



ROME DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN

ROME, GEORGIA • 2012

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GEOGRAPHY OF ROME

Rome is an energetic city of approximately 36,000 that was founded in 1834 where the Oostanaula and Etowah rivers converge to form the Coosa. Rome's growth began with the cotton industry and transportation of goods, and it soon became an economic hub in the Appalachian foothills of Northwest Georgia. Today, Rome's economy is primarily based on service-providing industries like education, retail, and healthcare, and is home to the largest private college campus in the United States, Berry College. The city benefits from its proximity to three interstate highways: I-75, I-20, and I-59, and its relatively easy connection to the metropolitan areas of Atlanta, Birmingham, and Chattanooga.



INTRODUCTION

To strengthen, sustain, and expand downtown Rome, the Downtown Development Authority hired the University of Georgia's Fanning Institute to develop a Master Plan to guide the next 20 years of growth and change. Through Fanning's community visioning process, members of the Rome community shared their thoughts, both good and bad, about the current state of downtown Rome and its future as a sustainable and vibrant economic hub. The resulting plan should be utilized as a living guide for the growth, development, and protection of downtown Rome.

DEVELOPING THE MASTER PLAN

The development of the Master Plan began in March 2012 when the Downtown Development Authority hired the Fanning Institute. Through a visioning process tailored specifically to Rome, the Fanning team provided opportunities for public input along with services such as planning assistance, recommendations for downtown programming, urban design, and landscape design.

As an initial step in the process, steering and visioning committees were formed in March 2012 to guide the public engagement process led by Fanning. In addition, Fanning gathered information through one-on-one interviews, focus groups, online surveys, a town hall meeting, and a visual preference survey to provide a better understanding of the needs and wants of the community. Fanning's team of planners, designers, and researchers used the information from these sessions and surveys to establish key areas of interest.

The Fanning team reviewed existing plans for the community, how they were being implemented, how they would relate to the Downtown Master Plan, and where the plans were complementary and where they were in opposition. Site visits, regular communication with Steering Committee members, and a full dissection of the information gathered through the public engagement processes allowed the team to develop a draft plan. This plan was presented to the Steering and Visioning Committees in September 2012 for feedback was provided during a series of work sessions in which the Committees had an opportunity to make adjustments to the draft. The final master plan was presented to the community in December 2012.

GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The goals of the Downtown Rome Master Plan, defined by the Steering Committee, were built from the extensive public engagement, and supported by research, analysis, photo documentation, site survey, and design research.

Goal 1: Extend the downtown streetscape. Broad Street is the main corridor of downtown Rome, where many restaurants and shops line the street. Downtown's historic structures provide residents and visitors with a rich architectural history, a unique aesthetic, and a fluid streetscape. The next step is to look beyond the downtown historic district and include other areas such as the Top of Broad Street and 5th Avenue as areas that should reflect the character of downtown Rome. This can be accomplished through streetscape improvements that will create consistent visual appeal.

Goal 2: Improve gateways. One of the major goals of this plan is to expand downtown Rome towards the river and Turner McCall Boulevard so that clearly defined gateways and districts may be established. The gateway corridors into downtown should be addressed and should create a sense of arrival and expand downtown Rome's sense of place. These gateways include Turner McCall Boulevard from the Etowah River to West 1st Street and the intersection of North 5th Avenue and Turner McCall.

Goal 3: Create a vision for the West 3rd and 5th Avenue districts. The expansion of downtown includes the proposed River District on West 3rd Street and the proposed Arts District on 5th Avenue. With the addition of an Arts District, more activities will be available for visitors and residents on both sides of the Oostanaula, increasing riverfront connectivity and activity, and taking full advantage of the existing public infrastructure.

Goal 4: Increase the number of businesses downtown. Rome's high number of downtown vacancies is slowly decreasing as empty buildings are being filled by restaurants and commercial shops. The City of Rome should create incentives to attract more businesses downtown that could fill these vacancies and could contribute to a thriving downtown economy. Multiple strategies and approaches will be necessary to encourage and sustain the ideal mix of businesses in the downtown.

Goal 5: Increase upper story residential opportunities. There is a need to continue to increase downtown living opportunity to make downtown Rome even more vibrant. However, there are a few impediments such as fire code and historic preservation guidelines that can hinder upper story developments. Rome can work to be more development friendly and should consider grant programs that would assist upper story redevelopment.

MOVING FORWARD

The goals of the Downtown Rome Master Plan seek to stimulate economic development, encourage sustainable initiatives, and increase entertainment opportunities which, in turn, will help establish a more viable, vibrant, and successful city. Enhancing and extending Broad Street's streetscape design; formalizing the gateways that lead to downtown Rome; filling vacant lots with appropriately designed structures; and addressing vacant buildings downtown will all be important parts of building a better downtown. And while the Downtown Rome Master Plan is designated final, it is worth remembering that plans should be living documents, serving as a guide for growth and change and evolving with the community over time.

DISTRICTS MAP



MIDDLE
OF BROAD



5th*****
avenue
Arts District

PARKS
& REC

DOWNTOWN ROME MASTER PLAN AND VISIONING PROCESS

Creating a Master Plan using the Fanning Institute’s visioning process requires months of hard work and commitment to a process that results in a shared vision that reflects the community’s goals, wants, and needs. Ideas must be vetted. Goals must be established and discussed, shaped and reshaped. Residents must be engaged. The community must show a commitment to moving forward together, and the vision must be shared, belonging to the whole, not just one or two individuals. Master Plans are living documents that offer a vision for a prosperous future. The steps involved in creating the Downtown Rome Master Plan follow.

MARCH, APRIL, MAY 2012

- Steering and Visioning Committees were formed to guide the overall process and provide community representation in creating the plan, respectively. The Steering Committee focused on the overall scope of work while the Visioning Committee worked to identify specific areas of focus in downtown and the associated issues. The Visioning Committee was charged with conducting a Visual Preference Survey.
- The Fanning team conducted one-on-one interviews with community leaders and stakeholders to gain detailed information about Downtown Rome.
- The Steering Committee provided a collection of plans that the Fanning team reviewed in addition to demographic and economic analyses. The review provided a snapshot of what has and has not worked in the past and informed the committees of future intentions of various stakeholders.
- The Steering Committee reviewed information gathered up to this point, agreed on major areas of concentration, and developed

questions for the upcoming town hall meeting.

- A town hall meeting was conducted using group process technology that allows all attendees to respond to each question. Through this technology, information was gathered and reviewed in real time, allowing community members to prioritize issues and discuss their concerns via instant electronic submissions.
- The Steering and Visioning Committees reviewed information gathered at the town hall meeting and agreed on a final scope of work.

JUNE, JULY, AUGUST 2012

- The Fanning team integrated the community input (from the surveys, town hall meeting, formal and informal interviews) into recommendations and illustrative designs. This work formed the basis of the Downtown Rome Master Plan that will be approved by the Steering and Visioning Committees.

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2012

- The Steering Committee held a work session to review work-to-date and develop three short-term implementation goals and strategies. The Steering Committee and the Fanning team presented a draft Downtown Rome Master Plan to the Visioning Committee and the committees began planning a final public presentation.
- The Fanning team, following input from the Steering and Visioning Committees, finalized the plans and recommendations and prepared the document for release.
- The Fanning team began work with the Downtown Development Authority Board to identify and develop a short-term work program to implement the initial phase of the Master Plan.
- The Steering and Visioning Committees, along with the Fanning team, released the final Downtown Rome Master Plan to the community at a public presentation on December 13th.

GATEWAYS



FIGURE 1, GATEWAYS MAP. KEY GATEWAY AREAS TO FOCUS ON ARE MARKED WITH RED STARS.

Gateways act as the arrival and departure point for communities; they are the first and last impression of the community. Too often in Georgia, communities have not preserved or developed attractive gateways. Without an attractive gateway, community members and visitors alike travel along strip corridors that fail to signify unique or important areas or generate interest. Downtown Rome has unique architecture and streetscape along Broad Street that signifies arrival to the heart and soul of the community. If the aesthetics can create a sense of arrival on Broad Street through tree plantings, appropriate signage, and sidewalk patterns then it can be replicated at key locations along Turner McCall Avenue and 2nd Avenue, Rome's gateway will signal to travelers that they are coming to a place of importance.

Currently, Broad Street in downtown Rome has approximately 9,500 vehicle trips per day, Turner McCall Boulevard has approximately 35,000, and 2nd Avenue has approximately 27,000. Creating targeted area gateways into downtown would help draw those approximately 60,000 daily travelers into downtown Rome to eat shop, play, and live.

TURNER MCCALL BOULEVARD

Turner McCall Boulevard mimics the look of any commercial corridor in America, with a number of large franchises and an overabundance of commercial signage. Though this mainstream commercial corridor benefits Rome's economy, there is no sense of place like that of the Historic Downtown District. Improving the streetscape of Turner McCall Boulevard, especially at the intersection with Broad Street, would help join the downtown and the commercial corridor, creating a sense of arrival that draws people downtown.

