; unified Community Calendar and App housing all activities within the community; unified Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Create an alliance/commission which is composed of all the arts/culture/business groups & government entities in community to meet quarterly/monthly. Create a dynamic app that promotes things to do; places to visit; restaurants to eat; etc.

*Medium-term:* Create a centralized marketing/information distribution network for various arts and culture organizations.

*Long-term:* Create a unified tourism marketing program that maximizes events/funding, while leveraging local funds. Adopt a full rebranding campaign to create a unified voice from Douglas County and Douglasville. Create a unified parks and recreation master plan that connects the leisure assets of both the city and county.

## BUDGET

*Medium-term:* (\$475,000) Unified Tourism Marketing Program- consider branding and marketing Douglasville and Douglas County as a first-tier destination within the metro-Atlanta region and the State of Georgia. This voice should be a professionally branded, unified voice of the new collaborative established (estimated development budget: \$75,000; estimated implementation budget: \$150,000; estimated yearly budget commitment: \$250,000).

*Long-term:* (\$50,000) Unified Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## EXPECTED IMPACT

The improved relationships created by the Cultural Collaboration Commission initiative will lead to more efficient and cohesive governments, which will attract people, industries, and businesses to Douglasville/Douglas County. With a cohesive message to residents and visitors alike, additional engagement in community events and volunteerism is expected.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Success can be measured by resident/visitor satisfaction with the community and its offerings. Individual organizations and/or events should monitor volunteerism and attendance metrics to determine if the message is being disseminated properly. Governments and community organizations should see a spike in productivity and efficiency given that the load is being shared across multiple organizations.



## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

The newly elected City and County leadership could provide the energy needed to jumpstart the connectivity efforts within all facets of the community. There is great hope for working together for the good of the City and County as a whole. The invested and passionate citizens will help to ensure the bigger picture remains in the forefront.

While the governments and government organizations/agencies play a key and crucial role within this collaboration effort, the primary purpose of this collaboration commission should be to allow individual voices and goals to come together.

Commissions for developing culture, arts, tourism and recreation are common throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States. As implementation is considered, leadership within Douglasville and Douglas County should communicate with local neighbors and regional leaders to understand best practices.

Locally, a prime example of community collaboration is the Columbus Consolidated Government in West Georgia. From organizational and government branding to trail development, the different governments and community/economic development organizations of the city work as one with a master vision and plan. North Star Research Brand Study: <http://www.northstarideas.com/case-studies/columbus-georgia>.

Nationally, the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Commission is an excellent example of collaboration and success regionally. The young organization was created in 2008 to unite 19 counties in Southwest Virginia through master planning and branding in tourism, arts, culture and economic development. Since creation, the organization has created the nationally renowned tourism product Crooked Road: Music Heritage Trail that connects each of the communities through innovative tourism products: <https://www.myswva.org/swva/about/partners>.

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# THANK YOU

The Arts & Culture Douglasville/Douglas County (Team ACDC) would like to thank and acknowledge the following individuals who contributed to our knowledge and understanding of Douglasville/Douglas County. We greatly appreciate their time and desire to answer our questions, introduce us to the great community, and make us aware of both the challenges and opportunities that lie within Douglasville/Douglas County.

ADAM CARTER, Douglas County Chamber Young Professionals Connection

COLLIN CASH, Douglas County Tourism

LISA LAND COOPER, Historian

RANDI GREENE, Georgia Department of Economic Development

MARCIA HAMPTON, City of Douglasville

DAVINA GRACE HOLL, Culture Arts Council of Douglasville/Douglas County

TRACIE IVEY, Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department

HARRISON MERRILL SR., Foxhall Resort & Sporting Club

ANA-ELLIS PERRY, Cultural Arts Council

DR. GORDON PRITZ, Douglas County School System

PATTI H. PUCKETT, Ameriprise Financial

ROCHELLE ROBINSON, City of Douglasville

JOHN SELL, Georgia Power

MIKE STEPHENS, ServisFirst Bank

DEAN WANG, LaQuinta Inn & Holiday Inn Express

TOM WORTHAN, Douglas County Board of Commissioners

# SECTION 2

“ In light of the relocation of Highway 92, how can downtown position itself for success? ”



D3

—  
DOWNTOWN DOUGLASVILLE  
—

# D3

**CARRIE BARNES**  
Community Development Consultant, Georgia EMC  
Cartersville, Georgia

**JASON BOOI**  
Private Wealth EDD Manager, Regions Bank  
Douglasville, Georgia

**WILL BURKE**  
Regional Coordinator for Cherokee, Cobb, Douglas and Paulding, United Way of Greater Atlanta  
Atlanta, Georgia

**JAMES HAMMOND**  
Managing Partner, Ikon Filmwork  
Atlanta, Georgia

**MILTON JOHNSON**  
Operations Analyst, Georgia Department of Human Services/Office of Legislative Affairs and Communication  
Eastman, Georgia

**APRIL MCKOWN**  
Main Street Manager, City of Douglasville  
Douglasville, Georgia

**AMANDA PEACOCK**  
Regional Project Manager, Georgia Department of Economic Development/Tourism Division  
Valdosta, Georgia

**SARA RAY**  
Director of Communications & Community Affairs, Douglas County Chamber of Commerce  
Douglasville, Georgia

**EVAN ROBERTSON**  
Senior Project Associate, Market Street Services  
Atlanta, Georgia

**JORDAN STONE**  
Administrative Director of Human Resources, Coffee Regional Medical Center  
Douglas, Georgia

**MEGAN WHITE**  
Marketing Projects Manager, Visit Savannah/Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce  
Savannah, Georgia

Throughout the nation, downtown areas are undergoing a renaissance. Behind their revitalization are a variety of factors ranging from changing homeownership rates and location preferences among young professionals to empty nesters seeking out urban-style settings to live out their retirement years. These shifts are evident in the transformations taking place in downtown areas across the metro Atlanta region. Through these transformations, communities are not only attracting new residents but also new businesses who are exceedingly using their surroundings to attract and retain tomorrow's workforce. Quality of place has become an essential component of community and economic vitality.

Given these broader trends, the relocation of Highway 92 comes at an opportune time for the city of Douglasville and Douglas County residents. At present, the downtown area is burdened with commuter traffic - commuters are simply trying to get to work in the morning or get home in the evening. They are going through downtown Douglasville, they are not going to it. The relocation will move Highway 92 to the eastern outskirts of Downtown Douglasville, relieving the downtown area of traffic and affording the city of Douglasville and its various downtown stakeholders the opportunity to establish Downtown Douglasville as a destination for current and future residents as well as visitors.

To activate downtown and promote its revitalization, our "Destination Downtown Douglasville" group recommends a series of solutions that can occur in concert with the Highway 92 relocation project. These recommendations range in size and scope but all are focused on achieving key outcomes necessary for revitalizing Douglas County's heart:

- Re-engage community residents with their downtown area, sparking an open and honest conversation about what downtown Douglasville should and could be for current and future residents.
- Invite current residents and the broader metro Atlanta community into downtown Douglasville through a unified branding campaign.
- Connect the newly created Hwy 92 Interchange with the core downtown commercial district via an attractive gateway corridor.
- Activate downtown by promoting catalyst developments that can create a live-work-play environment in downtown Douglasville.

Whether they realize or not, communities are engaged in intense competition for global talent. Access to a qualified workforce will continue to drive business location decisions and, consequently, community vitality and wellbeing. Growth is not a given, it is not predestined. With the relocation of Highway 92, the city of Douglasville and Douglas County have the potential to revitalize and transform its downtown area offering new downtown living options and urban amenities sought after by today's and tomorrow's workforce. Downtown Douglasville has the opportunity to take part in its own renaissance and position itself for future success.

## INTRODUCTION

Our group has been tasked to come up with “game changing ideas” to help Douglasville, and specifically downtown, put itself in a position for success. Our group tried a holistic approach. We met and interviewed people from the County, the City, the Chamber, and business owners. Our groups consists of people from all over the state of Georgia, some of whom have close ties to Douglasville/ Douglas County, others who visit Douglas County every now and then, and others who got their first taste of the city/county through the Young Gamechangers program.

The Atlanta Metro Population is projected to be over 8 million by 2040 (<http://www.atlantaregional.com/info-center/forecasts>). In other words, it will be as if the entire Charlotte Metropolitan area picked up and moved to the Atlanta area. If these projections hold true, higher populations and changes are on the horizon for Douglas County and Douglasville.

With that in mind, we set out to develop ideas that would allow Downtown Douglasville to take advantage of the expected population shift while leveraging the relocation of Highway 92. The result was three over-arching ideas that we feel will redefine Downtown Douglasville:

- Communitywide branding and marketing effort.
- Development of a gateway area from the new Highway 92 to Downtown Douglasville.
- Creation of downtown attractions that bring residents and visitors to downtown rather than just through downtown.

# COMMUNITY-WIDE BRANDING

## BIG IDEA ONE





## COMMUNITY-WIDE BRANDING

*Description:* Create a cohesive branding campaign for the City of Douglasville that unifies different organizations in the community and establishes Downtown as the heart of the community. This branding campaign would create one unified vision and message for the City, with a grand reopening of downtown and events in conjunction with First Friday and Saturday downtown each month.

*Scope of Initiative:* Douglasville is regionally acknowledged as a bedroom community to Atlanta. While this perception has led to increased residential growth over the last few years, the community is poised for diversified growth. As with many bedroom communities, residents who commute to Atlanta may not feel a strong connection with the community, especially Downtown. A communitywide branding campaign would be aimed both at attracting tourist and business development to Douglasville and Douglas County, while also establishing Downtown Douglasville as a destination for residents and visitors alike. The best examples of this are in Dayton Ohio, Columbus, Ohio and Newnan, Georgia.



*Scope of Initiative Continued:* Once a new branding plan has been developed, Douglasville could hold a “grand re-opening” of downtown with a press conference and festival event. This would be an ideal event to kick-off a First Fridays and Saturdays program or weekend-long festival that could take place every month.

First Friday and Saturday Events in other communities:

Dayton, Ohio: [http://www.downtowndayton.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=147](http://www.downtowndayton.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=147)

Savannah, Georgia: [http://www.riverstreetsavannah.com/events/cat\\_ids-10/](http://www.riverstreetsavannah.com/events/cat_ids-10/).

The branding campaign could also come up with a tagline that could be used by businesses and organizations throughout the community to unify the businesses in the community, similar to the Experience Destination Dedicated Program in Columbus, Ohio (<http://www.joinuscolumbus.com/feedback/>) and the Downtown Dayton partnership in Dayton, Ohio (<http://www.downtown-dayton.org/>).

This is a way for community members to focus on one goal and message in order to create a visitor friendly experience in Douglasville. By using the same message, branding and working together to promote downtown and regional events, it better positions Douglasville as an attractive destination.

## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Assemble a group of key stakeholders/community organizations who would each buy into a communitywide branding campaign. Initially, this group could be made up of the City of Douglasville, Douglas County, Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, Douglasville Convention and Visitors Bureau, Douglas County Tourism Office, and the DDA/Main Street program. This group or committee would help to identify the budget for the campaign and submit a Request For Proposal (RFP) for a branding initiative and community style guide to send to local, regional and national marketing agencies for proposals.

*Medium-term:* After advertising the RFP to 5 - 10+ firms, the committee could review and narrow down the proposals received to the top 1-3 firms. The top firms would be asked to present their ideas and strategies for the initiative and submit a budget to the committee. Finally, the top firm would be selected and given 3-6 months to complete the branding proposal.

*Long-term:* Receive all products and branding campaign ideas from the selected firm. Incorporate the design elements, message, fonts, colors, etc. into all websites, signage, printed materials, etc. in Douglasville. Community organizations will implement the branding initiative, unveiling the brand collectively. The new branding campaign will be a great opportunity to host a "grand re-opening" event for Downtown Douglasville and surrounding areas in conjunction with a First Friday and Saturday event that would go on to occur monthly. Continue to market Douglasville to residents, visitors and potential meeting/conventions guests with one message and vision for the community that each business and local organization can adopt into their messaging and strategies as well.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* Each of the partner organizations could contribute to the campaign. For example, if 5 community organizations participate, each organization could buy in at \$15,000 each for a total of \$75,000. The more organizations that buy in, the less the cost would be for each organization.

*Resources and Partnerships:* A private consultant could be hired to complete the campaign. As part of their responsibilities, the firm would create designs for all city and departmental communications, signage/wayfinding, and brochures/marketing materials. In order to encourage engagement and buy in from stakeholder, business owners, and surrounding neighborhoods, a series of focus groups could take place to help develop Douglasville's brand. The initial stakeholder committee could be responsible for spearheading this effort but the campaign will be something that local partners could also buy into later (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Douglas County Development Authority, Douglas County School System, Douglasville Conference Center, etc.) by adopting the logo and tagline as their own and incorporating it in their marketing similar to the program that Experience Columbus Ohio has in place (link: <http://www.joinuscolumbus.com/feedback/>.)



## BUDGET

The total budget for the branding campaign will largely be determined by the local stakeholders but a comparable campaign completed by a respected marketing firm was around \$75,000.

## IMPACT & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

While the products the community will receive from the marketing firm are important, the larger impact of this effort will be seen through unifying the key community organizations in Douglasville and Douglas County. Currently, an overall view of the community shows that many of the organizations operate independently from one another. This branding campaign could spark additional partnerships for future efforts in the community.

