

RENAISSANCE STRATEGIC VISION & PLAN

# DOWNTOWN CLARKESVILLE

FEBRUARY 2015



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# The Northeast Georgian

AUGUST 27, 2014

Midweek

## Residents, others, speak out on future of Clarkesville at town hall meeting Aug. 25

By KIMBERLY BROWN

Clarkesville residents and others have had the opportunity to speak out about what they want for the future of Clarkesville. On Monday, about 50 people attended a town hall meeting led by Danny Bivins and Langford Holbrook of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. In July, the city hired the Carl Vinson Institute to complete a master plan for the entire downtown area, with first priority given to rebuilding the area lost in a March 5 fire. The Aug. 25 meeting was another step in gathering information for that mas-

ter plan. People have also been given the opportunity to participate in focus groups, interviews and a survey so the Carl Vinson Institute could gather information "from as many people as we can" regarding the master plan, Bivins said. Bivins said they had received about 400 survey responses, and the survey is still available online at [clarkesvillega.com](http://clarkesvillega.com). "Clarkesville is already doing great things," he said. "You have an amazing town, an amazing downtown. That doesn't mean it can't be improved, but I want to make sure you understand I appreciate what you have."

The meeting was not just for Clarkesville residents, but anyone interested in what happens in the town. Two attendees, Lisa and Michael see, opened with why they attended. They gathered to answer questions about work in the town. What about work in the town? ing i

do you want the future of Clarkesville to be?

After the groups brainstormed their own responses and discussion, Bivins presented a list of 10 issues for the city, gathered from the focus groups, interviews and surveys.

As ranked by the group, No. 1 on the list of priorities was to replace the fire damaged buildings and businesses.

Second on the list was the need for downtown lodging, and tying for third was completing the streetscape and having

brook said. "Sometimes the public's priorities and the leadership's priorities don't necessarily align... It's good input for us."

Clarkesville Mayor Terry Greene reminded the group that "everyone's perspective is different."

"I saw the same things listed on the things Clarkesville does good and the things that need to be improved," he said. "Everyone's got their own perspective."

Bivins said creating the master plan should take about six months. "We're going to keep



Clarkesville town hall meeting. Led by Mayor Terry Greene, participants include Charlotte Hoalmen, Lisa Collins, Mike Collins, and others.

**"IT'S A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE CITY, THE PUBLIC WORKS AND THE PLANNING COMMISSION THAT REVIEWS EVERYTHING WE DO."**

- BILL GRESHAM, CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Wednesday, August 6, 2014

The Northeast Georgian

## Clarkesville begins focus groups

By KIMBERLY BROWN

The city of Clarkesville has begun seeking input from residents and those who visit the city, to determine what the future of Clarkesville's downtown might hold.

Last month, the city contracted with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia to work on a

county government and the chamber of commerce; and Clarkesville's Main Street.

Focus group participation is "invitation only," Horton said, but everyone, even residents outside the city and county, are invited to fill out a survey, which can be found at [clarkesvillega.com](http://clarkesvillega.com). Horton said her "personal goal" is to get at least 500 responses to the survey. In addition, one-

**"THE MORE PEOPLE WE TALK TO, THE BETTER CHANCE WE 'RE GOING TO GET IT RIGHT."**

- DANNY BIVINS, CARL VINSON INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT

include separate sessions for downtown property owners; downtown residents; city employees; the business association; the council and downtown development authority; real estate professionals; the financial and banking sectors; churches,

In addition to [clarkesvillega.com](http://clarkesvillega.com), surveys can be picked up and returned to city hall. A town hall meeting will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 25, to review the results of the public input.

## Clarkesville focus group

By KIMBERLY BROWN

Why do you think Clarkesville is unique? What is your favorite thing about the town? What do you think "works" and what doesn't work for residents and visitors coming to the downtown area?

These questions and more are being asked of residents, business owners and visitors during a series of focus group meetings and interviews this week. The purpose is to gather information for the new master plan, being developed by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. The master plan will focus first on rebuilding the area of the square which burned on March 5, but it will include all of the downtown area.

Tuesday and Wednesday, Danny Bivins of the Carl Vinson Institute, Kathy Papa of the Department of Community Affairs, and

Wednesday, August 6, 2014



KIMBERLY BROWN/Staff

Catherine Scranton, Teresa Barry and Doyle Kirk brainstorm representatives from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, master plan.

get that off the ground. We're looking for more community input to make the plan happen. If we get more people involved doing, the whole process will happen a lot faster."

The whole planning phase will last about six months, Bivins said. "In six months, we should be implementing small steps and small projects to start," he said

# Clarkesville Main Street board to tackle short-term projects

By KIMBERLY BROWN

As planning continues on rebuilding parts of the Clarkesville Square, which burned March 5, and making improvements to the rest of downtown, residents and visitors will soon see progress in several areas.

This week, the Clarkesville Main Street board committees heard presentations by Danny Bivins of the Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia. As a result, signage in the city of Clarkesville will soon be improved, as well as the bathrooms in Sam Pitts Park, through Main Street design committee efforts

tion to look at the whole city, for more than just next year, but for the next 10 or 20 years," he said.

Bivins told the Main Street design committee Wednesday that he has looked at demographics, worked with a steering committee that did a "visual preference assessment to let us know what looks good and what doesn't look good," conducted 13 focus groups, one-on-one interviews and surveys.

Bivins said he received more than 600 survey responses, which, for a town of about 1,700, is "the highest survey response rate."

## "...THE WHOLE MASTER PLAN IS PUBLICLY-DRIVEN."

- MARY BETH HORTON, MAIN STREET MANAGER

## e conducts s, interviews

you have amenities, that, for a town your size, no one else does."

In addition to the eight focus groups, Bivins' work will include 10 scheduled interviews.

But if you weren't invited to a focus group or interview, your input is still wanted, via a survey which can be completed online at clarkesvillega.com or a paper copy may be picked up and returned to city hall.

On Aug. 25, there will be a town hall meeting at Clarkesville City Hall using wireless laptops, where additional information will be gathered.

The entire process of developing a master plan has been accelerated, because the burned buildings on the square need to be addressed quickly, Bivins and Clarkesville City Manager Barbara Kesler said.

"What we're expecting is a master plan for downtown, but what we're interested in

See Projects, Page 5A

burned buildings is obviously the No. 1 priority, he said, but other projects also came out of the focus groups. Those include the need for downtown lodging, finishing the streetscape, improving way-finding signs, more downtown businesses, infrastructure improvements, parking, handling the old courthouse, park and recreational improvements, and more downtown housing.

Bivins told committee members they should

town area to reduce the signage. "Too much signage, they actually get in each other's way," he said.

term get rid of it. I'm enforcing it. Council member John Berger said he's already started a project. Member Bill the leader of the park

## Clarkesville residents hear master plan

KIMBERLY BROWN

Clarkesville residents are interested in what happens to their downtown. It was proven Feb. 2, when almost 100 people attended the Clarkesville City Council meeting to hear a presentation on the Clarkesville Main Street Master

About six months ago, the city contracted with the Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia to create a master plan. The plan will address only buildings burned during the March 5, 2014 fire, but much of the rest of downtown. As part of the master planning process, Main Street program

Bivins' final presentation during the meeting, Street Council report on Dec. 18 members' presentation build from owner of has been hired managers rebuild.



The Mauldin House Grounds  
Photo Credit: Ashley Williams

# INTRODUCTION

As the county seat of Habersham and a thriving, quintessential small town, Clarkesville offers a number of special qualities to visitors and residents alike. Many years before Clarkesville became an established city and hub for tourism, Cherokee Indians occupied the area. In the mid-16th century, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto passed through the land that would later be named after General John C. Clarke. European settlers inhabited the area following his exploration, and the city was chartered many years later, in 1823. The streets were named after presidents and to this day serve as a reminder of the city's rich history: Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and the popular Washington.

Although original lodging has been torn down, a streetcar line is gone, and the downtown square has a much different appearance, Clarkesville has kept its small-town charm. The historic buildings and architecture found throughout downtown remind visitors of Clarkesville's unique past. Blue Ridge Country Magazine accurately described the area as "The Friendliest Town," an image widely recognized by surrounding cities and citizens. The sense of community makes Clarkesville a premium option for relocation and for raising families, and the welcoming atmosphere brings tourists back time and time again. The rich arts culture and prominent Maker Movement illustrate the town's dedication to self-made products and creativity. These unique characteristics set Clarkesville apart from surrounding communities in Blue Ridge as well as across the state of Georgia.

## Clarkesville Demographics in 2014:

estimated  
**population**  
1,730  
with a projected  
growth rate of .08%

median  
household  
income  
**\$35,058**

median  
age  
**38.9**

**home**  
ownership  
**618** occupied homes  
42% rental rate



Downtown Clarkesville Renaissance Strategic Vision & Plan

# PARTNERS

The Georgia Downtown Renaissance Partnership was created to foster vibrant downtowns. It combines professionals from UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the Georgia Municipal Association, the Georgia Cities Foundation, and the Department of Community Affairs to provide the customized technical assistance necessary for local governments' downtown revitalization efforts. By working with government leaders, chambers of commerce, downtown merchants, property owners, lending institutions, and citizens, the Georgia Downtown Renaissance Partnership helps ensure that all cities in Georgia have access to what they need in order to realize their vision and maximize their potential.

The partnership's signature program is the Renaissance Strategic Visioning and Planning (R.S.V.P.). Faculty from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government provide comprehensive downtown planning services that incorporate public engagement and input, visioning and design, and an attainable work plan.

The partnership assisted the city of Clarkesville in creating its own strategic vision, plan, and short-term work program. Clarkesville's strategic vision and plan was created through a three-stage process.

## **Carl Vinson Institute of Government**

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

## **Office of the Vice President for Public Service and Outreach**

UGA Public Service and Outreach enhances quality of life in Georgia by applying the knowledge of the University to the state's evolving economic, social, and community needs. Since the 1920s, Public Service and Outreach has been the University's ambassador to every corner of the state, translating the land-grant mission into programs and initiatives aimed at improving communities and the daily lives of Georgians. Collectively, eight Public Service and Outreach units work to create jobs, develop leaders and address Georgia's most pressing issues. They include the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, the Fanning Institute for Leadership Development, the Small Business Development Center, the Archway Partnership, Marine Extension and Georgia Sea Grant, the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, the Georgia Center for Continuing Education and the Office of Service Learning, which also reports to the Office of the Vice President for Instruction.

## **Georgia Municipal Association**

Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, nonprofit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit, and technical consulting services to its members. GMA's purpose is to anticipate and

influence the forces shaping Georgia's communities and to provide leadership, tools, and services that assist local governments in becoming more innovative, effective, and responsive.

## **Georgia Cities Foundation**

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

## **Georgia Department of Community Affairs**

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) was created in 1977 to serve as an advocate for local governments. On July 1, 1996, the governor and Georgia Assembly merged the Georgia Housing and Finance Authority with the Department of Community Affairs. Today, DCA operates a host of state and federal grant programs; serves as the state's lead agency in housing finance and development; promulgates building codes to be adopted by local governments; provides comprehensive planning, technical, and research assistance to local governments; and serves as the lead agency for the state's solid waste reduction efforts.





# PROCESS + TIMELINE

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

Strategic visioning helps communities better understand their assets, more clearly identify priorities, and then use both as a basis for planning. Throughout the development of the plan, the community identifies issues that are affecting the community, articulates big-picture goals, and develops short-term and long-term strategies to address the issues.

There are three key steps in the strategic visioning and planning process:

## Step 1: Where are We Now?

It is essential to understand the current conditions of downtown Clarkesville. The first step involves demographic research, plan reviews, and public engagement. Focus groups, one-on-one interviews, a town hall meeting, community-wide surveys, and a visual preference assessment reveal the community's story as well as current issues and opportunities.

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

## Step 2: Where are We Going?

In the second phase of the process, the community looks to the future to shape a new vision. This vision is interpreted through illustrations and design recommendations so that all can see the physical translation of the collective vision.

- Design
- Renderings
- Visualization

## Step 3: How do We Get There?

The final step in the strategic visioning process is to create an implementation plan that moves the community toward its vision for the future. Community input and effort form the foundation for the implementation plan, which is critical for successful outcomes

- Work Program
- Design Solutions
- Short-term (1-18 months)
- Long-term (18 months–10 years)

## step 1

### designate a downtown point of contact/lead

Mary Beth Horton, Clarkesville Main Street Manager, and Barbara Kesler, Clarkesville City Manager, co-led the R.S.V.P. process. A kickoff meeting with Danny Bivins to discuss initial plans was held.

- Steering Committee formation
  - Steering Committee meeting dates
  - Survey development
  - Survey distribution planning begins
  - Local plan collection
- 

## step 2

### finalizing the survey

- Plans submitted to the Institute of Government for review
  - Surveys finalized
  - Steering Committee meeting
  - Site visit dates scheduled
  - Survey distribution plan
- 

## step 3

### public engagement process kickoff

- Begin scheduling face-to-face interviews, focus group meetings, and town hall meeting
  - Launch survey
  - Distribute survey
- 

## step 4

### coordination

- Town Hall meeting, focus group meetings, and interviews
  - Distribute survey
- 

## step 5

### collect surveys and send to the Institute of Government for analysis

## step 6

### site and public engagement visit

- Focus groups
- Photo documentation and visual preference assessment
- Interviews

## step 7

### steering committee meeting

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- Review of public input
- Work plan overview
- Solicit work program volunteers

## step 8

### work program meeting

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- Work plan overview
- Work plan area of interest selection
- Action groups formed
- Initial action item selection

## step 9

### work plan development

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- Continue to develop implementation steps for work plan action items

## step 10

### work plan finalization

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- Internal meetings with each action item subgroup
- Finalize action items
- Report progress to date
- Determine six-month calendar

## step 11

### final presentation

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- Presentations
- Action item subgroup presentations

## step 12

### final report

- Print final report and distribute to Clarkesville

# PUBLIC INPUT

In order to strategically envision a better future for downtown Clarkesville, that future needs to be depicted by those who live, work, study, and play there. Through a variety of public input methods, including focus groups, written surveys, and a town hall meeting, we are shown a comprehensive picture of the Clarkesville community's priorities. A total of 600 surveys responses were received from citizens of Clarkesville and tourists, and 12 focus group discussions were held with the following groups:

- Business and property owners
- Downtown residents
- Clarkesville Business and Community Association
- Clarkesville city officials and authorities
- Real estate firms
- Financial associates and bankers
- Churches
- Chamber and county
- Main Street board and volunteers
- Youth leadership from Habersham Central High School
- Piedmont College
- Elderly residents

The information received from these public input forums was recorded, combined, analyzed, and summarized. The results of this summary revealed what is currently working and needs to be capitalized on, as well as what elements need improvement or are missing.

