



2018 YOUNG GAMECHANGERS ALBANY-DOUGHERTY COUNTY

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS



“ Don't underestimate the power of your vision to change the world. Whether that world is your office, your community, an industry or a global movement, you need to have a core belief that what you contribute can fundamentally change the paradigm or way of thinking about problems.”

Leroy Hood

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ABOUT US

GeorgiaForward is a statewide nonpartisan nonprofit that is dedicated to strengthening communities, uniting our state and creating a talent pipeline within Georgia. Our leading program, Young Gamechangers, has completed programs in six communities across Georgia since 2012. We are proud to work with companies, governments, nonprofits, institutes of higher learning and other business and civic leaders to grapple with their community's most persistent challenges.

Since January of 2018, fifty of Georgia's best and brightest have been working in Albany Dougherty County to develop big idea recommendations to some of this community's problems. The Young Gamechangers -- young professionals between the ages of 24 and 40, from a variety of professional sectors across the state -- were divided into four groups to work on the four challenge questions crafted by the community steering committee. The group met in Albany three times over the course of the eight-month program and worked virtually for countless hours to learn, research, collaborate and reflect on the "game changing" ideas they developed.

The recommendations that follow are the result of some of Georgia's brightest young leaders thinking out of the box to creatively solve problems in Albany-Dougherty County. This product would not be possible without the invitation to bring Young Gamechangers to Albany-Dougherty County by community leadership, the guidance of the local steering committee, the enthusiasm of the class, the willingness of local leaders to be open and honest, the engagement of our Young Gamechanger alumni and the support of our sponsors. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in making the 2018 Young Gamechangers possible.

GeorgiaForward is excited to see which recommendations most resonate with the community and which will be implemented first! We look forward to a continued partnership as these ideas come to life.

-Kris V.



KRIS VAUGHN
Executive Director

Since August of 2015, Kris Vaughn has served as the Executive Director of GeorgiaForward. Under her leadership, GeorgiaForward has grown the leadership action program Young Gamechangers as well as resumed annual Forums that convene statewide thought leaders to discuss the future of Georgia.

Prior to joining GeorgiaForward, she worked in community and economic development in downtown Macon. She was named 40 Under 40 by Georgia Trend Magazine in 2016 and was a member of Leadership Georgia Class of 2017.



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DESTINATION: GOOD LIFE

In what ways can Albany-Dougherty County grow a sustainable Downtown business corridor that will increase the vitality of the community?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Destination: Good Life was tasked with producing recommendations that would aid in growing a sustainable Downtown business corridor that would increase the vitality of the community. The Good Life City has much to offer both visitors and residents of Albany and Dougherty County including the Albany Museum of Art, Albany Civil Rights Institute, Flint RiverQuarium, Chehaw Park and more. However, many businesses have moved from the Downtown area, leaving many buildings and sidewalks vacant. In order to grow a sustainable Downtown business corridor, the Good Life City must have 1) attractive businesses where people want to spend their money and 2) the people themselves, who will continue to support these businesses. As part of our effort to find out how Downtown could accomplish these two goals, our team conducted many interviews

to find out what Albany residents would like to see in their Downtown. Many reported that they would like to see more art, residential and commercial properties, activities, events and recreation. With that in mind, our recommendations follow suit. First, it is imperative that we focus on giving Downtown Albany an identity through placemaking. Second, we must give business and residential developers a roadmap or "how-to" guide for opening a business or creating housing Downtown. Lastly, we need to give people from all over Georgia multiple reasons to come Downtown – events, recreation, sports and more.

INTRODUCTION

In the past several years, hard work by local officials, residents and business owners has created momentum for Downtown Albany, and new amenities and developments are already springing up. Destination: Good Life and the Young Gamechangers are proposing a set of initiatives intended to appeal to developers, residents and visitors – initiatives designed to encourage the growth of the community, businesses and even individuals themselves by coming together to create a dynamic, unique place. Downtown Albany is primed to become the center of the good life in the Good Life City.

What attracts residents and visitors to downtowns across Georgia are their unique characteristics, unmatched offerings, accessibility and positive vibes – Downtown Albany's atmosphere should be no different.

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DESTINATION: GOOD LIFE PLACEMAKING

Creating & Sustaining a Downtown Identity

What attracts residents and visitors to downtowns across Georgia are their unique characteristics, unmatched offerings, accessibility and positive vibes – Downtown Albany’s atmosphere should be no different. This placemaking plan will strategically improve the perception of the city’s epicenter by offering visually appealing public art, convenient and budget-friendly amenities, welcoming streetscapes and a true sense of security by creating a hub for the “Good Life.”



PROJECTS

STREETSCAPES

The physical streetscapes of Downtown Albany offer perhaps the greatest opportunity for direct impact in the community by improving the perception of public space Downtown. Improvements to streetscapes should include all of the visual elements of a street, including the road, sidewalks, street furnishings, trees and landscape material. Focus is specifically needed on sidewalks in the areas of Jackson, Broad, Pine and Front streets due to their need of extensive repair.

PARKLETS

Parklets are a “lighter, cheaper, quicker” alternative to sidewalk widening, particularly on Broad and Pine. A parklet is a sidewalk extension that utilizes parking spaces for creation of additional space and amenities. Developing a parklet program will enhance placemaking by helping businesses expand their outdoor dining areas.

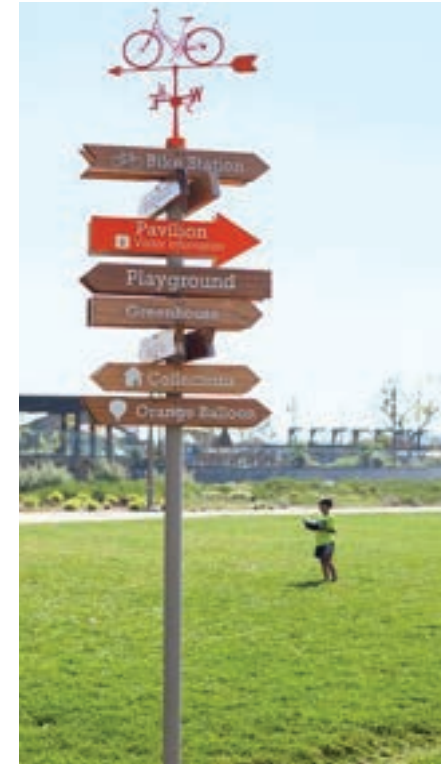
DISTRICTS

Albany is divided into areas that serve exponentially different purposes and have different historical and natural characteristics. Districts emphasize placemaking in that they communicate the area to the visitor. Collaboration with the Planning Department will identify boundaries for an Entertainment, Harlem Business and Old Northside Residential District.

PUBLIC SPACES

Downtown Albany has many underutilized spaces that could make great gathering places if

planned correctly. Gathering places such as courtyards are essential in supporting Downtown activities and socializing. The parking spaces behind the recently purchased properties on Front and Pine avenues would allow for an ideally located public courtyard for entertainment and outdoor dining.



WAYFINDING

Many downtown cities have realized the importance of having wayfinding signage for pedestrians and vehicles. Downtown Albany has many great assets and attractions, but there is no clear direction on how to get to specific destinations. Wayfinding serves a functional purpose and can also serve as an extension of the Downtown brand. Where gateways are used, wayfinding is the first impression provided of an entire area. A properly planned wayfinding system helps to create a “sense of place” Downtown by adding to the overall vibrancy of the area while serving a valuable function.

SAFETY AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

This is a volunteer program to spearhead safety initiatives. The Albany Police Department already offers a 12-week police academy to residents. It’s our recommendation that the Department and City encourage “graduates” of this program to become safety ambassadors. This group will work in shifts on a volunteer basis and give peace of mind to Downtown visitors and residents.



NATIONAL NIGHT OUT CAMPAIGN IN DOWNTOWN

The Albany Police Department has been a participant in the National Night Out campaign, which is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. But, it’s time to make Downtown an integral part of the celebration by bringing the events and activities of National Night Out to locations Downtown.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS GATHERINGS

Whether it’s coffee with a cop or pizza with the police, Downtown businesses can open their doors and provide a meeting space for residents to positively interface with police officers.

INCREASED DOWNTOWN LIGHTING

Adequate lighting serves as a natural deterrent to criminals, and a lack of it has been a common concern among Albanians. Funds should be directed toward creating inviting and bright public spaces on streets and sidewalks as well as alleys and parking areas.



MURALS

The city can partner with community groups to make possible the creation of large murals. Placed on the sides of buildings, these will attract residents and visitors interested in sharing pictures in front of this public art. Communities such as

Colquitt and the Cabbagetown area of Atlanta have emphasized their own local culture and character through the fostering of dynamic, interesting public murals, and Albany should continue to emphasize its own local art by doing the same Downtown. The impending move of the Museum to its Downtown location offers an exciting opportunity for such a project.