This master plan suggests that the proper streetscape elements such as tree plantings, landscaping, downtown signage, and attractive street lighting should begin at two points on Turner McCall Boulevard approaching the intersection with Broad Street: 1) at the intersection with 5th Avenue; and 2) at the bridge located on Turner McCall Boulevard just before reaching Broad Street.

ISSUES

There is a lack of visual cues to help determine the start and entry into downtown. More attractive street lighting, signage, and landscaping are needed.

There are empty lots that need context-appropriate, attractive infill development to anchor the street view and create better gateways to downtown Rome.

There is a lack of design continuity between the Historic Downtown District and Turner McCall Boulevard.

Turner McCall Boulevard is under Georgia Department of Transportation oversight, limiting local community design options.

SOLUTIONS

Planting more trees at the four corners of the major intersection of Broad Street and Turner McCall Boulevard will let travelers know they are approaching downtown. Also, adding a two-foot (2') strip of grass or brick paver between the sidewalk and the road on both sides of Turner McCall Boulevard will create a buffer between the pedestrian and road, and will beautify the streetscape. Adding brick curb cuts for pedestrian crossings at intersections will add to the aesthetics and cue drivers to slow down at crosswalks.

Attractive site amenities should be added that continue the character of the Historic Downtown District to Turner McCall Boulevard, such as trees, signage, and street lamps. These will help visually unify both the Historic Downtown District and Turner McCall Boulevard. These visual cues will help define Turner McCall Boulevard as the entry to downtown Rome.

Reducing curb cuts will create safer and more beautiful sidewalks for pedestrians and will make entrances less confusing to drivers.

Empty lots are key locations for gateway buildings. Gateway buildings serve as the formal architectural entry to downtown and should be designed with the context of the Historic Downtown District in mind.

Create a partnership with corridor property owners to allow the city to plant trees on their private property and meet Georgia Department of Transportation regulations.



TURNER MCCALL BOULEVARD

PLAN VIEW



FIGURE 2. TURNER MCCALL BOULEVARD CURRENT STREETScape, PLAN VIEW.

Before: Currently, Turner McCall Boulevard lacks a formal entrance to downtown. The streetscape lacks the design elements found in downtown, such as street trees, boulevards, and proper infill development.

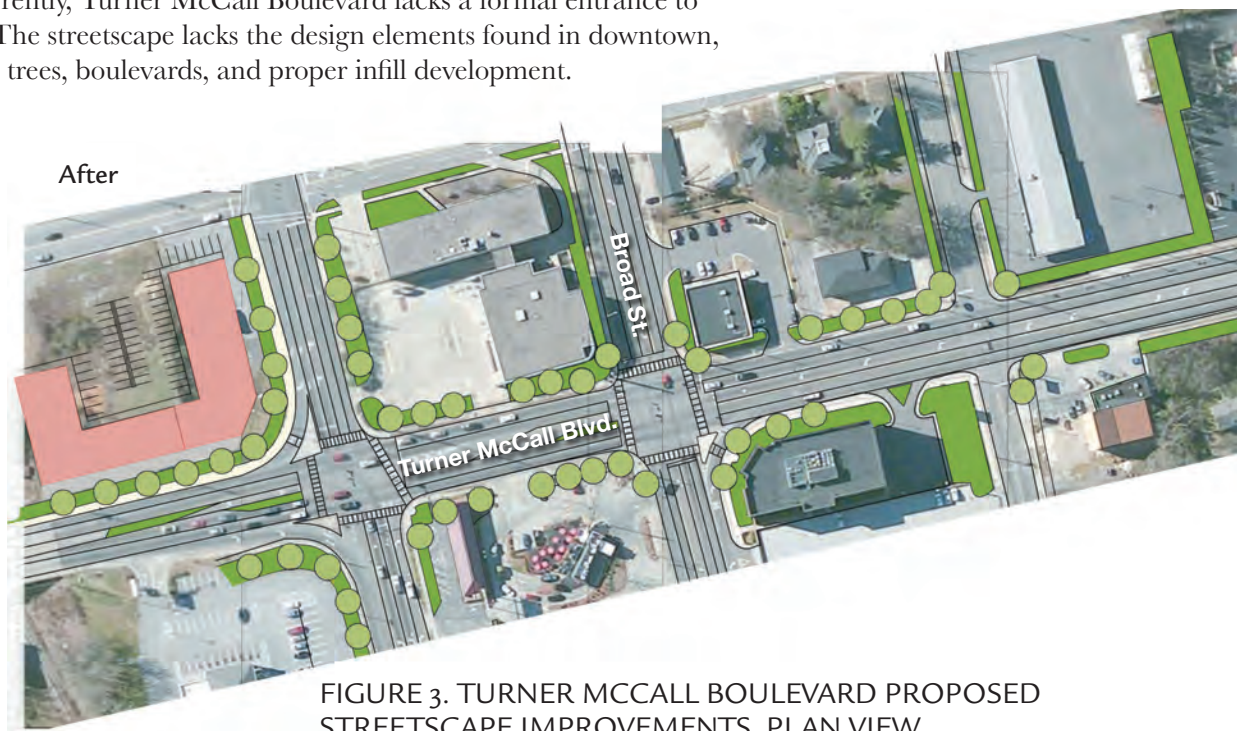


FIGURE 3. TURNER MCCALL BOULEVARD PROPOSED STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS, PLAN VIEW.

After: The rendered map shows improvements to Turner McCall Boulevard including tree plantings every eight, fifteen or twenty feet (8', 15', or 20'), green buffers, and corner infill development.

STREETSCAPE



FIGURES 4, 5, & 6. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The sidewalk on Turner McCall Boulevard is not well maintained. There are no shade trees.

After: This rendering shows the sidewalk with simple maintenance, which improves the aesthetic of the area immediately. After, with trees: This rendering shows a maintained and landscaped sidewalk that is beautiful and shaded.



FIGURES 7 & 8. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The sidewalk gets lost among all of the curb cuts from Turner McCall Boulevard and lacks shade trees.

After: This rendering shows the sidewalk with an added green buffer and shade trees, which helps to define the sidewalk making the area safer for pedestrians and more beautiful.



FIGURES 9 & 10. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This streetscape lacks crape myrtles and green buffers.

After: The rendering shows the streetscape with crape myrtles and green buffers, which help unify Turner McCall Boulevard and Broad Street as well as make the street more beautiful.



FIGURES 11 & 12. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Turner McCall Boulevard lacks the landscaping and continuity of Broad Street.

After: This rendering shows the area with better landscaping, including planted grass and crape myrtles and shade trees located a minimum of eight feet (8') from the road.



FIGURES 13 & 14. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This streetscape lacks shade trees and visual continuity with Broad Street.

After: The rendering above shows the streetscape with shade trees, which help unify Turner McCall Boulevard and Broad Street as well as make the street more beautiful.



FIGURES 15, 16, & 17. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Turner McCall Boulevard lacks the landscaping and continuity of Broad Street.

After, with crape myrtles: This rendering shows the area with better landscaping, including planted grass and crape myrtles located a minimum of eight feet (8') from the road.

After, with willow oaks: This rendering shows the area with better landscaping, including planted grass and willow oak trees located a minimum of eight feet (8'). Willow oaks are used downtown on Broad Street, so by using them on Turner McCall Blvd. the entire gateway to downtown will be unified with downtown.



FIGURES 18 & 19. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This parking lot lacks shade.

After: The rendering above shows the area with better landscaping, including shade trees and a planted swale that captures rain water run-off from the parking lot.

GOOD EXAMPLE ON TURNER MCCALL BOULEVARD



FIGURE 20. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

The photograph shows a good example of streetscape plantings. This property has crape myrtles fronting the street.



FIGURE 21 & 22. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows the parking garage with crape myrtles, which help unify Turner McCall Boulevard and Broad Street as well as make the street more beautiful.



FIGURE 23 & 24. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The parking garage is exposed and without street trees.

After: The rendering shows the streetscape with crape myrtles continuing from the adjacent property, helping to unify Turner McCall Boulevard and Broad Street as well as make the street more beautiful.

SIGNAGE



FIGURES 25 & 26. SIGNAGE.

Before: Unattractive billboard signage is what travelers see as they cross over the bridge.

After: The rendering shows the billboard being used to welcome visitors to Rome. Banners are displayed on street poles and continued from downtown to Turner McCall Boulevard.

INFILL



FIGURES 27 & 28. INFILL.

Before: This empty lot is located along Turner McCall Boulevard.

After: The rendering shows a possible infill design with a corner-facing building and attractive landscaping.

2ND AVENUE

Second Avenue is a road designed to move vehicles through Rome as quickly as possible. In doing so, it bisects downtown and creates a division. As long as 2nd Avenue is a Georgia Department of Transportation right-of-way, there are very few options to mediate its negative impacts on the downtown. So, the focus should be on creating a sense of anticipation then arriving in downtown along 2nd Avenue. This can be accomplished by using different unique forms of signage and greening where feasible to communicate to the traveler that they are arriving or departing downtown Rome.