## TOP ISSUES IDENTIFIED:

- **FIRE-DAMAGED BUILDINGS AND BUSINESSES**
- **COMPLETING THE STREETScape**
- **WAY-FINDING (PARKING, ARRIVAL INTO THE CITY, ETC.)**
- **THE OLD COURTHOUSE**
- **DOWNTOWN HOUSING**
- **PARK AND RECREATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS**
- **DOWNTOWN LODGING**
- **INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **EVENT SPACE**
- **MORE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS**



Photo Credit:  
Adam Dover

## What is working well in Downtown Clarkesville?

The community of people who call Clarkesville home value their current quality of life. Residents feel a sense of pride, passion, and connection to their town, which spurs them to get involved in the city's cultural events and future planning. The small-town feel is widely believed to contribute to this quality of life, which a consensus of Clarkesville residents indicated is preserved through a welcoming atmosphere, a safe environment, a general ease of getting around on foot, and the historic qualities evident in the architecture and layout of downtown city streets.

Clarkesville residents are keenly aware of the wide variety of shopping and restaurants currently in place along Washington Street and the square; particularly successful are the restaurants that serve drinks after daytime business hours. Many people

interviewed attributed the success and variety of businesses located downtown to the Clarkesville Business and Community Association. Everyone from retirees to the local youth are involved in the annual events taking place in the square, including the Mountain Laurel Festival, Taste of Clarkesville, A Downtown Clarkesville Christmas, and the trick-or-treating activities hosted by the businesses throughout the square during Halloween.

Many individuals wanted to make the important point that Clarkesville has natural resources along the Soque River, and the town serves as a functional gateway where outdoor enthusiasts can stop on their way to the mountain lakes of Rabun and Burton, the forests of Tallulah Gorge State Park, and the greater Nantahala National Forest.

# What is not working well, and can be remedied?

Public input is divided on Clarkesville's functional and practical needs, versus changes that could improve Clarkesville's unique identity and character.

## FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

### Fire-Damaged/Vacant Buildings

A chief desire by those interviewed is to restore and fill the vacated and blighted buildings throughout town. Needing immediate attention are the burned-out buildings along the northeast edge of the square, the old county courthouse building, and the old garment factory buildings along Madison and Water streets on the southwest edge of downtown.

### Lodging Downtown

While Clarkesville residents celebrate the events and establishments that currently draw visitors into downtown, many pointed out that there is nowhere for visitors to stay overnight. Therefore, bringing lodging to downtown Clarkesville is of primary importance, and the prevailing form desired by residents is a locally owned, boutique-size establishment embodying local character and form. The Inn at Little Washington in Washington, Virginia was suggested as a possible model.

### Walkability/Connectivity

While most respondents identified walkability as one of the best aspects of their unique downtown, a recurring theme was the desire for improved walkability and to further identify Clarkesville as a walking-oriented city. Specific requests included making a better connection from downtown to Pitts Park as well as improving pedestrian safety and mobility at the primary intersection of 115 East and Washington/Historic 441 located in the middle of the square. Improved signage and wayfinding to better direct visitors is another priority.

### Parking and Automobiles

When assessing current parking downtown, residents were split on whether Clarkesville has enough parking or whether more is needed. Residents offered some suggestions to prepare for future parking needs, including building smaller lots behind buildings and improving signage to identify parking for visitors. Automobile circulation was a major concern as well, chiefly because fast traffic along Washington Street and through the square challenges the pedestrian-friendly feeling of an otherwise walkable downtown. Circulation and parking in the square itself was also mentioned as a place of much-needed improvement. A desire to re-route large trucks around downtown Clarkesville so they no longer pass directly through it was voiced repeatedly.

### Housing Downtown

To further promote more density and walkability downtown, respondents discussed the ever-growing need to increase residential housing downtown. Upper-story lofts above ground-floor commercial levels were often mentioned.

### Infrastructure

Various infrastructure needs were touched upon when discussions turned to city operations, such as replacing aging clay water lines and providing power outlets on the square to better facilitate events.

### Event Promotion

Numerous calls were made for regional promotion and marketing of Clarkesville's existing events, as well as a desire for more scheduled events on the square and at Pitts Park.

### Event Space

Respondents also identified the need for a community gathering/event space. The renovation of the Mary Street Lion's Club Building could provide a solution.

## CHARACTER

### Types of Businesses

The diversification of commercial businesses downtown was a top subject among all participants in the public input process. An overarching theme that runs throughout all suggestions is to encourage businesses to stay open well past 5:00 pm and to stay open during peak times for visitors such as weekend afternoons. The desired attributes of new businesses are listed here in descending order of priority:

- Local business ownership
- Increased range of restaurant and café options, with enthusiastic request by the local youth for a yogurt shop and candy store
- Sophisticated bars, a brewery, or a gastropub
- Friendly hangouts for all ages, such a place for music and dancing
- Contemporary clothes shops for women

### Unifying Identity

While respondents expressed an overwhelming desire to retain Clarkesville's small-town charm, there was not a consensus on one single identity for the city. Consequently, suggestions for Clarkesville's future identity varied from a premier outdoor recreation outfitter and lodger to a family-friendly city to an arts "maker" culture. Several other towns were mentioned as possible case studies, including Thomasville, Georgia, and Hendersonville, North Carolina.

### Business Growth

Three possible barriers to new commercial growth in downtown Clarkesville were identified: 1) high rents that discourage small hobby businesses to take the risk, 2) the city taxing business owners at 100% of assessed value within the city limits (however, Clarkesville has a low millage rate, which offsets the 100% assessment), and 3) overly restrictive building

code ordinances. Along with these criticisms, there were some calls to provide incentives to outside businesses in neighboring cities to create new stores in Clarkesville.

### Streetscape

Many respondents discussed needed streetscape improvements. Expansion of the streetscape along Washington Street is on the top of residents minds, particularly through the square and on the adjacent side-streets.

### Riverfront Improvement

Pitts Park, located along the Soque River on the north edge of downtown, was mentioned by many as needing an improved amphitheater and cleaner restrooms. Additionally, the river's edge adjacent to the park needs improved pedestrian connectivity from downtown, linkage with existing greenway trail systems, and a boat launch on the water.

### Downtown District Expansion

Several respondents wished to capitalize on the historic nature of the US 441 corridor along Washington Street by extending the downtown identity further south. Others also mentioned expanding the downtown identity through West Water Street.

### Entry Signage

The residents of Clarkesville want to let visitors know they are entering a special place, where people care about what goes on. To generate interest, many called for a prominent and attractive entry sign along the four-lane (Hwy 23) that would be in line with the historic architectural features through downtown Clarkesville.

### Community Theater

Respondents also stated that the local theater on Washington Street is underutilized and that additional regular events should be hosted there beyond only live theater productions.

Downtown Clarkesville  
**WORK PLAN**





Downtown Clarkesville Renaissance Strategic Vision & Plan

# WORK PLAN

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government is using an organized and systematic approach to downtown redevelopment and revitalization modeled after the Main Street Four-Point Approach.<sup>®</sup> The process involves creating a community vision based on broad community engagement and input that leads to the development of an implementation plan with a step-by-step guide for success.

The plan focuses on four program components: Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Development. To be successful, communities must look to address issues and opportunities in each of the components, working with broad public support for the betterment of the community.

Across each of the four program components, there is one critical element: public input and engagement. Those who live in a place know more than anyone what is needed and what is wanted. The buy-in and support of the community are essential so that we can address issues and seize opportunities. A community must, first and foremost, meet the needs of its residents—after that, opportunities to increase tourism and other economic opportunities will follow. Clarkesville has created a work program built upon the input of its residents that addresses the following components:

## THE MAIN STREET© FOUR-POINT APPROACH

### 1 organization

Organization refers to working to establish accord and co-action among the various and diverse groups that have a stake in the downtown district. By getting everyone in the downtown district as well as other community stakeholders to work together toward a unified goal, the coordination of the Main Street Program can provide direct and consistent management for downtown.

### 2 promotion

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

### 3 design

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

### 4 economic development

(The Four-Point Approach uses the term “economic restructuring.”) Building on and strengthening a community’s existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base is essential. It can be achieved through techniques to retain and expand successful businesses and thus providing a balanced commercial mix. Other strategies include sharpening the competitiveness and merchandizing skills of business owners and attracting new businesses the local market can support.

These four points work together, each supporting and assisting the others, to improve the social, political, physical, and economic vitality of a downtown.

## ORGANIZATION

### Create a Youth Main Street Program

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

The Youth Main Street Program participants could assist like other volunteers, or they could also be responsible for overseeing their own activities.

Possible examples:

- *Shop Downtown Campaign:* Starting a “shop local” or “shop downtown” campaign in partnership with high school students is a way to remind community members to consider spending money locally rather than at national chains. By working with high school students, you are developing a local customer base of students and their family members. When residents shop locally, money stays in the community, encouraging a positive economic environment for people interested in starting small businesses. For every \$100 spent in locally owned stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. For every \$100 spent in a national chain, only \$43 stays local. Spend it online, and nothing stays local.

### Recruit New Volunteers

For a downtown organization to be successful, volunteers are necessary. Throughout the

engagement process, many participants used terms like “them” or “they” should do this or that. Moving forward, Clarkesville needs people to volunteer and become doers. It is important to link people's desires to actionable items that can be completed.

### Integrating Cycling Elements into Downtown

Many cyclists travel through Clarkesville to access North Georgia's roads and mountain biking trails. The Welcome Center or Hanners could offer items like inner tubes and a bike repair stand for quick fixes. The Welcome Center could also offer bicycles for tourists. One could easily bike secondary streets to enjoy the community's historic and recreational areas.

### Main Street Website

The website contains all the resources necessary for a downtown informational site. A few adjustments could be made to communicate the authentic nature of the Clarkesville's community. Within the website, information could be separated as local or corporate to highlight the local flare that is so prevalent in the restaurant and retail establishments. Vacant and for-sale properties listed on the website could include a photo, description, price, and contact phone number. Also, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) incentive programs could be shown in a prominent place to showcase the Main Street business-friendly approach. Case study examples that show before and after façades would also help illustrate the program's success.

### Coordinate Extended-Hour Events

An overwhelming percentage of people surveyed commented on the limited store hours in downtown Clarkesville, saying downtown retail closes too early. Instituting extended hours of operation for downtown businesses would populate the area after 5:00 pm, helping transform the function of downtown from primarily governmental and business services to retail and entertainment services in the evenings. If downtown Clarkesville decides to practice extended

hours, then merchants can coordinate and advertise extended schedules, creating a more event-like feeling in the downtown. Often, First Fridays act as a trial run for extended hours.

## PROMOTION

### Brand

Clarkesville defines its community as a quintessential small town surrounded by natural recreational opportunities and a rich Maker Movement.

### Maker Movement

Clarkesville can embrace its very own take on the Maker Movement from art, craft beer, and wine to all types of home-grown products. The Maker Movement or DIY (Do It Yourself) is an evolution of millions of people who are taking big risks to start their own small businesses dedicated to creating and selling self-made products. In a world of mass-produced products, modern technology has made it easier than ever for a single individual to create and distribute items that are customizable and unique without having middlemen like manufacturers. This growing shift will continue to affect the economy and will likely have significant implications for large retailers. This special time in history will have a transformative impact on our future.

### Public Art

Throughout the public engagement phase, the input emphasized the uniqueness of Clarkesville. The community has a strong sense of place, and residents do not want it to become a make-believe town like Helen. Clarkesville can integrate the Maker Movement approach into the public realm through public art. This can be accomplished by installing unique public amenities like benches and bike racks. Clarkesville can also incorporate this idea into way-finding signage. The concept is to take the mundane and make it unique.

### Art and Wine Walk

An Art Walk could be the initial step to branding Clarkesville as a Makers Downtown. Throughout

the focus group sessions, many people discussed supporting the local artists in and around Clarkesville. Creating an Art Walk event supports both the artists and local businesses. Business owners could showcase local artists' work within their businesses for a one-month period. During the month-long event, the community would host an evening open house when everyone would walk store-to-store, viewing the art, shopping, drinking wine, and sampling local foods. A passport of locations could be created: if one visits all the locations within the passport, then they are eligible for a raffle drawing. An Art Walk is a fun event for tourists and locals alike. It is a way to expose many different people to local businesses and art in a fun and festive atmosphere. Even children can get into the act with child art lessons and art prizes.

### Regional Maker Movement Attractions

Develop a regional tour that highlights all the Maker Movement activities. Then package the tours via the web, apps, and brochures. Work with all the unique non-corporate area lodging and large sites to get the word out. Be the first in the area to claim the identity and foster the reputation.

### Re-Opening Downtown

Once the fire-damaged buildings and businesses are replaced, the Clarkesville community could host a downtown grand re-opening celebration to welcome the new businesses and the greater community to downtown. This could be a yearly event that celebrates new development.

### Dinner and a Movie/Music

The focus groups and survey responses made it clear that people would like to have an evening of activities in downtown. The Habersham Community Theater is an incredible asset for Clarkesville. The community overwhelmingly supports the theater. There is an opportunity to utilize the theater for movies and musical performances on certain scheduled evenings and combine the movies/music with promotion of local restaurants by offering a

dinner and movie/music ticket option. Setting up "dinner and a movie" nights in downtown would give restaurants and the theater a boost, keeping people downtown after dark and contributing to Clarkesville's reputation as a destination. The dinner and movie/music concept could also be used with its normal theatrical performances, possibly bringing in new viewers.