Additionally, our hope is that a branding campaign will serve to create an identity for the Downtown Douglasville that will resonate with residents of Douglasville and Douglas County. Many residents feel a stronger connection with Atlanta than the community they live in and are unaware of the great shops, restaurants and events that Downtown Douglasville has to offer. The Grand Re-Opening event will serve to both unveil the new brand but also to bring people to downtown to explore the great things they have in their own community.

A successful branding campaign would have multiple community partners (no less than 3 partnering organizations). It will be important that the brand development process put a strong emphasis on community input and outreach in order to understand the community's ideas of Douglasville's identity. Finally, the greatest measure of success will be whether other community organizations decide to join the communitywide brand and buy in as well.

# DOWNTOWN GATEWAY

## BIG IDEA TWO

### DOWNTOWN GATEWAY

*Description:* In order to address the beautification and connectivity of the Highway 92 project to Downtown Douglasville, we recommend developing the portion of Highway 78 (Broad Street) from the old mill site to the core downtown commercial district. This includes implementing aesthetic upgrades and making the route more pedestrian-friendly.

*Scope of Initiative:* This idea is to develop the portion of Highway 78 (E. Broad Street) from the core area in downtown out to the new Highway 92 interchange. We recommend major infill/redevelopment along this portion of this gateway into downtown Douglasville more attractive, vibrant, and pedestrian friendly will help downtown thrive, especially in light of the Highway 92 relocation. Traffic will reduce by an estimated 5,000-6,000 vehicles per day. We feel this traffic shift will have a very positive impact on downtown. Currently, the traffic going through downtown is doing just that...going through. We feel the lightened load will make downtown a welcoming place to shop and dine, creating a destination.

Part of this project would be a redevelopment of the old mill property which is currently in blighted condition and in need of a major cleanup effort and project. There is potential for many different types of developments on this site. A mixed-use development (residential/commercial mix), could be appropriate for the site. A mixed use development would bring more residents to the downtown area as well as additional retail and office/professional. While a mixed use development would be ideal, we understand the costs associated so something like creating a greenspace on the old mill site may be more feasible in the short-term.





*Scope of Initiative Continued:* We also recommend making this stretch of Highway 78 more walkable to downtown in order to create a sense of place. Because of the challenge working around the railroad, we suggest focusing on the north side of Highway 78 for enhanced walkability. This could be accomplished through various sidewalk, lighting, landscaping, and signage projects. One option for signage would be digital signage that could also be used to promote the many events held in the downtown district.

There are several vacant or blighted properties along the target area. We recommend working with property owners to come up with good uses for redevelopment or acquisition by the DDA or city once they have completed other catalyst projects. Expanding the core downtown commercial area outwards on Highway 78 towards the Highway 92 expansion and mill site will tie everything together on this end of town. It will also create more retail and commerce for the downtown area and expand the quality of life aspect that a downtown district brings to a community.

These enhancements could be great tie-ins to the existing downtown commercial core. With some vision and leadership, Broad Street could be a true “main street” in Downtown Douglasville.

## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

*Short-term:* We recommend beginning this initiative by cleaning up the old mill site. If there is anything salvageable on the site that would show some of the history of what was there before, work to stabilize that in order to save some history. The goal would be to make the site visually appealing until redevelopment can occur.

*Medium-term:* The next step could be working on sidewalk/streetscape enhancements and improvements along Highway 78 out from downtown. Seeking funding from GDOT to do streetscape enhancements would also be useful. Proper signage, lighting, and sidewalks may occur together or in phases.

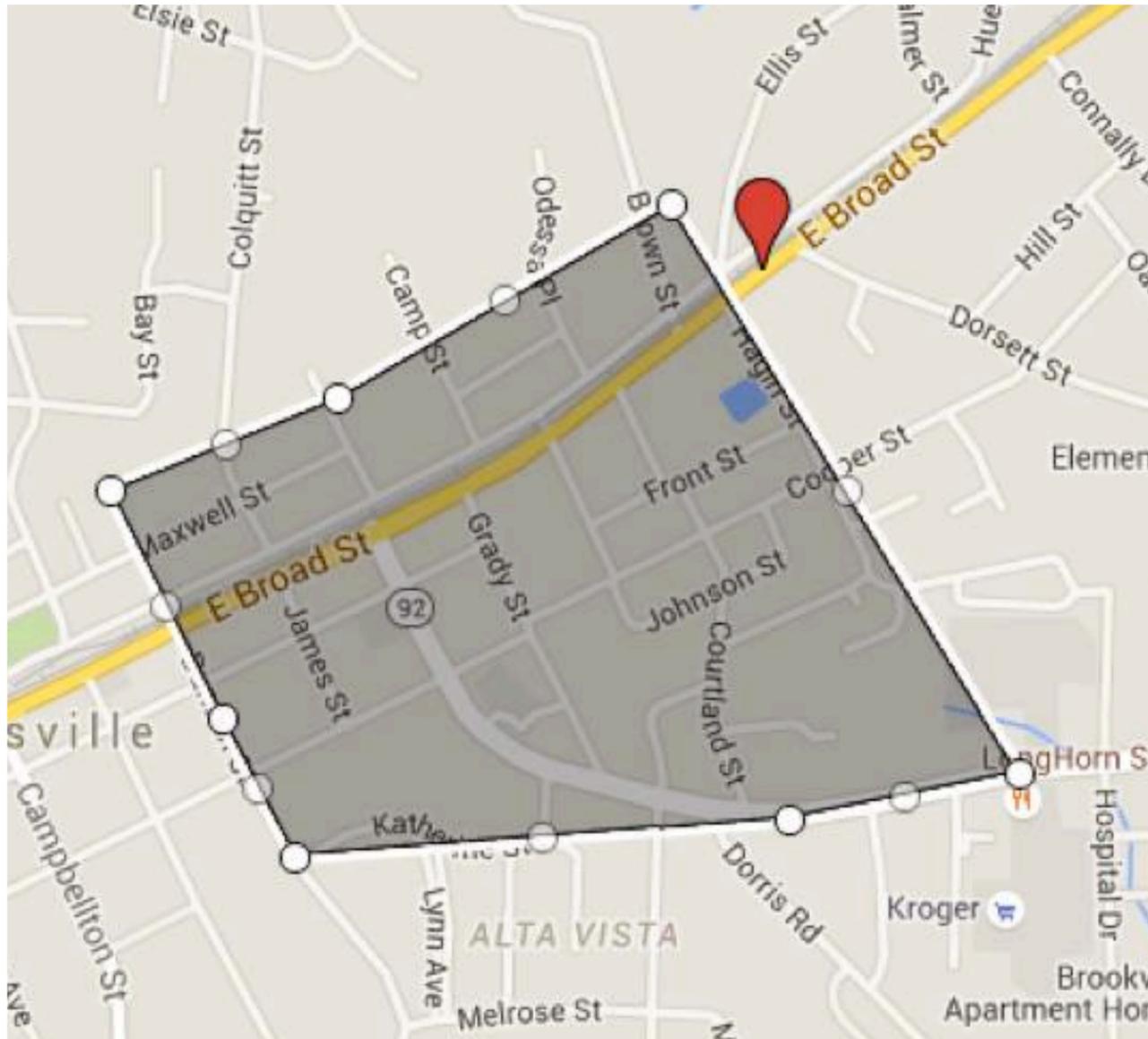
*Long-term:* Finally, the community could work with property owners along this corridor of Highway 78 to create a plan to re-establish vibrant businesses and aesthetically pleasing properties. The community may need to seek out owners of current underdeveloped properties to see if they are interested in redeveloping, selling, or renting in order to fully develop this area incorporate it into downtown.

## BUDGET

We fully recognize that this proposal may be rather costly, particularly depending on the size of the undertaking. Funding sources will also likely impact the feasibility of this initiative. New signage would be the lowest cost piece of this initiative and could be added for around \$20,000 for basic entryway signs into the downtown area. From there costs would escalate. New sidewalks, curbing and other infill could cost around \$600,000 depending on the scope of the undertaking. The project could certainly cost more depending on various factors like moving utilities, size of the improvement area, and features included in the project.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding, Resources and Partnerships:* Mill Site- Brownfield/Grayfield grants from Georgia Environmental Protection Division if the mill needs such funding ([https://epd.georgia.gov/sites/epd.georgia.gov/files/related\\_files/site\\_page/BFTax.pdf](https://epd.georgia.gov/sites/epd.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/BFTax.pdf)); Gateways/Sidewalks- Georgia Transportation Enhancement money for streetscape, signage, etc. Douglasville is very familiar with this program and has worked on it in several other parts of the city (<http://www.dot.ga.gov/IS/Funding/TE>); Department of Community Affairs Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund [DDRLF] (<http://www.dca.state.ga.us/economic/financing/programs/ddrlf.asp> & <http://www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org/LoanFund.aspx>); Historical Projects- Georgia Historic Preservation and Federal Historic Preservation tax credits (<http://georgiashpo.org/incentives/tax>).



## IMPACT & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We believe that this initiative will impact downtown Douglasville by creating a unique look and feel. It will provide a clear entryway into downtown and set the area apart from other parts of town providing it with its own character. This initiative can be measured with the metrics below. Many of these metrics can be used to gauge the overall health of downtown but will also reflect upon the successfulness of implementation of this initiative: timeline for completion; variance from project budget; number of out of town visitors to downtown; percentage of occupied properties in downtown; reduction in the number of blighted properties; miles of new or rehabilitated sidewalks; acres converted to green space; number of new signs.

# TO, NOT THROUGH

BIG IDEA THREE





## TO, NOT THROUGH

*Description:* We propose that downtown set itself up as a place that people come to, not through. Currently, US Highway 92 runs through downtown Douglasville. This, of course, leads to issues with traffic, making changes/improvements, and growth. Downtown Douglasville is a place that a lot of people drive through. The 2013 City of Douglasville Comprehensive Plan highlights the intersections along Highway 92 and E. Broad Street as “severely congested” traffic areas for afternoon traffic (p. 40). With the realignment of Highway 92, downtown will be freed up to make changes, improvements, build out, and eventually “reopen” downtown. In order to make this a place that people visit instead of bypass, we propose putting in anchor institutions to attract visitors, new residents, new businesses, and new developments.

*Scope of Initiative:* The “To, Not Through” initiative is aimed at accomplishing three primary goals: 1) increase the community’s comfort level with potential development downtown by reimagining what downtown Douglasville could offer, 2) generate renewed energy in the downtown area coinciding with the relocation of Highway 92, and 3) develop key downtown anchors that will revitalize and ensure the downtown area’s sustainability into the future.



## SCOPE OF INITIATIVE CONTINUED

In order to accomplish the first two goals, the “To, Not Through” initiative suggests engaging in a robust tactical urbanism campaign that focus on reimagining strategic locations in Downtown Douglasville. Tactical urbanism campaigns typically incorporate low cost campaigns that leverage volunteer and in-kind donations to transform public space. Tactical urbanism generally features the following five characteristics:

A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change; the offering of local solutions for local planning challenges; short-term commitment and realistic expectations; low-risks, with a possibly high reward; and the development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits, and their constituents.

Potential tactical urbanism campaigns in Downtown Douglasville could include transforming the top deck of the downtown parking deck into an oasis park, turning O’Neal Plaza into a gaming room for a day, transforming Church Street into a linear park for a weekend, or hosting a community camp out in O’Neal Plaza to demonstrate the benefits of a residential population in the downtown among others.



To accomplish the long-term, sustainable revitalization of Downtown Douglasville, our proposed anchors take the form of developments that will enhance on-street activity and draw residents of the Douglas County community into the downtown area. Proposed anchor developments include:

- **Mixed-Use Development:** The ideal mixed-use development will focus on attracting new residents to downtown Douglasville. Thus, the mixed-use development will primarily feature market rate rental apartments or condominiums with a small first floor retail or flexible office space component.
- **Boutique Hotel:** While major flag hotels provide a level of comfort to some travelers such as a trusted brand and easy booking, a boutique hotel is the perfect fit for downtown Douglasville. A boutique hotel will not only add the needed hotel component to the downtown area, it will complement the historic charm that downtown Douglasville is known for. If a boutique hotel path was taken, the city would have more leverage to aid in the design of the hotel, historical integrity of the facade, and potential branding going forward.
- **Adaptive Greenspace:** With little available space in the downtown Douglasville area, utilizing the Douglasville Cemetery as a greenspace could transform into an asset for the downtown Douglasville area. The adaptive reuse of the Cemetery will maintain final resting places of those laid to rest at the Cemetery while also engaging in beautification of its green space, and enhancing its walking paths to support all types of activities including walking, running, and biking. Maintaining the dignity and serenity of the cemetery would be crucial while also leveraging the benefits of the greenspace.
- **Higher Education Presence:** Higher education institutions can provide vital institutional support to the revitalization of specific geographic areas. Nearby downtown Atlanta has thrived due to the investments of Georgia State University and downtown Macon is undergoing a renaissance due to the increased presence of Mercer University. As higher education institutions in Douglas County continue to grow, identifying opportunities for partnership could be beneficial to both the institution and the downtown area.

## ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

**Short-term:** Identify strategic locations for a tactical urbanism campaign that “reimagines” Downtown Douglasville’s public space. Partner with local downtown businesses, community organizations, and public sector entities to hold multiple tactical urbanism events. Hold a community wide vote to identify the most impactful tactical urbanism campaign. Begin preparations to transform the most popular campaign into a permanent installation. Identify strategic locations for anchors to be located in or proximate to Downtown Douglasville including, but not limited to, the Old Jail site, the downtown parking deck, the old mill site, and other locations that align with the “mixed-use” zoning designation contained in the City of Douglasville’s 2040 land-use plan. Begin discussions with higher education institutions to determine the feasibility of locating a facility or student housing in an “anchor” site. Begin site planning and preparation of adaptive re-use of the Douglasville Cemetery. Develop a plan of action from the forthcoming hotel feasibility study.