ISSUES

There is a lack of visual cues to help determine the start and entry into downtown. More attractive street lighting, signage, and landscaping are needed.

Second Avenue is under Georgia Department of Transportation oversight, limiting local community design options.

SOLUTIONS

Add gateway signage at the corner of 2nd Avenue and Turner McCall Boulevard.

Increase landscaping along 2nd Avenue from Turner McCall to the bridge.

Create unique downtown signage along the roadway to remind travelers to eat shop, play and live downtown.

Place downtown historic banners along the light poles on the bridge to act as unifiers and define the boundary of downtown creating a sense of arrival.



2ND
AVE.

GATEWAYS



FIGURES 29 & 30. 2ND AVENUE.

Before. The bridge lacks banners.

After: Banners are added to the street lights to signify an arrival to downtown.



Banners

Before



After



FIGURES 31 & 32. 2ND AVENUE.
Closeup: Use the metal retaining wall as a welcoming mural.

Closeup



TOP *of* BROAD



FIGURE 33, TOP OF BROAD MAP. THE TOP OF BROAD AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN.

The Top of Broad is an area bound by Turner McCall Boulevard to the north and 6th Avenue to the south. While it is the primary entrance, the Top of Broad lacks traditional design elements that signify the arrival to downtown. Borrowing some of these elements from the historic district (Middle of Broad) and using them throughout the Top of Broad Street will create an appropriate and recognizable entrance into downtown Rome at the intersection of Turner McCall and Broad Street.

ISSUES

The Top of Broad streetscape has a number of issues that need to be addressed: inconsistent façades that do not reflect the same character of the rest of the architecture on Broad Street; narrow and unattractive sidewalks; uneven tree spacing and inconsistent tree selection; lack of a median; and frequent curb cuts into business parking lots that can compromise pedestrian safety.

The Top of Broad also lacks much of the feel of historic downtown Rome, which has a beautiful streetscape complete with large willow oaks, crape myrtles, downtown signage, brick accents on the sidewalks, and other street furnishings.

SOLUTIONS

Consistently spacing trees that can grow into a wide tree canopy will provide shade for pedestrians and also visually enhance the street. Suggested trees are those that thrive in urban conditions, including: willow oaks, Texas redbuds, Japanese Zelcovas, and red maples.

Attractive downtown signage (such as the banners on street lamp poles in the Middle of Broad) should be added along the Top of Broad and at the intersection of Broad Street and Turner McCall Boulevard. This will help create continuity in the look of downtown Rome. Visitors will be welcomed to downtown from Turner McCall and signage will help to establish a sense of arrival.

Sidewalks at the Top of Broad that are currently four-feet wide (4') should be widened to six feet (6') to match sidewalks on the Middle of Broad. Widening the sidewalks will add to the overall aesthetic as well as increase safety for pedestrians. Also, the number of curb cuts should be reduced to lower the hazard to both drivers and pedestrians.

TOP of
BROAD

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

PLAN VIEWS

ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS, BLOCK 1: 8TH AVENUE AND BROAD STREET TO TURNER McCALL BOULEVARD AND BROAD STREET



FIGURE 34, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The map above shows Block 1 before road configuration improvements.



FIGURE 35, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendered map above shows Block 1 after streetscape improvements: trees spaced every eight or fifteen (8' or 15'); a minimum sidewalk width of six feet (6'); and a minimum planted median width of two feet (2').

BLOCK 2: RIVERSIDE PARKWAY AND BROAD STREET TO 8TH AVENUE AND BROAD STREET

This block of the Top of Broad Street has the same issues as Block 1. The rendering below shows improvements made to this section of Broad Street. The addition of a four-foot (4') planted median serves as a safeguard from oncoming traffic.



FIGURE 36, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The map above shows Block 2 before streetscape improvements.

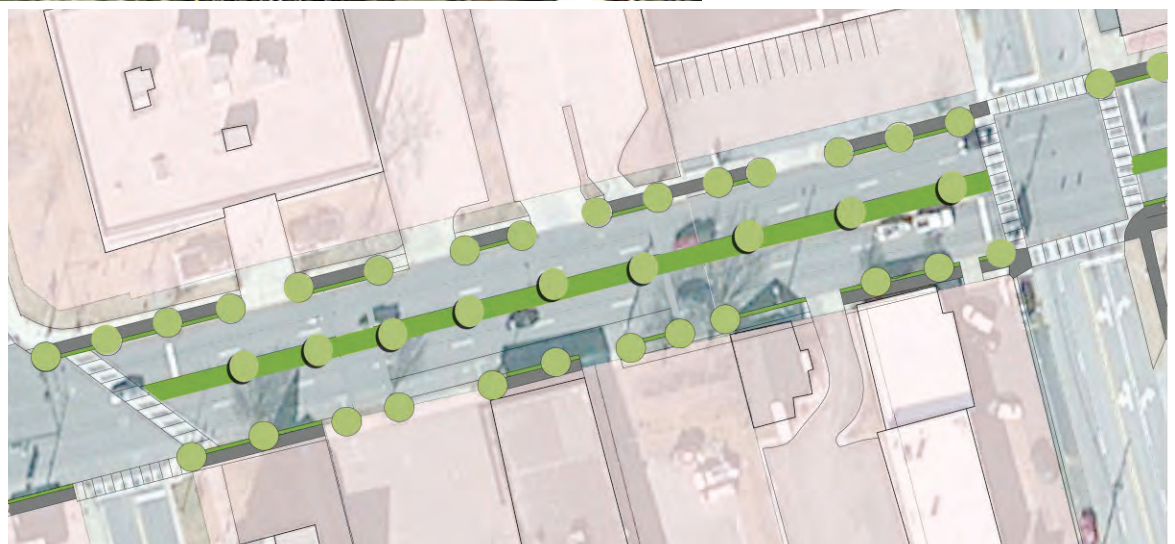


FIGURE 37, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendered map above shows Block 2 after streetscape improvements: trees spaced every eight or fifteen (8' or 15'); a minimum sidewalk width of six feet (6'); and a minimum vegetated median width of four feet (4').

BLOCK 3: 6TH AVENUE AND BROAD STREET TO RIVERSIDE PARKWAY AND BROAD STREET

This block has inconsistencies in sidewalk widths, tree spacing, tree species, and road widths. Enhancing the overall streetscape will enhance traffic flow and beautify the street.



FIGURE 38, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: Map of Top of Broad, before streetscape improvements.

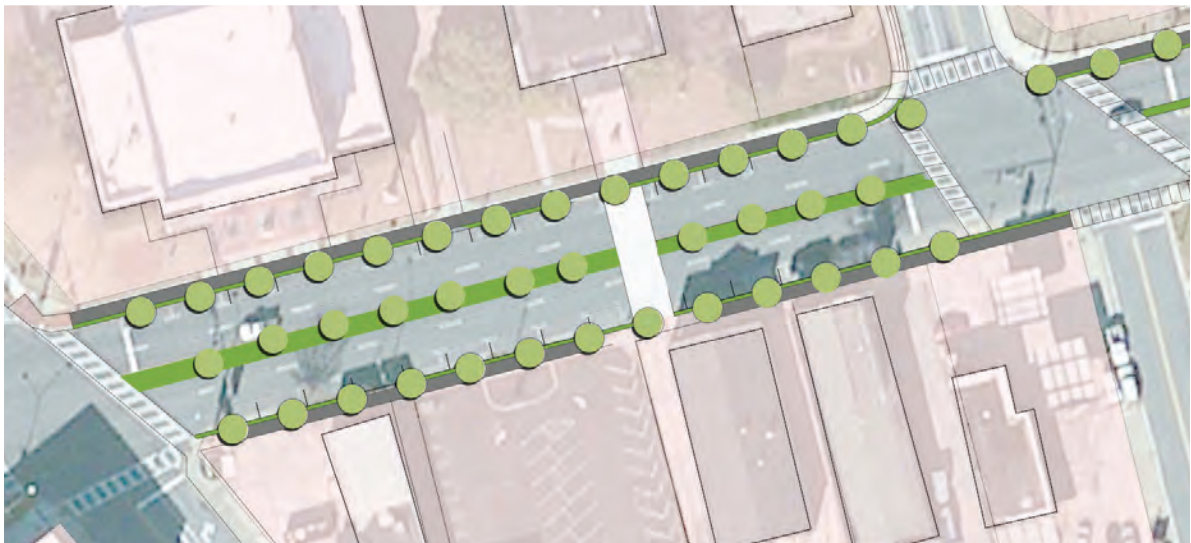
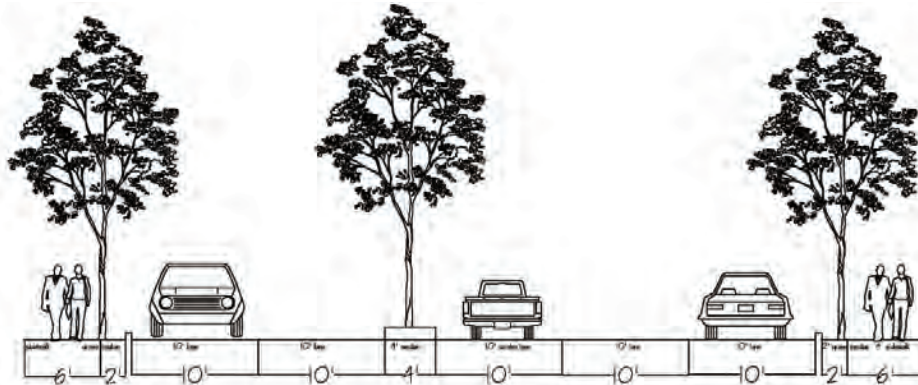


FIGURE 39, ROAD CONFIGURATION IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The following improvements are shown in the rendered map of Block 3: trees spaced every eight or fifteen (8' or 15'); a minimum sidewalk width of six feet (6'); and the addition of a median averaging four to six feet in width (4'-6'). This design will help create a consistent streetscape to improve pedestrian safety and traffic flow.