### **Create a First Friday Event**

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

### **Highway Signage**

The purpose of gateway signage is to announce the presence of and entry into a city. Because of the four-lane Highway 441/365, one can pass by Clarkesville and not even know it exists. By defining the main entrances into Clarkesville with distinctive signage and a planting pattern, passersby would be more likely to recognize and access the town.

### **Public Art/Vacant Windows**

There are vacant store fronts in downtown. Ideally these will be filled by new or expanding businesses, but until then, these storefronts can temporarily display visuals that are of interest to the local community. In fact, these displays can draw people to the downtown with exhibits that include children's art to local civic clubs' seasonal competitions for Halloween, Christmas, or community events.

### **Banners/Signage in Town**

Clarkesville has already used banners downtown. This program could continue to evolve by creating different themes each quarter/season (i.e. eat/play/shop) etc.



**Ticket:** A Dinner and a Movie "ticket" like this one could be used by local restaurants in partnership with the Habersham Theater and could offer specials and discounts. The reverse side of the ticket could advertise the City of Clarkesville's website and direct visitors to the event calendar and other important information.

**See page 81 for more details.**



## Highway Signage

The purpose of gateway signage is to announce the presence of and entry into a city. Because of the four-lane Highway 441/365, one can pass by Clarkesville and not even know it exists. By defining the main entrances into Clarkesville with distinctive signage and a planting pattern, passersby would be more likely to recognize and access the town.

Gateway location 1: The intersection of Louise Street and Highway 197 is a good location for gateway signage that would inform travelers that they are approaching downtown Clarkesville. The painted and paved median in the center of the intersection could be planted with grass, and new gateway signage could be installed here. Also, landscaping could be improved in the areas surrounding the intersection to give a greater sense of arrival.



## Highway Signage

Directional signage: More attractive directional signage could be installed along the highway. A simple wooden sign that directs travelers to downtown Clarkesville and also offers directions to nearby Lake Russell would be more noticeable to drivers and add to the overall streetscape aesthetic. Landscaping around the sign draws attention and beautifies the location.



Temporary truck sign: For special events such as the Mountain Laurel Festival, temporary signage like this one could draw attention and add unique character to the gateways into downtown Clarkesville. Classic cars and trucks with signs attached are a creative way to communicate directions and events to travelers.



## Public Art in Vacant Windows

Before: This building is located at 1335 Washington Street. Vacant buildings downtown provide opportunities to display the work of local artists and craftsmen.

After: The rendering shows what the empty storefront would look like if filled with local artists' work. A hand-carved wooden bench adds character to the sidewalk



Note: This particular space is no longer vacant. However, the same concept could be applied to other vacant spaces downtown.



## DESIGN

### Main Square Redesign

The historic downtown "square" was an oval-shaped downtown greenspace that acted as a traffic circle. The Georgia Department of Transportation reconfigured the intersection of state roads 115 and 365, creating a four-way intersection, and in the process removed the historic "square." The current square is primarily a parking lot. During large events, the parking lot is blocked off and used as a large gathering spot, acting as a traditional downtown square. The square has some traffic configuration issues as well as pedestrian connectivity problems. Some small design adjustments could create better connectivity for both automobiles and pedestrians alike. Along with these changes, integrating more trees would add to the overall aesthetics and create a feel of a more traditional downtown square.

### Connectivity

The people of Clarkesville love to walk. Walking for exercise, for leisure, or to shop was discussed throughout the public input phase. Clarkesvillians see their downtown as walkable and would like to continue to improve its walkable infrastructure.

- Sidewalks: Continue to improve Washington Street's sidewalks. The brick pavers are costly and harder to maintain than traditional cement sidewalks. The brick palette could be integrated as an access in future sidewalk projects, creating a similar look and feel, but with less cost and lower maintenance.
- Secondary Roads: In the downtown area, increase sidewalks on secondary downtown streets to create more connections to parking lots and the rear of buildings.
- Greenway Master Plan: Continue to fund and implement the Greenway Master Plan. The Greenway Master Plan is truly a connectivity master plan. The plan could also look at

integrating schools like Woodville Elementary School. Walking and connectivity is very important to the people of Clarkesville and is an amenity that is broadly supported. When the plan is completed, it will offer a unique asset that other communities will envy.

- Walking Trails: Clarkesville could mark walking routes throughout the community with a color-coded system similar to hiking trails.
- Curb Cuts: Retrofit commercial automobile-centric corridors by decreasing multiple curb cuts and increasing sidewalks and green infrastructure.
- Connect Downtown and Pitts Park: Develop a stronger connection between downtown Clarkesville and Pitts Park.

### Extend the Streetscape

The new streetscape in downtown Clarkesville is one of the greatest points of pride mentioned in focus groups and survey responses. However, the streetscape should be extended all along Washington Street. Also, new sidewalks, street trees, and lighting should be extended onto secondary downtown roads to create better connectivity.

### Rear Buildings

Many of the Washington Street buildings have rear parking lots, which is a valuable asset. More attention needs to be paid to the aesthetics of these parking areas and the rear of the buildings. Also, these areas, in time, could become sites for infill development. Furthermore, the rear entrances, if properly improved, could act as additional premium space. The city could offer façade grants for the front and rear of buildings to encourage rear-building renovations.

## **County Courthouse**

The Old County Courthouse and surrounding property has the potential to have the largest impact on the City of Clarkesville and Habersham County. In the short term, the courthouse parking needs to be altered to maximize downtown parking availability to support downtown businesses. The better the businesses do financially, the better the city and county will do as well.

In the long term, hopefully the county will see this key site as an economic development opportunity that could perform like another industry. This site could be redeveloped into a \$20 million mixed-use development that could house retailers, offices, housing, lodging, public safety infrastructure, and a downtown active greenspace. Ideally, the county, city, Development Authority, and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) would work together to redevelop this site for the betterment of the entire community.

## **Exterior Lighting**

Walking at night with uneven sidewalks, steep grades, and haphazard lighting conditions on some secondary streets can be difficult. It is important to make sure that sidewalks are well lit and that ground elevation changes are easily noticeable.

## **Façade Improvements**

Work with existing businesses that have nonconforming structures to improve their façades when it is time to renovate the buildings. This approach is non-combative and will take time, but working with and assisting the property owner creates a win-win situation.

## **Parking**

Parking is always a downtown issue, no matter what downtown you are in. Clarkesville has conducted a parking study that concluded the downtown has enough parking. That being said, Clarkesville must

continue to address the concerns raised about parking such as way-finding signage, two-hour parking limits, striping to designate parking spaces along Washington Street and other secondary streets, and easy walkways to public parking lots.

## **Two-Hour Parking Signage**

During the public engagement process, many people stated that they would either like the two-hour parking to be enforced or the signs to be removed. The signs deliver a negative message. The city could remove the signs as an initial step in the downtown implementation plan. It is also important to reiterate the need for business owners and employees to not use the parking spots in front of their stores but to park in the public lots, leaving the prime spots open for patrons.

## **Pitts Park Restrooms**

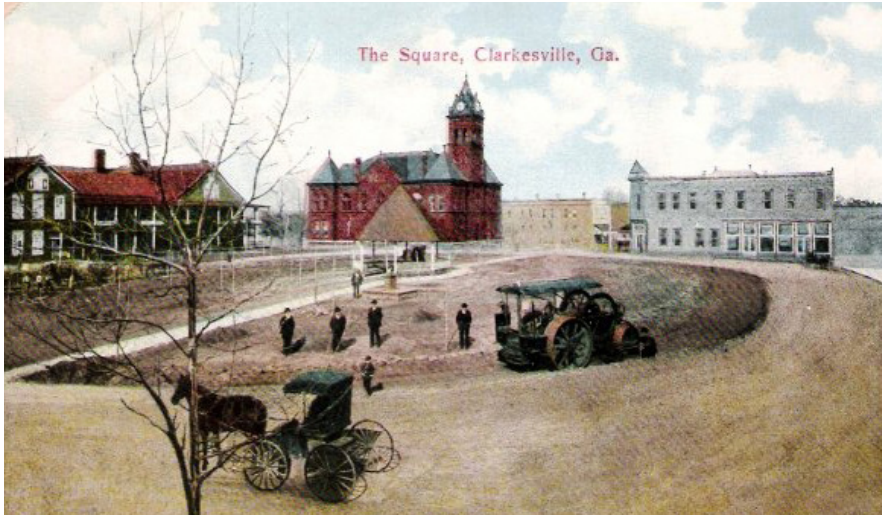
The restrooms in Pitts Park aren't the pits, but they could be improved. Pitts Park is a wonderful amenity that is enjoyed by the greater Clarkesville community. It is truly a unique asset that people love. However, the bathrooms are clearly in need of a little tender loving care. With a little paint inside and out, along with some fun signage, the restrooms could be upgraded in keeping with the rest of this wonderful park.

## **Downtown Directional Signage**

Clarkesville has many amenities necessary to support a vibrant downtown. For instance, downtown has two public restrooms, public parking lots, green space, and a Welcome Center. Unfortunately, these amenities are not all prominently located on the main thoroughfare. Therefore, attractive and unique way-finding signage is necessary to direct tourists and community members to these amenities.

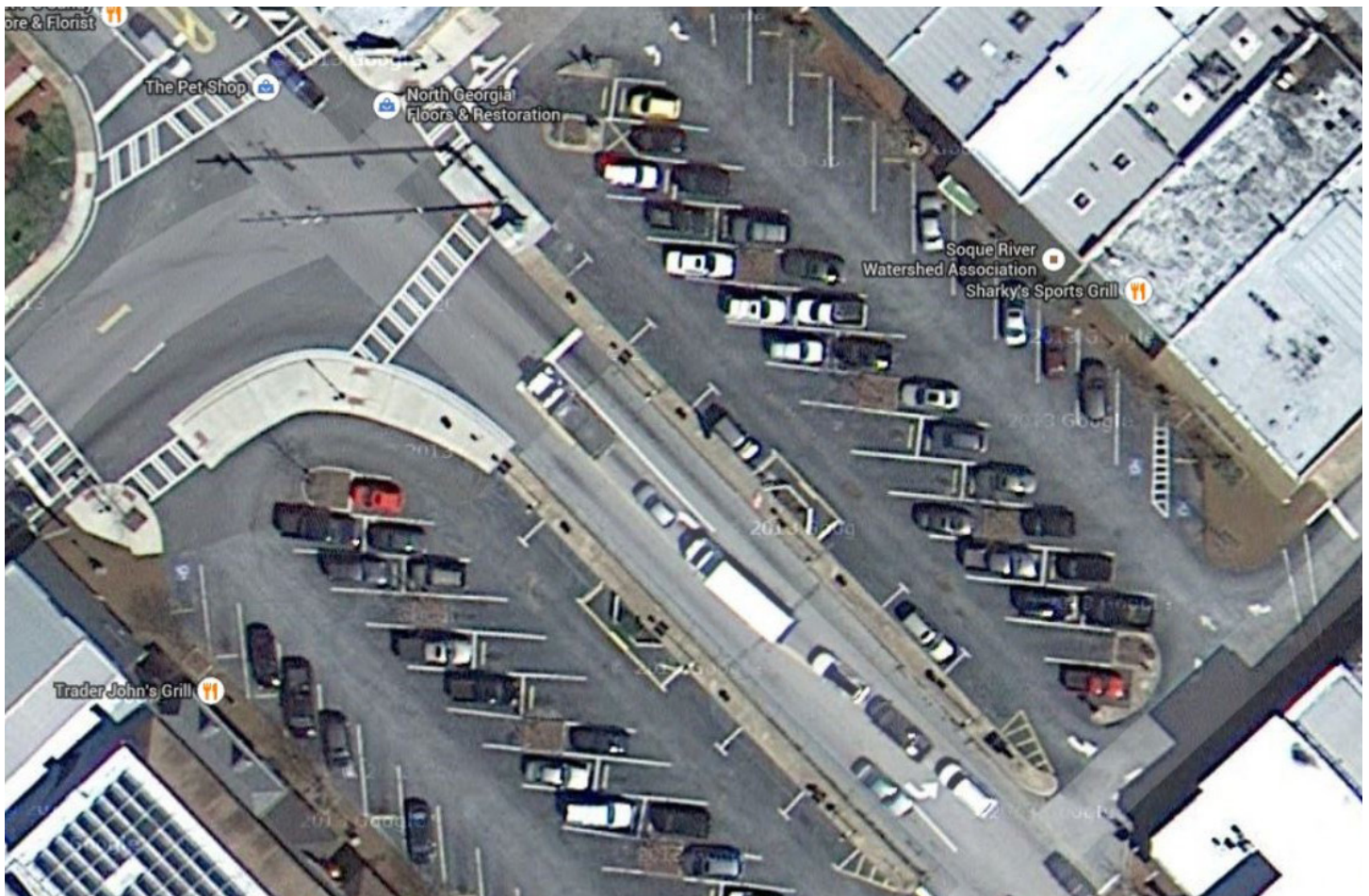
## Main Square Redesign

The historic downtown "square" was an oval-shaped downtown greenspace that acted as a traffic circle. The Georgia Department of Transportation reconfigured the intersection of state roads 115 and 365, creating a four-way intersection, and in the process removed the historic "square." The current square is primarily a parking lot. During large events, the parking lot is blocked off and used as a large gathering spot, acting as a traditional downtown square. The square has some traffic configuration issues as well as pedestrian connectivity problems. Some small design adjustments could create better connectivity for both automobiles and pedestrians alike. Along with these changes, integrating more trees would add to the overall aesthetics and create a feel of a more traditional downtown square.



*Left: A view of Clarkesville's 1912 historic square design and the 1898 courthouse in the background.*

*Below: Clarkesville's square today; an aerial view of Washington Street.*





*Town Square, Current Design Improvements*

Adding more crosswalks at intersections as well as at the ends of parking lots produces a more connected block, allowing pedestrians to safely circulate through the most dense area of downtown. Installing sidewalks and adjacent rain gardens creates a buffer for safe circulation along the main road while promoting beautification and water runoff collection. This would require the parallel parking found in these areas to be removed and potentially reallocated in the lot in front of the courthouse.