**Medium-term:** Aligning with the Highway 92 relocation grand opening, unveil permanent tactical urbanism installation to the community. Begin discussions with the private development community to determine interest for an anchor development in Downtown Douglasville including, but not limited to, a mixed-use development. Identify and reduce barriers to development on selected anchor sites, including establishing expedited permitting protocols for desirable anchor development. At the city and county government’s discretion, identify and address challenges associated with the old jail site. Finalize adaptive re-use of the Douglasville Cemetery and establish creative programming that leverages its history to tell Douglasville’s story.

**Long-term:** Issue and evaluate Requests for Proposals from the development community for a mixed-use development located on an “anchor” site located in or proximate to Downtown Douglasville. At the city and county government’s discretion, begin site preparation work of the old jail site for potential development. Begin site preparation work of alternative anchor sites.



## BUDGET

*Mixed use space:* This will vary depending on several factors such as: size of development, location, quality of furniture, fixtures, and equipment, and the re-purpose an existing structure versus a new build. The cost of a development will likely be in the range of \$100 - \$250/ square foot.

*Boutique Hotel:* Hotels costs can vary widely based on the same factors listed above. Building a new hotel will likely be in the range of \$450 - \$700/ square foot.

*Adaptive Greenspace:* Minor upgrades like park benches and signage could be added for a cost as low as \$15,000. Costs would rise from that depending on the scope of the upgrades.

*Higher Education Presence:* This initiative consists mainly of partnering with institutions of higher learning in an effort to get these organizations to use their own dollars for development. So this initiative would not necessarily cost anything unless Douglasville/ Douglas County decided to enter into some sort of split-funding arrangement.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding, Resources and Partnerships:* All of the proposed initiatives could be funded through some of the following avenues: Tax abatements - Local governments in Douglasville and Douglas County could put together a tax abatement plan for new businesses moving into the downtown area. The Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Georgia Department of Revenue may also be useful in providing state tax abatements for business owners; Tax Allocation District/ Community Improvement District - State legislators could be useful with this source because it may require approval from the General Assembly. Other communities, like Gwinnett County, have implemented such funding and therefore may be able to provide some insight and resources on their experiences with such funding; SPLOST referendum - Local governments could be used as a resource to assist with the process of adding a referendum to a ballot.

The following funding sources rely on a local, concerted effort to raise funds in Douglas County.

Community leaders and other organizations like the DDA or the Chamber of Commerce could coordinate the fundraising efforts where the funds go to a community foundation in a philanthropic manner: Funding from individuals; Funding from private entrepreneurs; Funding by institutions of higher learning; Grants and donations from local industries.

Developing partnerships throughout the community among various organizations and businesses will be beneficial for this initiative because communities tend to accomplish more when everyone works together. This cohesion helps grow strong relationships and networks that yield individuals who can tackle the initiatives laid out above. Because some of the funding sources require state legislative approval, involving key legislators could be very beneficial. Also seeking partnerships with higher education institutions could be useful.



## IMPACT & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Percent growth of the City of Douglasville population.
- Percent of total City of Douglasville population living in Downtown Douglasville.
- Percent of total City of Douglasville population aged 25 to 44.
- Percent growth in sales tax revenue from Downtown Douglasville businesses.
- Percent growth in property taxes generated by Downtown Douglasville properties.
- New capital investment and development expenditures in Downtown Douglasville.
- Increased foot traffic in Downtown Douglasville.
- Increased customer traffic in Downtown Douglasville.
- Average attendance of community events in Downtown Douglasville.
- Number of hotel rooms booked in Downtown Douglasville.
- Average annual travelers visiting Downtown Douglasville.
- Number of tactical urbanism campaigns held in Downtown Douglasville.

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We would like to thank the following people for graciously welcoming us to Douglasville and providing invaluable information.

SHARON BROWN, Downtown Douglasville business owner

COLLIN CASH, Douglas County Tourism

LISA COOPER, Douglas County Museum

DOUGLASVILLE CONFERENCE CENTER

LAJUAN GRACE, Downtown Douglasville business owner

MARCIA HAMPTON, City of Douglasville

NEIL JENKINS, Irish Bred Pub and Restaurant

BARRY OLIVER, Downtown Douglasville business owner and DDA Vice Chair

SHANDRON PEMBERTON, DDA and owner POSolutions, Inc.

PATTI H. PUCKETT, Ameriprise Financial

GORDON PRITZ, Douglas County Schools

JOHN SELL, Georgia Power

KRISTEN TATE, Douglasville Welcome Center

PATRICE WILLIAMS, City of Douglasville

MICHELLE WRIGHT, City of Douglasville

BRITTANY WYATT, Irish Bred Pub and Restaurant

# SECTION 3

“What can the community do, outside of the school system, to enhance the educational opportunities of Douglas County students to prepare them for the jobs of the next century?”

## OPPORTUNITY TOMORROW

—  
EDUCATION

# OPPORTUNITY TOMORROW

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**JESSICA AINSWORTH**

Assistant Director of Assessment, Douglas County School System  
Villa Rica, Georgia

**MANDI CODY**

City Manager, City of Metter  
Metter, Georgia

**KATE COFFEY**

Investor Engagement, Georgia Chamber of Commerce  
Atlanta, Georgia

**ALVIN HUFF**

Economic Development Project Manager, City of Marietta  
Marietta, Georgia

**AMANDA MATEO**

Scheduling Supervisor, American Red Cross  
Douglasville, Georgia

**Laurie Murrah-Hanson**

Program Coordinator, Georgia 4-H & Great Promise Partnership  
Atlanta, Georgia

**CHRISTOPHER G. PIKE**

Main Street Manager, City of Villa Rica  
Villa Rica, Georgia

**CHRIS TSAVATEWA**

Assistant Professor of Health Administration; Director of the Office of Experiential Learning,  
Middle Georgia State University  
Macon, Georgia

**HALEY WATSON**

Executive Director, Main Street Gray  
Gray, Georgia

**KENITA WILLIAMS**

Partnership Manager, Atlanta Public Schools  
Atlanta, Georgia

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Created in the year 1870, Douglas County can be considered one of the hidden jewels in the state of Georgia. With its rich history, proud citizens and unique location, Douglas county is primed to be to be a major aerotropolis and economic driver for the region. Yet, like most major urban locales across the country, the County is not without its troubles, with poverty and joblessness being among the leading concerns. Looking towards the future, a key component to addressing these issues is better preparing students with the skills that employers need.

Such an effort requires an intentional strategy that the Douglas County school system cannot accomplish alone. Research has shown that isolated-impact approaches (efforts by one organization to solve a complex problem using a single method) are not effective (McNall et al., 2015). Furthermore, for today's student to access the jobs of the 21st century, it is evident that education cannot stop upon completion of high school and may restart numerous times during his/her life. It is then necessary to address education across a lifetime and not exclusively within the framework of PK-12.

As such, we offer the following three recommendations: a) the creation of an interactive, STEM focused learning space aka the Exploratorium, b) addressing barriers to access of post-secondary institutions, and c) a manufacturing incubator. With the focus on lifelong learning, recommendations serve to enable the student as he/she grows within the workforce.

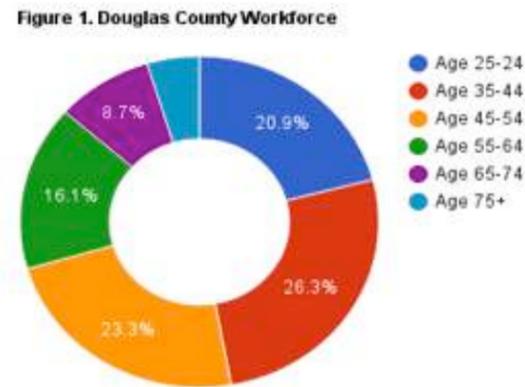
The recent influx of new high-tech employers such as Google and Keurig require a workforce with a background of science and technology. While specific companies and technologies may rise and fall in the 21st century, the goal is to excite students about an industry that is likely to thrive. The Exploratorium would serve as a "hands on", interactive learning space to excite a young student's natural curiosity and problem solving skills.

While this emphasis on science and technology will appeal to a portion of young students, a greater difficulty currently lies in enabling nontraditional students to continue their education to sharpen their skills or pursue new fields by pursuing their GED or attending technical college. They have greater obligations and responsibilities and, in turn, greater impediments to furthering their education. As such, DC Ready would serve to strengthen the relationships between area service providers to lower the barriers for student workers looking to learn new skills.

As the student/worker's skills progress, he/she may wish to transition from employee to employer. The manufacturing incubator would be there to assist him/her with this transition. Via community partnerships, an entrepreneur would be able to utilize shared equipment and receive training in business management to turn their idea into a reality.

## INTRODUCTION

Today Douglas County has a mix of a variety of industries, such as advanced manufacturing, back office, data processing, life sciences, logistics, headquarters, and technical services. The Douglas County area experienced significant growth. It has an approximate population of 136,400 and a projected population of 216,700 by 2025. As a suburb of metro Atlanta and close proximity to world's largest airport, Douglas County is a prime location for businesses and workforce. Douglas County has a balanced workforce as shown by Figure 1.



The balance of workforce creates an opportunity for potential and current labor. Current school-age residents have access to five high schools each with a different magnet program, college and career academy, charter school, and other private schools. The 2015 Douglas County high school graduation rate was 88.19% (Douglas County School System, 2016). Once a high school student graduates, Douglas County houses or is in close proximity to several colleges and technical schools including West Georgia Technical College, Georgia Highlands College, Mercer University, and the University of West Georgia. In 2015 the Georgia Department of Labor published an unemployment rate for Douglas County as 6.2%. While the graduation rate is high and the unemployment rate is low, the 2015-2016 free/reduced lunch rate for the Douglas County School System is 61.74% (Douglas County School System, 2016). This rate is a signal of the under or unemployed needs in Douglas County. The Department of Labor and the Atlanta Regional Commission work collaboratively to promote work placement and underemployed citizens of Douglas County. Both have offices located in the downtown Douglasville area.

Through the Northwest Georgia Region of Hope project, a survey was completed regarding community needs. The top ten primary areas of perceived concerns in Douglas County are (1) poverty (2) youth aggression/bullying (3) availability of jobs (4) youth going to jail (5) adults going to jail (6) youths having unprotected sex (7) access to public transportation (8) youth leaving school before graduation (9) access to recreational activities (10) youth alcohol and substance abuse. According to the survey:

- 68% stated the overall strength of our community is good, very good, or excellent.
- 80% stated I feel connected to the community.
- 75% stated I know where to go to access to the programs, services, and supports my family needs.
- 81% stated the program, services, and supports my family needs are available in our community.
- 72% stated the next time I need help, I could go to my family or friends.
- 17% stated the next time I need help, I have no one to go to.

The Metro Atlanta Equity Atlas published a heat map of the metro Atlanta areas with households who have an income less than \$40,000. There are large portions located in downtown Douglasville, in the east area of the county and extreme south of the county who have low incomes. Another report by the organization, rates Douglas County as 10-15% of its residents are below the poverty line and 10-20% of the Douglas County children are living in poverty.

### SWOT ANALYSIS

#### STRENGTHS

- Several colleges and technical schools in close proximity to the county
- Variety of industries available
- High percentage of high school graduates
- STEM initiatives included in K-12 public schools

#### WEAKNESSES

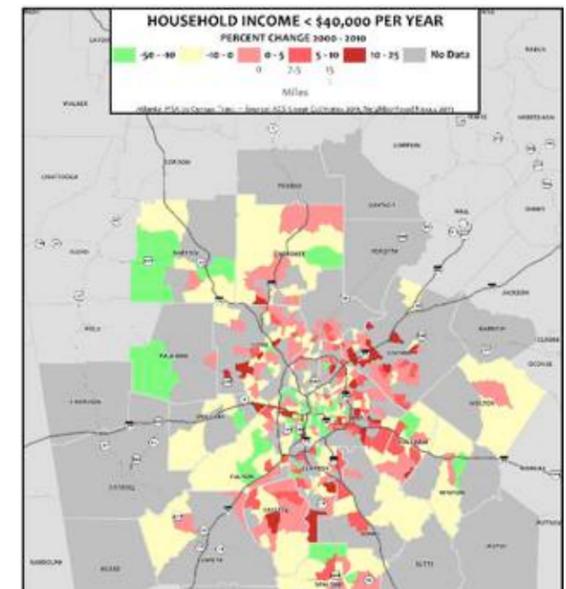
- High free/reduced lunch rate
- Some lack of knowledge from citizens regarding where to access programs

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Balanced workforce
- Strength of community

#### THREATS

- Low income families are distributed throughout the county
- Growing population with growing needs



Currently, Douglas County is host to numerous nonprofits and businesses with a common purpose for the betterment of the residents. Literacy and Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) have been two focus areas between the Douglas County School system and other organizations in and around Douglas County. Research have shown early literacy rates are strong predictors of post-high school successes. The Douglas County Georgia Public Library Service works collaboratively with the school system and residents for annual literacy events and summer reading programs. STEM careers continue to be on the rise in the United States. Although these careers are increasing, a gender and minority gap exists in STEM careers. Early career exploration is important to expose students to a variety of potential careers. The Douglas County School system boosts many STEM partnerships to support their students, such as the annual Google Gravity Games, Georgia Institute of Technology mentoring, Code.org initiative, and a state certified STEM magnet program at Lithia Springs High School.