STREETSCAPE DIMENSIONS



The street section option below details the proposed streetscape dimensions for Block 2 (8th Avenue to Riverside Parkway/7th Avenue).

FIGURE 40, BLOCK 2 STREETSCAPE DIMENSIONS.

The following improvements are shown in the street section above: an average of a four- to six-foot (4' to 6') sidewalk width that can comfortably accommodate two pedestrians; a two-foot (2') wide brick strip between the sidewalk and street that serves as a buffer for pedestrian safety; a minimum of ten-feet (10') wide thru-lanes; a center vegetated street median with a width of a four feet (4'); and tree plantings spaced approximately every eight or fifteen feet (8' or 15').

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Several sites along the Top of Broad could reduce curb cuts. The before-and-after images show how simple improvements can make a big difference.

Before



After



FIGURES 41 & 42, SITE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This building's design does not match the overall character of the rest of downtown Rome. However, it is an operating business in downtown, which is always better than a vacancy. There are too many curb cuts along the sidewalk, posing a hazard to pedestrians. Unattractive signage is another concern.

After: This property is improved dramatically with tree plantings, reconfigured parking, and basic landscaping.



FIGURES 43 & 44. SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This sidewalk lacks the tree plantings found on Middle of Broad.

After: This rendering shows the proposed streetscape design with newly planted trees along the existing turf median. Evenly planted trees will create a formal entry way into downtown Rome.



FIGURES 45 & 46, SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This sidewalk shown in the photograph above lacks the brick pavers and tree grates found on Middle of Broad.

After: This rendering shows the addition of brick pavers, tree grates, and planted grass on the adjacent property to enhance the streetscape.

Several facades along the Top of Broad need a facelift and/or landscape improvements. The before-and-after images below show how simple improvements can make a big difference.



FIGURES 47 & 48, FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS:

After: This rendering shows a façade improvement that includes tree plantings, side signage, and landscaping to enhance the look of this property on Broad Street. This helps to establish a formal streetscape and makes the sidewalk safer for pedestrians. Private lots along the Top of Broad maintain a large area of street-front property. By encouraging more landscaping and tree plantings, the streetscape for Top of Broad will look more unified.



FIGURES 49 & 50, SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This sidewalk shown in the photograph above lacks the brick pavers and tree grates found on Middle of Broad.

After: This rendering shows the addition of brick pavers (two-foot wide) that serve as a visual buffer from the streets and continue the design elements from the middle of Broad Street.



FIGURES 51 & 52, MEDIAN ADDITIONS AND TREE PLANTINGS.

Reducing the amount of impervious paving provides aesthetic and environmental benefits. Creating rock-rain garden swales as shown in the rendering can help capture storm water runoff. Private property can improve environmental impacts through better water conservation practices. Implementing a rock swale garden that incorporates a variety of drought tolerant species can help the streetscape aesthetically and also reduces ground-water pollutants.



FIGURES 53 & 54, SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The sidewalk is not well maintained and has too large of a curb cut that causes confusion for drivers and pedestrians.

After: This rendering shows sidewalk improvements, including landscaping and tree plantings.

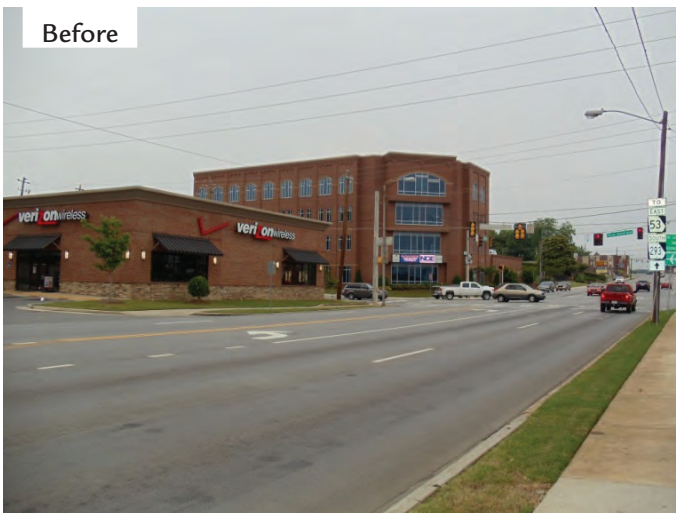


FIGURES 55 & 56, SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The sidewalk shown is in disrepair.

After: This rendering shows a streetscape improvement that includes a repaved sidewalk, planted trees, and greening of the unused area of the parking lot.

MEDIAN ADDITION



FIGURES 57 & 58, MEDIAN ADDITIONS AND TREE PLANTINGS.

Before: While the buildings are well-designed, corner-facing buildings, this street lacks a formalized streetscape.

After: This rendering of the proposed streetscape improvements for Block 1 shows a median design that shortens the left turning lane. The ten-foot (10') vegetative median creates a more formal entrance into downtown Rome. Brick pavers are added to sidewalks and trees are planted to reflect the design elements of Middle of Broad.



FIGURES 59 & 60, MEDIAN ADDITIONS AND TREE PLANTINGS:

Before: The 8th Avenue intersection on Broad Street lacks the tall willow oaks and center grass median that are characteristic of Middle of Broad.

After: The rendering shows Top of Broad with willow oaks and a grass median.



FIGURES 61 & 62, MEDIAN ADDITIONS AND TREE PLANTINGS.

Before: The current painted median is shown in the photograph.

After: The rendering shows the addition of a four-foot wide (4') center grass median on the Top of Broad Street with tree plantings spaced eight to fifteen feet (8' to 15') apart along with brick pavers.



FIGURES 63 & 64, MEDIAN ADDITIONS AND TREE PLANTINGS.

Before: The 6th Avenue intersection on Broad Street lacks the tall willow oaks and center vegetative median that are characteristic of Middle of Broad.

After: The rendering shows the 6th Avenue intersection with willow oaks and a vegetative median.

MIDDLE OF BROAD



FIGURE 65, MIDDLE OF BROAD MAP. THE MIDDLE OF BROAD AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED IN PURPLE.

The Middle of Broad is what is most readily identified as historic downtown Rome, starting at the 6th Avenue intersection heading southeast to 2nd Avenue. This section of Broad Street is one of Rome's most attractive places with an eclectic collection of shops and restaurants and valuable on-street parking. Other features of the Middle of Broad include the Etowah Fountain Park, myriad historic buildings, and a beautiful streetscape. The City has noticeably invested in street trees, street furnishings, decorative banners, and brick accents on the sidewalks in this area of downtown.

ISSUES

Some sections of the sidewalks need improvement. There are areas along the Middle of Broad where the sidewalks are cracking, posing a hazard to pedestrians and creating a negative aesthetic.

The Middle of Broad streetscape should be expanded to the side streets in the district.

Urban street trees can have a shorter lifespan than trees planted in a more natural setting.

There are multiple façades that do not conform to the architecture in the historic district.

SOLUTIONS

Planting more trees, specifically crape myrtles and willow oaks in this area of downtown will help unify the streetscape. To address concerns common to urban trees, a management plan should be prepared to ensure that trees are properly maintained and cared for.

Adding a two foot (2') row of brick pavers from the curb inward will create a buffer between the pedestrian sidewalk and road, beautify the streetscape, and increase visual appeal.

Attractive site furnishings such as benches, signage, trash cans, and street lamps should be added in locations that could serve as gathering places such as in front of the parking garage or in wide, vacant spans of sidewalks.

The façade of the parking deck should be softened or “greened” with a climbing vine that will add visual interest and appeal. Screenings can help to make these properties blend in better with the historic fabric.

MIDDLE OF BROAD



FIGURES 66, 67, & 68. MIDDLE OF BROAD STREETScape.

The photographs show areas on Middle of Broad that need improvement. These features should be maintained and expanded throughout Middle of Broad.



FIGURES 69 & 70. MIDDLE OF BROAD ISSUES.