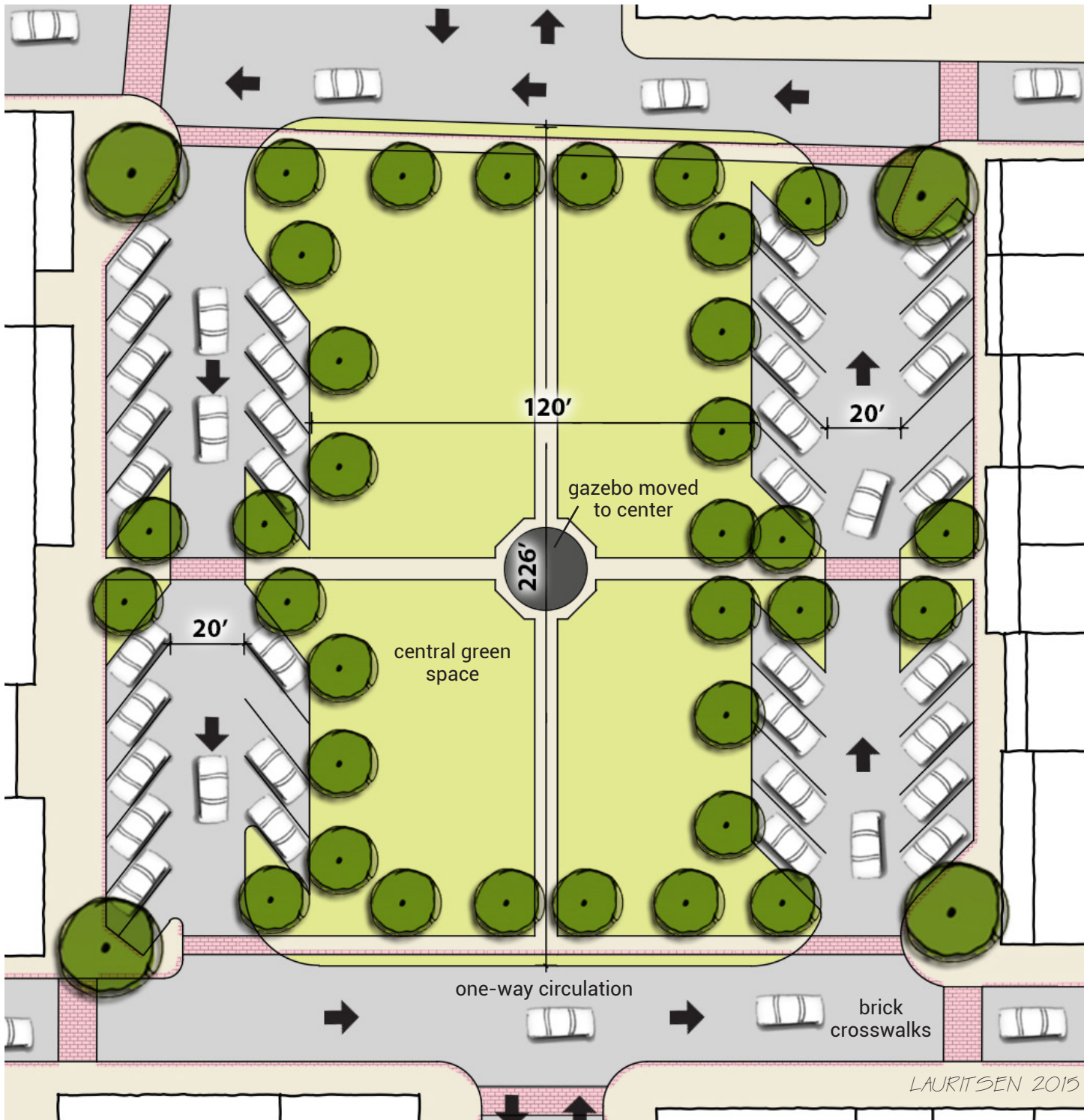
*Town Square, Current Design Improvements*

This graphic representation shows these changes from a northward facing view looking down Washington Street. Rain gardens comprise various species that are tolerant of heavy water that flows through curb cuts during storms. Larger trees such as the Black Walnut are suitable for the ends of these rain gardens, creating a visual pinching effect, forcing drivers to slow down through the area. Trees with higher canopies such as the Honey Locust would work well in the middle areas and would maintain visual perspectives for pedestrians and motorists, as well as beautifying the corridor.



*Town Square, Current Design Improvements*

New sidewalks run the length of the square, allowing pedestrians to easily walk through to their destinations as well as providing a safe area for motorists exiting their cars. Brick borders align with the existing downtown streetscape and create a visual buffer, separating pedestrians from the street traffic.



*Town Square Historic Re-design Option*

A second option is to take the square back to its original historic form. The rendered plan view above depicts the main square returning to its historic oval form. The space is reconfigured such that drivers circulate one-way around a central green space, with 36 available parking spaces. Street trees align with the green space edges, defining the space and drawing in pedestrians for passive or active use. The historic gazebo would be placed in the center of the greenspace, creating a focal point and event space for the city or private parties. Brick crosswalks and sidewalks with brick bond borders mimic the existing downtown streetscape aesthetic while creating safe pedestrian circulation through the new square.

## Town Square Buildings

A recent fire destroyed several structures on the east side of the Washington Street Town Square. The following design options show what could be implemented in the space. Façade and streetscape improvements could work together to create a beautiful area that is attractive to businesses and customers. The photo composite below shows what the buildings east of the town square look like now. A painted wall has been placed in front of the buildings to cover the damage; however, next door businesses' signs are being blocked.



*Plan View*

### fire damage:

These three buildings, along with another structure on the rear, were damaged in a recent fire.



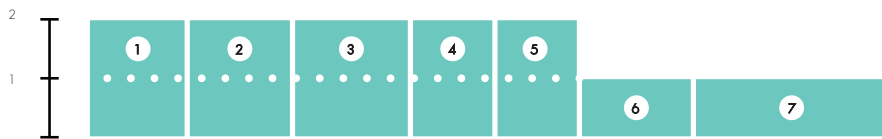
*East side of Town Square Buildings*



# Town Square Buildings Design Options

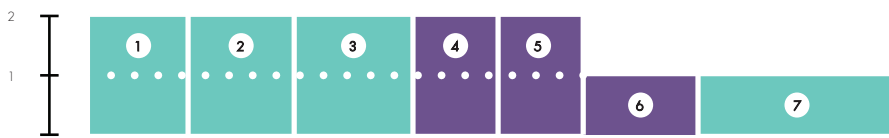
The chart below shows different design options for the east side of Town Square ranging from restoration using historically accurate design to a completely new design that fits within the aesthetic context of the street.

NO CHANGES
  RESTORATION
  NEW DESIGN



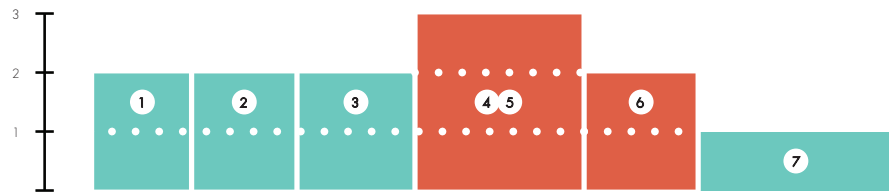
EXISTING

THIS GRAPHIC SHOWS THE SEVEN EXISTING BUILDINGS LOCATED AT 1404 THROUGH 1442 WASHINGTON STREET.



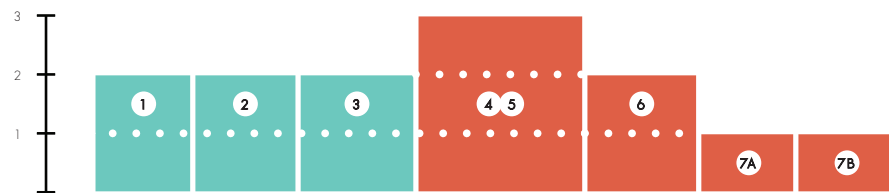
OPTION 1: RESTORATION

BUILDINGS 4, 5, AND 6 ARE RESTORED TO THEIR ORIGINAL APPEARANCE BEFORE FIRE DAMAGE.



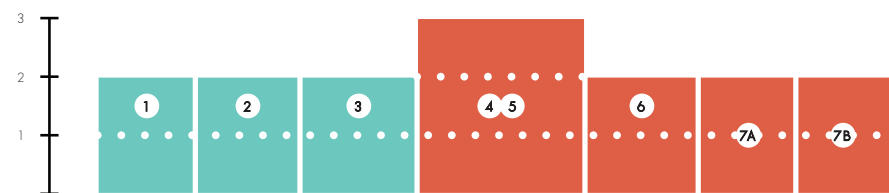
OPTION 2: NEW DESIGN

BUILDINGS 4 AND 5 ARE REPLACED WITH A NEW, SINGLE STRUCTURE AND INCREASED TO THREE STORIES; BUILDING 6 IS REPLACED WITH A TWO-STORY BUILDING.



OPTION 3: NEW DESIGN

BUILDINGS 4 AND 5 ARE REPLACED WITH A NEW, SINGLE STRUCTURE AND INCREASED TO THREE STORIES; BUILDING 6 IS REPLACED WITH A TWO-STORY BUILDING; AND BUILDING 7'S FACADE APPEARANCE IS IMPROVED TO TWO SEPERATE STOREFRONTS (7A AND 7B).



OPTION 4: NEW DESIGN

BUILDING 7 IS CHANGED TO A TWO-STORY BUILDING AND ITS FACADE'S APPEARANCE IS IMPROVED TO TWO SEPERATE STOREFRONTS (7A AND 7B).



**Before**



**Option 1: Restoration**

This option shows the fire-damaged buildings restored to a more historically accurate design. Porches and railings are removed, leaving a more simple design.



**Option 2: New Design**

This option shows the fire-damaged buildings replaced with a new, larger single structure and increased to three stories. Building 6 (see chart, left) has a second story addition.



**Option 3: New Design**

This option shows the fire-damaged buildings replaced with a new, larger single structure and increased to three stories. Building 6 (see chart, left) has a second story addition. Building 7's façade is improved by breaking it up into two separate storefronts.

## Option 4: New Design

This option shows the fire-damaged buildings replaced with a new, larger single structure and increased to three stories. Building 6 (see chart on page 34) has a second-story addition. Building 7's façade is improved by breaking it down into two separate storefronts.



Before

### Original Buildings



## new design

the new design that replaced the fire-damaged buildings now visually balances the street and gives it a centerpoint.



Building 7's façade is broken up into two separate storefronts, giving the space better market value to new businesses.

Re-designed to be two stories to mirror the other side of the row.



K. MCSHEA 2015

## Fire/Infill Options

It is important to rebuild the structures that were lost to the fire. There were four buildings and multiple businesses lost, including three restaurants. These businesses helped create a downtown destination for Clarkesville. There are multiple possibilities for redevelopment. The Clarkesville DDA has the ability to assist the rebuilding effort through incentives. It will take a collaborative effort that combines the private and public sectors for new or restored buildings and businesses to come back.



*Before:* The recent fire destroyed several buildings around the Square, including Sweet Breads Restaurant (shown top, left). Other buildings on this block are still damaged and are currently being screened by a painted wooden fence until redevelopment and restoration can occur (shown top, right).

Left: Aerial view of entire block with fire-damaged buildings highlighted. *Image from Google Maps.*



### Design Option 1

There are many options for restoration and redevelopment of this block. In Design Option 1, the buildings damaged by fire (shown in purple) are restored to a historically accurate design. Debris from the Sweet Breads Restaurant fire is cleared for a new development. In this design, the new infill is placed on the corner fronting East Water Street and Bridge Street. The parking lot is moved north of the building to allow the storefront to be more ideally positioned along the East Water Street sidewalk. On-site parking is a great asset to a downtown business and this design allows for the same number of spaces or more (depending on lot layout) as the old Sweet Breads parking lot had prior to the fire. On-street parking is also added along East Water Street and Clarkesville's streetscape design is continued down East Water Street, Bridge Street and Monroe Street.



### Design Option 2A

In Design Option 2A, the buildings damaged by fire (shown in red) are replaced with a new design. The new Sweet Breads infill and parking remain the same as shown in Design Option 1, with the only difference being a new alleyway that cuts through the block. The new alleyway allows access for "back of house" operations for the occupying businesses. Additional on-street parking is added in the alleyway, along with pedestrian access by new sidewalks. Again, Clarkesville's streetscape design is continued through the alleyway, and down East Water Street, Bridge Street and Monroe Street.



■ NO CHANGES     
 ■ RESTORATION     
 ■ NEW DESIGN

### Design Option 2B

Design Option 2B has the same changes as Design Option 2A, except rooftop spaces are also utilized. Flat roofs allow for more marketable square footage located on top of the building. Upper-story residences could have rooftop access to a courtyard or even a swimming pool. Restaurants could have rooftop dining or an outdoor bar that could maximize their dining space square footage. Special events such as weddings or reunions could also take place in these rooftop spaces.



*Example of a rooftop bar at a restaurant in Arlington, Virginia.*





### Design Option 3

Though the 2014 fire was a terrible event in Clarkesville, new opportunity exists to redevelop the entire block, making it a beautiful downtown destination that will attract new businesses. In Design Option 3, the fire-damaged buildings as well as the adjacent corner building are replaced with a new design. Therefore, the new design is now taking up half of the original Square block of buildings.