# DOUGLAS EXPLORATORIUM

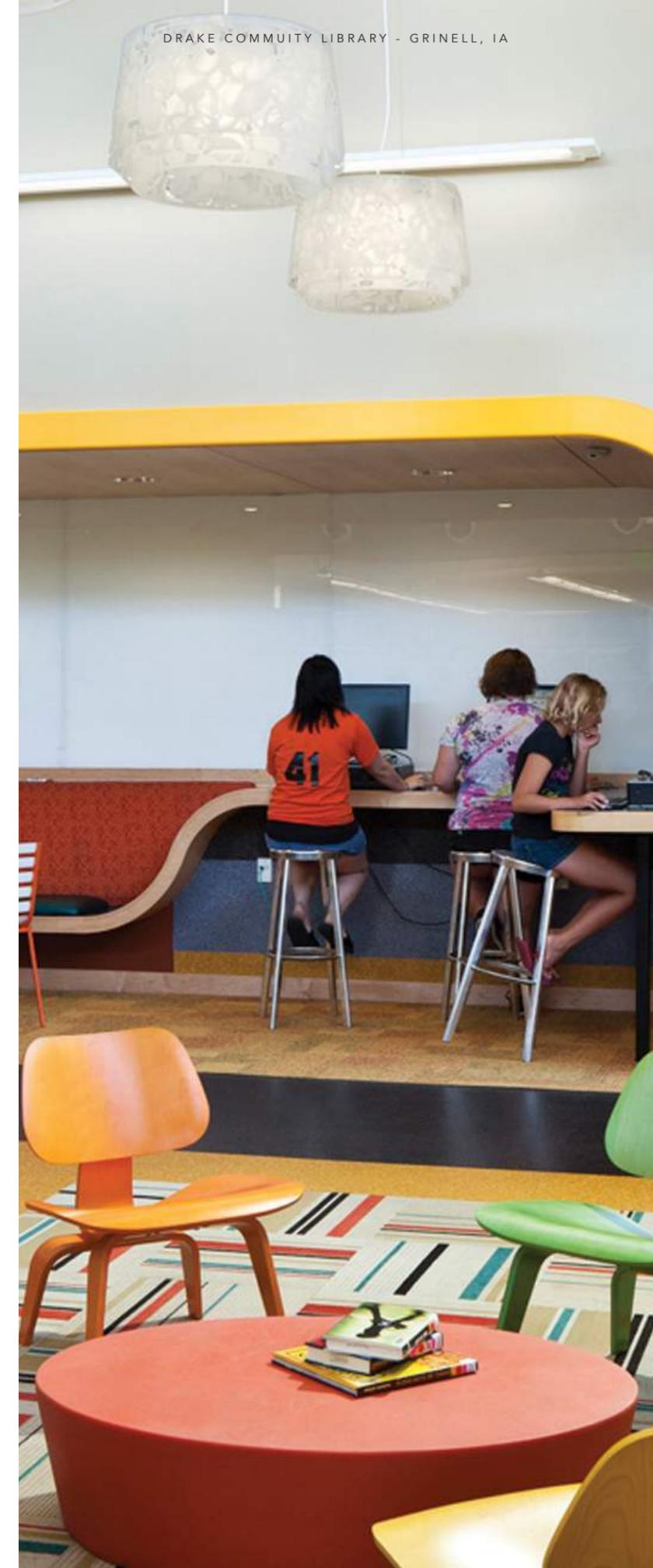
## BIG IDEA ONE

### DOUGLAS EXPLORATORIUM

*Description:* To create a space where extraordinary learning experiences across science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields can occur that have the power to transform the lives of children, families, and their communities. Whether it is called an innovation lab, fablab, creative space, incubator, learning commons, or STEM center, with the help of community partners, volunteers, parents, and educators - this space can offer an extraordinary visitor experiences through unique programming and engagement opportunities.

*Scope of Initiative:* One of the nation's most well documented educational shortcomings and challenges has been the obstacle associated with increasing the number of students who are interested in and pursue a career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, the STEM fields.

Even with the growing public interest and support for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education across the country, research continues to show that students in the United States perpetually lag behind other countries in mathematics and science (Kuenzi 2008). Furthermore, the declining levels of mathematics and science proficiency observed between the 4th and 12th grades undermine student's ability to succeed in future postsecondary STEM education and leaving them unprepared for expanding STEM Careers (Kuenzi 2008).



*Scope of Initiative Continued:* A recent report from the National Math + Science Initiative (NMSI, 2014) revealed the following statistics:

- Only 44% of 2013 US high school graduates were ready for college-level math.
- Only 35% of 2013 US high school graduates were ready for college-level science.
- Students who progress through at least Algebra II in high school are twice as likely as those who do not to complete a four-year degree.
- 38% of students who start post-secondary education with a STEM major do NOT graduate with one.
- In 2008, 31% of US bachelor's degrees were awarded in science and engineering fields compared to 61% in Japan and 51% in China.
- By 2018, 92% of traditional STEM jobs will be for those with at least some postsecondary education and training.
- Close to two-thirds of STEM job openings will be for those with Bachelor's degrees and above (65%).
- Only 23% of STEM workers are women, however women make up 48% of workers in all occupations.
- Only 12% of STEM workers are non-Hispanic black and Hispanic, but these individuals account for 25% of overall employment.

In response to this issue, various organizations across Georgia including the State Board of Education and the University System of Georgia are tackling this problem from a number of fronts as they recognize that STEM competency plays a critical role in preparing the state's future workforce for employment in what has been recognized as an increasingly technical world where critical thinking and problem solving skills are enhanced through discovery and exploration.

Current Georgia projects, like the University System of Georgia STEM initiative and STEM Georgia, are working aggressively with K-12 partners and broad industry partners to increase the number of K-12 students who are prepared for and are interested in majoring in STEM disciplines in college, increase the number of qualified K-12 STEM teachers, and increase the number STEM certified schools. To that end, our recommendation is focused on introducing students to STEM concepts earlier and keeping STEM students from dropping out of the STEM talent pipeline by capitalizing on the values and successes, achieve their goals, rather than staying within one specialty.

This phased approach eventually resulting in a higher order traditional museum concept married with a contemporary center and pre-school experiential /immersion classroom allows for modular project development over several years, expanding and responding to partnership opportunities, sector needs, and funding opportunities. This concept allows Douglas County to bridge the gap between educational space and exhibit, creates a comfortable space for strangers and partners to interact, empowers visitors, engages families earlier and together, creates meaningful and memorable experiences tied to existing STEM considerations and workforce development needs, encourages collaboration, provides a space that is not a static, and creates a community of regulars. A purposeful space can have multi-use value examples include: (1) rental space for performing arts (2) graduation (3) non-profit after-school programming (4) summer camps (5) and much more.



## ACTION STEPS

1. Comprehensive stakeholder analysis.
2. Expandable space analysis study.
  3. Flexible funding model.
4. Interdisciplinary programming strategy.
5. Long Range full strategic plan.

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Begin immediate yet interim/pilot partnership/shared space approach. Pursue strategic industry partnerships focused on programming alignment.

*Medium-term:* Pursue funding and begin space review for either larger shared space or unique space.

*Long-term:* Entertain educational partnerships (pre-K; schools and colleges). Explore dynamic museum rotational curation.



## BUDGET

### *Short-term:* Approach/Phase 1 - Shared Space Approach:

Small, teaching-only space (500 to 3,000 square feet) with a small number of instructors (1-10 people) that is sustainable by requiring relatively little infrastructure or full-time staff. Estimated Initial Capital Investment and Start-up Cost: \$50,000. Estimated Annual Cost: \$12,000-72,000.

### *Medium-term:* Approach/Phase 2 - Dedicated Space Approach:

Small, volunteer-run community (10-80 active members) that occasionally teach classes, share some amount of tools and space, and pay rent on a 3,000 to 8,000 square foot space with relatively low membership fees. Estimated Initial Capital Investment and Start-up Cost: \$130,000. Estimated Annual Cost: \$72,000-\$192,000.

### *Long-term:* Approach/Phase 3 - Expanded Dedicated Space Approach:

Large (8,000 to 40,000+ square feet) community workshop usually featuring educational programs, membership access to shared tools/workspace, and featuring storage or production rental space. Estimated Initial Capital Investment and Start-up Cost: \$1.5 million. Estimated Annual Cost: \$192,000-\$960,000.

### *Long-term+:* Approach/Phase 4 - Integrated STEAM Museum and Educational Partnership:

Very large (40,000 to 150,000+ square feet) community development facility intended to support a broad strategy for experiential learning. This model would include not only a membership network, but paid staff, aspects of Approach/Phase 3, and a Pre-School Immersion Classroom. Estimated Initial Capital Investment and Start-up Cost: \$4.5 million. Estimated Annual Cost: \$960,000-\$3,600,000.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING

*Memberships:* Memberships are considered to be one of the most common sources of funding. Memberships could be a single membership rate or a sliding scale based on use, need and income. Typical membership rates vary anywhere from \$40 per month for a small starting membership up to \$175 per month for a larger more advanced individual with more space requirements and equipment demands.

*Rentals:* Studio rental space and special event rentals could provide a substantial source of income. Listed studio space or storage unit space could be offered at a nominal monthly rate. Studio and/or storage space could be offered in 50, 100, 200, 250 sq ft studios: \$2/sq. ft/month

*Classes/Workshops/Camps:* Special topic workshops and classes offered to members and the public could be a substantial source of revenue. Similar facilities derive 60% of their revenue from workshops: Summer Camps - \$100-\$175 per week/per student; open Makers Night - \$30 to \$175; after School Care - \$50-\$175 per week/per student; specialty Skills Classes - \$10 to \$30/student-hour per classes.

*Field Trips/Group Tours:* Specially designed workshops and programs could be offered to school groups, out-of-school programs, clubs, civic organizations, community centers, libraries, and more. Groups could visit the facility or special traveling programs could be developed for in classroom or onsite instructional opportunities. Tours offered at \$8 per child with special discounts given to Title I Schools.

*Grants:* There are several national and local competitive grants offered by private sector foundations, businesses and nonprofit organizations. Public sector grants tend to require a more complicated applications process but are more readily available: Georgia Technology Authority (GTA); 21st Century; Community Learning Center Grant; Community Development Block Grant (Georgia Department of Community Affairs); Atlanta Regional Commission; Innovative Education State Grant; US Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration; US Department of Education

*Crowdfunding:* Crowdfunding is a great way to fund specific equipment, needs and projects within the facility.

*Local Corporate Support:* Corporate entities located within the city have a vested interest in the community desire to provide support, improve school programs, and want to contribute to a more productive and educated workforce. This may include: Georgia Power, Google Community Grants for Douglas County, Ga., GreyStone, and Georgia Power.

*City/County Government/School System:* Due to the economic development potential of the, many local governments throughout the country are finding it beneficial to invest in projects for workforce education development. Funding could include Facility/Space Donation, SPLOST, General Fund, and ESPLOST.

## POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS & EXPECTED IMPACT

*Partnerships:* Boys & Girls Club; School System; GreyStone; WellStar; Georgia Power; City Government; County Government; Google; WSB-TV/ TV Stations; Newspapers of West Georgia.

*Impact:* The Douglas County Exploratorium will serve as a catalyst for shared community exploration and engagement. The Center will help to foster open dialogue, collective contribution, and multi-level collaboration. The Exploratorium will not only serve as a center for education innovation but also facilitate entrepreneurial excellence.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

In Georgia, STEM education is defined as an integrated curriculum (as opposed to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics taught in isolation) that is driven by problem-solving, discovery, exploratory project/problem based learning, and student-centered development of ideas and solutions.

The proposed Center for Learning and Discovery and potential off shoots anticipates integrated programming confidently structured to make an impact on not only the individual served but the community and economy as a whole. In order to achieve that, the Center must ascribe to a vision of achievement and impact. It is well documented that a set of outcomes and indicators around STEM education help provide a common framework and language for programs activities and organizational strategy. An example of such consensus measures can be seen in the following recommendations of the After-school Alliance (2013), representing not only outcomes that are achievable in STEM programs but are supported by research in youth development and learning.

Outcomes represent the major developmental impacts on young people with respect to STEM learning.

Their 2013 study, suggests that after-school providers and supporters believe after-school STEM programs can support young people to: Develop interest in STEM and STEM learning activities; develop capacities to productively engage in STEM learning activities; come to value the goals of STEM and STEM learning activities.

Indicators are the concrete ways that young people demonstrate progress toward the intended program outcomes with respect to STEM learning. According to the study results, after-school providers and supporters believe that after-school programs may be best positioned, in the following rank order, to support and expand young people's: Active participation in STEM learning opportunities, curiosity about STEM topics, concepts or practices; ability to productively engage in STEM processes of investigation; awareness of STEM professions; ability to exercise STEM-relevant life and career skills; understanding the value of STEM in society.



*Measures of Success Continued:* The sub-indicators represent specific, measurable dimensions of the indicators. Study results indicate the after-school providers and supporters have a confidence that STEM after-school programs are well positioned to support and expand young people's: Active engagement and focus in STEM learning activities; demonstration of ability to work in teams to conduct STEM investigations; active inquiries into STEM topics, concepts or practices; development of an understanding of the variety of STEM careers related to different fields of study.