Middle of Broad - side streets with streetscape improvements, the other three corners lack the improvement: street trees, furnishings, and brick accents.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS



FIGURES 71 & 72. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Middle of Broad lacks street trees and brick pavers like those found on most areas of Broad Street.

After: The rendering depicts improvements including a brick sidewalk paver, the addition of crape myrtles, and the addition of a large shade tree (such as a willow oak).



FIGURES 73 & 74. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Middle of Broad lacks elements that will soften its appearance and break up the concrete.

After: The rendering depicts improvements including a brick sidewalk and the addition of a willow oak tree to provide shade and visual continuity with the rest of Broad Street.



FIGURES 75 & 76. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Middle of Broad lacks elements that will improve its visual appeal.

After: The rendering depicts improvements including a brick sidewalk and the addition of crape myrtles to provide shade and visual continuity with the rest of Broad Street.



FIGURES 77, 78, & 79. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

This property on Broad Street has good tree cover and landscaping.

Before: This property on Middle of Broad lacks the same beautiful tree cover and landscaping.

After: Willow oaks are added to improve the streetscape.

Before



FIGURE 80. PARKING DECK, STREET VIEW.

Before: This parking deck on Broad Street does not contribute to the aesthetic of the streetscape.

After with Greening



FIGURE 81. PARKING DECK, STREET VIEW.

After, with greening: The parking deck is “greened” with a climbing vine.

After Greening Sculptures & Trees



FIGURE 82. PARKING DECK, STREET VIEW.

After; greening, sculpture, and trees: The parking deck is “greened” with climbing vines, trees are planted, and the flower sculpture is added to the corner.



FIGURES 83 & 84. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This area on Middle of Broad lacks elements that will soften its appearance and break up the concrete.

After: The rendering depicts improvements including a brick sidewalk and the addition of a willow oak tree to provide shade and visual continuity with the rest of Broad Street.





COTTON *Block*



Cotton Block is a major gateway into downtown from the southwest. It is identified as the area that begins at the intersection of Broad Street and 1st Street, including all areas surrounding the intersection such as Southern Mills and the bridge, and it runs northwest stopping at 2nd Avenue. Currently, this important entry into downtown lacks any sense of arrival.

FIGURE 85, COTTON BLOCK MAP. THE COTTON BLOCK AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW.

ISSUES

Cotton Block lacks large shade trees, and sidewalks lack a proper tree canopy. The trees that do exist are out of proportion to the building heights on Cotton Block.

Cotton Block does not have a planted median.

There are potentially dangerous conflicts between a vehicular lane and a crosswalk when turning left from Broad Street onto 2nd Avenue.

Opportunities for increased economic growth and development are being missed.

SOLUTIONS

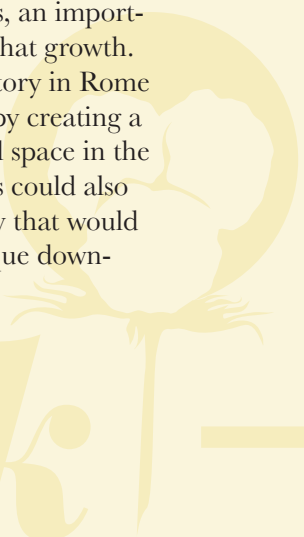
Improve the sense of arrival at the intersection of 1st Avenue and Broad Street by adding site furnishings, signage, and plantings. Planting trees that will be appropriately proportioned to buildings will balance the streetscape. In addition, large trees have many benefits: they slow down traffic, decrease noise, and offer shade.

Configure roads and median to maximize green space, plantings, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings. Medians are a great tool for enhancing the streetscape because they provide a natural buffer, allow for formal planting designs, and provide a break in crosswalks that extend over many lanes. Broad Street has medians with large planted trees in some sections, and this should be carried throughout the whole length of Broad. This will help slow down traffic and provide a scenic driving experience.

The current left-turn lane configuration from Broad turning onto 2nd should be shortened so that vehicles will not be merging until after passing the crosswalk. With modifications to the crosswalk and the left-turn lane, a new median can be designed that will enhance pedestrian safety and be more visually appealing.

Economic opportunities can enhance the Cotton Block: Southeastern Mills, an important driver for this area, is key to that growth. Southeastern Mills has a rich history in Rome and could help grow downtown by creating a storefront as a museum and retail space in the Cotton Block. Southeastern Mills could also develop public tours of its factory that would tell its history and become a unique downtown destination for visitors.

COTTON BLOCK
Block



STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS



FIGURES 86 & 87, STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS:

Before: The map depicts the current streetscape configuration of Cotton Block.

After: The plan view of Cotton Block depicts the proposed streetscape improvements. These improvements include reconfiguring the left-turn lane so that it begins after the pedestrian crosswalk, planting a vegetative central median, and planting trees.





Before



After



After

FIGURES 88, 89, & 90.
STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.
After: The renderings show Cotton Block gateway improvements, which include the planting large shade trees at the corners and a brick crosswalk to extend the downtown streetscape and create a sense of arrival.

NEW LEFT-TURN LANE CONFIGURATION

FIGURES 91 & 92. NEW LEFT-TURN LANE CONFIGURATION

Before: The current left-turn lane configuration is a hazard to pedestrians because cars merge left through the crosswalk

After: The rendering shows the new design for the left-turn lane configuration. The left-turn lane has been shortened so that it does not begin until after the pedestrian crosswalk, a safer and more attractive solution. The median which was concrete and brick has been changed to a green median with planters and shade trees. Crosswalk signage and decorative banners have also been added.





Before

FIGURES 93 & 94. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.
Crosswalk and Paver Changes, After: The rendering shows the crosswalk and sidewalk with more green space and shade trees.



After

SOUTHEASTERN MILLS STOREFRONT



FIGURES 95 & 96. SOUTHEASTERN MILLS STOREFRONT.

Before: The current storefront is in need of a redesign that will fit the context of the street.

After: The rendering shows the new façade design for this building. It is programmed with a Southeastern Mills museum and gift shop to educate the public about the history of the mill and its products.





5th ★★★★★ avenue *Arts District*



FIGURE 97, 5TH AVENUE. THE 5TH AVENUE AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED IN ORANGE.

The proposed 5th Avenue Arts District includes the area starting at the 5th Avenue Bridge heading northwest.

ISSUES

This area is underutilized with a high number of vacant buildings, and building façades are not well maintained. Some properties have good landscaping, but overall the streetscape is lacking the beautiful aesthetic found on Broad Street.

SOLUTIONS

The proposed district would be located adjacent to the proposed West 3rd Street River District, Floyd Medical Center, Barron Stadium, and the Rome-Floyd Tennis Center. The new arts district would offer visitors something different from downtown Rome, while complementing all that downtown has to offer.

The proposed district's close proximity to the river is an opportunity to take advantage of views from second stories and draw visitors from the river to 5th Avenue. Changes in current ordinances could allow for bars and nightlife, something many residents have mentioned as a piece that is missing from downtown Rome. This area would attract the creative industry such as designers, artists, and music venues. During the day, it would also have places for young families and children, such as a children's museum (one like Ink in Gainesville, Georgia), cupcake shops, frozen yogurt, and other restaurants. By offering visitors something to do both day and night, this district will be full of life and become a destination for those attending cultural, artistic, and social events.

Streetscape improvements that would make 5th Avenue more attractive and pedestrian friendly are needed. Adding a green median with large willow oaks would continue the elements from downtown and offer shade. Currently, 5th Avenue is a very hot place to walk during the summer so adding trees along the sidewalks would help cool it down and encourage people to walk and shop. Sidewalks need resurfacing as well. Façade improvements, the addition of street furnishings, creative signage, and lighting are all needed to create the arts and entertainment district.

Finally, creating a gateway with a sense of arrival at both ends of 5th Avenue (one from Turner McCall Boulevard and another at the 5th Avenue Bridge) will help to define the boundaries of the district and alert visitors that they have arrived to a different district in Rome. Creative signage and colorful plantings should be encouraged to express the character of the proposed 5th Avenue Arts District.

PLAN VIEWS



FIGURES 98 & 99. GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The 5th Avenue bridge to downtown is not being utilized

After: The rendering shows 5th Avenue bridge with fold-out umbrellas, stool seating, and planters.



STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Before



FIGURES 100 & 101. GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: The current 5th Avenue bridge to downtown.

After: The rendering shows 5th Avenue bridge with an arts district sign and string lighting.

After





FIGURES 102 & 103. NEW STREET CONFIGURATIONS.

Before: Currently, 5th Avenue has no street trees or vegetative median like those found on Broad Street. Also lacking crosswalks, 5th Avenue is dangerous for pedestrians

After: The rendering shows 5th Avenue with a new street configuration including a center planted median. This is a design element that is already used in the Historic Downtown District and has been recommended in all proposed districts in order to establish continuity in all areas of downtown. A crosswalk with a brick central paver has been included in the new design, as well as more attractive traffic lights and façade improvements.