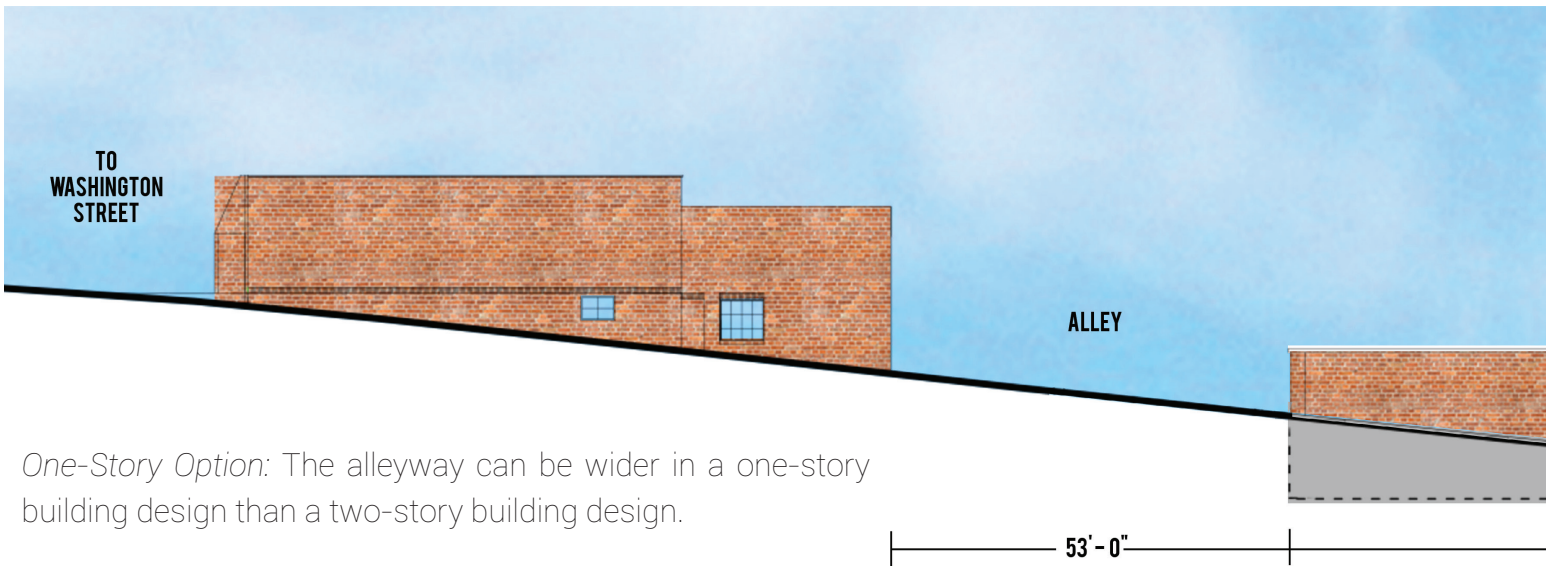


### Design Option 4

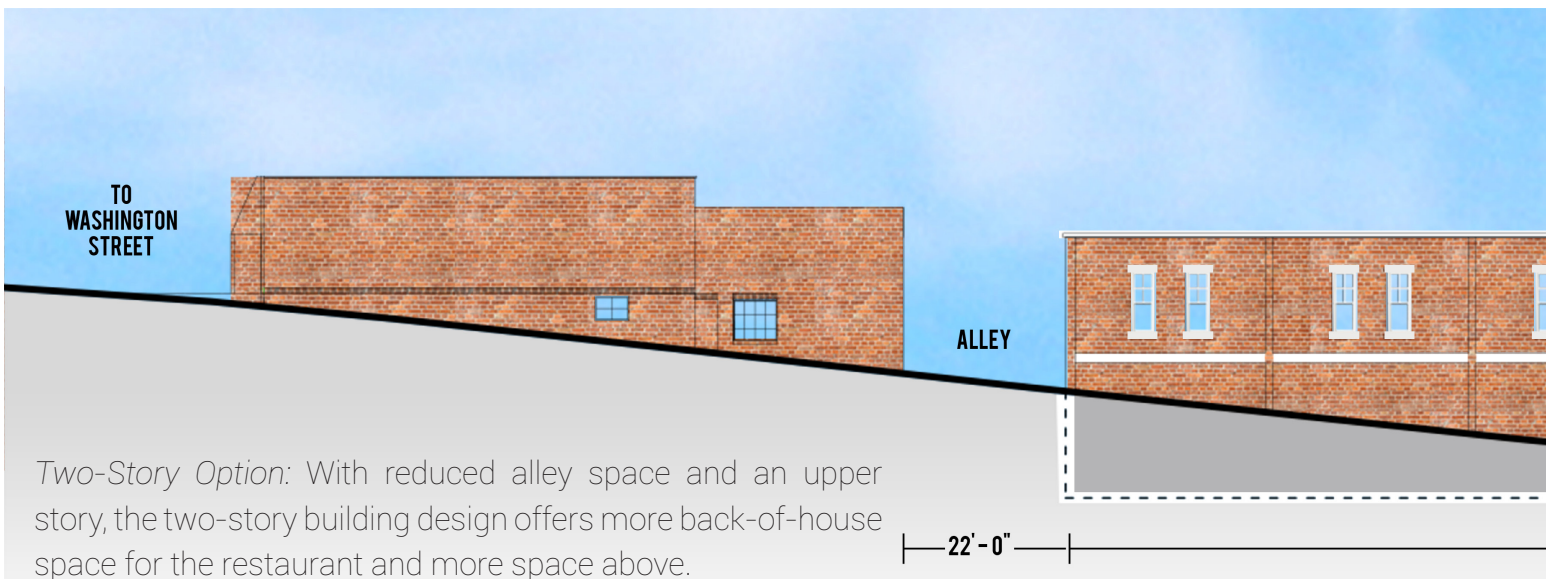
Currently, the property located at the corner of Monroe Street and Bridge Street is a storage facility. However, if this property can be acquired in the future, it could be a potential new development. In Design Option 4, the rendered plan above shows the potential new development, which mirrors the previous Sweet Breads design. The number of new parking spaces would increase, with the potential for new businesses and/or residents on the block.

## New Sweet Breads Infill

As shown in the rendered plan views of the block, the new Sweet Breads infill will be moved to the corner, fronting both East Water Street and Bridge Street. New infill could be either one or two stories, with or without an active rooftop space. The rendered elevation below shows the different design options.

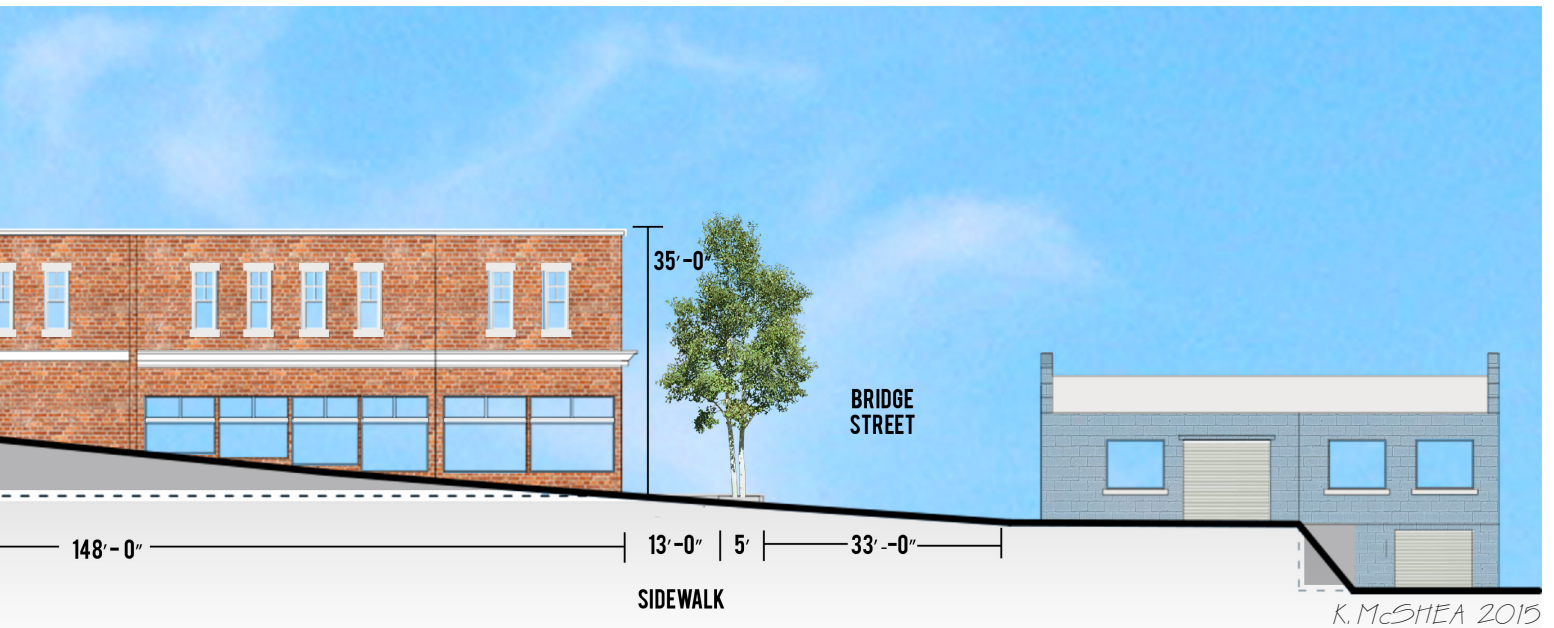
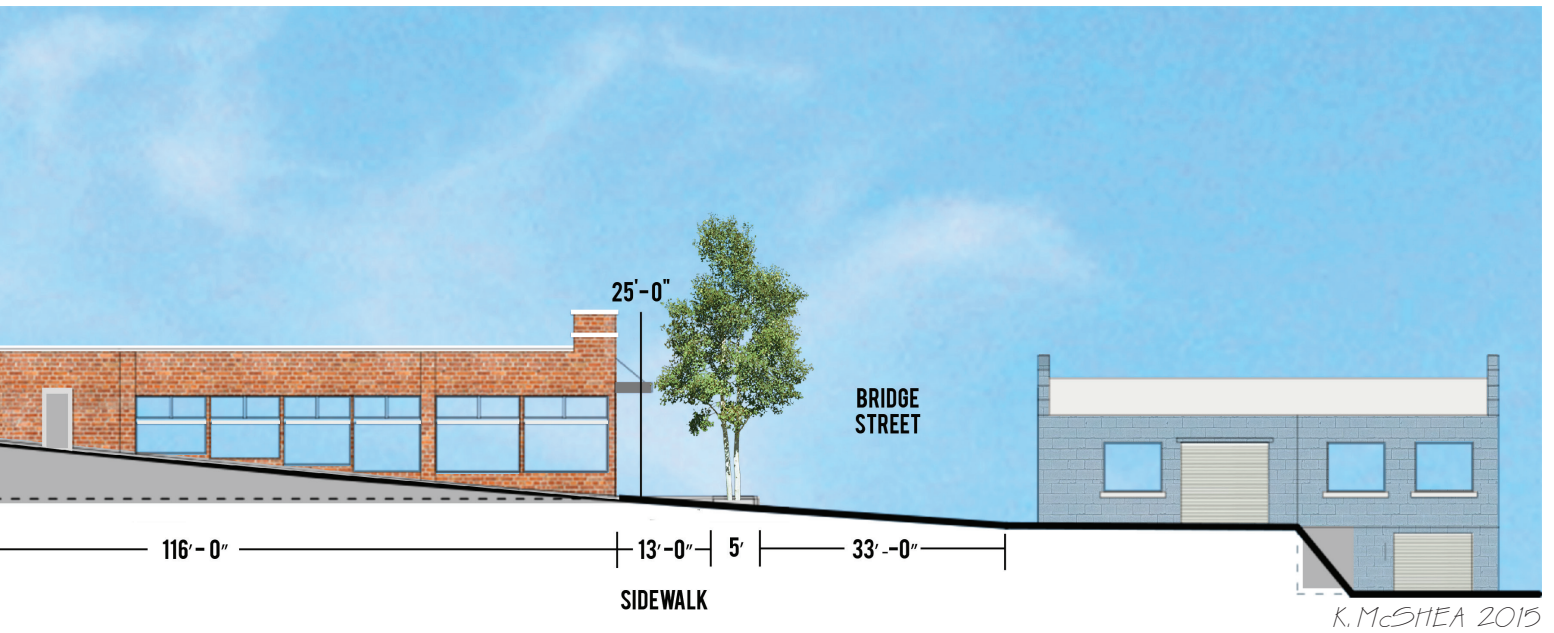
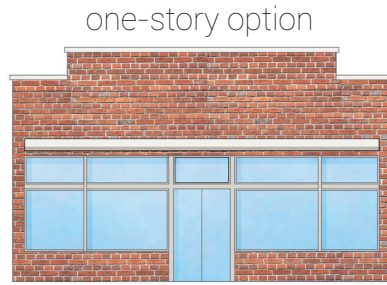


*One-Story Option:* The alleyway can be wider in a one-story building design than a two-story building design.



*Two-Story Option:* With reduced alley space and an upper story, the two-story building design offers more back-of-house space for the restaurant and more space above.

Storefronts facing  
Bridge Street:



## New Sweet Breads Infill, Perspective Views

As shown in the rendered plan views of the block, the new Sweet Breads infill will be moved to the corner, fronting both East Water Street and Bridge Street. New infill could be either one or two stories, with or without an active rooftop space. The rendered elevation below shows the different design options.