The following three goals developed by the National Research Council (2011) with regards to STEM education not only “reflect the types of intellectual capital needed for the nation's growth and development in an increasingly science and technology driven world” but are essential in the training of a capable workforce and a STEM literate populous.

- Goal 1: Expand the number of students who ultimately pursue advanced degrees and careers in STEM fields and broaden the participation of women and minorities in those fields.
- Goal 2: Expand the STEM-capable workforce and broaden the participation of women and minorities in that workforce.
- Goal 3: Increase STEM literacy for all students, including those who do not pursue STEM-related careers or additional study in the STEM disciplines.

In Georgia the University System of Georgia's STEM initiative has worked aggressively K-12 partners and various USG institutions in alignment with the aforementioned goals and increase: The number of K-12 students who are prepared for and are interested in majoring in STEM disciplines in college; the success and completion rates of college students majoring in STEM disciplines; and the number of qualified K-12 STEM teachers.

# DC READY

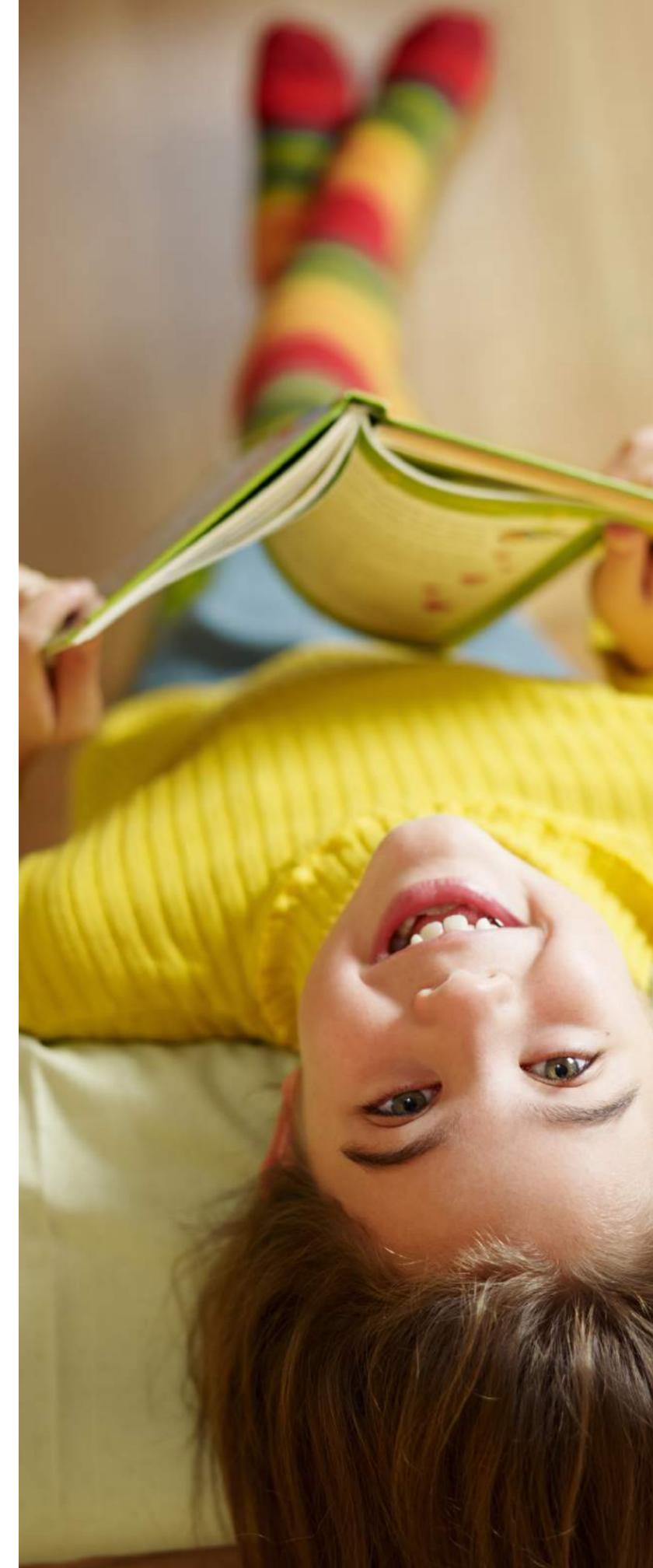
## BIG IDEA TWO

### DC READY

*Description:* Create a workforce development alliance between workforce development organizations, the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, the Douglas County School System, and local employers focused on enhancing work readiness and reducing barriers to employability for students, recent graduates, underemployed, and unemployed Douglas County citizens.

*Scope of Initiative:* The future is bright for the metro-Atlanta area as the region continues its economic recovery supported by continued population growth and an improving housing market (Humphreys, 2015). Statewide graduation rates continue to improve. The state's graduation rate increased 6.3% in 2014, the fourth straight year of improvement (Georgia Department of Education, 2015). However, Georgia employers continue to struggle to find a qualified workforce to replace aging, retiring workers (Bluestein & Davis, 2014). According to the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education, Georgia will add 15 million new jobs by 2020, and 60% of those jobs will require some sort of education after high school. However, only 42% of Georgians currently have some sort of post-secondary education or training (Rickman, 2013).

Although Georgia's graduation rates are improving, we still lag behind a majority of the nation. Graduation rates for African-American students, students with disabilities, students for whom English is a second language, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students continue to lag behind those of their peers (U.S. Department of Education as cited in Governing, 2013).



## SCOPE OF INITIATIVE CONTINUED

Employers cite a lack of skilled workers in specific sectors, along with a general lack of “soft skills” including effective communication and problem solving (Bluestein & Davis, 2014). The Governor’s High Demand Career Initiative Report identified several specific sectors including mechanical engineering, welding, software development, computer programming, and manufacturing that are in particular need.

The Governor’s High Demand Career Initiative report highlighted important, emerging trends in the state: Georgia’s workforce is aging; internships, co-ops, and on the job training are effective tools to identify and train future employers; soft skills are crucial and many younger workers are deficient in these areas; employees should be “work ready” and proficient in reading, numeracy, and writing; STEM should be introduced at a younger age; Georgia has a shortage of skilled trades workers; partnerships with educational institutions including local boards of education, University System of Georgia, and the Technical College System of Georgia are very productive; Georgia’s STEM workforce needs more diversity.

Our group noticed the absence of an education committee within the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce. Rather, their focus is on workforce development. Many Chambers across the state have now implemented education committees in order to better align the work of the education and private sectors within their communities.

For example, the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC) adamantly believes that economic success of the region is inextricably linked to the health and success of the public education system. To that end, MAC formed an education committee comprised of representatives from local corporations all committed to using the business community as a lever to bolster student achieve and improve schools. By partnering directly with the regions superintendents, as well as other key education stakeholders and champions, the committee is able to identify and tackle key focus areas, in both education policy and practice, to improve outcomes for students in the 15 school systems in the Metro Atlanta area.

Additionally, though the education committee is focused on the region, MAC has had a specific partnership with Atlanta Public Schools (APS) through its Atlanta Partners for Education (APFE) program for more than 30 years. APFE is consortium of more than 300 businesses that partner with APS schools to offer support and help the district carry out its mission of ensuring that every APS student will graduate ready for college and career.

Alternatively, we have seen that many Chambers of Commerce have opted for a hybrid model that combines education with workforce development to form an “educated workforce” committee. These types of committees seek to improve the rapport and collaboration between the business and education communities to foster student attainment and outcomes with the eventual goal of well-trained, work-ready workforce for the local business communities.



*Scope of Initiative Continued:* In order to address the challenges outline above, we propose the creation of a Douglas County education and workforce development committee (henceforth referred to as “DC Ready”). This committee would increase communication between the local school system, employers, institutes of higher education, local government, and nonprofit organizations. DC Ready will continually scan the local environment for challenges and opportunities and develop initiatives to prepare Douglas County youth to enter post-secondary education, training, and/or the workforce. The committee will become experts on and inform local policy decisions on issues regarding education and workforce development. Issues will include workforce development preparation, PK-12 education reform (public and private), post-secondary education, career/technical education, and identification of critical skills necessary for employment in local careers.

DC Ready will bridge the gap between businesses, the local school system, nonprofit organizations, and local government through business partnerships (i.e. job shadowing experiences, interviewing preparation, mentoring, CTAE pathways, and sponsorships). Of particular focus for the committee will be business recruitment, job skills training, youth development, online learning programs, public communications, community literacy, and a mobile career center.



*Scope of Initiative Continued:* DC Ready will bridge the gap between businesses, the local school system, nonprofit organizations, and local government through business partnerships (i.e. job shadowing experiences, interviewing preparation, mentoring, CTAE pathways, and sponsorships). Of particular focus for the committee will be business recruitment, job skills training, youth development, online learning programs, public communications, community literacy, and a mobile career center.

The mobile career center will be the first main initiative of DC Ready. The mobile career center would target citizens characterized by early childhood, current students, underemployed, and unemployed.

Transportation and access to services in Douglas County creates barriers for residents. Currently, the Department of Labor and Atlanta Regional Commission office are located in Downtown Douglasville. Based on the county's free and reduced lunch rates per school, there are pockets of Douglas County which would benefit from workforce development. These areas are not in close proximity to the Downtown area, thus access is a concern. We are proposing a mobile support model. This will allow the Department of Labor, Atlanta Regional Commission, Chamber of Douglas County, Workforce Development Authority, United Way, Douglas County School System, and other profit/non-profit organizations to go to communities and provide on-site support, resources, and information. This type of community partnership is used in several California towns (Community Partnerships of San Joaquin, 2016; Rim Family Services, 2016). One is sponsored by Kasier Permanente (Community Partnerships of San Joaquin, 2016). A similar model, used mostly to target young students and their parents, is used in Mississippi called Excel by 5 (Excel, 2016).

The proposed model would directly support data collected from Northwest Georgia Region of Hope project (Community of Hope, 2016). The mobile career center would bring activities to students, mini-library, parent coaching, career readiness information, job training/coaching, job preparation, job application processes, GED, social services, and other support tools. Through building relationships with

## ACTION STEPS

1. Create DC Ready Committee/Board - The DC Ready Board will provide the overall vision and leadership for the program. This committee will direct policy and actions of members within the committee on issues that affect education and workforce development. The composition of the board should include individuals from the Douglas County School System, Douglas County Chamber of Commerce, local institutes of higher education (including West Georgia Technical College), local city and county government, local employers, and representatives from community partner organizations and agencies including the Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Department of Labor.
2. Investigate funding sources.
3. Development long/short term plan.
  4. Hire staff.
  5. Purchase mobile career center.

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Determine which organization and/or individual who will coordinate committee formation (ex. Chamber of Commerce) and act as a backbone organization for the effort; identify individuals, organizations, and programs to target for membership; investigate funding sources; choose committee leadership; identify and choose committee members.

*Medium-term:* Conduct first meeting of the board; solidify committee's vision for DC Ready; determine committee's specific goals and objectives to implement DC Ready; schedule future committee meetings (bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.); develop sub-committees as needed for data collection, etc.; collect community data to inform objective implementation; SWOT analysis; continue to pursue funding sources.

*Long-term:* Finalize strategic plan based on committee's goals and objectives; identify geographic areas of need; hire and train staff; purchase mobile career center; begin implementing mobile programs.

## BUDGET

*Mobile DC Ready Vehicle or Trailer:* \$100,000

*Mobile DC Ready Branding and Remodel of space:* \$50,000

*Parent and Student Resources (Technology and books):* \$150,000

Total initial start-up: \$300,000. Annual cost: \$500,000 for job trainer(s), advertising, mobile center upkeep, online program maintenance, community literacy program.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* The Georgia Vision Project, which helps promote partnerships in local communities between local businesses and educational and human service organizations. Currently, the organization has a campaign called “Spark.” Spark brings awareness of the importance of a parent’s involvement in a student’ educational experience. Resources are provided include a campaign toolkit; Atlanta Regional Commission; grants: Community Development Block Grant (Georgia Department of Community Affairs); Appalachian Regional Commission; US Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration; US Department of Education; County Government; Corporate Sponsorships; local employers; private donations.

*Partnerships:* Department of Labor; Department of Community Affairs; Atlanta Regional Commission; West Georgia Technical; Douglas County School System; American Red Cross; Google; Workforce Development.

## IMPACT & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We expect to positively impact the community in several ways:

- Increase the literacy rate of students in economically disadvantaged areas
- Increase school readiness of students in economically disadvantaged areas
- Increase parents ability to assist with their child’s academic requirements
  - Increase job readiness skills
  - Increase employment rate
  - Decrease underemployment rate

*Measures of Success:* Trend data will be collected using four areas: demographics, perception, process, and achievement. Demographic data will include free/reduced lunch rates, median income, and target areas. Surveys will be used to collect perception data from parents of students in economically disadvantaged areas. The types and attendance to activities/classes will measure processes. Last, achievement data will be collected through the school system on standardized testing and graduate rate in the identified areas.

# INCUBATOR SPACE

BIG IDEA THREE





THE GROVE COLLABORATIVE SPACE - DALLAS, TX

## INCUBATOR SPACE

*Description:* To create a manufacturing incubator space with a fabrication laboratory to inspire and equip manufacturing innovation and entrepreneurial activity. The ability to access fabrication tools and facilities can be very difficult for a single startup but shared services will provide affordable and usable resources for small businesses. This will allow entrepreneurs to come together within an incubator space and collaborate among manufacturers.