REINTRODUCE THE TURTLES

Rejuvenating the turtle mascots from the early 2000s could be great for the arts scene in Downtown Albany by emphasizing the river as central to the city's brand and creating a welcoming and familiar atmosphere. The turtles that remain on display could be revamped, and additional turtles could be added in new locations and with new themes. Schools, churches and businesses could sponsor and refurbish a turtle and have it placed in a designated area.



CITY PASS

The Good Life Albany 3-Day Pass would allow individuals and families alike to purchase a comprehensive package to

Downtown Albany's various attractions along with some exciting transportation options to and from. Attractions will include Chehaw, Flint RiverQuarium, Albany Civil Rights Institute, Albany Museum of Art and Thronateeska Heritage Center. Patrons will also have the option to enjoy a kayak rental from Kayak Attack to float the Flint River one day, or a bike rental from the Albany Welcome Center to take in the beauty of the various trails on another day. This pass would be valid for three consecutive days.



BLUES & BREWS FESTIVAL: CELEBRATING ALBANY'S LEGACY

We are confident that a hybrid Jazz (Blues) and Beer Festival would celebrate the city's legacy and musical history while appealing to the growing interests in craft beer around the state. The legacy of notable Albanian, Ray Charles, would be the focal point of this event. In the spirit of inclusion and welcoming all to Downtown Albany, this festival would also include one of the city's largest employers, MillerCoors. MillerCoors has operated in Albany since 1979, pumping out more than nine million barrels of beer a year and employing almost 600 employees.

ACTION STEPS

DESTINATION: GOOD LIFE #1

SHORT-TERM

- PARKLETS
- DISTRICTS
- DOWNTOWN BUSINESS GATHERINGS
- REINTRODUCE THE TURTLES

MID-TERM

- WAYFINDING
- SAFETY
- AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
- NATIONAL NIGHT OUT DOWNTOWN
- INCREASED DOWNTOWN LIGHTING
- MURALS
- CITY PASS
- BLUES AND BREWS FESTIVAL

LONG-TERM

- INCREASE DOWNTOWN LIGHTING
- SIDEWALK STREETS CAPES
- PUBLIC SPACES

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- **SPLOST VII** and future SPLOST funding
- **Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program:** The EECBG Program represents the largest nationwide direct investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies at the community level in U.S. history, rapidly increasing the number of communities directly engaged with DOE on programs that increased renewable energy capacity, technical knowledge and deployment of energy efficiency projects at the local level.
- **Georgia Council for the Arts:** \$1,000-\$7,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grant. Deadline is typically February, announced in July.
- **National Endowment for the Arts:** Through various grants programs, the NEA funds arts projects, consisting of one or more specific events or activities that make a difference in a community or field.
- **Support from American Express:** American Express supports organizations that cultivate meaningful opportunities for civic engagement by our employees and members of the community, whether as volunteers, donors, voters or patrons. Supported programs encourage community service and civic participation, and deliver measurable outcomes that have a lasting impact on communities. Areas of support include funding for organizations and projects that preserve or rediscover major historic sites and monuments in order to provide ongoing sustainable access and enjoyment for current and future audiences. Programs supported include historic landmarks and public spaces. This is an ongoing application process with no set deadline.
- **Funding for Natural and Cultural Heritage:** The Cracker Barrel Foundation believes in the importance of preserving and communicating natural and cultural heritage through support of environmental education, preserving historic monuments, natural sites, parks and providing arts education. Nonprofit organizations seeking grant funding must provide services and/or have a mailing address from a city and state where a Cracker Barrel Old Country Store is located. Proposals are accepted and reviewed throughout the year. Decisions are made quarterly. This is an ongoing application process with no set deadline.
- **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation:** The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation currently makes grants in several core program areas including the performing arts and art history, conservation and museums. The program for art museums is designed to help excellent institutions build and sustain their capacity to undertake serious scholarship on their permanent collections; to preserve these collections; and to share the results of their work in appropriate ways with scholarly and other audiences. The Foundation's Performing Arts Program provides multi-year grants on an invitation-only basis to a small number of leading orchestras, theater companies, opera companies, modern dance companies and presenters based in the United States. Letters of inquiry regarding programs that fall within the above-described areas of focus are welcome and are reviewed throughout the year. This is an ongoing application process with no set deadline.
- **Blank Foundation Funding for the Arts:** The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation recognizes that a thriving arts community contributes immeasurably to economic and social vitality. The arts also inspire and engage young people in ways that spark academic and social success. Within the scope of their strategic plan and specific funding initiatives, The Blank Family Foundation will identify and invite potential partners to apply for grants. Funding areas include the Art of Change, a program which encourages a rich arts community available to all

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Sidewalks	\$1,400,000
Parklet Program	\$15,000
Public Spaces	\$150,000
Wayfinding	\$150,000
Downtown Lighting	\$100,000
Murals	\$10,000
City Pass	\$300
Blues & Brews Festival	\$70,000
Total	\$1,895,300

citizens. Inquiries about initiatives or programs relating to the Foundation's specific goals may be made by contacting the Foundation staff member associated with the relevant program area. This is an ongoing application process with no set deadline.

- **Art Works:** These grants support artistically excellent projects that celebrate our creativity and cultural heritage, invite mutual respect for differing beliefs and values, and enrich humanity. Matching grants generally range from \$10,000 to \$100,000. A minimum cost share/match equal to the grant amount is required.
- **Our Town:** Organizations may apply for creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and through strategies that leverage arts, culture and/or design toward achieving community goals. Our Town offers support for projects in two areas: 1) Arts Engagement, Cultural Planning and Design Projects that represent the distinct character and quality of their communities, and 2) Projects that Build Knowledge about Creative Placemaking.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

ALBANY CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

FLINT RIVERQUARIUM

ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY

ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

DOUGHERTY COUNTY LOCAL GOVERNMENT

ALBANY POLICE DEPARTMENT

MILLERCOORS

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

SPECTRA EVENT MANAGEMENT

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS OWNERS

PRETORIA FIELDS MICROBREWERY

FLATS AT 249

EXPECTED IMPACT

It is important that Downtown Albany establishes itself as an experience. Upon arriving in Downtown Albany, a visitor, or local person, should understand they are in Downtown Albany, a place with a unique look and feel. New residents should experience not only a sense of place, but also a sense of pride for being pioneers in a "not so new" land. The expected impact is that Downtown Albany will truly become the hub of Southwest Georgia for tourism, shopping, culture, recreation, government, and business.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau measures the number of visitors that come and walk through Downtown Albany. It is the expected to see a significant increase in the number of visitors. A placemaking campaign Downtown should also accelerate the continuing expansion of businesses and residents in the Downtown corridor.



DESTINATION: GOOD LIFE

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

A Roadmap to Increasing Residential and Commercial Property

In order for Downtown Albany to thrive, it is paramount that residential and commercial development increases radically. To accomplish this goal, Destination: Good Life recommends implementing several steps. First, we recommend creating a "Roadmap to Development" for both residential and commercial property. This revitalization roadmap will facilitate the growth of existing businesses, and recommend and create conditions for additional growth engines. The Roadmap will contain possibilities for continued growth for existing businesses and provide the keys to developing and sustaining a business Downtown for new businesses. The end goal is to help business leaders and investors create a better sense of community and quality of life for residents by providing desirable amenities in their own backyard.

The second step that Destination: Good Life recommends is to review and update city codes and ordinances to encourage business growth and residential development as well as provide a benefit to current businesses. Currently, the local ordinances are not as favorable for business as they could be. One example of an improvement would be the revision of the City's food truck ordinance. Currently, food truck operators are faced with an inefficient business license process which presents an obstacle for reaching customers and maximizing profit. Along with the ordinance revamp, we recommend implementing a vacancy tax.

There are dozens of buildings Downtown that are currently empty, providing no value to Downtown. A tax, similar to Savannah and Cobb County's blight tax, might give Downtown property owners the nudge they need to seek tenants or establish a business, ultimately increasing revenue for the City of Albany. Finally, the City could increase its code enforcement efforts to ensure that vacant properties Downtown are not

allowed to stand neglected, further depressing the value of all of Downtown.

It is important that Downtown residential and business development happens nearly simultaneously. Therefore, we suggest implementing a request for proposal (RFP) style process for developing a designated area of Downtown. Conceptually, this would include a block of buildings on either Front Street or Pine Avenue that are currently owned by the City. Prospective business owners would submit a business plan as an RFP that would then be reviewed by a designated board of community leaders to assess whether or not the proposed businesses meet the development goals for Downtown. Each business that is approved by the review board will be financially assisted with developing the space in accordance with the business plan presented and the vision for Downtown.