*Before*



*After, One-Story Option*

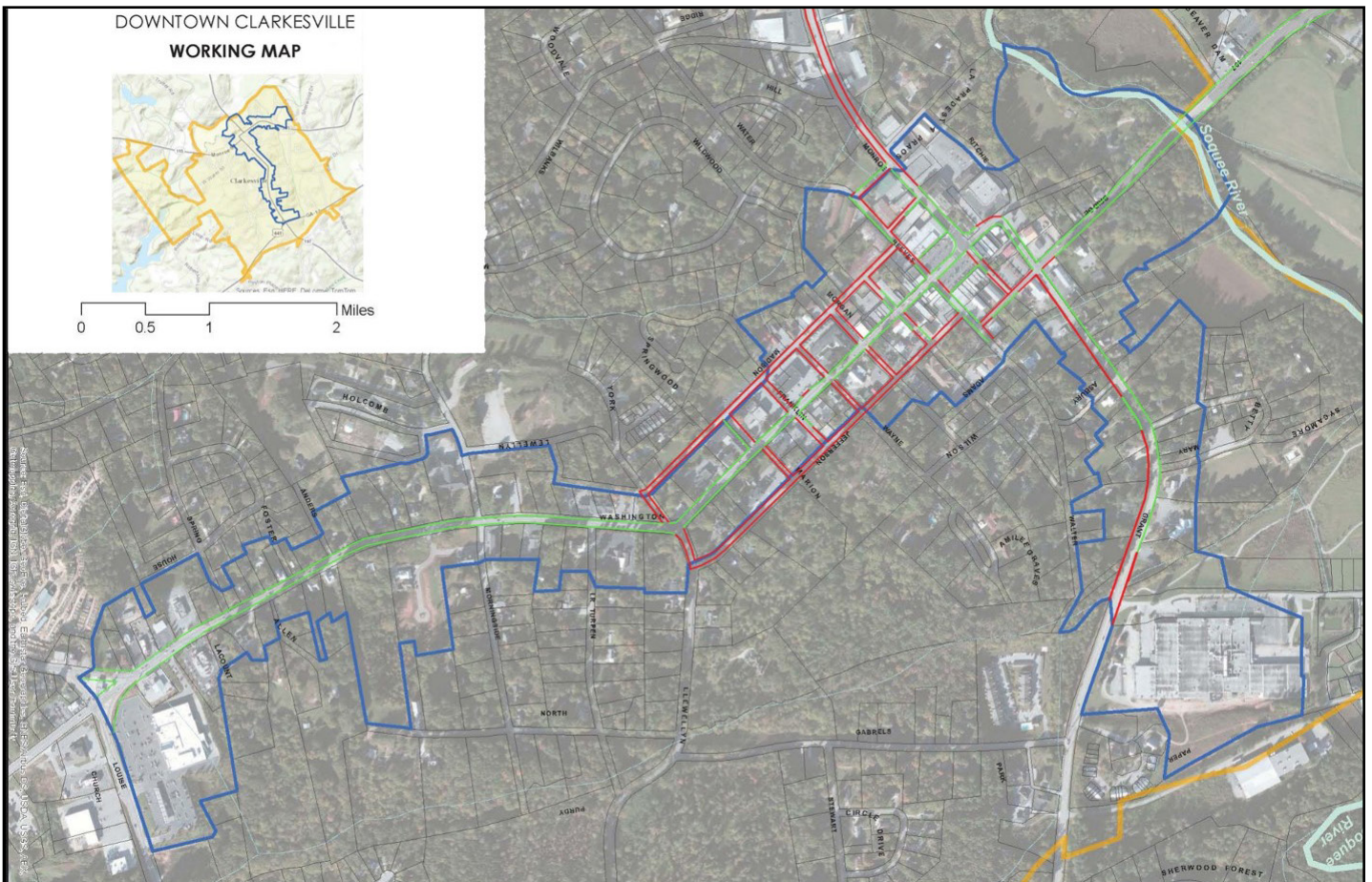
### ***After, Two-Story Option***




The building designs for both one and two-story design options are meant to reflect the historic character of downtown Clarkesville. Red brick construction with some ornamentation and large storefront windows will fit within Clarkesville's design context. One to two stories fits within the context of scale of most buildings downtown.



# Connectivity

The people of Clarkesville love to walk. Walking for exercise, for leisure, or to shop was discussed throughout the public input phase. Clarkesvillians see their downtown as walkable and would like to continue to improve its walkable infrastructure. The Institute of Government completed a sidewalk inventory of downtown. The blue line indicates where the downtown boundary is (note: this boundary has been created for the purposes of this strategic vision and plan). The red line shows where no sidewalk currently exists, and the green line shows an existing sidewalk.



-  Downtown Boundary
-  No Sidewalk
-  Sidewalk Exists



**Before**

*Before:* The photograph shows an area downtown where a sidewalk is needed. The sidewalk ends at the gazebo on this side of Washington Street, which causes pedestrians to cross the intersection or walk in the grass when heading northwest toward Pitts Park.



**After**

*After:* The rendering shows a new sidewalk that could continue all the way to Pitts Park, linking the park to downtown. Brick edging is added to the sidewalk, continuing the downtown streetscape design.



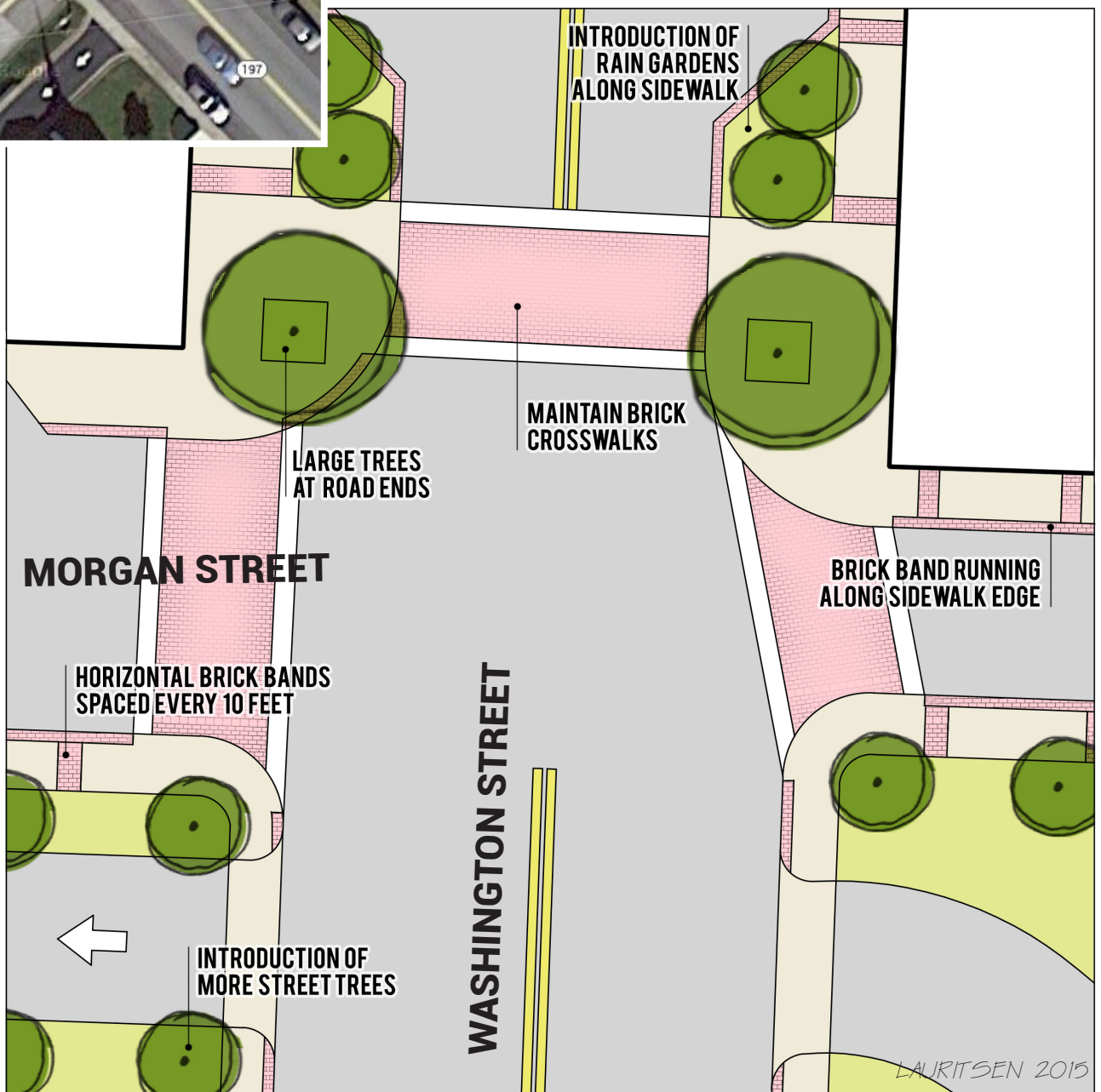
## Extend the Streetscape

The new streetscape in downtown Clarkesville is one of the greatest points of pride mentioned in focus groups and survey responses. However, the streetscape should be extended all along Washington Street. Also, new sidewalks, street trees, and lighting should be extended onto secondary downtown roads to create better connectivity.



*Before:* The aerial view (left) shows the intersection of Washington and Water Streets. This intersection is where the current streetscape improvements end. *Image from Google Maps.*

*After:* The plan view below shows new streetscape improvements that will extend Clarkesville's existing design down Washington Street. Improvements include: keeping brick crosswalks, adding brick edging to sidewalks, and landscaping.





*Before:* The photograph shows the existing streetscape on the fringe of the downtown area. The strong personality of downtown suddenly ends but could be extended down primary and secondary roads bordering the main district area.



*After:* The rendering depicts an updated streetscape that mimics certain characteristics of downtown such as running brick bond borders along the sidewalks, which would beautify the corridor as well as creating a safer walking zone for pedestrians. Brick crosswalks and light posts already seen downtown could also be added to continue the downtown aesthetic. Installing rain gardens and street trees would green the edges of the roads as well as becoming a runoff collection system that would provide better erosion control and safer driving conditions during storms.



Before



After: New sidewalk with brick bond edging and reduced curb cuts



After: shade trees planted along the sidewalk



After: Crape myrtles planted along sidewalk



Before



After: New sidewalk with brick bond edging



Before



After: New sidewalk with shade trees lines a parking lot on West Water Street.



After: Downtown's secondary streets are important, too. The sidewalk has been cleaned and brick bond edging has been applied. A rain garden helps catch stormwater runoff. Downtown's connectivity and the street's aesthetic has been improved.



Before

## Rear Buildings

Many of the Washington Street buildings have rear parking lots, which is a valuable asset. More attention needs to be paid to the aesthetics of these parking areas and the rear of the buildings. Also, these areas, in time, could become sites for infill development. Furthermore, the rear entrances, if properly improved, could act as additional premium space. The city could offer façade grants for the front and rear of buildings to encourage rear-building renovations.



*Before:* This rear façade is seen from West Green Street.

*After:* The rendering below shows the improved rear façade. A sidewalk has been added to reduce the continuous curb cut and is decorated with brick edging to match the streetscape on Washington Street. A planted grass buffer separates the rear façade from the parking lot. Shade trees screen the back of the building.





Before

## Rear Buildings, Downtown Music Venue

*Before (Left):* This rear façade is located off of Monroe Ave. An alley cuts through the lot, and one of the connected buildings has a space for rent.



*After:* The vacant space is transformed into a restaurant and music venue, “DrumRoll Live Music and Grille.” Grass buffers add definition to the sidewalk and beautify the space. Trees are planted to offer shade to the new patio space, where outdoor events can be held under string lights at night. The alley is still available for vehicle traffic but is clearly defined and separated from the patio by a grass buffer.

## County Courthouse

The Old County Courthouse and surrounding property has the potential to have the largest impact on the City of Clarkesville and Habersham County. In the short term, the courthouse parking needs to be altered to maximize downtown parking availability to support downtown businesses. The better the businesses do financially, the better the city and county will do as well.

In the long term, hopefully the county will see this key site as an economic development opportunity that could perform like another industry. This site could be redeveloped into a \$20 million mixed-use development that could house retailers, offices, housing, lodging, public safety infrastructure, and a downtown active green space. Ideally, the county, city, Development Authority, and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) would work together to redevelop this site for the betterment of the entire community.



*Old Courthouse Property, Before:* Located at on a prime lot downtown, the existing old courthouse building has a variety of uses but the space is not maximized. The large paved parking lot could be put to better use with new infill development.



*Old Courthouse Property, After.* The rendered plan above shows what new development on the old county courthouse site could be. There are many different options for new design; however, this example shows new, two- to three-story mixed-use buildings filling the empty paved lot. Bottom floors offer retail and services, and upper floors serve as office and residential space. The existing streetscape design elements such as shade trees and brick-edged sidewalks are continued as part of this plan to tie in with Clarkesville's overall downtown streetscape. Sidewalks within the property improve circulation and connectivity to surrounding businesses and to Pitts Park.

## View Down 115 East/Monroe Street

The rendering (right) shows a design inspired by Clarkesville's original mid-century courthouse clock tower, making it highly visible on the corner of 115 East and Washington Street. The ground level could have retail, while office and residential space could be located on upper floors.





## View of the New Mixed-Use Courthouse Square Design

The rendering shows a longer-term vision (20 years) of what the new courthouse square could be. Clarkesville's signature gazebo has been moved to the center plaza, creating a gathering space that could be used for events. The new square design could be a walkable activity hub surrounded by storefronts, wide sidewalks, and smaller plazas. Spaces for outdoor patio dining are placed along sidewalks. The Square could be Clarkesville's premiere live, work, and play space for the future.





**Visioning: The Courthouse Square**  
a 20-year design concept

## Exterior Lighting

Walking at night with uneven sidewalks, steep grades, and haphazard lighting conditions on some secondary streets can be difficult. It is important to make sure that sidewalks are well lit and that ground elevation changes are easily noticeable.



*Before:* This stretch of Monroe Street branches immediately off the existing town square and includes the entrance to great amenities to visitors: a free visitor parking lot and bathroom facility. However, the street itself lacks sidewalks and adequate lighting, and the road pavement appears uncared for.