*Scope of Initiative:* The manufacturing incubator space would be established as a partnership between West Georgia Technical College and Mercer University. West Georgia Technical College would provide the machinery donated by businesses in the community. Mercer University would teach business classes on soft skills and leadership skills. The space would be open to the community for tours as well as school field trips. It would also have a shared office space where businesses can rent desks and gain access to conference rooms, printers, and other amenities. There is a large potential to partner with the maker's space and also potential to create a niche incubator space for the film industry to build off of television and film production already taking place in Douglas County and Georgia's tax credits for this industry. The incubator space will benefit emerging and expanding manufacturers by enabling them to develop new partnerships with local businesses, colleges and universities, and the school system.

CO+HOOTS - PHOENIX, AZ



## ACTION STEPS

1. Identify and obtain commitment of partners in secondary education and local government.
2. Identify appropriate location (review downtown area)
3. Seek grant applications from EDA and One Georgia
4. Dedicate funding sources for continued operations

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Initiative could begin immediately; EDA and One Georgia have revolving deadlines for funding opportunities; identify organizations and programs to target for funding.

*Medium-term:* Identify vacant spaces/potential sites that can support weight and safety requirements of equipment; identify team of individuals to serve as incubator management; pursue funding opportunities with identified organizations and programs.

*Long-term:* Integrate incubator into community culture by exploiting relationships with existing businesses in the community; share success stories with media outlets to further perpetuate the space's use and popularity.

## BUDGET

*Initial Capital Investment and Start-up Cost:* \$3 million (less if utilize former jail building and property acquisition is not required).

*Estimated Annual Cost:* \$300,000 for Facilitator; Support Services; and continued machinery upgrades

## FUNDING, RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* The Georgia Vision Project, which helps promote partnerships in local communities between local businesses and educational and human service organizations. Currently, the organization has a campaign called “Spark.” Spark brings awareness of the importance of a parent’s involvement in a student’ educational experience. Resources are provided include a campaign toolkit; Atlanta Regional Commission; grants: Community Development Block Grant (Georgia Department of Community Affairs), Appalachian Regional Commission, US Department of Labor - Employment and Training Administration, US Department of Education; County Government; Corporate Sponsorships- Target local employers including Google, Amazon, etc; private donations.

*Partnerships:* Department of Labor; Department of Community Affairs; West Georgia Technical; Douglas County School System; American Red Cross; Google.

## IMPACT & MEASURES OF SUCCESS

*Impact:* An incubator space will help create and retain new employment in the manufacturing sector. Securing the support of local businesses will engage the community, and encourage relationships between youth and the employers of Douglas County. The use of an older building will not only pacify local initiatives to preserve Douglasville architecture, it is a positive way to prevent further deterioration of existing Douglasville buildings. Shared equipment will further reduce costs and create affordable space for new and existing small manufacturers.

### *Measures of Success:*

1. Once a manufacturer grows and expands, they stay located in Douglasville, and further integrates his/her business by employing others in the community.
2. It will boost the number of manufacturers developing in or moving to the area.
3. Mercer University administering soft skill and time management classes so entrepreneurs can operate successfully.
4. Further collaboration with educational partners would lead to a culture of creativity and learning within Douglas county, coupled with a physical manifestation within the Makerspace
5. The number of jobs created by incubator tenants and graduates
6. The incubator provides students with opportunities to work side by side with entrepreneurs.

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# SECTION 4

“ As a suburban county in a major metropolitan area, how should Douglas County leverage its history, assets, human capital, and rural roots alongside the Atlanta region’s growth and opportunity? What role should Douglas County play in metro Atlanta’s ecosystem? ”



**WESTMORE**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

# WESTMORE

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## KEITH ANTHONY

City President – Forsyth, GA, Persons Banking Company  
Macon, Georgia

## JOHN BARRON

Owner, InTown Lawn Care  
Macon, Georgia

## KYLE GABLE

Broker, Pioneer Land Group  
Douglasville, Georgia

## MYESHA GOOD

CRM Business Analyst, City of Atlanta, Office of the Mayor  
Lithia Springs, Georgia

## SCOTT NICHOLSON

Analytics Technology Internal Consultant, Delta Air Lines, Inc.  
Atlanta, Georgia

## COLE POSEY

Director of Marketing, Southern Regional Technical College  
Moultrie, Georgia

## ASHLEY ROBINSON

Chief of Staff, Georgia House Democratic Caucus  
Atlanta, Georgia

## BREEZY STRATON

Project Manager, Douglas County Economic Development Authority  
Douglasville, Georgia

## HEATH TIPPENS

Senior Project Manager, Cherokee Office of Economic Development  
Cherokee, Georgia

## MADLINE TOELKE

Junior Designer, Marketing Alliance Group  
Dalton, Georgia

## SARAH WILGUS

Senior Program Manager – Midtown Transportation and Sustainability, Midtown Alliance  
Atlanta, Georgia

## JAMES WRIGHT

Vice President of Corporate Services, GreyStone Power Corporation  
Smyrna, Georgia

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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With a growing population of 5,710,795 and a total landmass area of 6,126 sq. mi., Douglas County sits upon one of the largest, wealthiest, and technologically advanced cities in the United States: Atlanta, Georgia (Packer, 2016). The opportunities and successes generated daily in this region are innovative and inspiring to entrepreneurs, young professionals, and families alike, creating Atlanta to be one of the most traveled cities of the South- for both business and leisure- with help from the "world's most-traveled airport": Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (Hetter, 2016).

When presented with our challenge question, a few key words stuck out: history, assets, human capital, rural roots, growth, opportunity, and ecosystem. When these words are explored individually a vast array of ideas are generated. However, when we explore these words together, dissect them and define them, and assign meaning to them from our research, we start to understand the questions in order to find solutions that will encourage Douglas County to thrive.

Our biggest challenge was exploring the relationship between Douglas County and metro Atlanta's ecosystem. By definition, an ecosystem is "a system, or a group of interconnected elements, formed by the interaction of a community of organisms with their environment" (Ecosystem, 2016). Thus, when thinking of Atlanta's ecosystem we must look at metro area as a whole taking into account the residents and infrastructure that makes up metro Atlanta.

Through our research, identifying Douglas County's history, assets, human capital, and rural roots, we established the following opportunity zones for Douglas County: urban sprawl is creating a lack of green space in Atlanta; undeveloped land along the southern realm of metro Atlanta, leading from the airport to Douglas County, is a prime location for local and transient residents; and the inconsistency of public transportation and mobility outside of Atlanta's core causes a great challenge for commuters (Urban Sprawl, 2016).

## INTRODUCTION

Atlanta's metro land area is made up of about 8,000 square miles, 5.6% of the city's total acreage being parks, nature preserves, and gardens- residents are in need of more nature (Goborin Se, 2016). On a national average, most cities green spaces make up about 10% of their total acreage (Sherer, 2016). However, Douglas County is home to over 5,000 acres of state owned, county owned, and corporate owned outdoor recreational space. The opportunity to position Douglas County as metro Atlanta's Outdoor Recreation Hub is extensive and fairly simple to implement being that the recreation spaces are already developed.

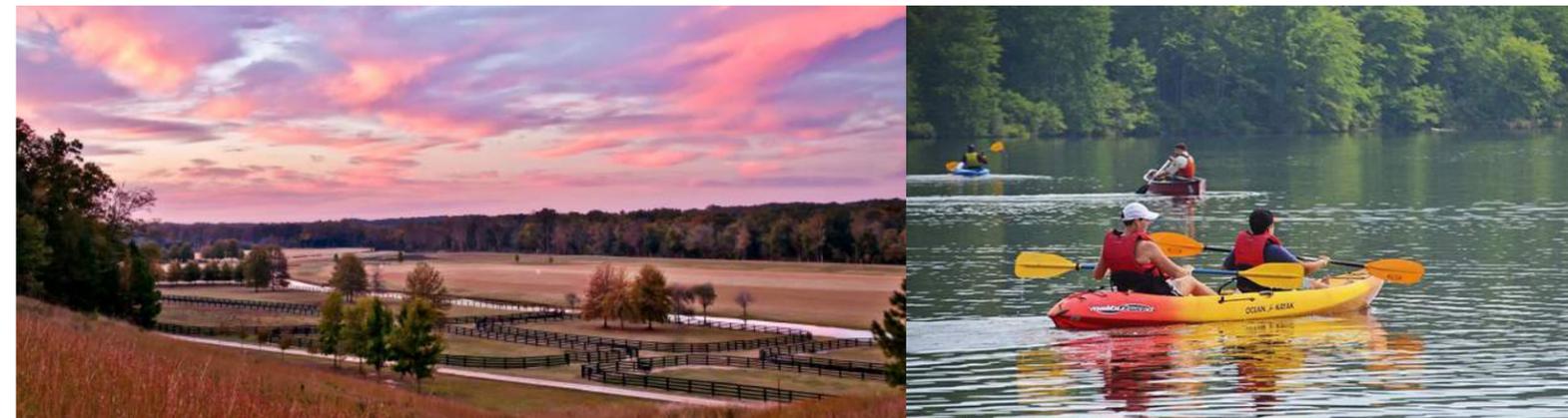
The Aerotropolis Corridor is a project in the midst of being developed from the local and state levels. It includes the 45,000 acres of undeveloped land along South Fulton Parkway leading from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport to Douglas County via Capps Ferry Road. However, the Aerotropolis Corridor stops about ½ mile inside Douglas County at Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club. By leveraging the Aerotropolis Corridor and Capps Ferry Road, the corridor can be extended to reach historic Downtown Douglasville via Bright Star Road Connector and Interstate 20, thereby linking the core of metro Atlanta to State of Alabama, with Douglasville and Douglas County in-between.

Mobility is an issue for many communities within metro Atlanta. In previous years the question regarding mobility has focused on how we support residents who work in Atlanta proper and relieve congestion on Interstate 20. Therefore, the RideShare program was adopted and by accounts has been successful. The question now is how do we transport people within our county while providing access to new companies relocating within Douglas County.

The big ideas presented are aimed at answering these challenges in a realistic and implementable manner while keeping in mind the history, rural roots, human capital, and assets of Douglas County as competitive advantages within metro Atlanta's ecosystem.

# EXPLORE DOUGLAS

## BIG IDEA ONE





## EXPLORE DOUGLAS

*Description:* Douglas County's total land mass area, including water, is approximately 201 square miles and is one of the 10-core counties in the metro Atlanta area. As a county with an abundance of natural amenities, such as Sweetwater Creek State Park, Boundary Waters/Dog River Park, and Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club, Douglas County can leverage these assets by positioning itself as the Outdoor Recreational Hub for the Metro Atlanta region and its surrounding counties.

With over 5,000 acres of state owned, county owned, and corporate owned recreational acreage in Douglas County, we invite the people of Douglas County and Metro Atlanta to come Explore Douglas. We want people to get out and Explore Douglas and see what the county has to offer.

*Scope of Initiative:* The plan is to develop a comprehensive marketing plan and sample itineraries for exploring Douglas County's various outdoor recreation areas. Each location currently markets their attraction as a sole destination but by leveraging the all destinations as a package experience Douglas County can attract weekenders who want to explore the outdoors, participate in recreational activities, dive into history, eat at local owned highly rated restaurants, and stay overnight in one of our hotels or in the yurt village at Sweetwater Creek State Park.

CHC REGIONAL TRAIL - BOUNDARY WATERS



PINE MOUNTAIN



REC CENTER - BOUNDARY WATERS



- *Sweetwater Creek State Park* is a 2,549-acre Georgia state park that is 15 miles west of Downtown Atlanta. The park is composed of wooded hiking trails, the 215 acre George Sparks Reservoir, and ruins of the New Manchester Manufacturing Company, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and camping and yurt sites. 400+ acres of the park are located on the Chattahoochee River that is planned for trails, camping sites, and kayak launch site.
- *Boundary Waters* is a 500-acre recreational complex located along the Chattahoochee River. This recreational park encompasses a state of the art aquatic center, baseball, soccer, and football fields, children's playground, a 10-acre fishing pond, 12+ miles of multi-use trails for equestrian, mountain biking, hiking, and running. The park is also equipped with a disc golf course.
- *Dog River Park* is a 900-acre park that is in efforts to protect and conserve the quality of its drinking water source: the Dog River. This park also serves as an active and passive recreational area for residents in it's natural, undeveloped beauty. Part of Dog River serves as a scenic location for whitewater rapids and is ideal for kayaking.
- *Pine Mountain Gold Museum* is a 27- acre park in Villa Rica that has a 4,800 sq. ft. museum and theater documenting the history of the Villa Rica gold mines. The park also has 3 miles of walking trails, farm animal exhibit, and mini train that tours the property.
- *Foxhall Resort & Sporting Club* is a 1100-acre planned community and urban sporting club that centers around recreational sports and events. This property is privately owned and is the vision of Harrison Merrill. Foxhall's opportunities include real estate, wedding venue, event spaces, sporting activities, and overnight accommodations.

## ACTION STEPS

1. Meet with the leadership at each location to determine their level of interest in participating.
  2. Meet with Douglas County CVB Director to determine the level of participation.
    3. Develop a committee to implement project
    4. Design sample maps and itineraries for concept viewing.
    5. Implement project and distribute maps and itineraries.

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Meetings and coordinating ownership of project

*Medium-term:* Design of maps and itineraries and begin marketing Douglas County as metro Atlanta's Outdoor Recreation Hub through social media and distribution of maps/itineraries.