FIGURES 104 & 105. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: Currently, 5th Avenue has no street trees or vegetative median like those found on Broad Street.

After: The rendering shows 5th Avenue with a new median and street trees



FIGURES 106 & 107. STREETScape IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: Currently, 5th Avenue has no street trees or vegetative median like those found on Broad Street.

After: The rendering shows 5th Avenue with a new median and street trees.



FIGURES 108 & 109. GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: This corner is a main gateway from West 3rd Street.

After: This rendering shows the corner at the intersection of 5th Avenue and West 3rd Street. Improvements include: planting the corner, adding attractive banners like those found on Broad Street, redefining the crosswalk, planting trees along a new green buffer, and implementing a façade “facelift” for the Ingram Glass Inc. building.



FIGURES 110 & 111. SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows a new design for the sidewalks on 5th Avenue. Improvements include new pavers, brick detail borders, façade improvements, and the addition of a green buffer between the sidewalk and the street that offers protection and beauty. New businesses like the ones shown above are ideas for the types of businesses that would be successful in an arts and entertainment district.



UTILIZING ALLEY SPACES



Before

FIGURES 112 & 113. UTILIZING ALLEY SPACES.

Before: This alley is underutilized as a cut-through to West 3rd Street.

After: This rendering shows an alley on 5th Avenue after being transformed into a greenway that connects 5th Avenue to the West 3rd Street Hotel District. String lighting, creative signage, murals, and hanging planters create a beautiful space.



After



Before

FIGURES 114 & 115. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS.

Before: A run-down warehouse off of 5th Avenue is not being utilized.

After: The rendering shows the buildings redesigned with a roof garden and restaurant and a graphic design studio. Streetscape improvements include tree plantings and extension of the grass buffer.



After

Before



FIGURES 116 & 117. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows the redesigned shopping center programmed with businesses that would be typical of a creative, arts district. Such businesses might include a make-your-own pottery store, trendy boutiques, vegetarian/healthy eateries, and art galleries. The sidewalks are shown here with improvements such as tree plantings, reduced curb cuts, and a green buffer for better definition.

After





FIGURES 118 & 119. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows these building redesigned as a children's museum and activity center and a local fine arts studio.





Before



After

FIGURES 120 & 121. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows these building redesigned as a children’s museum and activity center and a local fine arts studio.



Before

FIGURES 122 & 123. FAÇADE IMPROVEMENTS.

After: The rendering shows the building redesigned as a restaurant with an outdoor patio.



After

WEST 3RD RIVER DISTRICT



The West 3rd Street River District is an area adjacent to the Oostenala River between 2nd Avenue and 4th Avenue. This area holds great promise for redevelopment and revitalization.

FIGURE 124, WEST 3RD MAP. THE WEST 3RD AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED IN RED.

ISSUES

The West 3rd Street area is directly across the Oostanala River from historic downtown Rome. Currently, the area is underutilized, and there is little economic activity.

SOLUTIONS

The proposed West 3rd Street River District includes the area south of W 3rd Street to the Oostanala River. The district is situated between the proposed 5th Avenue Arts District and the existing active recreation district that encompasses Barron Stadium and Heritage Park. The W 3rd Street district offers multiple opportunities for hotels, condominiums, restaurants, and access to the river. The revived W 3rd Street will create a unique experience for residents and visitors.

The proposed building structures take full advantage of views to the tennis center, the scenic skyline of Rome, and the Oostanala River. The heights of the proposed buildings are proportional to existing structures, and materials for the buildings are to be sourced locally to strengthen the sense of place. Parking is accommodated for patrons in parking decks situated below a street-level plaza.

The new district offers opportunities to restructure W 3rd Street into a more multi-modal road surface. By accommodating pedestrians, bikes, parking, vehicles, and buses, W 3rd Street has the potential to serve more patrons and provide more transportation choices for the public.

The new “Riverwalk” Boulevard along the Oostanala would be filled with retail and restaurant opportunities. River Street in Savannah and Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, South Carolina, are existing areas to emulate. Both projects have positively stimulated economic activities and brought people to experience the rivers.

The Central Park in the center of the district is a series of interconnected green spaces that form a greenway system. The Rome Greenway would continue westward to the hospital and eastward to Rome’s downtown.

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT

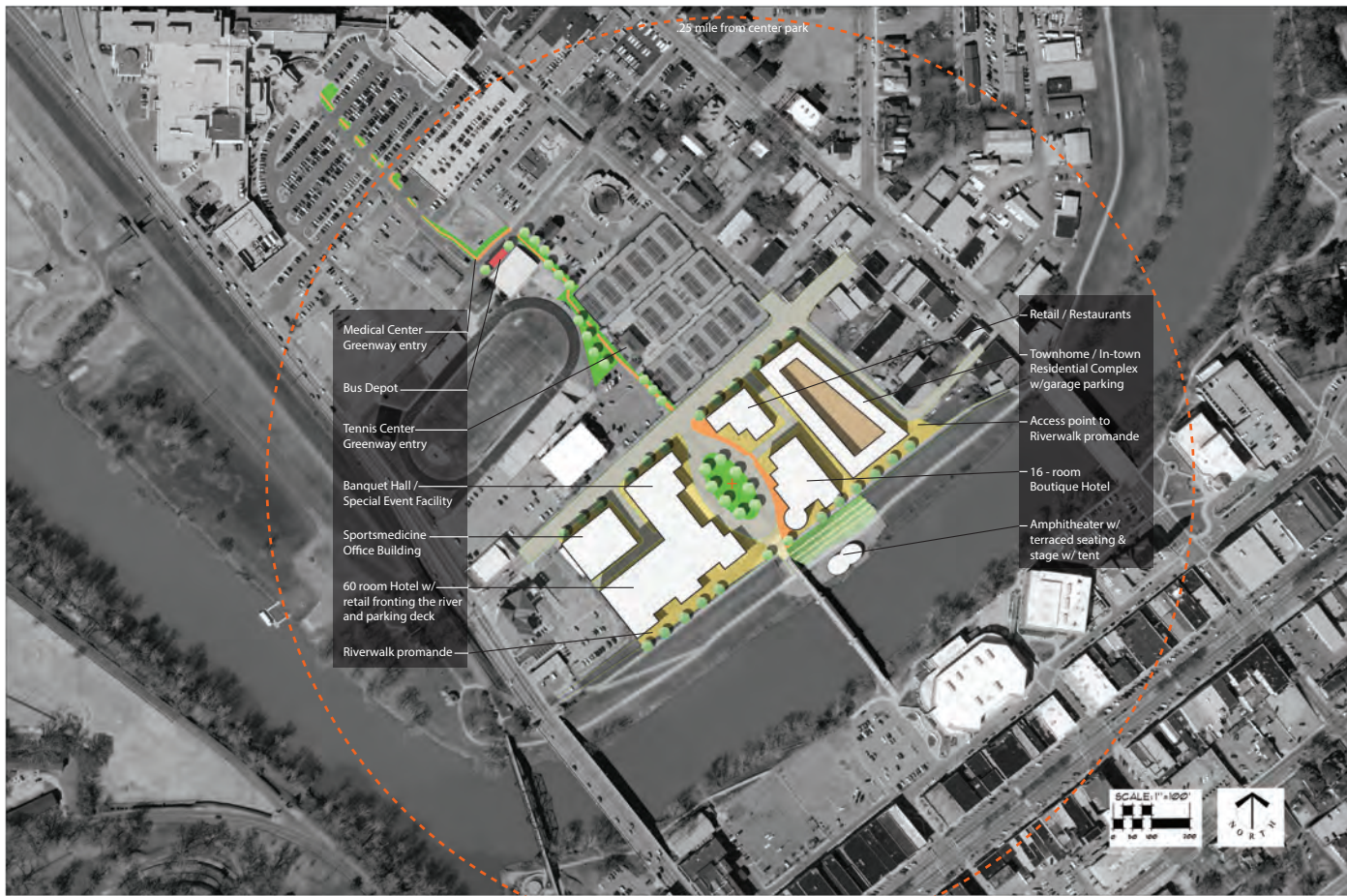


FIGURE 125. PROPOSED RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, PLAN VIEW.



FIGURE 126. PROPOSED RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, ELEVATION.
The rendering shows a section of the proposed West 3rd Street River District and pedestrian bridge to downtown.



FIGURE 127. PROPOSED RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, PERSPECTIVE VIEW.

The rendering shows a perspective view of the proposed riverfront development on West 3rd Street. The proposed development would include a boutique hotel, shops and restaurants, and loft apartment housing.



Before

FIGURES 128 & 129. PROPOSED RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT, VIEW FROM PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE.

The rendering shows a possible design for the proposed West 3rd Street River District and the pedestrian bridge to downtown.



After

THE PROPOSED GREENWAY SYSTEM



FIGURES 130 & 131. THE PROPOSED GREENWAY SYSTEM.

Before: The photograph shows a possible location for the proposed greenway system that would run through the West 3rd Street River District.