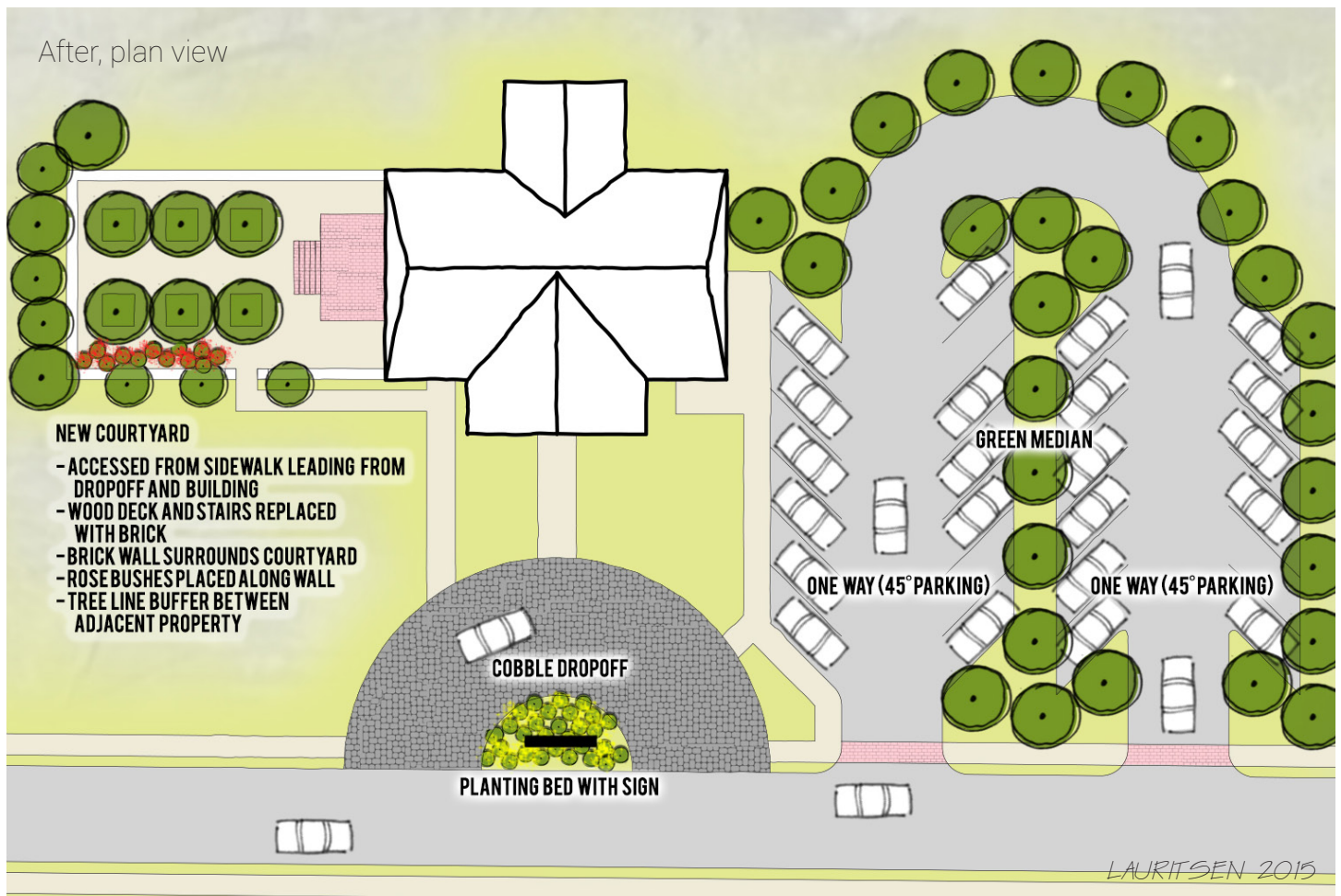
*After:* Simply repaving both Monroe Street and the alley behind the town square buildings improves the overall look of this area, while brick-trimmed sidewalks and crosswalks increases walkability. Lastly, the inclusion of upright light posts improves visibility and safety, while extending the downtown district feel beyond the town square.

## Façade Improvements

Clarkesville should work with existing businesses that have nonconforming structures to improve their façades when it is time to renovate the buildings. This approach is non-combative and will take time, but working with and assisting the property owner creates a win-win situation.

### Mary Street House

This house on Mary Street was once used by the Lion's Club.





*Mary Street House, Before*

*Before:* Once used by the Lion's Club, the Mary Street house could be renovated and used as an event space for meetings, weddings, reunions, parties, and more.



*Mary Street House, After*

*After:* The rendering above shows the Mary Street House hosting a wedding reception in the newly designed courtyard space. Landscaping improvements, façade improvements, and new signage transform the house into an event space. The parking lot is repaved and landscaped, and a semicircular driveway allows for valet and provides an easy drop-off point for caterers and other event coordinators.

## Rite Aid Pharmacy

Rite Aid Pharmacy is located at 1235 Washington Street. When it is time to renovate the existing business, the City of Clarkesville could work with Rite Aid Pharmacy and other businesses to renovate existing structures in a way that the new design could fit within the overall aesthetic context and future planning of Clarkesville. The rendering below shows a newer, more attractive design that Rite Aid is using at other store locations. This design would fit well on the streetscape.



*Existing Rite Aid Pharmacy on Washington Street*



*After Renovations, Front Entrance*



*After Renovations, Side Entrance*

## Bridge Street Building



Before

Before: The vacant building is located at the corner of Old Historic U.S. 441 and Bridge Street, a prime corner lot downtown. Some renovation is needed to the building, and landscaping is needed on the lot.



After

After: Downtown destinations where people can gather and hang out were a main request made throughout the public input phase. The vacant building could be a new home for a variety of businesses. The rendering shows one such purpose, the "Fifty-Fifty Microbrewery." The building has been renovated with a patio space for outdoor live entertainment or just hanging out. Landscaping improvements enhance the lot.

# Hanners Building and Adjacent Buildings on the Square

The three buildings shown in the photograph below are located on the town square, and the Hanners Building is a corner landmark in downtown Clarkesville. With some minor improvements, this block of buildings could look more polished.



Hanners sign moved to more prominent central location on façade

New paint

Accent band added

Logo sign changed to a painted mural sign and new metal awning



After

Large continuous awning removed and replaced by two separate awnings for historical accuracy and to give cleaner look to the façade

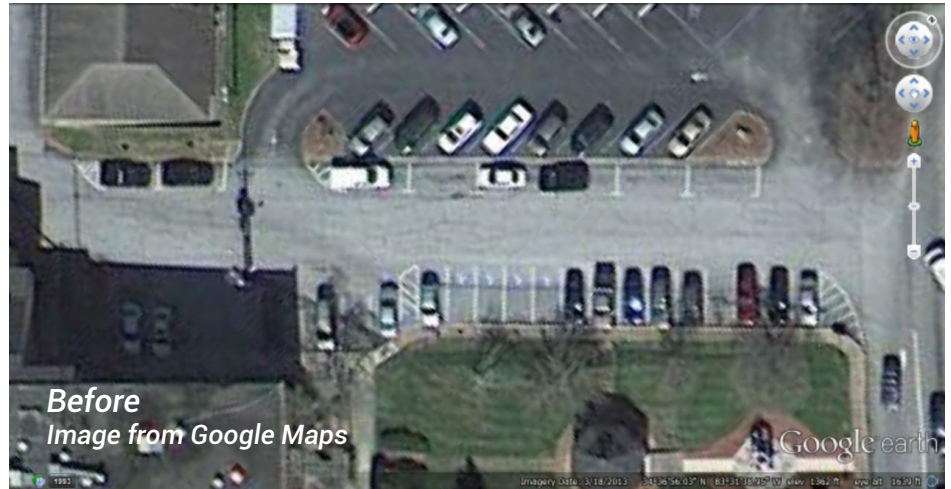
K. McSHEA 2015



## Parking

Parking is always a downtown issue, no matter what downtown you are in. Clarkesville has conducted a parking study that concluded the downtown has enough parking. That being said, Clarkesville must continue to address the concerns raised about parking such as way-finding signage, two-hour parking limits, striping to designate parking spaces along Washington Street and other secondary streets, and easy walkways to public parking lots.

*Before:* The public parking lot in front of the courthouse is underutilized, and reprogramming could create a more effective and attractive parking area immediately adjacent to the main square. The existing lot contains 33 parking spaces, eight of which are designated for handicap accessibility and another six reserved for county officials.



*After (rendered plan above):* Since this is no longer an operational county courthouse, the reserved spaces can be eliminated and handicapped spaces can be reduced, creating twelve new parking spaces. Moving away from parallel parking and transitioning to a combination of both parallel and 45-degree parking lines would allow the lot to hold 34 cars, with only one handicap accessible spot and no reserved spaces. The downtown streetscape is extended by applying the brick bands along the sidewalks as well as horizontal bands running every 10-15 feet. Street trees are installed within planting beds at the ends of parking lanes. Additional updates could include installing a green planting strip between this lot and the adjacent private parking lot, allowing pedestrians to get out of the vehicular zone and into a safer walking area leading to downtown.

**Before**



*Before:* The photograph depicts the existing conditions of the entrance into the courthouse parking lot. There is no discernible crosswalk allowing pedestrians to cross over the entrance of the lot, and the circulation patterns are confusing for drivers.

**After**



*After:* This rendering depicts the lot entrance with the addition of a brick crosswalk that is already present downtown. It creates a safe passage for pedestrians and signals drivers to pedestrians walking along the sidewalk. Street trees within newly installed planting beds break up the sea of asphalt and create attractive areas of shade where pedestrians can rest.

## Pitts Park Restrooms

The restrooms in Pitts Park aren't the pits, but they could be improved. Pitts Park is a wonderful amenity that is enjoyed by the greater Clarkesville community. It is truly a unique asset that people love. However, the bathrooms are clearly in need of a little tender loving care. With a little paint inside and out, along with some fun signage, the restrooms could be upgraded in keeping with the rest of this wonderful park.



### After:

- structure painted green with Clarkesville logo
- park rules signage consolidated from over 20 signs in Pitts Park to one attractive sign and placed on exterior restroom wall replacing old sign
- poles removed
- trees planted
- large stones help define the space so cars cannot park in pedestrian area
- mulch added to define sidewalk

## Downtown Directional Signage

Clarkesville has many amenities necessary to support a vibrant downtown. For instance, downtown has two public restrooms, public parking lots, green space, and a Welcome Center. Unfortunately, these amenities are not all prominently located on the main thoroughfare. Therefore, attractive and unique way-finding signage is necessary to direct tourists and community members to these amenities.

*Before*



*After: Using Utility Boxes and Murals*

This digital rendering shows the new sidewalk design with the addition of brick crosswalks. A painted sign includes the Clarkesville logo and directions to nearby public parking, a downtown amenity. The utility box is used as a place to attach directional signage and a map of downtown, helping visitors locate key areas of interest such as shops, restaurants, parking, and public restrooms.

## Utilizing the Backs of Existing Signs

Why add to the visual clutter of the streetscape when signs could just as easily be placed on the back side of existing downtown signs? The Mauldin House serves as both a welcome center and an event space for downtown Clarkesville; however, there is no directional signage on Washington Street pointing the way for visitors. Using the back side of an existing sign, a sign saying "Welcome Center, Next Left" could be placed to direct southbound traffic on Washington Street. This is just one example of how new signage could be applied to the backs of existing signs while also adding more wayfinding signage to downtown.



After: In addition to new wayfinding signage, the digital rendering above also includes enhancements to the streetscape, such as planting trees and filling striped areas on the pavement with grass.

## Murals to Create a Sense of Arrival

Blank walls of downtown buildings offer a great opportunity to paint wayfinding signage, display beautiful work of local artists, or for branding by painting the Clarkesville logo. The rendering below shows how the Clarkesville logo could be painted on the blank wall of this building, located along Highway 115 East / Monroe Street. It gives visitors a sense of arrival as they get to the heart of downtown, while reinforcing the Clarkesville brand by displaying the logo. Lights could be added so that the same effect could be possible even after the sun goes down.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Opening a Business Guide

Main Street could develop a "How to Open a Business" guide that would walk potential entrepreneurs step-by-step through the process. Other communities like Canton, Georgia, have developed these types of documents, which usually address topics such as appropriate zoning, building permits, inspections, and occupational tax certificates. This type of guide helps clarify and streamline the local government logistics.

### Fire/Infill Options

It is important to rebuild the structures that were lost to the fire. Four buildings and multiple businesses were lost, including three restaurants. These businesses helped create a downtown destination for Clarkesville. There are multiple possibilities for redevelopment. The Clarkesville DDA has the ability to assist the rebuilding effort through incentives. It will take a collaborative effort that combines the private and public sectors for new or restored buildings and businesses to come back.

### Economic Redevelopment Strategies

As the city and DDA work with the property owners to restore and repair the fire-damaged buildings, creative economic solutions could be useful. Engaging a company that specializes in public-private development could be beneficial.

### Lodging Downtown

The public input phase revealed an overwhelming desire for a downtown lodging option. The public wants a smaller lodging option, with a boutique hotel often discussed. A downtown hotel would add a much-needed overnight option for the area, and all downtown restaurants and retailers would benefit from the lodgers. In order for downtown Clarkesville to become a full-fledged destination, lodging must be developed. In time, there will likely be multiple downtown lodging options.

### Hosting a Downtown Incentive Workshop

Downtown already offers many incentives like façade grants, preservation tax credits, and low-interest loan programs. These programs can be the critical ingredient to make downtown development deals happen. It is important that local realtors and bankers know, support, and utilize these incentives. A yearly update could kick-start this process. An incentive workshop that brings representatives from the Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Cities Foundation could be arranged around a lunchtime workshop.

### Soque River

Building on Clarkesville's natural resources will help link the areas of natural beauty, creating unique assets for tourists and locals alike. Pitts Park is a fabulous city park. Building a stronger connection between the park and the Soque River would make this recreational area even better. Currently, the river does not play a prominent role in park programming. Two ideas were discussed during public input: a canoe/kayak launch, and a fishing/viewing platform. Canoe or kayak launches would allow people to put in or pull out at Pitts Park. A low-impact boat launch could be funded through a Department of Natural Resources recreational trails grant.

A boardwalk-style fishing and viewing platform could be enjoyed by citizens and tourists of all ages. This structure would encourage visitors to fish or sit and enjoy the river. The Mark of the Potter, a nearby roadside shop, was referenced as a good model. The attraction features gumball-like fish food dispensers—people put in money and then feed the fish. It draws people of all ages to the site. By implementing these improvements, Clarkesville would create a river destination.

### Garment Manufacturing Mill

The old Garment Manufacturing Mill, located at the corner of West Water Street and Madison Street, is in need of redevelopment. This is a prime piece of

property, but its current abandoned and neglected condition is negatively impacting adjacent properties, decreasing the likelihood of area development. This property is ideal for redevelopment, which could offer a mix of uses from commercial retail and office to residential space, with plenty of parking behind the structure.

### **Main Street Website Update**

The excellent Clarkesville Main Street website is doing a great job of communicating all that downtown Clarkesville offers. A few small additions could make it even more helpful. The website already links to vacant properties, but this feature could be even more effective if each property listing included a photo of the exterior and interior, square footage information, contact information, and the purchase and/or rental price.