*Long-term:* Continue to develop attractions to add to map.

## BUDGET

*Short-term:* (\$2,500) Supplies for meetings and seed money for project (undetermined expenses to initiate project).

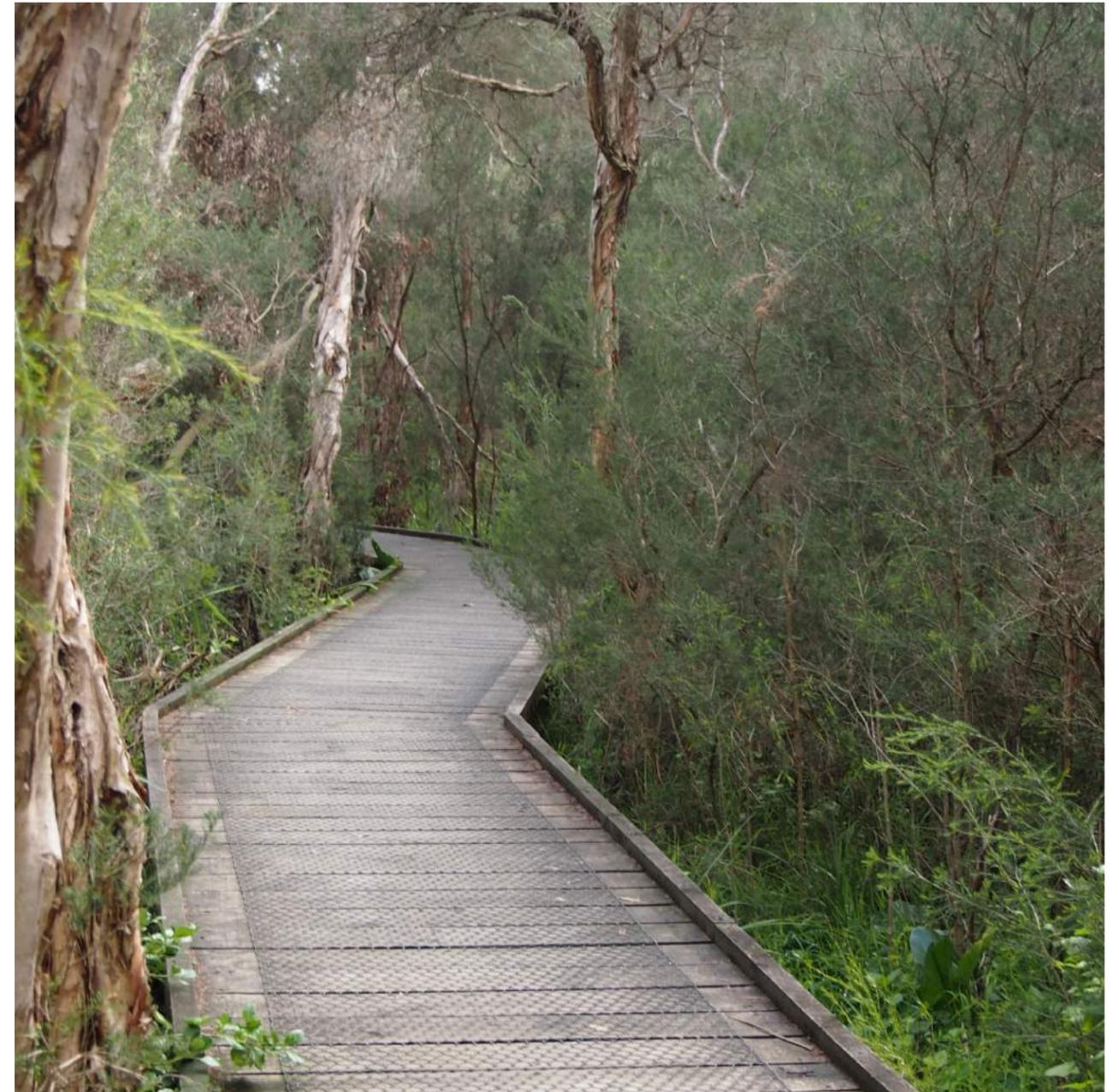
*Medium-term:* (\$5,000) Graphic Design and GIS services for digital map development, website launch and integration of social media platforms.

*Long-term:* (\$5,000) Annually for on-going website updates and social media presence.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* Douglas County CVB, City of Douglasville CVB, City of Villa Rica CVB, Attractions Contributions from their overall marketing budget, Corporate Sponsorships through a Wellness Campaign, trust for Public Land - additional greenspace donations for conservation efforts, advertising space on map for restaurants and overnight accommodations.

*Resources and Partnerships:* State of Georgia Park Service - Sweetwater Creek State Park, Douglas County Government, CVB, Parks and Recreation, Planning and Zoning, City of Douglasville, City of Villa Rica, Douglas County Economic Development Authority, Atlanta Regional Commission, Douglasville-Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority, Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club, Pine Mountain Gold Museum.



## EXPECTED IMPACT

- Anecdotal feedback from attractions stating that attendance has increased.
  - Proven increase of attendance at attractions.
- Analytical results from website and social media including ROI for expenditures.
  - Occupancy rate of hotels increase over 12 month period.
  - Traffic Counts on weekends increase (ESRI data to confirm).

# EXPAND DOUGLAS

## BIG IDEA TWO

### EXPAND DOUGLAS

*Description:* An Aerotropolis is a metropolitan subarea where the layout, infrastructure, and economy are centered around an airport, which serves as a multimodal core. The Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor is a 25 mile-long, 4 mile-wide corridor along South Fulton Parkway that runs from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport to Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club, located in south Douglas County. Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club is \$2.5 billion mixed-use development which, based on research, is unique considering its proximity to the Atlanta airport and city's core. The growth that will occur along this corridor is potentially the next big opportunity to continue to grow metro Atlanta's economy. Expand Douglas will leverage this corridor and continue the development along Capps Ferry Road to state Highway 5 and Interstate 20, thereby linking Douglas County with Atlanta and the State of Alabama.

*Scope of Initiative:* Increase Douglas County's economy viability by leveraging the work already being done for the Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor. At this time, the Aerotropolis Corridor ends approximately a half of a mile inside Douglas County at Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club. By expanding the corridor to include Highway 5 and intersecting Interstate 20, Douglas County can take better advantage of the strategic work in progress.



## ACTION STEPS

1. Meet with the partnership working on the Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor to obtain greater detail on the projected timeline and elements of the corridor (land use policies, transportation infrastructure improvements, funding opportunities and any master planning being implemented).
2. Meet with Douglas County DOT and Planning and Zoning to determine if there are any plans to improve the infrastructure between the corridor and Interstate 20. If not, determine the best route to link the corridor with I-20.
3. Develop a master land use and zoning plan to determine how expanding the corridor to I-20 will lead to future development for the area while maintain as much of the rural aspect as possible.
4. If no infrastructure improvements are planned, determine what improvements are needed to accommodate increased traffic along the corridor to I-20.
  5. Formally market the linkage from the corridor to I-20.
6. Determine whether a new interchange is needed at Bright Star Road to better route traffic and to fully utilize the Bright Star Road Connector.

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* (end of 2016) meet with various stakeholders including Atlanta Regional Commission, partners of the Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor, owners of Foxhall Resort and Sporting Club, Douglas County Board of Commissioners, Douglas County Department of Transportation, and Douglas County Department of Planning and Zoning.

*Medium-term:* (1 - 3 years) Based on meeting results, conduct a needs assessment and fiscal impact analysis to determine possible impacts to Douglas County. If the results are positive, a consultant will be hired to create a master plan for the route from the corridor to I-20.

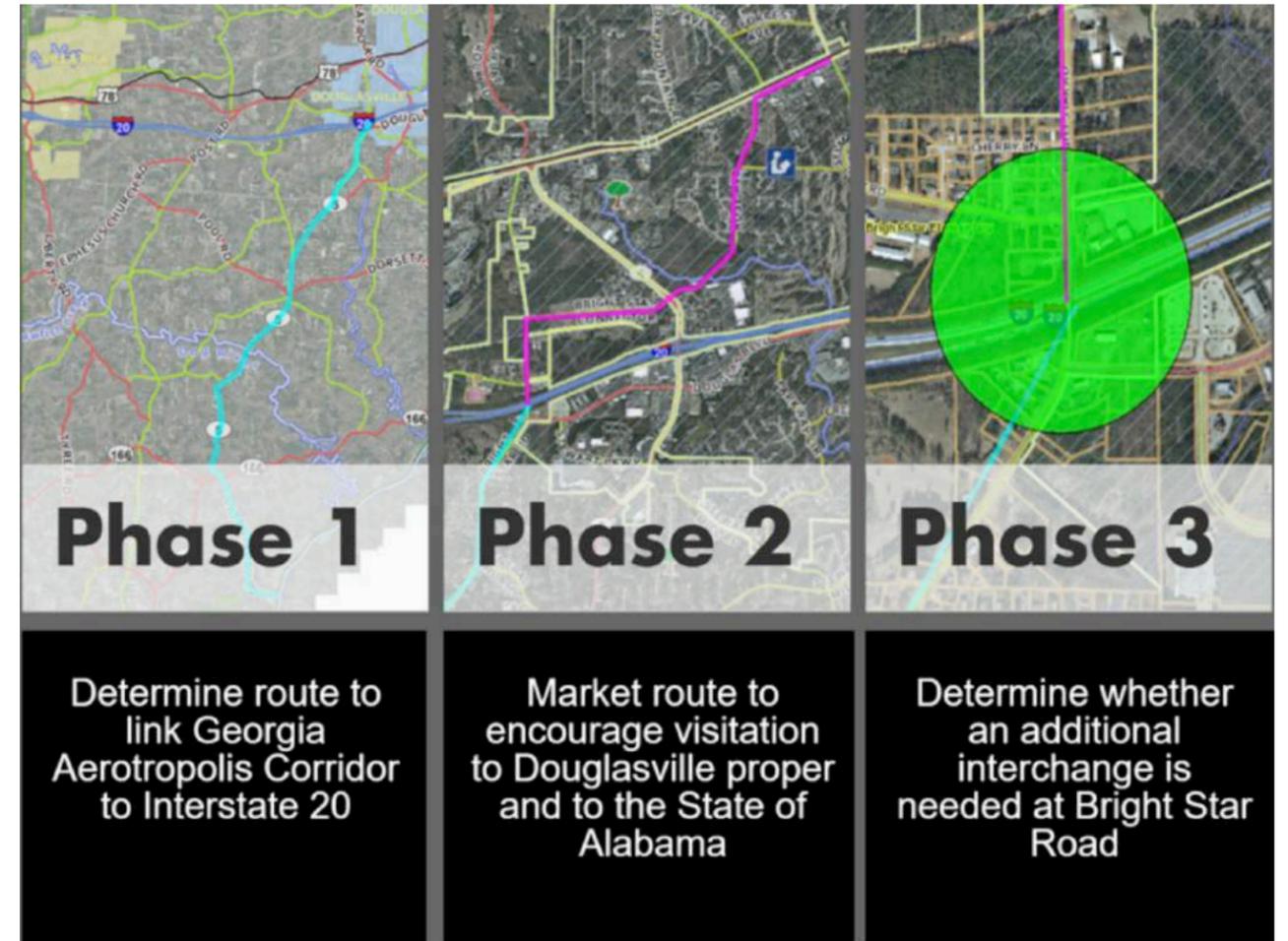
*Long-term:* (4 - 10 years) Initiate infrastructure improvements and conduct study to determine if an additional interchange at Bright Star Road is needed to alleviate congestion at the Highway 5 interchange.

## BUDGET

*Short-term:* (\$1000) Meeting supplies and information gathering .

*Medium-term:* (\$200,000) Impact studies and master plan for extension of corridor.

