

Beautification Initiatives and Design

SUMMARY

This Community Transformation Strategy is for Main Street programs who want to improve the visual appeal of the residential and commercial historic district. This strategy should seek to support and to develop ordinances, policies, projects and programs to address the visual attributes of the buildings and the downtown's built environment. Special consideration should be given to initiatives serving to enhance the business environment through community engagement, accessibility and preservation. Keep in mind, the creation and maintenance of this area can only be supported through both public and private investment.

KEY DESCRIPTORS

Clean, organized, safe, welcoming, design standards, codes enforcement, aesthetic enhancements, art, partners, plant palettes, developing an aesthetic, color palettes, design guidelines, façade grants, design incentive programs, property owner relations, murals, preservation, user experience, environment enhancers, atmosphere enhancers, pride in public buildings and storefront window merchandising.

“Design is *human*. It's not about 'Is it pretty,' but about the *connection* it creates between a product and our lives.”

— Jenny Arden

PROS

These initiatives make downtown visually appealing.

Design can unite character areas.

These projects have the potential for high impact, low investment.

These projects can incorporate community history and heritage through the use of public markers and plaques.

CONS

These projects can be seen as frivolous.

Maintenance is an important consideration.

Time investment is another consideration.

Taste in design is subjective.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

These efforts may require significant buy-in from property owners and the public sector to maintain.

These initiatives need public input.

Funding for installation and maintenance must be considered.

Design projects can unify people or cause controversy.

These initiatives create places for interaction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Is the proposed design consistent with the current community aesthetic?

What is the capacity for maintenance?

What role will this Transformation Strategy play in enhancing the downtown environment?

Which existing partners can be your community cheerleaders?

How does this plan fit into your current downtown master plan?

Dahlonega, ExploreGeorgia.org



FOUR-POINT APPROACH ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Identify planters or other fixtures that can be used as additional signage for businesses.
- Develop and implement a facade grant program that focuses its dollars on investing in good design and beautification initiatives by local businesses.
- Develop and offer a visual merchandising workshop.
- Develop a “This place is full of potential!” campaign to increase excitement and awareness for vacant properties downtown.
- Host a downtown open house for local real estate professionals and the chamber of commerce to showcase vacant properties.
- Develop an available property listing either online or in print form.
- Establish a land bank to allow you to acquire property more easily for development/redevelopment.

DESIGN

- Install attractive planters, bike racks, trash cans or benches to enhance the visual appeal of the downtown district.
- Encourage arts in underutilized spaces. Examples include utility boxes, light poles, painted crosswalks, banners and planters.
- Develop a seasonal planting plan and rotate greenery out accordingly.
- Develop a suggested paint palette for downtown.
- Consider the installation of a diverse type of lights downtown, including streetlights, signage, twinkle lights in trees and lights outlining rooftops.
- Enhance the pedestrian crosswalk experience with signage, bump outs, raised or painted crosswalks, brick pavers and greenery.
- Develop and install a comprehensive parking signage program.
- Develop downtown design guidelines.
- Develop and implement the use of form-based codes.
- Design a city-wide wayfinding program that helps people find downtown and its attractions.

PROMOTIONS

- Consider sponsorship opportunities for design elements downtown, such as bike racks, benches, swings, trees, gazebos, tables and chairs, planters and more.
- Identify partner organizations that can help maintain the existing design elements downtown.
- Develop and install a historic marker program to highlight the history or significant events that occurred downtown.
- Offer a “window of the month” featuring one business each month, on social media, that exhibits good visual merchandising practices.
- Create a downtown photo contest to grow engagement with the community and to develop a reserve of artistic and beautiful photos.
- Install “selfie” spots downtown, in alley ways or other underutilized spaces.
- Participate in the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “This Place Matters” campaign.
- Use before and after photos to highlight projects and their impact on social media.
- Use window clings to highlight and to recognize facade grant recipients.

ORGANIZATION

- Organize with partners community planting days or community cleanup days.
- Host an annual awards event to recognize the best preservation and beautification projects.
- Develop a downtown ambassador program to serve as the “friendly faces” of downtown.
- Host monthly merchant meetings as a way for businesses to meet key city employees and to learn more about local incentive programs offered by Main Street and the state.
- Develop a youth leadership program in conjunction with the city to inspire future generations to be invested in downtown.
- Institute a vacancy registry or blight ordinance to address neglect by owners.
- Adopt tree ordinances to reduce the unnecessary elimination of trees downtown and to reduce the heat island effect.
- Adopt demolition ordinances that would restrict and define how and why a building would be taken down.
- Develop sign ordinances specific to the downtown district.
- Work with partners to create and implement a downtown master plan.
- Develop a downtown waste management plan to specifically address the needs of business.
- Adopt the international property maintenance code to enhance code enforcement

PARTNERS

Keep America Beautiful
Garden clubs
Civic organizations
Educational institutions
Churches
Chamber of commerce
Merchant association
Cooperative Extension
Service offices
City and county parks and recreation departments
Public works department
Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Georgia Council for the Arts
Tourism Product Development Grants
Walking or cycling clubs
Georgia Cities Foundation