### **Upper-story Housing Marketing**

An additional page could be added to the Main Street website that promotes downtown housing. It would be the DDA's responsibility to list traditional downtown housing and upper-story housing options. In addition, the Main Street Program could develop a waiting list to promote the option. To make people aware of the downtown living option and to raise money, the DDA could host a "Downtown Housing Tour" of current homes and lofts.

### **Community Event Space/Mary Street Building**

A recurring theme throughout the public input process was the need for a community event space that could house weddings, parties, community functions, club activities, and private events. Luckily, Clarkesville already owns the Lions Club House, located on Mary Street. The facility needs to be renovated, but once completed, the building could offer the space necessary for community activities.

### **Live Music Venue**

Having establishments that host live music events would also add to Clarkesville's reputation as a

destination. Live music was mentioned by all ages as an activity that would be supported.

### **Create Upper-story Housing Incentives**

Clarkesville could take steps to develop incentives for upper-story housing. For instance, safety grants for upper-story wiring and sprinklers could encourage upper-story housing redevelopment. (Consider creating and implementing a wiring and sprinkler grant program similar to Dahlgonega's.)

### **Old Mill**

The Old Mill houses multiple tenants that add a variety of recreational opportunities like bowling to Clarkesville. However, much work is still needed for the full redevelopment opportunity to be realized.



Photo Credit: Dione Garrison



## Infill Options

The vacant lot shown in the photograph below provides an excellent location for new downtown infill. Located in a prime space on Washington Street, the new infill should fit within the character of the overall historic streetscape, and should complement the surrounding buildings in scale, building style, materials, and color. The rendering below shows a two-story infill building that could be mixed-use, with restaurant or retail space on the ground level and downtown living or office space above.



## Soque River

Building on Clarkesville's natural resources will help link the areas of natural beauty, creating unique assets for tourists and locals alike. Pitts Park is a fabulous city park. Building a stronger connection between the park and the Soque River would make this recreational area even better. Currently, the river does not play a prominent role in park programming. Two ideas were often discussed during public input: a canoe or kayak launch, and a fishing/viewing platform.



*Before*

*Before:* The photograph shows an area along the Soque River.

*After:* The rendering below shows a boardwalk-style dock that could be used for fishing or just enjoying the river. Adding amenities like this to Pitts Park will create destinations for downtown Clarkesville.



*After*

## Old Garment Manufacturing Mill

The old Garment Manufacturing Mill, located at the corner of West Water Street and Madison Street, is in need of redevelopment. This is a prime piece of property, but its current abandoned and neglected condition is negatively impacting adjacent properties, decreasing the likelihood of area development. This property could be redeveloped to offer a mix of uses from commercial retail and office to residential space, with plenty of parking behind the structure.





Before



After: The rendering shows the old Garment Manufacturing Mill restored and being used by several businesses and residents as a mixed use development. It could be used as a workshop for the Makers Movement of Clarkesville, local artist studios, bars, retail, small restaurants, and/or apartments. Streetscape elements found on Washington Street are extended to West Water Street, including street lamps, sidewalk design, and shade trees.

short-term  
**ACTION ITEMS**

## SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEM CHECKLIST

### organization

**Create a Downtown Guide**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Create a Junior Main Street Board**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Downtown Lodging**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mary Street Building**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vacant Property Online Inventory/  
Breakfast with Property Owners**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

### promotion

**Dinner and a Movie**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Public Art/Vacant Windows**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday Night Live - 1<sup>st</sup> Fridays**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

### design

**2-Hour Parking Sign Removal**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pitts Park Restroom**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Striping Parking Spaces**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Utility Box Signage**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

### economic development

**A Guide to Starting a Business  
in Clarkesville**  
Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## ORGANIZATION

### 1 Create a Downtown Guide

- Lead: Mary Beth Horton
- Partners: Jeff Johnson, Teresa Barry (CBCA)
- Timeline: Proof by February 10th
- Funding: Graphic Design/Layout: \$500  
Printing: First set, \$200; additional sets, sponsor driven
- Obstacles: None

Steps:

1. Update map and business directory
2. Determine content to be included
3. Find Graphic Designer
4. Printing costs: quantity of 1000 = \$198
5. Distribution of first set
6. Find sponsors for second printing

### 2 Create a Junior Main Street Board

- Lead: Mary Beth Horton
- Partners: Neil Reems, Katie Ledford
- Timeline: Select youth by March; first meeting in April
- Funding: \$200
- Obstacles: None

Steps:

1. Create guidelines/application
2. Set length of program:  
April 1–May 30, 2016
3. Set number of youth to serve: 8
4. Reach out to schools/teachers and request student recommendations
  - a. Habersham Central High School
  - b. Tallulah Falls School
  - c. Piedmont College
  - d. North Georgia Tech

5. Review applications
6. Select JR Board members
7. Hold first meeting to gather student input/ ideas
8. Distribute Junior Main Street t-shirts, name badges
9. Let student ideas determine direction of Junior Board
10. Publicity for Junior Main Street Board

## PROMOTION

### 1 Dinner and a Movie

- Lead: Sherry Callahan (liaison to HCT)
  - Partners: Mary Beth (licensing); Alta Mosely (theater); Laura Farrelly (Harvest Habersham); Jeff Morris (Copper Pot)
  - Timeline: Get verbal interest by Friday November 21; Reserve movies by January 31; Movie dates March 21 and May 2nd
  - Funding: Cost of movie licensing, cost of screen rental
  - Obstacles: Screen size/stage accommodation
- Steps:
1. Check HCT Calendar of Events for open dates
  2. Speak to Alta Mosely (Sherry)
  3. Speak to local restaurants (Joni – Harvest Habersham & Copper Pot)
  4. Acquire projection screen – Wayne Bright Productions
  5. Brainstorm movie titles
  6. Confirm movie dates/showings: March 21 and May 2
  7. Acquire licensing for two movies
  8. Confirm ticket prices: \$8.00 ticket
  9. Meet with theater
  10. Send letter to restaurants
  11. Determine dinner specials for participating restaurants
  12. "Dress rehearsal" at theater with equipment
  13. Create posters/tickets
  14. Publicity campaign: news releases, radio, social media, word-of-mouth
  15. Acquire red carpet, ropes for night of event; publicity materials
  16. Event night!



*Ticket:* A Dinner and a Movie "ticket" like this one could be used by local restaurants in partnership with the Habersham Community Theater and could offer specials and discounts. The reverse side of the ticket could advertise the City of Clarkesville's website and direct visitors to the event calendar and other important information.



## 2 Public Art/Vacant Windows

- Lead: Roxie Barron and Claudia Lyle
- Partners: Wally Wenn, local artists, Mary Beth Horton
- Timeline: Phase 1: March–April; Phase 2: May–July; Phase 3: August–October; Phase 4: November–December
- Funding: \$150 per phase/ \$600 project total
- Obstacles: Permission from artists

Steps:

1. Obtain permission to use city-owned property windows
2. Determine content to go into each window for each phase
  - a. Downtown Master Plan images
  - b. Themed photography: "Eyes of Clarkesville"
  - c. Pottery/paintings
  - d. Various exhibits
3. Talk to artists about displaying artwork
4. Determine pricing for printed display
5. Rotate artwork out quarterly
6. Publicity for each display



*Before:* This building is located at 1335 Washington Street. Vacant buildings downtown provide opportunities to display the work of local artists and craftsmen.

*After:* The rendering shows what the empty storefront would look like if filled with local artists' work. A hand-carved wooden bench adds character to the sidewalk



## 3 Friday Night Live - 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays

- Lead: Joey Duncan
- Partners: Ann Brusich, Sherry Callahan
- Timeline: Present idea to CBCA in January; Hold events April–June
- Funding: CBCA and Main Street; cost to be determined
- Obstacles: Local ordinance restrictions/local business participation

Steps:

1. Research Clayton and Sautee events (Ann); research Gainesville (MBH/Roxie)
2. Check calendars to avoid conflicts
3. Present concept to CBCA for buy in, input, suggested activities (Joey)
4. Go to council to see if there are any barriers or obstacles
5. Advertising/graphics
6. Schedule activities for Friday events

## DESIGN

### 1 2-Hour Parking Sign Removal

- Lead: Barbara Kesler/Leigh Johnston
- Partners: City of Clarkesville Public Works
- Timeline: February 2015
- Funding: None
- Obstacles: Weather/public works availability

Steps:

1. Work with Public Works Department to remove all 2-hour parking signage downtown
2. Discuss how signs are to be removed
3. Remove signs



## 2 Pitts Park Restrooms

- Lead: Hunter McCutcheon
- Partners: Taylor Graham, Jeremy Pirkle, Charle Statler
- Timeline: Phase 1: May; Phase 2: December; Phase 4: November–December
- Funding: In kind/donations
- Obstacles: None

Steps:

1. Request donations from local businesses/hardware stores
2. Meet with city departments
3. Determine paint colors
4. Consolidate signage into one sign
5. Collect resources (paint, supplies, trees, mulch)
6. Obtain help from volunteers
7. Schedule day of painting
8. Publicity/recognition
9. Begin working on Phase 2



## 3 Striping Parking Spaces

- Lead: City of Clarkesville Public Works
- Partners: Bill Gresham, Jeremy Garmon
- Timeline: February 2015
- Funding: To be determined
- Obstacles: None

Steps:

1. Meet with lead/partners to determine spaces to be striped
2. Contact company to do striping
3. Stripe the parking spaces

# 4

## Utility Box Signage

- Lead: Wendy Behrens
- Partners: Leigh Johnston, Teresa Barry
- Timeline: May 2015
- Funding: \$150 from Clarkesville Business & Community Association
- Obstacles: None

### Steps:

1. Meet with city manager and zoning administrator
2. Create design (Jennifer Tench)
3. Print stickers: local vendor
4. Place stickers
5. Get permission from county manager to add complementary sign at Courthouse
6. Publicity/recognition



# 5

## A Guide to Starting a Business in Clarkesville

- Lead: Mary Beth Horton
- Partners: JR Charles, Caleb Gaines, Glenda Smith
- Timeline: March
- Funding: \$100 printing costs
- Obstacles: None

### Steps:

1. Obtain county guide
2. Develop list of necessary documents to include
3. Customize all documents for Clarkesville
4. Consolidate all information into one file/booklet
5. Distribute proof to relevant departments/city clerk city manager
6. Print copies for city clerk and new business packets
7. Make available online

## 6 Downtown Lodging

- Lead: Joey Duncan
- Partners: City of Clarkesville/ DDA
- Timeline: Mid-January 2015
- Funding: Varies
- Obstacles: Finding investors/developers

Steps:

1. Obtain downtown lodging feasibility study
2. Meet with DDA, city manager, and committee
3. Report findings of feasibility study
4. Maintain ongoing search for investors/ developers and potential lodging sites

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## 7 Mary Street Building

- Lead: Barrie Aycock
- Partners: Janet Taylor, Deb Kilgore
- Timeline: Phase 1: end of January 2015; Phase 2: To be determined
- Funding: To be determined
- Obstacles: Funding

Steps:

1. Inspection of building
2. Rental feasibility study/income potential (Janet Taylor)
3. Have ARC or GMRC research grant opportunities
4. Present above findings to Barbara/city council

5. Suggest contractor to do preliminary construction estimate
6. Make Request for Proposal for potential contractors
7. Hire contractor
8. Fundraising ideas "Save the Lions Building"
9. Work with soccer association on potential parking/event conflicts
10. Hire event coordinator to schedule events
11. Ribbon-cutting upon completion

*Mary Street Building, After:* The Mary Street Building is restored and used for a variety of events.



## 8 Vacant Property Online Inventory/ Breakfast with Property Owners

- Lead: Roxie Barron
- Partners: JR Charles, Jeff Johnson, Mary Beth Horton
- Timeline: March 1, 2015
- Funding: \$200
- Obstacles: Permission from property owners

### Steps:

1. Send Roxie a map of downtown district and current business inventory
2. Visit Tax Assessors site to obtain owner names; information – Roxie
3. Select date for property owners coffee/ breakfast
4. Send invitations to property owners; board of directors, mayor and council; CBCA members – ALL
5. Create form for property owners to complete during breakfast – JR Charles
6. Collect breakfast items/coffee; set up conference room with supplies –ALL
7. Hold meeting with property owners
8. Collect completed forms
9. Take pictures of downtown properties – Jeff Johnson
10. Consolidate all information and send to Mary Beth to post on web
11. Publicity for project – MBH
12. Maintain quarterly updates on site

long-term  
**ACTION ITEMS**

# 1 **Fire Damaged Building Options**

It is important to rebuild the structures lost in the fire and to fill the new spaces with multiple businesses. The city has purchased four of the five structures affected by the fire and is collaborating with the Clarkesville DDA and professional consultants to rebuild these structures over the next 2–3 years.

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# 2 **Streetscape Extension and Connectivity**

The streetscape is a point of community pride and needs to be extended along Washington Street and the adjoining side streets to create more connectivity and to improve walkability. The city has designated SPLOST VI funds and has applied for grant funds to finance this extension.

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# 3 **County Courthouse/Main Square Redesign**

Redesigning the area occupied by the Old County Courthouse offers the largest positive economic development opportunity for the City of Clarkesville and Habersham County. This site could be redeveloped into a substantial mixed-use development that could house retailers, offices, housing, lodging, public safety infrastructure, and several active downtown green spaces. The City of Clarkesville, Habersham County, the Development Authority, and the Clarkesville Downtown Development Authority will work together to redevelop the area for the betterment of the community.

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# 4 **Downtown Lodging**

A hotel feasibility study has shown that downtown Clarkesville can support a small lodging option. Clarkesville will focus efforts of the Main Street Program and the Clarkesville Downtown Development Authority toward recruiting a family-run or boutique-type lodging facility.

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# 5 **Community Event Space**

The city owns the old Lions Club House, which would make an excellent event venue to host weddings, parties, community functions, and private events. Efforts will be focused on obtaining funds to make necessary repairs and updates to the building for future use as an event space.

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# 6 **Create Upper-story Housing Opportunities and Incentives**

Downtown Clarkesville currently has empty upper-story spaces that could be converted into downtown housing. The city could develop a safety grant program to assist with rewiring and sprinkler requirements to encourage development of these spaces into upper-story housing.