*Long-term:* (Unknown) Most likely several million dollars in order to develop an additional interchange and make improvements to the Highway 5 interchange



## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

*Funding:* Land owners along corridor - added value to their property by having a master plan created and increased traffic counts, GDOT grants, local Maintenance and Improvement Grants, Federal Grants for improving interchanges on interstates due to congestion, Douglas County Government, City of Douglasville Government, Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor partners, Private industry along the corridor

*Resources and Partnerships:* Georgia Aerotropolis Corridor committee/partners, Atlanta Regional Commission, Douglas County Government, City of Douglasville Government, Douglas County Economic Development Authority, Private Land Owners, Developers, Industry



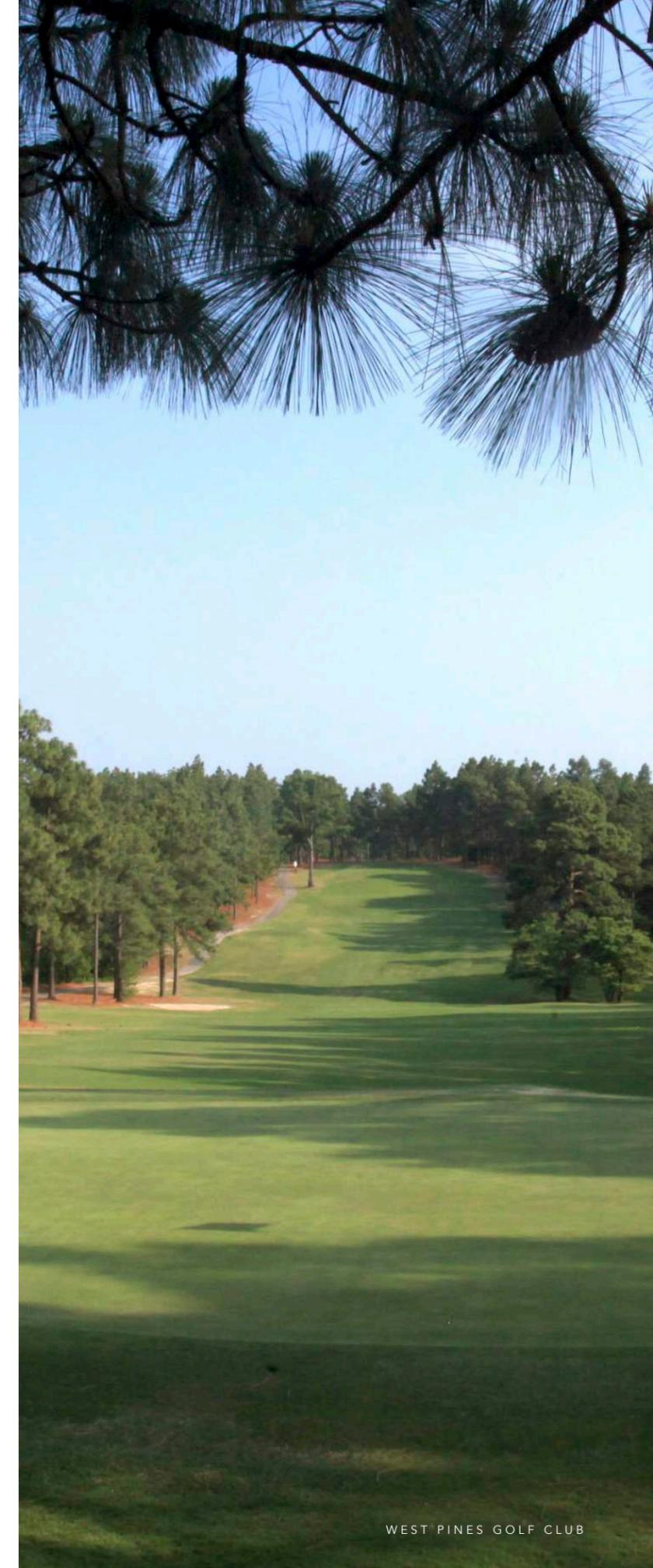
# CONNECT DOUGLAS

## BIG IDEA THREE

### CONNECT DOUGLAS

*Description:* Connect Douglas is to create a more unified Douglas County through walkability improvements and intra-county vanpool. “Walkability” can be classified as a measure of how friendly the area is to walking. It can help increase economic development and has various environmental and health impacts. An increase in physical activity, including walking, can prevent various chronic diseases (Gase, 2016). The first project includes connecting Arbor Place Mall and West Pines Golf Course to Downtown Douglasville via a pedestrian bridge, improving the sidewalks within Douglas County and building a pedestrian/non-motorized greenway to and around Douglas County. The intra-county vanpool utilizes 15 passenger vans on specific routes to provide access to retail and industrial areas within the county to promote consumerism and employment at various businesses in Douglas County.

*Scope of Initiative:* The pedestrian bridge is to connect Arbor Place Mall, West Pines Golf Course and Downtown Douglasville. The scope of the initiative is to identify which areas are currently prepped for sidewalks and connect already existing sidewalks together. The Douglas County greenway would partner with the PATH Foundation to add trails that would connect Centennial Olympic Park in Downtown Atlanta, to Sweetwater Creek State Park in east Douglas County. The intra-county vanpool connects the residents of Douglas County with resources, opportunities, and retail that are currently not safely accessible without the use of a personal vehicle due to the lack of sidewalks/pathways and no public transportation option. This intra-country vanpool would be a program that requires registration and has a nominal fee to participate.



## ACTION STEPS

1. Schedule town hall meetings to bring the ideas to the community in order to receive residential and business support.
2. Engage legislators on the local and state level as some of the ideas proposed may need legislative support.
3. Identify and engage key stakeholders regarding different project's funding and support: Pedestrian Bridge - identify funding and engage with Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) regarding a Downtown Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant; Sidewalks: Identify areas that are already prepped for sidewalks (existing curb and gutter on road) and re-examine existing Fairburn Road LCI grant to see if there could be funding for sidewalks included; Douglas County greenway: Engage the PATH Foundation to get understand community selection and funding match, engage community business leaders to seek private funding and seek out government grant programs that could assist in funding; Intra-County Vanpool: engage Douglas County Board of Commissioners and DOT to identify potential use of RideShare vans and engage WIB (workforce investment board) for use of WIOA funds to act as seed money for the program since the program is targeting the employment opportunities for the county residents.
4. Measure success of projects utilizing proposed metrics of success.

## TIMELINE

*Short-term:* Intra-County Vanpool and Pedestrian Bridge project

*Medium-term:* Sidewalk Improvements project

*Long-term:* Douglas County greenway project

## BUDGET

*Intra-County Vanpool:* responses from stakeholders will determine specific routes and number of buses. This program is to be designed very similarly to the RideShare program, therefore the proposed annual budget is \$750,000 (the FY 2015 RideShare budget was \$786,000).

*Pedestrian Bridge:* a 10 foot wide prefabricated "Steadfast" type Pedestrian Bridge: \$1,200 per linear foot with design, engineering, installation and administration costs. An 8' wide clearance can possibly reduce this cost.

*Sidewalk Improvements:* For streets that are prepped with curb and gutter, sidewalk construction will be \$500,000/mile. For streets that are not prepped with curb and gutter, sidewalk construction will be \$1 million/mile.

*Douglas County Greenway:* Based on the PATH Foundation's costs of developing existing trails, it is estimated that this project would cost approximately \$1 million per mile of trail. This cost can fluctuate depending on factors such as land ownership, cleanup expenses, and other variable costs.



## POTENTIAL FUNDING, RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS

### Funding:

*Intra-County Vanpool:* Just as in the Rideshare program, passengers will pay a nominal fee to participate, those in an approved job training program may be able to receive assistance through WIB/ WIOA funds. The administration of the program is to be determined but could likely be governed in the same office as the Rideshare program. Federal Transportation grants are available to assist in program development and implementation if program specifically assists disadvantaged workers and those within a job training program.

*Pedestrian Bridge:* Downtown Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), which is a program that awards planning grants on a competitive basis to local governments to prepare and implement plans for the enhancement of existing centers and corridors consistent with regional development policies, and it also provides transportation infrastructure.

*Sidewalk Improvements:* LCI grants are one of the few ways to get government money for sidewalk construction, the FAST act does not typically fund sidewalk construction. Recommendation would be to leverage the Fairburn Rd. LCI that Douglas County already has been obtained to build sidewalks and connect existing sidewalks.

*Douglas County Greenway:* The PATH Foundation has traditionally leveraged public-private partnerships to build the PATHs. Local business leaders would be instrumental in funding the effort, as would grants (such as the federal Recreational Trails Program).

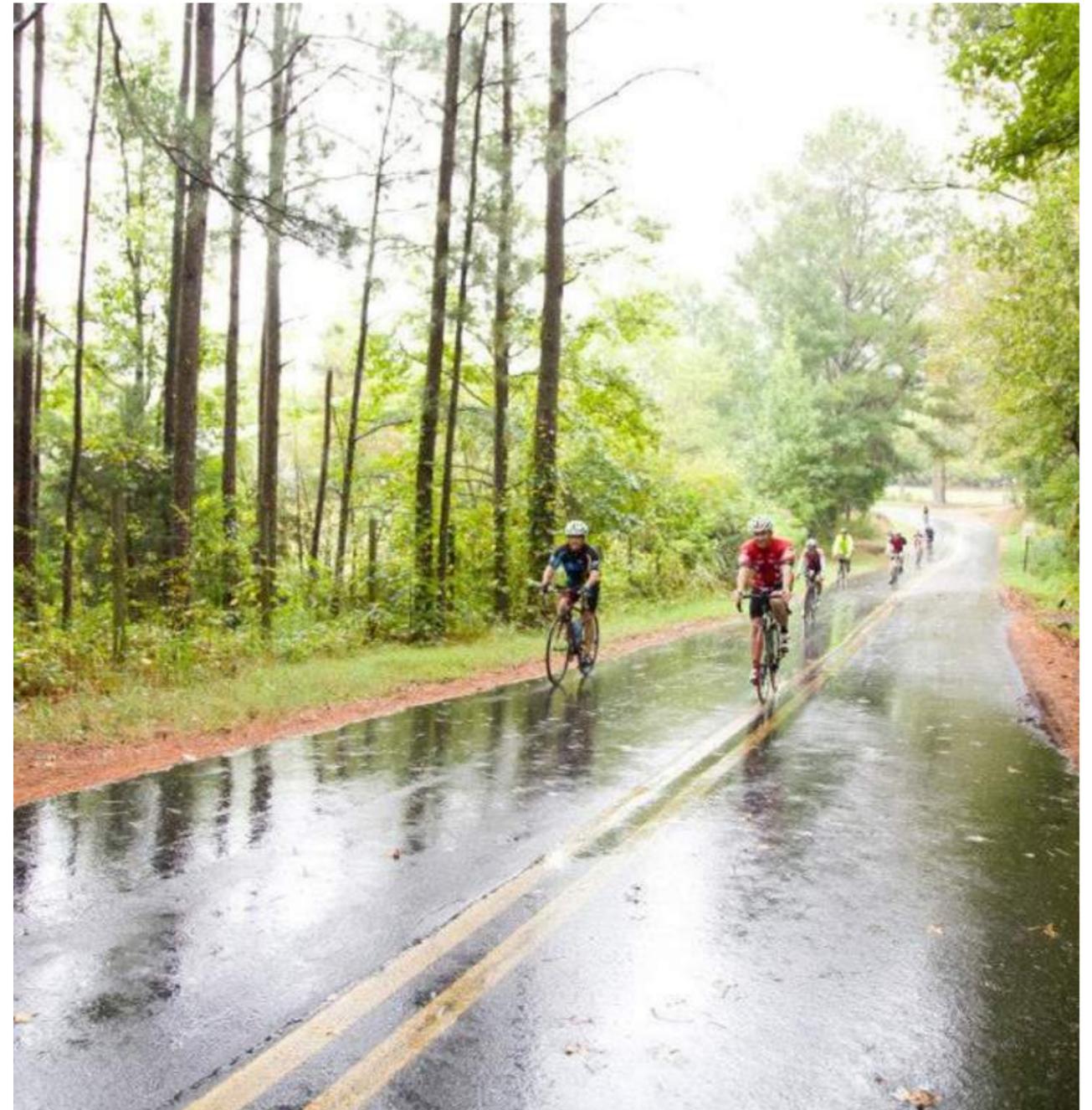
*Resources and Partnerships:* All of these projects will benefit from strong community support and potential partnerships with the following: Atlanta Regional Commission, Douglas County Board of Commissioners, Douglasville City Council, Georgia General Assembly, Community HOAs in the vicinity, Douglas County Communications and Community Relations, Department of Transportation, Douglas County Planning and Zoning, Douglas County Department of Purchasing and PATH Foundation.

## EXPECTED IMPACT

- *Intra-County Vanpool:* The intra-county transportation system will allow Douglas County residents to engage in Douglas County employment opportunities, post-secondary education offerings, and consumerism. By connecting Douglas County to itself through transportation opportunities we are helping to create an environment where prosperity is encouraged and the opportunity to better oneself is not limited by a personal vehicle.
- *Pedestrian Bridge:* The pedestrian bridge will allow the two partner regions (Atlanta/ Douglas County) to build on existing collaborations between regional authorities, businesses, community and local governments. The goal is to enhance relationships and to build a sense of community, collaboration and connection for the County.
- *Dog River Park* is a 900-acre park that is in efforts to protect and conserve the quality of its drinking water source: the Dog River. This park also serves as an active and passive recreational area for residents in it's natural, undeveloped beauty. Part of Dog River serves as a scenic location for whitewater rapids and is ideal for kayaking.
- *Sidewalk Improvements:* Sidewalks are necessary in a community to promote walkability for all ages, safety for pedestrians and economic vitality of existing businesses. Fairburn Road would be a great place to build sidewalks because it would allow for connectivity from downtown to the industrial corridor of Riverside. Fairburn Road will also potentially see more residential in the upcoming years as subdivisions will be completed and sidewalks in the area would increase the attractiveness of housing.
- *Douglas County Greenway:* The existing PATH trails have proven to be an economic development catalyst in the areas in which they are built (see Eastside Beltline Trail in Midtown Atlanta, the Silver Comet between Cobb County and Alabama, and many others). In addition to drawing new residents, existing community members will see benefits from the drawing of desirable commercial development, the improved walkability and public safety between parks and to & from Atlanta, and the encouragement (and easier ability) for all community members to live a healthy lifestyle, among other benefits.

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

1. Community support and buy-in of proposed projects.
2. Legislative support and buy-in of proposed projects.
3. Locations of sidewalk improvement and Greenway confirmed.
4. Funding identified for short, medium and long term projects.
5. Milestone completion dates.



PATH TRAIL TO STONE MOUNTAIN

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GIL SHEAROUSE, Douglasville-Douglas County Water and Sewer Authority

MARK TEAL, Douglas County Government

CHAIRMAN TOM WORTHAN, Douglas County Board of Commissioners



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# THANK YOU

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FROM THE SPRING 2016 YOUNG GAMECHANGER'S CLASS

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