SCOPE

Collaboration with Albany State University to establish a Downtown retail space could introduce the school to a wider market for merchandise and paraphernalia sales and provide another Downtown draw for students.

Recommendations for the development of other businesses that would be beneficial to Downtown residents include restaurants, a pharmacy, curb store, coffee shop, etc. Some of these types of industries may also be built into a building (under lofts/apartments) in mixed-use developments so that new standalone buildings are not needed and won't compromise the image of Downtown.

TO ENGAGE LOCAL INDUSTRIES, CREATE HOUSING AND BUSINESS INCENTIVES FOR:

- Partnering with area companies to offer/offset employee living stipends
- Developers to create residential and commercial developments at a relatively low cost. This could become a tangible option through the RFP/Business Plan recommendation.
- Albany State University students who move Downtown post-graduation, offering possible loan or tuition reimbursement
- Current businesses offering incentives or loyalty discounts to major employers or Downtown residents. For example, the Cookie Shoppe might offer a free cookie with lunch purchase to Phoebe employees that choose to have a meal off campus, or residents of the Flats at 249.

ACTION STEPS

Engage City Council, Downtown Development Authority and Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission in a discussion geared toward changing the City's code of ordinances and, essentially, priming the City and the City's vision for the development of Downtown. Engaging the City and County attorney, along with the City and County Commissioners, will be essential for this step, as it will entail a revamping of the Albany Downtown Riverfront Overlay District to include possible changes in regulations regarding building aesthetics, zoning requirements for different levels of buildings (upstairs v. downstairs usage), and alcohol laws.

SHORT-TERM

HIRING NECESSARY PERSONNEL

- Develop RFP for Consultant and Marketing Coordinator. The Consultant's main objective should be actual development of the program meant to encourage development of the Downtown Albany Corridor.
- Publish RFP and gather necessary résumés for Consultant and Marketing Coordinator.
- Review RFP responses and interview individuals for Consultant and Marketing Coordinator.

MID-TERM

DEVELOPMENT OF ROADMAP & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES (ALBANY PDS)

- Consultant and Marketing Coordinator to engage necessary City departments regarding manual that would include information on possible funding sources, city codes, standards, resources and guidelines. Consultant and Marketing Coordinator should work together to develop the "Roadmap" materials/handbook.

- Consultant and Marketing Coordinator to develop agenda for or one-to two-day Professional Development Series.
- Marketing Coordinator to reach out to various individuals (Pace Burt, grants representatives, grant writers, etc.) regarding speaking engagements during Professional Development Series.
- Marketing Coordinator to plan the culminating "open house" style tour of Downtown for members of Professional Development Series as well as outside investors/developers. (Not only do developers get to see the buildings and notice other developers are interested in Downtown, but this can also serve as a method of linking possible outside investors with potential developers/businesses.)

(The timeline on these ideas could be extended considerably by the consultant or developer of the program to better suit the actual goal of the PDS, which is to identify and encourage potential developers and business owners for Downtown.)

ALBANY PDS

- Marketing Coordinator develops application for PDS (must have viable business plan to enter program - for commercial development) and implement plan as developed in Phase II.

LONG-TERM

RFP/BUSINESS PLAN PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF DESIGNATED BLOCK

- Develop RFP for identifying potential businesses.
- Business plans due to review board.
- Identify the selected number of winners and the property they will develop.

Allow three to six months for development. Once development is complete and each business is ready to open, schedule a grand opening date.

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Professional Development Series	\$10,000
Website	\$2,000
Guide/Roadmap	\$5,000
Marketing Coordinator	\$40,000
Open House Event	\$1,000
Consultant	\$25,000
Total	\$83,000

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Destination: Good Life recommends that local industries engage in the development of Downtown Albany by offering financial assistance for redevelopment. Any investment in the development of Downtown will be returned multiple times through the increased business activities and newly located Downtown residents. One example of industry participation might be collaborating with the City's Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund to offer a larger incentive, ultimately supporting higher quality development. Another, more specific, example of local industry collaboration would be a MillerCoors beer garden located near the river. This type of establishment would cater to recreationalists that have spent a day on the Flint as well as locals looking for a fun hangout where local products can be enjoyed.

While we understand that local industry funding may be more challenging to acquire, there are countless programs and funds geared specifically for this vision. The following is a list of local, state and national opportunities that are available for Downtown development.

- Historic properties that are 50 years of age and older qualify for historic tax credit through the State of Georgia and the National Historic Preservation.
- State funding up to 20 percent construction; national funding up to 25 percent construction
- New Market tax credits for residential and commercial properties
- 20 – 25 percent of redevelopment costs
- Georgia Job Tax Credit provides up to \$4,000 on state tax return for each full-time job created
- Economic Development Administration through the Community of Economic Development has a Revolving Loan Fund. This is a loan program that awards between \$2,000 - \$200,000.
 - This funding is meant to close the gap between what a bank approves and what they actually need.
 - A lot of banks do not offer start-up loans or offer too much (^\$250,000)
 - If a bank denies someone they can also apply
 - Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund was approved by the Commission in 2013. They were awarded \$5 million to be used for redevelopment in Downtown.
 - This funding source was used for Pretoria Fields, the Flats at 249 and the Albany Museum of Art.
- For Smaller businesses – A Façade Grant Program provides up to \$5,000 for exterior improvements and signage.
- Department of Community Affairs offers a downtown development loan for redevelopment projects up to \$250,000.
- Georgia Cities Foundation provides up to \$250,000 loan for redevelopment projects Downtown. Albany Community Together, Inc. is a local Community Development Financial Institution that offers loans ranging from \$500 to \$250,000. The loans require a personal guaranty from each principal owner of the borrowing business, but they are specifically targeted at expansions of existing businesses, start-up businesses and both working and start-up capital.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Downtown Albany has a distinct advantage: it has assets already in place. In addition to the amenities and opportunities that have already been developed, Downtown is full of properties and areas that possess unique history and character and await further development. This idea simply attempts to streamline the efforts of current Downtown stakeholders and allow new stakeholders to move Downtown with more efficiency.

If current and future business owners are shown that the City and the County are taking active measures to not only provide funding, but also create an environment conducive to dynamic Downtown growth, development Downtown could achieve momentum that it previously has been unable to achieve. The creation of a Roadmap for development, in conjunction with the hiring of a Marketing Coordinator and a Professional Development Series, would set expectations, which developers can specifically target. Enhanced code enforcement and vacancy taxes would send a clear signal that the lack of development will incur costs. Overall, the specific recommendations of the Roadmap, coupled with the broader indications of Albany's desire for robust Downtown development, will advise developers in Albany, in Georgia, and all over the country that Downtown is ready and waiting for a vibrant future.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Destination: Good Life has been told by citizen after citizen that:

1. Commercial developments need residents to serve, and
2. Residential developments need businesses to give residents something to do.



Downtown is in the difficult position of needing to encourage both residential and commercial development simultaneously. If changes in local ordinances and zoning laws can be approved, a development Roadmap successfully presented, and a working partnership created between local industries and local governments, Downtown could see considerable momentum in development of new living spaces and new restaurants, bars, stores and other businesses for its residents to enjoy. For this idea, success means a lot of new Downtown residents becoming the cheerleaders for a lot of new Downtown businesses and amenities.

DESTINATION: GOOD LIFE RECREATION

Success in Downtown would be strongly correlated with Downtown's ability to project a sense of place by creating and embracing a particular identity. Albany is already a destination for recreation. Each year, more than 1,000 people travel from all over the United States to run in the Snickers Marathon. In addition, Albany is known as a destination for hunting. Destination: Good Life proposes to build upon this reputation and make Downtown Albany more of a hub for recreation. In turn, businesses would follow the movement Downtown and encourage a revitalization of Downtown Albany.



PROJECTS

HEALTH & WELLNESS EVENTS

The Parks and Recreation Department could bring more health and wellness events to the riverfront. These activities would provide free advertising to the private businesses that operate the classes, and spark more interest and activity Downtown.

YOGA ON THE RIVERFRONT

The green space in front of the Flint River can host large group yoga events. This would not only bring new people Downtown, but it would also promote a sense of health and wellness.

OUTDOOR GYM/FITNESS CENTER

An outdoor fitness center provides multiple benefits to the community – it is a low-to-no-cost option for those who cannot afford a typical gym membership, it promotes health and wellness, it gives individuals a reason to come Downtown, and it creates a sense of place.



FRIDAYS ON THE FLINT

Many cities have implemented a "First Friday" event in their Downtown area. Albany's biggest asset Downtown is the river. We recommend a "First Friday" event take place by the river – to include vendors, yoga in the park, food trucks and other events.