After: The rendering shows the proposed greenway system that would connect the West 3rd Street River District to the hospital and downtown.

A NEW CONCERT SPACE



FIGURES 132 & 133. A NEW CONCERT SPACE.

Before: The photograph shows an undeveloped riverfront.

After: This rendering shows the proposed concert space and mixed-use development on the riverfront. Terraced seating on the slope is incorporated for a natural look.

PARKS & REC



FIGURE 134, PARKS & RECREATION MAP. THE PARKS & REC AREA IS HIGHLIGHTED WITH GREEN STRIPES.

The Rome-Floyd Parks and Recreation Authority manages a variety of facilities available to the public, including Barron Stadium and Maddox Track, the Heritage Trail System, Heritage Park, and the Rome-Floyd Tennis Center. The area of focus for this report is West Third Street and the Oostanaula riverfront, which are areas that are currently underutilized. New designs and programming for these focus areas will increase activity along the river and in downtown. Both areas have close proximity to the river and downtown, providing great opportunities for riverfront activities that will take advantage of the beautiful views of the river and cityscape.

ISSUES

Currently, public gathering spaces are not being maximized along the riverfront. Since it lacks “activity nodes,” pedestrians merely pass through the riverfront region instead heading towards it as a destination.

Although the Heritage Trail System is an excellent start for developing riverfront infrastructure, connectivity could be improved to downtown, the Fifth Avenue Arts District, and West Third Street.

While children have access to an existing network of sporting events, Rome lacks adult sports leagues for young adults.

With all of the open space available along the riverfront, a variety of future uses would increase activity along the river, increase connectivity between different areas of downtown, and provide a catalyst for economic growth.

Another concern is the lack of shade along the riverfront, which does not encourage visitors to stay for a long period of time. There is little relief from the sun along the riverfront, especially during the summer months.

SOLUTIONS

Creating a central gathering area along the river, such as an outdoor amphitheater, would provide a space for various events. Facing the river and downtown, the amphitheater will have a beautiful backdrop that residents and visitors can enjoy.

Building upon the already existing Heritage Trail System, “activity nodes” should be created along the river. These nodes could include a number of things. For example, sand volleyball courts could be used by an adult volleyball league to hold after-work volleyball tournaments. Other adult sports such as Ultimate Frisbee, kickball, and flag football could be hosted in areas along the river. By programming spaces along the river to be used for these purposes, other amenities will follow to service the groups using the spaces, such as food and beverage carts.

Activities such as kayaking, paddle boats, and fishing would bring more people to the river, and therefore to downtown Rome. A “Rome Outfitters” houseboat is shown in the rendering in Figure #. Visitors could rent kayaks, paddle boats, and cane fishing poles. A bait and tackle shop is included inside the houseboat.

Especially during the summer months, residents need relief from the heat. The town green is an excellent addition to downtown and has been a popular place for families to cool off during the summer. However, the town green has become overcrowded and there is a need for another heat relief destination downtown. Like sporting events, new activity node will increase the demand for other services such as food and beverage carts. Local food and beverage carts could offer products from local businesses along the river.



AMPHITHEATER AND FLOATING DOCK

Before



After



FIGURES 135 & 136. AMPHITHEATER & FLOATING DOCK.

Before: Current view of the river.

After: The rendering shows the river with an amphitheater and floating dock for events. Landscaping and shade trees have been added.

Before



After



FIGURES 137 & 138. VOLLEYBALL.

Before: Current view of an unused space.

After: The rendering shows this area used for an adult league volleyball tournament.

HOUSEBOAT OUTFITTERS



FIGURES 139 & 140. HOUSEBOAT OUTFITTERS.

Before: Current view of an unused riverfront space.

After: The rendering shows this riverfront space being used for a “Rome Outfitters” houseboat, which would provide kayak, paddle boat, and cane fishing rentals.



FIGURES 141 & 142. BEACH.

Before: Current view of an unused space.

After: The rendering shows this area transformed into a public beach.

LOCAL FOOD CARTS



FIGURES 143 & 144. LOCAL FOOD CARTS.

Before: Current view of an underutilized space.

After: The rendering shows this area transformed with mobile food carts representing local restaurants.



YEAR-ONE STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

I. IMPLEMENT VACANT STOREFRONT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Downtowns with active and visually appealing street façades attract consumers and new businesses as well as support existing business. The necessary ingredients are historic buildings, prominent streetscape, and businesses. Rome possesses all three key ingredients to be successful. However, Rome — like most downtowns — does have vacant storefronts that look unappealing. By implementing a vacant storefront improvement program, the Authority can transform an eyesore into an asset.

ACTION STEPS

- Designate a Storefront Improvement Program under Authority's design committee.
- Survey downtown for all vacant buildings, make a list, and map vacancies.
- Determine key locations.
- Within key locations, make a list of owners with which the DDA has a good working relationship and another list for owners that the DDA will need to spend time getting to know.
- Secure a local printer (receive a discounted rate in exchange for advertising).
- Approach community partners for display information, such as, Rome Area History Museum or Rome Area Council for the Arts. Be creative!
- Develop descriptive exhibit poster for window displays.
- Create a rotating schedule to keep exhibits new and updated.
- Take before and after photographs and put them on the DDA website.
- Evaluate impact and compare if these spaces rent faster and determine the return on investment (ROI).

Project Lead: DDA Design Committee
Chair, Ann Pullen

Time Frame: 4 months (Jan - Apr 2013)

Funding: \$1500

Partners: Business Improvement District (BID) Commission, property owners, and relators



- Secure a local printer (receive a discounted rate in exchange for advertising).
- Approach community partners for display information, such as, Rome Area History Museum or Rome Area Council for the Arts. Be creative!
- Develop descriptive exhibit poster for window displays.
- Create a rotating schedule to keep exhibits new and updated.
- Take before and after photographs and put them on the DDA website.



II. REVIEW HISTORIC PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIP WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION (HPC).

Throughout the public engagement process, citizens said that Rome's historic architecture was the key feature of downtown. They also stated that the Historic Preservation Commission and the HPC guidelines often slow or prevent new development. Periodic review of the guidelines would assure that preservation and new develop are being balanced.

ACTION STEPS

- Present the partnership concept to the Historic Preservation Commission to oversee the process.
- Designate a person to represent the Historic Preservation Committee.
- Designate a person to represent the development community.
- Have the development community representative attend the Historic Preservation Commission meeting as an audience member.
- Have the two representatives discuss areas of concerns and agreement following the monthly meetings.
- Create a relationship where business and development concerns can be discussed in a positive environment before and after review.
- On a two-year cycle, review the preservation guidelines to determine which issues can be addressed and which issues can't be addressed to satisfy the historic preservation and business communities.

Project Lead: Co-Chair: Steven McDowell, Historic Preservation Commission, and a person to be named to represent the business community

Time Frame: Two-year cycle

Funding: No funding necessary

Partners: Historic Planning Commission, City of Rome, Planning Department, developers, business, and property owners

III. REFINE PROCESS FOR UPPER STORY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Downtown Development Authority office takes a customer friendly approach when assisting developers with the bureaucracy involved in building downtown upper-story housing. The Authority will work with a local developer that is currently building upper-story living space. Using this experience as a case study example on what works well and what is not working well will help the DDA learn how to assist new upper-story development downtown

ACTION STEPS

- Designate upper-story residential development program to Economic Development Committee.
- Identify local developers to engage in the process.
- Determine which upper-story housing has been developed over the last two years.
- Interview the owners and developers to determine the process that they went through.
- Outline the process from start to finish.
- Determine areas and procedures that need improvement.
- Develop a process where the staff can provide technical assistance.
- Learn relevant information to aid in the leasing process, for example, cost per square foot to each property, hookup fees, average utility costs, average square-foot cost per floor and per block.

Project Lead: Steve White, DDA Economic Development committee chair

Time Frame: 6 months

Funding: No funding is necessary

Partners: Developers, property owners, fire marshal, building official, realtors, downstairs and upstairs tenets

IV. STREAMLINE PROCESS FOR OPENING A BUSINESS

The Downtown Development Authority office takes a customer friendly approach when assisting new businesses with the process of opening a new business. Insight gained from the experiences of businesses that opened in 2012 as a case example on what works well and what is not working well will help assist new business development.

ACTION STEPS

- Designate this action to the Authority's Business Development Committee.
- Determine which businesses opened last year.
- Interview new owners to determine the process they went through.
- Outline the process from start to finish.
- Determine areas and procedures that need improvement.
- Develop a process where staff can provide technical assistance.
- Learn relevant information to aid in the leasing process, for example, cost per square-foot for each property, hookup fees, average utility costs, average square-foot cost per floor and per block.
- Update and maintain building and business inventory.
- Develop and provide incentive package for prospects; identify resources.

Project Lead: Steve White, DDA Economic Development Committee Chair
Time Frame: 6 months (Jan-June)
Funding: No funding is necessary
Partners: 2012 new businesses

V. RECRUIT BUSINESS TO DOWNTOWN

Downtown is open for business.