FLOAT THE FLINT

Partner with Flint Riverkeeper to have guided tours of Flint. Outposts provide rentals and drop-off and pickup from different areas.



COMPETITIVE EVENTS

- Work with Spectra Venue Management to encourage competitive sports teams to play at the Civic Center.
- Encourages people to visit Downtown
- Partner with Marine Corps Logistics Base, Phoebe and Hughston Clinic for health and wellness events.

TASTE OF ALBANY

This event would feature local and regional restaurants, distilleries and breweries, as well as other local vendors so patrons could sample fine foods and sip craft beers, local wines and artisan spirits cultivated and crafted right here at home in South Georgia.

FREESTYLE BMX

In close proximity to Downtown, the Parks at Chehaw houses a dirt BMX track. There is currently a plot of land next to the Civic Center that was previously used as a golf course. We recommend that the golf course be restructured into a concrete, Freestyle BMX park with riding bowl transitions, ramp jumps and a vert ramp.

This new sport has the potential to draw thousands of people Downtown. If implemented, Parks and Recreation is encouraged to work on documentation needed to host state and/or national competitions.



RELOCATE EXISTING SKATE PARK

Currently, Albany has a small skate park across the bridge in Downtown Albany. The Parks and Recreation Department has already decided to relocate the park. We recommend that the park is relocated to the area near the Civic Center. If planned properly, the Freestyle BMX and skate park could be combined.

OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURTS

The Parks and Recreation Department is already interested in adding outdoor basketball courts to Downtown Albany. Ten to 12 courts of all different sizes would provide an additional sport.

RACETRACK - SPARTAN RACE, WARRIOR DASH, TOUGH MUDDER OR OTHER COMPETITIONS

Many cities host races that attract people from around the world. We recommend adding a Spartan Race, Warrior Dash or Tough Mudder event in Downtown Albany.

**PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
CONNECTING ALBANY STATE
UNIVERSITY & DOWNTOWN
ALBANY**

The closest walkable crossing of the river is on US 19 and is not conducive to safety for Albany State University students. The recommended bridge(s) can incorporate the history of Albany and also showcase elements of new and older bridges. A replica covered bridge can be built near the bridge keeper's house and a modern bridge can be built in a different location. This would showcase different bridges like the truss bridge for the railroad, concrete vehicle bridge or others. The idea to reduce pedestrians on the vehicle bridges helps promote connectivity and shows the city is walkable. This is already being considered in the Flint Master Trails Plan, and Destination: Good Life strongly recommends that the pedestrian bridge be made a priority.



BUILDING ON WHAT IS ALREADY IN PLACE



SNICKERS MARATHON

The Snickers Marathon is one of the top Boston Marathon qualifiers in the country. Almost 20 percent of all runners qualify for the Boston Marathon, making it one of the nation's fastest marathons.

SPLASH PAD

Downtown Albany is lucky to have a splash pad, but it is not being used to its full potential. By hosting events that bring people Downtown, we are confident this amenity will start being utilized more.

CIVIC CENTER

Spectra Venue Management now manages the Albany Civic Center. We recommend that Spectra focuses on bringing an array of events to Downtown Albany - including recreation events.

KAYAKING AND CANOING

- Kayak Attack has just purchased a storefront on Front Street in Downtown Albany. We recommend that this business is highlighted at some of the events Downtown to help promote use of this great business.
- There are three other outposts in town that could also be involved with guided Flint River tours, kayak and canoe rentals, as well as shuttling to and from different boat ramps for patrons to get on and off the river.
- **Flint River Hammock** - This new type of park could be created along the river for lounging in hammocks, chatting with friends and looking over the river. This is an opportunity for river enthusiasts to appreciate nature while providing a little bit of art after floating on the Flint River. The hammock poles can be painted/ designed to represent the history in Albany-Dougherty County. <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article166668582.html>

VETERANS STATE PARK AMPHITHEATRE

- Host music and other events at Veterans State Park Amphitheatre
- Collaborate with Albany State University to host concerts and plays by the Fine Arts Department
- Host concerts during Fridays on the Flint events. This would allow local artists to be included in the musical line up and build a better sense of community

SCOPE

Establishing Downtown Albany as a recreation destination will increase community engagement and activity, specifically in the Downtown area, while bringing more visibility to established local businesses and appealing to prospects. As local businesses become more visible, their customer bases become larger - a major factor in the businesses' ability to sustain their Downtown presence. Ultimately, the establishment of the Downtown area as the recreation and entertainment hub will serve as a driving force to maintaining the vitality of the Downtown area, which is widely viewed as the heart of a local community.

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Outdoor Fitness Center	\$20,000
Hammock Park	\$5,000
Relocate Skate Park	\$100,000
Events	\$10,000
Basketball Courts	\$250,000
Race Track	\$200,000
Pedestrian Bridge	\$1,000,000
Total	\$1,585,000

**ACTION
STEPS**

DESTINATION:
GOOD LIFE #3

SHORT-TERM

- FRIDAYS ON THE FLINT
- TASTE OF ALBANY
- YOGA IN THE PARK
- FLOAT THE FLINT

MID-TERM

- OUTDOOR FITNESS FACILITY
- HAMMOCK PARK
- RELOCATE AND EXPAND CURRENT SKATE PARK
- BMX COURSE - WORK ON QUALIFICATIONS TO HOST TOURNAMENTS

LONG-TERM

- PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE
- RACETRACK - COMPETITIVE RACES SUCH AS TOUGH MUDDER
- BASKETBALL & OTHER RECREATION COURTS

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

SPLOST Recreation Fund (\$2 million that can be reallocated from tennis courts to new recreation)

GRANTS:

NAME	WEBSITE	GRANT AMOUNT
J. Bulow Campbell Foundation	http://jbcf.org/grantmaking/application-procedures/	\$100,000+
Surdna Foundation	www.surdna.org/grants/grants-overview.html	\$50,000+
Merck Foundation	www.msdrresponsibility.com/our-giving/foundation/	\$50,000+
Georgia Power Foundation	www.georgiapower.com/community/helping-others/charitable-giving.html	\$50,000+
Bradley Turner Foundation Inc.	www.wcbradley.com/index.php?/about/overview	\$50,000+
Georgia Cities Foundation Revolving Loan Fund	www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org/Programs-Services/Revolving-Loan-Fund.aspx	\$250,000+

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

AB&T – Luke Flatt
 Phoebe – Joel Wernick
 Chehaw BMX – Tommy Knight
 Flint Riverkeeper – Gordon Rogers/Jayme Smith

Parks & Recreation Department – Joel Holmes
 Downtown Development Authority
 Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau

EXPECTED IMPACT

After conducting several interviews with local business owners, many of them stated that they are hesitant to come Downtown because of past failures. We need to show business owners that people will and do come to Downtown Albany, and health and sporting initiatives are a key opportunity to bring more people Downtown. Once the people come, we are confident businesses will follow. For example, LakePoint Sporting Community in Cartersville, Georgia (just north of Atlanta), began with a few ball fields. Now, this sporting community has become a destination for traveling teams across the Southeast. In turn, the community has prospered with new hotels and other businesses popping up and flourishing.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The measure of success will be reflected in the amount of regularly scheduled and well-attended events that are hosted Downtown. With proper marketing locally, across the state and regionally, more people will become aware of these events we're offering. Additionally, increased business presence and the longevity of existing businesses will serve as success indicators.



CITATIONS & RESOURCES

Andrew Mellon Foundation: <https://mellon.org/programs/>
Art Works: <https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/art-works/grant-program-description>
Blank Foundation Funding for the Arts: <https://blankfoundation.org/investments/>
Bradley Turner Foundation Inc.: <https://www.wcbradley.com/index.php?/about/overview>
Columbus Hammock Park: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article166668582.html>
Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program: https://www.energy.gov/eere/ssl/financing-options#Utility_Financing__Municipally_Owned
Freestyle BMX: <http://www.genesbmx.com/BMXandSkateparks.html>
Funding for Natural and Cultural Heritage: <https://www.crackerbarrel.com/about/giving>
Georgia Cities Foundation: <https://www.georgiacitiesfoundation.org/Programs-Services/Revolving-Loan-Fund.aspx>
Georgia Council for the Arts: <http://gaarts.org/images/PDFs/FY19-Project-Guidelines-FINAL.pdf>
Georgia Power Foundation: <https://www.georgiapower.com/community/helping-others/charitable-giving.html>
J. Bulow Campbell Foundation: <http://jbcf.org/grantmaking/application-procedures/>
Merck Foundation: <https://www.msdrresponsibility.com/our-giving/foundation/>
National Endowment for the Arts: <https://www.arts.gov/grants/apply-grant/grants-organizations>
Our Town: <https://www.arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction>
Starting a mud run obstacle race: <http://www.mudrunguide.com/2013/05/organize-start-mud-run-obstacle-race-bring-town/>
Support from American Express: <http://about.americanexpress.com/csr/howto.aspx>
Surdna Foundation: <http://www.surdna.org/grants/grants-overview.html>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Destination: Good Life would like to acknowledge the Albany-Dougherty County partners who have assisted in our research, planning and guidance to reach our final recommendations. We are grateful to the following community members for their time, wisdom and generosity:

Pace Burt
 Developer
 The Flats at 249

Chris Cohilas
 Chairman
 Dougherty County
 Commission

Luke Flatt
 President and CEO
 AB&T

BJ Fletcher
 City of Albany Commission

Carlton Fletcher
 Albany Herald

William Hancock
 Webb/Needmore Properties

Bo Henry
 Businessman

Claire Fox Hilliard
 Music Director and Conductor
 Albany Symphony Orchestra

Dorothy Hubbard
 Mayor
 City of Albany

Yaz Johnson
 Yaz Modeling Agency

Spencer Lee
 County Attorney
 Dougherty County

Michael Persley
 Chief of Police
 Albany Police Department

Jeff 'Bodine' Sinyard
 Owner
 Adams Exterminators

Sharon Subadan
 City Manager
 City of Albany

JD Sumner
 Spokesperson
 Dougherty County School System

Joel Wernick
 President & CEO
 Phoebe Putney Health System

Paula Williams
 Executive Director
 Albany Museum of Art

CONNECT ALBANY

How can Albany-Dougherty County leverage existing natural resources to develop a more connected and walkable community?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

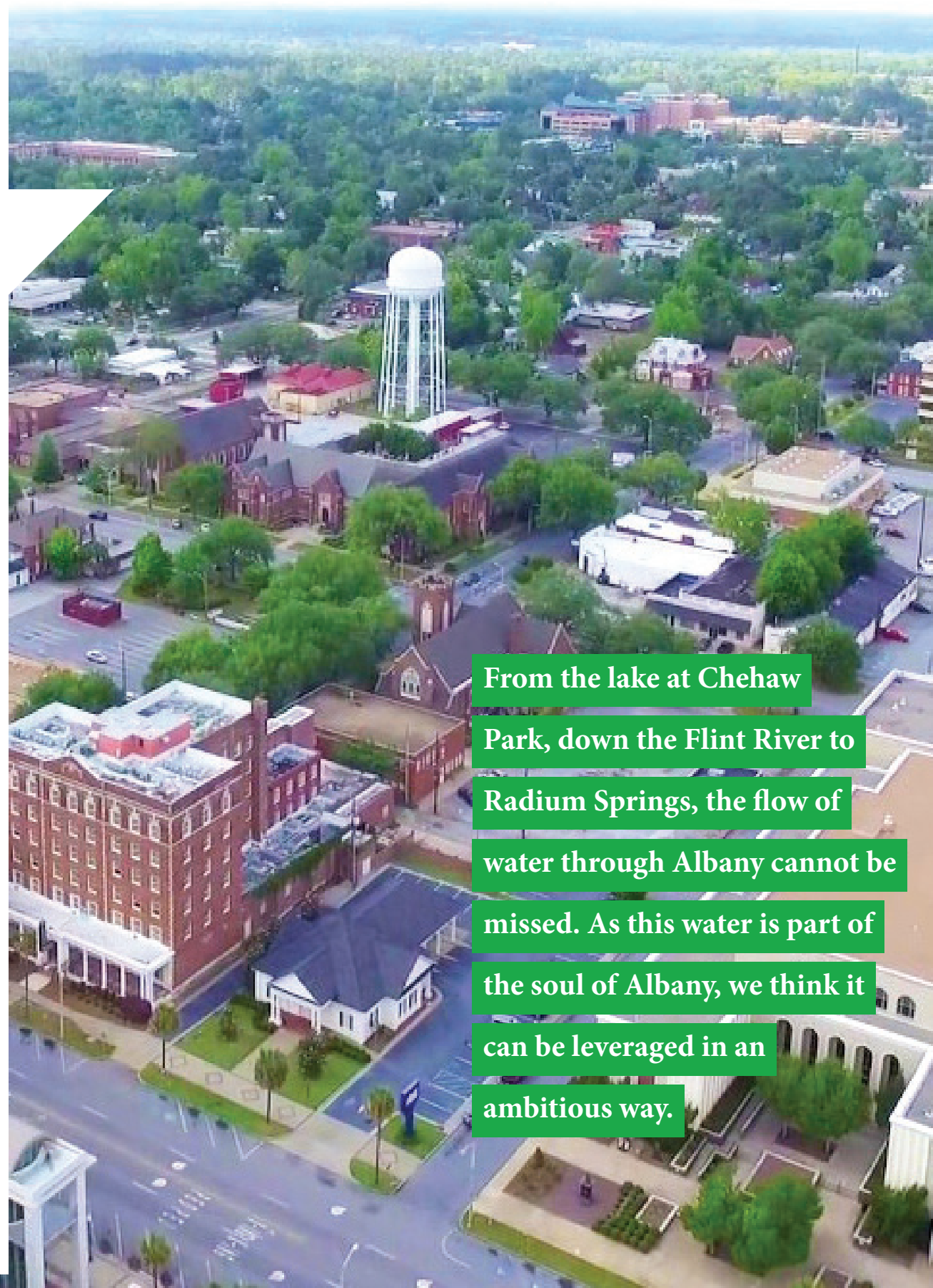
The city of Albany and Dougherty County have been blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Environmentally, Downtown Albany is bordered by Chehaw Park to the north, the Flint River to the east, and Radium Springs to the south. Culturally, the city is home to a rich history from its beginning as a trade hub and a center of civil rights activities. Further, Albany is an anchor for education and medical care in Southwest Georgia.

The Connect Albany team was tasked with leveraging these natural resources to develop a more connected and walkable community. Currently, there are studies and proposals that detail infrastructure improvements, transportation safety improvements and trail system expansion. Our group recognizes the quality of these proposals and looks to expand their impacts with

three big ideas including education and promotion of walkable areas, community pride and service and appeals to the community's sense of adventure.

From the lake at Chehaw Park, down the Flint River to Radium Springs, the flow of water through Albany cannot be missed. As this water is part of the soul of Albany, we think it can be leveraged in an ambitious way. The creation of a water park, filled with water slides, zip lines, and other adventurous activities could serve as a defining attraction for the area. This park would not only provide a standalone experience, but it would also connect with the Flint Master Trails Plan and connect patrons to more of what Albany has to offer.

During interviews with local stakeholders, it became apparent the community was not aware of the walkable attractions that are already offered. We propose an effort to promote these attractions in a way that will reach residents and visitors alike through digital and physical media. We recommend the creation of numerous tours and exhibits that will be marked with updated, appropriate signage that encourage walking. We also propose a greater connection with Albany State University and greater involvement of its students in community life.



From the lake at Chehaw Park, down the Flint River to Radium Springs, the flow of water through Albany cannot be missed. As this water is part of the soul of Albany, we think it can be leveraged in an ambitious way.

TEAM MEMBERS

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Albany, GA

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Albany, GA

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Columbus, GA

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Quest For Change, Inc.
Albany, GA

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Freudenberg Performance Materials
Macon, GA

Lauren Ramsdell
ASHRAE
Atlanta, GA

Julian Smart-Rimple
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Atlanta, GA

David Wilschetz
Complete Carriers, LLC
Albany, GA

The recent, devastating natural disasters that hit the Albany area resulted in a new bond between local residents. A common theme in our interviews was the desire to make that bond a permanent fixture in the community. Because of this, we recommend a series of community days to promote community, culture, history and wellness. Creating positive events for all to attend will move this community together in a meaningful direction.

Albany-Dougherty County has built momentum around its transportation and trail proposals. Now is the time to leverage the area's environmental, historical and human resources to promote the connectivity of residents and visitors alike.

INTRODUCTION

Albany-Dougherty County is a vibrant community with all the amenities of a big city with a small-town feel. With a population of 94,565 (U.S. Census Bureau), Albany is the largest city in Southwest Georgia and not only serves its residents, but also more than 44,000 visitors annually (Hendricks).

With university-level higher education, a bustling regional hospital and a diversified economy that includes tourism, manufacturing, industry and services, Albany-Dougherty County has no shortage of practical amenities. But with its picturesque setting along the banks of the Flint River and adjacent to Radium Springs – one of the seven natural wonders of Georgia (NGE) – this community also has an abundance of natural resources and recreational opportunities.

Albany-Dougherty County has not

been without its challenges. Along with its beauty, the Flint River can also be tumultuous, and flooded twice in recent memory, in 1993 and 1998. Some of the hardest hit areas have never recovered. Additionally, the city and county were hit with back-to-back tornadoes on January 2, and 22, 2017, causing 40 injuries, five deaths and nearly \$1 billion worth of damage (Dougherty County).

Our challenge is to connect both residents and visitors not only with the natural environment, but also with each other. Many of our stakeholder interviews mentioned the community's greatest resource being its residents. Through an exciting new outdoor attraction, improved signage and wayfinding, and proactive community events, Albany-Dougherty County will become a stronger, more connected, and even better place to live, work and play.



CONNECT ALBANY WATER ATTRACTION

DESCRIPTION

The idea of a water attraction seeks to bring the Albany community together through fun, highly engaging activities that will provide a multitude of attractions for individuals and families alike. These attractions will include water slides, rope swings, a cable wake park and a state-of-the-art zipline course. This will be an instant attraction, connected with the trailway system and other outdoor activities, making it a true staple in the Albany community.

Based on stakeholder interviews, children in the community are particularly interested in seeing this idea come to light.

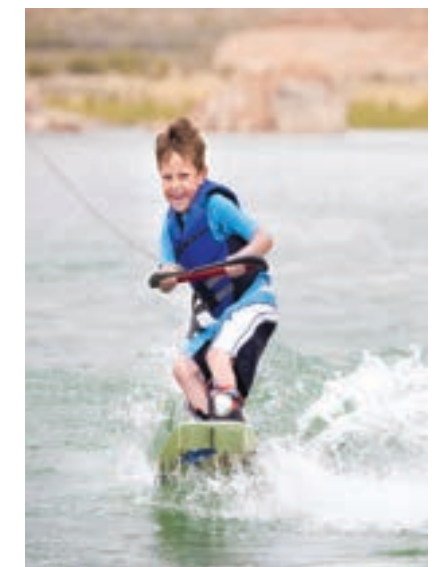


PROJECTS

CABLE WAKE PARK

A Model cable wake park in a similar fashion to the Valdosta Wake Compound (VWC), but use the Flint River as the water source rather than a manmade pond—ideally building a five tower cable park that suits both beginners and advanced riders. Strategically located at the former Radium Springs Country Club site or Downtown, Albany's water attraction would host a day of fun for children and adults with many skill levels and abilities. The wake park would provide a way to bring people into wakeboarding and wakeskating that otherwise wouldn't have access, interest or knowledge of the sport.

Furthermore, a partnership with WakeFest in Albany would provide greater exposure to both the wake park and the WakeFest event (GA Wake Series).



WATER SLIDES & ROPE SWINGS

Beyond just the wake park, the facility would offer water slides and rope swings as a source of entertainment for people of all ages. These attractions would be centered around the river with the goal of getting people out into the Flint enjoying the natural resources that Albany has available.



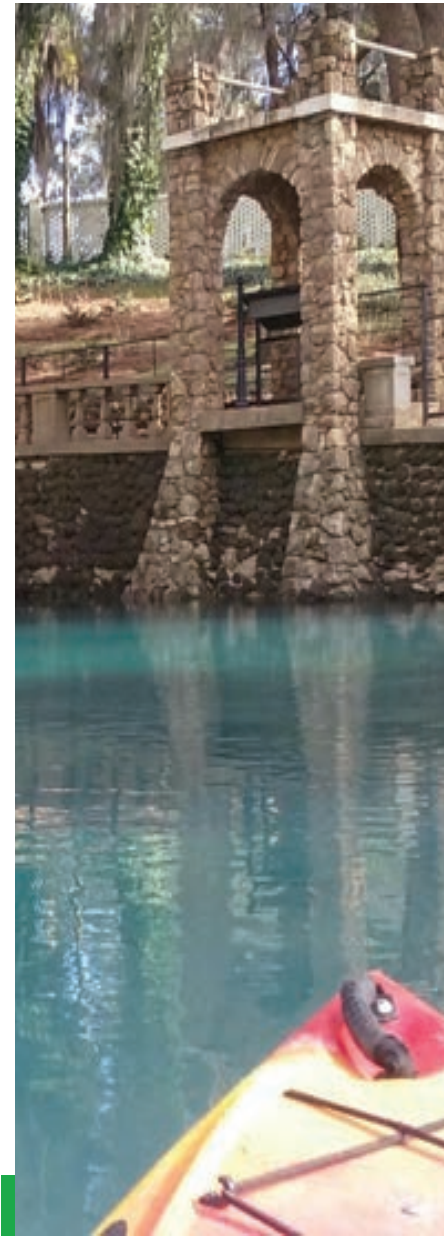
ZIPLINE COURSE

A zipline would provide additional recreation for tourists and locals and employ one of Dougherty County's other natural resources – trees. Ziplines showcase Albany-Dougherty County from a different vantage point. Locals and tourists alike could see the area from a bird's-eye view. The zipline project could be completed on a smaller, more cost-efficient scale featuring a shorter canopy tour fashioned similarly to Banning Mills Aerial Adventure Challenge Park in North Georgia that boasts the World's Largest Zipline Canopy Tour (Banning Mills). Length of the canopy tour could be adjusted based on resources available.



TRAIL SYSTEM

We recommend connecting both of these attractions to the current trail system so they can be accessed by automobile, bicycle or on foot. Plans are already in place to connect Radium Springs to the rest of the Albany greenway network (Hodges), so providing a way for people to get to the park by foot or bicycle will be an important part of ensuring this attraction is accessible. Additionally, the wake park will have seating areas where pedestrians can come and watch wakeboarders.



SHORT-TERM

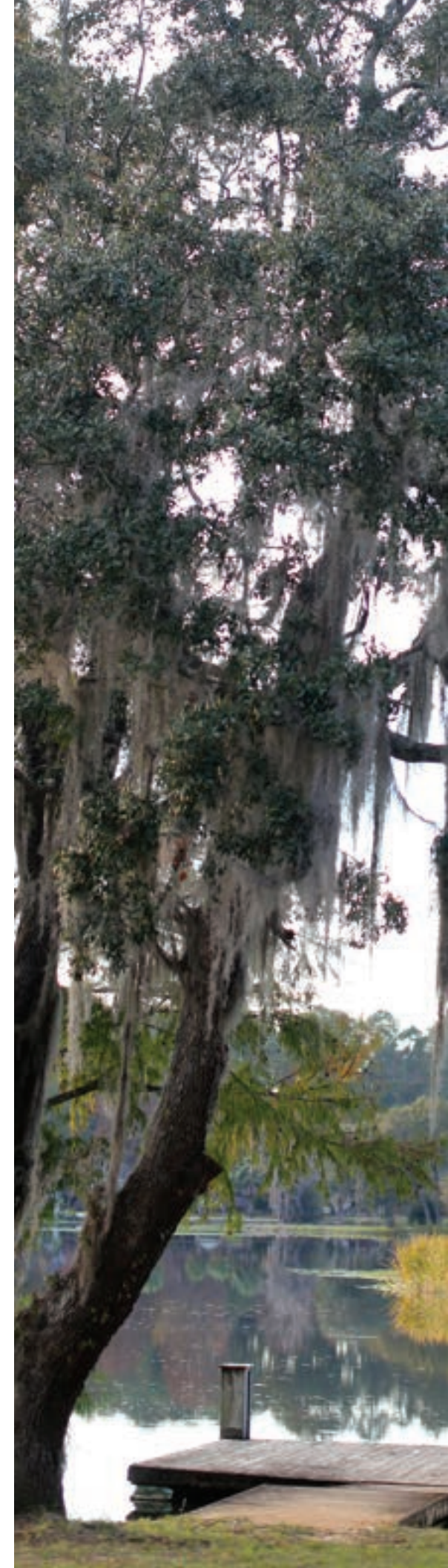
- Identify optimal location for water park and zipline (proposed near Radium Springs Gardens), but bring in developers to ensure landscaping and structural requirements are met
- Identify funding sources/private investors and developers
- Research community buy-in and public/private partnerships
- Land acquisition if not already in place

MID-TERM

- Develop blueprints/layout of park
- Secure permits for structures
- Host bid process for building; select companies to complete project
- Establish timeline for building process and open date

LONG-TERM

- Establish park open date and begin advertising three to six months months prior
- Hire and train staff to run park



POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Public/private partnerships with business and industry in the area
- Private developer such as Herschend Family Entertainment/Cypress Gardens (current and former owners of Wild Adventures)
- Staff and volunteer time for water slide and rope swing assembly
- Grants from Paddle Nation for water attraction construction (Paddle Nation)
- Grants from the National Park Service to acquire and develop riverfront land (NPS, "Land and Water Conservation Fund;* NPS, "National Park Service Offers \$15 Million in Grants for Outdoor Recreation in Cities")

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Flint Riverkeeper
- Rivers Alive
- Georgia River Network, Paddle Georgia and Georgia Water Trails
- Georgia Water Coalition
- Kayak Attack