The number one concern for Romans is empty buildings downtown. Among the many roles and responsibilities of the Authority, recruiting new business to downtown is a priority. Multiple steps need to be taken to actively encourage recruiting businesses for downtown beginning with a market analysis to better understand the opportunities.

ACTION STEPS

- Have a market analysis done for downtown to determine gaps and overlaps.
- Develop strategies to target opportunities within the gaps.
- Develop a DDA website that focuses on the downtown development.

Project Lead: Board of Directors Executive Committee and Ann Arnold
Time Frame: 10 months (Jan- Nov 2013)
Funding: To be determined
Partners: City of Rome, Business Improvement District Commission, DDA promotions



ANNUAL ORIENTATION FOR BANKERS AND REALTORS.

The Rome DDA would like to partner with local banks and realtors to foster more downtown development opportunities. Currently, Rome is known throughout the state for its downtown development savvy in regards to using statewide redevelopment loans intended to spur economic vibrancy in downtowns. By working with state partners at the Department of Community Affairs and Georgia Cities Foundation, the DDA would host a one-day loan incentive training for its local community bankers and realtors.

ACTION STEPS

- Designate Economic Development committee in the training concept.
- Determine training location, date, and time.
- Staff will work with its state partners to schedule their participation.
- Staff working with committee and state partners will create training packet.
- Create a training evaluation.
- Host training event.

Project Lead: Steve White, Economic Development Chair
Time Frame: 8 months
Funding: To be determined
Partners: Chamber, realtors, and bankers

FIVE- TO TEN-YEAR CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

I. ENCOURAGING UPPER-STORY HOUSING:

CREATING A SPRINKLER INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

The positive impact of downtown residential living has been recognized throughout the downtown master planning process. Downtown Rome has taken advantage of some upper-story housing opportunities, but adding new sprinkler systems to meet fire code is making additional upper story redevelopment projects cost prohibitive. A sprinkler loan or grant program should be developed by the city to help with upper-story housing development.

The Downtown Development Authority should:

- Research national sprinkler loan and grant programs (information on Savannah's program is included in the Appendix);
- Develop an outline of the program with a cost and benefit analysis;
- Create a partnership with the City to secure funding for the program; and
- Develop criteria and administer the program.

II. VACANT STOREFRONTS AND UPPER STORY OFFICES:

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

Too often businesses open and then close quickly due to poor planning. This is unfortunate for the business owner and can create a negative reputation for locations within downtown. Currently, one of the Rome DDA's roles is to recruit and develop downtown businesses. The Rome DDA should increase its focus to assist prospective downtown business owners. This effort will help to ensure that startup businesses have the necessary plans and resources in place to be successful. This will also drive new business downtown to fill vacancies.

The Downtown Development Authority should:

- Work with the city to increase DDA funding for personnel necessary to develop and administer the Downtown Business Development Program;
- Research downtown entrepreneurship programs;
- Develop a list of potential providers and partners;
- Develop an initial program and determine the program budget along with participant costs;
- Advertise program; and
- Evaluate the program, its impact, and the return on investment (ROI).

III. REDEVELOPMENT OF THE 5TH AVENUE DISTRICT:

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT.

The revitalized 5th Avenue district will be a vital gateway into downtown as a new commercial development is being built at the corner of Turner McCall Boulevard and West 5th Avenue. Many downtown Romans have expressed the need for a downtown grocery store, and this new development is slated to house a Publix market. To create a strong visual connection between historic downtown and this new district, the look of the Broad Street streetscape should be extended down West 5th Avenue, allowing this area to feel like the traditional downtown, and enhancing an important route into and out of downtown.

There is also an opportunity to redevelop the private property in this area around an arts-based theme. The area could have artists in residence and showcase their work in a vibrant live-work-play neighborhood.

The Downtown Development Authority should:

- Convene a sub-committee with representatives from the city, Arts Council, and other interested parties;
- Begin discussion with the city about infrastructure improvements and timelines for 5th Avenue;
- Begin discussions with Rome's planning and engineering departments to develop a specific plan and budget;
- Research arts districts and visit communities with arts districts;
- Work with the Arts Council and surrounding colleges and artists to determine interest; and
- Work with the Arts Council to negotiate and secure key properties if interest exists.



IV. REFOCUSING ON THE RIVER:

A PARK AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCE AND DRAW.

Downtown Rome is uniquely situated on the banks of three rivers, and as the West 3rd and the West 5th Avenue areas are redeveloped, the Coosa and Oostanaula rivers will play a crucial role. There is an abundance of green space that is an ideal place for the citizens of Rome to come, gather, and enjoy. Activities along the Oostanaula River will create strong connections to both sides of downtown.

The existing Heritage Trail running along the Coosa and Oostanaula connects the downtown to other residential and commercial areas throughout the city and provides safe routes into the heart of the community for Romans of all ages. By focusing on recreational activities in a concentrated area, a sense of vibrancy is created; people and activities attract more people.

Moreover, the rivers are a unique feature that sets Rome apart from many communities, and the green space adjacent to the rivers has much of the infrastructure in place to support additional recreational activities. It is time to maximize their use.

The Downtown Development Authority should investigate these recreation-related businesses and opportunities:

- **Outfitter.** Put an outfitter directly on the Oostanaula River very close to the Town Green, the fountain, and the pedestrian bridge. This will promote river use, and provide quick and easy access. Have kayaks, canoes, and paddleboats ready to go. One design possibility would be to house the outfitter in a houseboat that is

connected to the dock, and the shop itself becomes an interesting feature.

- **Bike rental.** The outfitter could also rent bicycles to get people moving along Heritage Trail.
- **Take-out points.** Create sandy beaches designated for pullout points along the river.
- **Fishing.** Have free cane poles available at the public dock. Bait could be sold from a gumball type dispenser onsite, and kids would be able to fish from the dock or from designated fishing platforms. Work with the state to develop a one-day fishing license.



- Slides. There are amazing man-made slopes along the banks of Oostanaula that are calling out for a slide. A series of slides could be installed, attracting kids and kids at heart, creating a unique and exciting feature.
- Volleyball. Adapting the existing grass field at Heritage Park into sand volleyball courts for a co-ed league on Friday evenings and Saturdays would be a way to bring active young professionals downtown.
- Kickball. The same grass field could also easily accommodate kickball games by simply adding bases and drawing lines. Kickball is another co-ed activity that is popular with college students and young professionals.



V. CONNECTIVITY DOWNTOWN:

TROLLEY LOOP.

As downtown Rome continues to grow and more people are drawn to live, work, and play downtown, connecting people to their destinations without relying on an automobile becomes an important factor. By creating a simple loop route serviced by a motorized trolley, people can park their cars and travel easily and safely through downtown Rome. This loop can include travel to the edges of downtown, and have stops that include places like the soon to be constructed Publix market at Turner McCall and West 5th Avenue.

The Downtown Development Authority should investigate trolley systems used in peer communities, such as Chattanooga, to move people into, out of, and around downtown.



VI. DOWNTOWN PARKING

Parking is an issue that almost every downtown must address. Either a downtown has too much parking, meaning empty spaces, or a downtown doesn't have enough to meet demand. Moreover, issues can arise when people are not able to park directly in front of their destination.

Downtown Rome has multiple parking options: on-street parking, parking garages, and surface lots. Three main issues were identified during the public engagement process: overly restrictive on-street parking (2 hours per day); no clear understanding as to which surface lots are public and which are private; and no inclination to park in the parking garages. No solution will meet the needs of every citizen, but tweaking the system might alleviate some concerns.

- If on-street parking is free for the first two-hours, then all parking, including garages, should be free for the first two-hours. Keep it consistent.
- Install new signage in the surface lots that clearly indicates if the lot is public or private.
- Advertise that downtown employees can get a discounted rate in the parking garage.
- Add features, such as slides or whimsical playscapes, to the parking garages making them irresistible to children who will insist that their parents park there.



VII. WEST 3RD RIVER DISTRICT:

OVERLAY DISTRICT.

The redevelopment potential for the West 3rd district is tremendous. However, this area needs a design overlay to guarantee that the new development will be an asset. Current zoning does not adequately ensure a downtown look and feel. New guidelines that address building size, site plan, materials, roof, windows and mix of uses need to be developed. These guidelines should assure that new development complements the look and feel of historic downtown Rome.

Rome should rely on FRESH for its overlay district guidelines. FRESH — an acronym developed by Pratt Cassity in UGA's College of Environment and Design — outlines the main areas new development should address to complement a historic urban area.

- **F**ootprint: The appropriate size of the building; it should be similar to those surrounding it;
- **R**oofline: What type of rooflines (pitch, materials, etc.) will be allowed and will mechanical equipment will be seen (note: this area has two fronts and no back);
- **E**nvelope: How big or small will the building be, the massing;
- **S**kin: What building materials will be allowed; and
- **H**oles: Refers to windows and doors as well as spacing.