EXPECTED IMPACT

The impact of this project includes repositioning Albany in the minds of locals and outside audiences. We hope to improve recreational options that local Albanians can enjoy as well as increasing tourism where travelers see Albany as a fun place to visit. Many, if not all, of the stakeholders and local Albanians agreed that one of Albany's greatest natural resources is the river. It has been vastly underutilized, but has potential to be a focal point of the city. Capitalizing on the river, its amazing location right through the center of Albany, and showcasing it through a variety of attractions could be a massive revenue generator as well as

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Wake park	\$500,000-\$1,250,000
Zipline	\$10,000-\$500,000 depending on length and additional structures needed
Water slides & rope swings	\$20,000-\$100,000 depending on number of slides and complexity
Insurance	\$25,000 per year
Staff & Training	\$250,000 per year
Equipment, including wake boards and other gear	\$10,000

distinguishing Albany as a destination location in South Georgia. If positioned correctly, the water attractions could also bring more traffic to existing Albany resources like the Flint RiverQuarium, Thronateeska Heritage Center, Chehaw Park and the Albany Civil Rights Museum.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Development of the attractions
- Number of people who use the attractions, tracking ticket sales
- Revenue generated by the attraction



CONNECT ALBANY BRAND ALBANY

DESCRIPTION

Part of the way for the City of Albany to tell its story and attract visitors, but also for locals to rediscover their city and all it has to offer, is through branding.

Based on the challenge question that was presented and insight we received throughout this process, the overarching theme was that while walking through Albany, there was not enough information or indication of what this beautiful community has to offer. And while external marketing campaigns by the Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau are continually being revamped, the same amount

of attention does not appear to be made for internal marketing campaigns.

This particular project focuses on means to improve connectivity throughout Albany-Dougherty County through visual means in three different ways: through digital media, physical means and on a collegiate level.

We are confident that by collaborating with vested community stakeholders, this idea will help to boost local pride for Albany State University, as well as support marketing campaigns promoting tourism to the area, and help Albanians fall back in love with their city.

PROJECTS

UPGRADING DIGITAL PRESENCE

The City of Albany currently has two main websites focused on events, recreation and tourism—Visit Albany, run by the Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), and Only One Albany, run by the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission (EDC). While the Visit Albany website is actively being updated to be an indispensable resource to visitors, we think the Only One Albany website is underused. We propose actively curating new content for the websites specifically geared to inform visitors regarding new and upcoming attractions, new events and more. This content creation could be a collaborative venture between the CVB, EDC and the Albany Herald. Ideally, this could be an opportunity to create dedicated paid content writer position(s) to keep material vibrant and engaging to the respective audiences.

Ideas for this new content will include information about community festivals, local attractions, guided and self-guided walking tours offered and

sponsored by the CVB in conjunction with local attractions, and hiking, cycling and walking trails along/adjacent to the current/proposed trails running throughout Albany-Dougherty County. Categories specifically focused on being family friendly and low cost to diversify and attract community members across age and economic lines should be developed and populated with content. Furthermore, interaction and integration through social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, etc.) and mobile websites is key. Regularly scheduled updates will be the vital element to keep up with the modern pace of consumption. This content can also be used to supplement any other media, physical or otherwise, distributed through the Albany CVB and the Albany Herald.

UNIFIED SIGNAGE

Another key component to elevate Albany's marketability both internally and externally is by improving existing signage throughout the city. This is an effective "low-hanging fruit" to help develop a unique Albany look and feel. A steering and coordination committee would need to be formed (if one is not already in place) between the CVB, EDC, local attractions and other interested stakeholders to discuss what this "look" is.



Creative and unique signage could include some of the community's top attractions and destinations such as the Flint RiverQuarium, Chehaw Park and others. In the design of these signs, it would be beneficial to use symbols unique to Albany, such as the Flint River, turtles, Ray Charles, Radium Springs, etc. Other types of signage to consider include new neighborhood signs and historical/civic/cultural information signs and milestones along and in areas where tours may occur. From our research with community stakeholders, there is plenty of indication many plans are underway and collaboration between organizations is already happening. Creating these new visuals will only help boost these existing plans. As a nod to a more on-trend category of signs, finding locations for scenic selfie spots to engage people on social media could be a great way to promote incentive and interactivity with residents and visitors alike. An example of a corridor that could benefit from improved signage is the area between Flint RiverQuarium on Pine Avenue and Thronateeska Heritage Center on Roosevelt Avenue.





In addition, many interviewed stakeholders reported an unsafe perception of the downtown and riverfront areas. It may be reasonable for the Albany Police Department to think about installing additional safety signage such as 911 and other emergency information signs where appropriate.

Overall, improved signage will help educate visitors on what Albany has to offer, give Albany a cohesive look and feel as a community, and assuage safety concerns. It will be important to collaborate with relevant community stakeholders to accomplish this goal.



EMBRACE THE GOWN

Albany State University (ASU) has been a standing legacy to higher education for more than a century (Huff). One of the questions Albany had for this Gamechanger group was how Albany can have a “college town feel.” As it stands, there seems to be a great disconnect with ASU being embraced wholeheartedly by the community, and from feedback we received, the ASU community feels isolated as a result. We think the best way to gain positive branding is to begin establishing official “town and gown relations” with ASU.



From research done and suggestions from the International Town and Gown Association, the most effective work is done by formalizing this relationship (Whitt; Sungu-Eryilmaz). At a minimum, creating opportunities to bring the city to the university such as town halls and forums where both students and city representatives can attend would be a fantastic start. The City Commission and Albany Area Chamber of Commerce should also actively invite the ASU leadership to community leadership events. On a more official scale, a commission can be developed with members from ASU’s Office of Institutional Advancement, university public relations and their city counterparts. This kind of visibility and engagement is crucial to help bridge the gap between the entities, and the community will only grow stronger for it. While this relationship will not flourish immediately, if the commitment is there, connection will be well worth the effort.

Additionally, bring more of ASU visibly into the downtown area by integrating the ASU Ram in signage and monuments. There

is already an example of this at the intersection of Pine Avenue and North Washington Street. Students will be more encouraged into the community if they are able to take advantage of student discounts with local businesses. Finally, identify ways to bring the talent of ASU students to possibly help develop some of the promotional material discussed in this idea – whether that be through internships or volunteering.

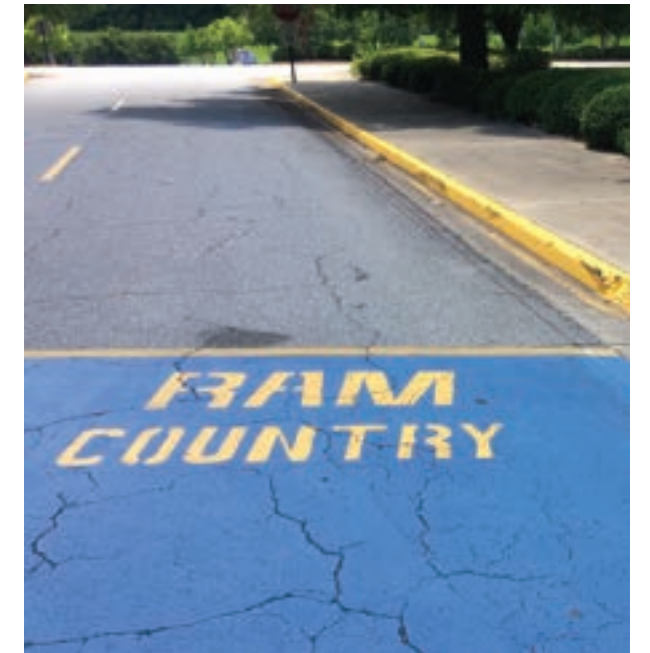
ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM

- Identify what organizations/attractions would be interested in having newly designed signage and discuss preliminary ideas of what those signs would involve and potential locations around the city
- Identify course of action to develop content creation position – leveraging existing employees within collaborating organizations or create a new position
- Begin discussions between Albany State University and City of Albany officials regarding avenues of engagement (events, town halls, interested parties, etc.)
- Consider sponsorship and advertisement opportunities for third party entities to sponsor signage

MID-TERM

- Develop new potential walks/tours/programs and consolidate any existing tours that will be included in the new content creation sponsored by Albany CVB and local attractions
- Begin design phase of signage and monuments once locations have been identified
- Apply for sign permits per Albany Planning and Development
- Create room in the city budget for ongoing maintenance of signage
- Develop official town and gown commission between City Commission, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce and Albany State University leadership



LONG-TERM

- Begin installation of signs in identified locations around city and county
- Announce updates to Visit Albany and Only One Albany websites
- Develop a schedule of official events in which Albany State University leadership and students can participate
- Continue to have regular town and gown commission meetings between city and university leadership

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Content Creator/Social Media Management Position	\$48,000 per year
Design, permitting and installation of improved signage	\$25,000 - \$35,000
Permitting fees to install signs/monuments around city	\$3,000, or as specified by Albany Municipal Code

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau tourism advertising budget
- Community Foundation of South Georgia grant program
- Developing a memorial milestone foundation — through this program individuals/alumni can donate amenities such as signs, benches, etc. in memory or honor of loved ones
- Revenue-generating tour passes could be offered
- AARP Community Challenge grant to assist with infrastructure improvements
- Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) REBC Grant Program
- Georgia Downtown Revolving Loan Fund
- GDOT Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG)

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Albany State University, Office of Institutional Advancement
- Special interest groups and businesses related to outdoor activity, i.e., hiking, cycling (Pecan City Pedalers), kayaking, running, etc.
- Thronateeska Heritage Center
- Albany Civil Rights Institute
- Flint RiverQuarium
- Chehaw Park
- Albany Police Department
- Albany Herald
- Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission and Albany Area Chamber of Commerce to assist with finding business partners to sponsor scenic selfie spots and advertising for the walker's guide and app

EXPECTED IMPACT

The development of the visual Albany brand is critical to the support of all endeavors surrounding community development and marketing. Overall, we think that this idea not only helps to support external facing efforts, but, more importantly, helps to look inward and remind Albanians what makes Albany special.

By leveraging existing organizational talent within Albany CVB, Albany-Dougherty EDC and the Albany Herald to produce fresh, creative online content keeps the local scene interesting for everyone.

By improving wayfinding and wayseeing, the hope is to boost pride in the promotion of Albany's existing natural resources and help visitors fall in love with them. Establishing a formal relationship with Albany State University will help Albany with the development of a "college town" feel they desire.

The Albany-Dougherty County community comprised of people of diverse backgrounds and it is crucial that access to these recreational activities are able to cross all lines. The perception that seems to pervade is there is nothing to do in Albany, but that certainly is not the case in this part of Southwest Georgia where "history and nature flow."

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- An increased number of unique visitors to Visit Albany and Only One Albany websites after addition of new content
- An increase in social media-related statistics (hashtag usage, "check ins," etc.)
- Studies of economic impact on individual organizations with sponsored tours and trails
- Annual surveys distributed to Albany State University students and community stakeholders for levels of satisfaction

CONNECT ALBANY ALBANY DAYS & ALBANY IS

DESCRIPTION

According to many interviewed stakeholders, Albany-Dougherty County's greatest natural resources are its residents. Each time the region has been affected by natural disasters, Albany residents have stepped up to take care of their neighbors and give back to their communities. Rather than wait until the next emergency, Albany-Dougherty County should promote community service and connectivity as a way of life. Albany Days, quarterly celebrations of what makes Albany great, is an initiative that will focus residents' attention on their community. Albany Days will involve service opportunities, civic functions and physical fitness.

Albany Days can be used to rejuvenate the "Only One Albany" Campaign, continuing to improve public awareness about the natural and built environment available in the County, as well as engage residents on a regular basis. Albany needs a continuous branding initiative directed by and for the people of Albany-Dougherty County. Furthermore, a partnership with WakeFest in Albany would provide greater exposure to both the wake park and the WakeFest event (GA Wake Series).

PROJECTS

The overall community engagement campaign surrounds health, wellness, equitable access

and safety to expose Albanians to using their environment to help connect with nature and each other. This initiative will affect all areas of Albany, particularly those in older or less developed areas of town. Certain celebrations, such as the day of service, will happen concurrently in different parts of the city. Other celebrations, such as Albany Moves, will rotate through different neighborhoods to diversify engagement.

REVAMP THE "ONLY ONE ALBANY" CAMPAIGN AND WEBSITE

It was reinforced during community interviews that many groups (children, students, African American residents, etc.) were unaware of what the city had to offer them in terms of recreation, and the "Only One Albany" Campaign should bridge that gap. As mentioned previously, this campaign will help Albany residents better know what is happening in their own city. The following Albany Days are the first step to promoting a greater sense of understanding across class, race and socioeconomic lines, and should be promoted through existing channels, including the "Only One Albany" Campaign, and used as initial content for redoubled community marketing





efforts.

ALBANY SERVICE DAY

A community-wide, culturally significant day of service will help Albanians not only improve their communities, but also connect more with one another. Churches, civic groups, Dougherty County Schools, Albany State University and others will coordinate to schedule volunteer opportunities all on the same day. A media and word-of-mouth campaign will involve unaffiliated volunteers with the established groups, bridging the gap between established civic volunteers and new faces. The volunteer efforts should be focused on making



Albany more connected and resilient, such as repairing storm-damaged homes, cleaning up the Flint River or building accessibility ramps for elderly residents. This date should be on or near the anniversary of the most destructive 2017 tornado, January 22.

ALBANY MOVES DAY

Using the infrastructure already in place for the Snickers Marathon and calling on support from local groups such as the Pecan City Pedalers, plan and implement a health and wellness festival in Downtown Albany. Events will include a 5K run, and local bike groups will host bike safety and



training classes and end with a fun, casual "Tour de Albany" using newly updated bike lanes and safety measures. Local yoga, barre, Pilates and similar instructors will lead pop-up workshops by the river. Kayaking outfitters will provide free basic paddling classes. As a part of Albany Moves Day, a fact sheet and media campaign highlighting the diverse recreation opportunities in Albany should be implemented. A potential partner is Phoebe Health, who could couple this event with their existing public health initiatives. This day should be coupled with and inspired by America Walks! and take place on or near National Walking Day (April 1).

ALBANY CULTURE DAY

By leveraging relationships with local industry such as Procter and Gamble, MillerCoors, Mars, quail plantations and others, Albany should offer one day of free admission to all of its cultural institutions. Industry will underwrite one day of operation for all Albany attractions, including the Albany Museum of Art, Chehaw, Thronateeska Heritage Center, the Albany Civil Rights Museum and Radium Springs. All residents would be

encouraged to visit these sites, and it is hoped to spark enough interest to want to go back on their own (and pay full price). This day should be on or near May 18, International Museums Day. Students will be more encouraged into the community if they are able to take advantage of student discounts with local businesses. Finally, identify ways to bring the talent of Albany State students to possibly help develop some of the promotional material discussed in this idea—whether that be through internships or volunteering.



ALBANY GOOD LIFE DAY

Albany Good Life Day is a festival showcasing the best of Albany-Dougherty County that moves from neighborhood to neighborhood each year, encouraging people to get out of their comfort zones and meet residents from different communities. Local artisans and businesses could set up in a street festival. Artists and community members could gather to paint murals and maintain art walks. Concerts would feature local musicians in the amphitheater or Ray Charles Plaza. A parade featuring local high school and Albany State University marching bands would draw crowds and inspire civic pride. This event should be modeled on Atlanta Streets Alive and move locations each year. This could occur in the early fall to capitalize on nice weather without being too hot or too buggy. Albany Police Community Liaisons should be there to answer questions and show the community that Albany is both safe and equitably policed.



ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM

- Begin to identify sites and locations to host events
- Brainstorm and decide on dates for events
- Engage civic groups, churches, Albany State University, etc., to find a common day to host service events/inform them of citywide service day proposal so they can start working together
- Identify steering committee (governmental or laypeople) who will serve as community spokespeople and/or help with fundraising

MID-TERM

- Develop marketing strategies to disseminate information about the various Albany Days
- Contact sponsors and event participants for Albany Moves and Good Life days
- Secure funding and date(s) for Albany Culture Day
- Identify ways the "Only One Albany" campaign fits in with existing public health campaigns; recruit Phoebe Putney representatives for help in developing and spreading information. Enact public health/awareness campaign about all there is to do in Albany.

LONG-TERM

- Review effectiveness of selected campaign marketing strategies
- Pass planning and marketing responsibilities to community spokespeople
- Establish an Albany "street team" of top students from middle schools, high schools and ASU. These students would be civic minded and serve as the next-generation pipeline of passionate, connected Albanians.

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Addition to “Only One Albany” public health and awareness campaign	\$50,000
Promotion of the various events	\$50,000
Permitting	\$10,000, or as specified by Albany Municipal Code
Cost of one day of operation for Thronateeska, Civil Rights Institute, Flint RiverQuarium, Chehaw and Art Museum	\$250,000 (estimate)

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Public/private partnerships with business and industry in the area
- Civic volunteers will provide their own supplies
- Department of Community Affairs Redevelopment Fund Program to assist in getting communities hardest hit by tornadoes back on their feet
- CDC and NIH public health grants to assist in public health initiatives
- Disaster relief and blight abatement grants such as those from Love Your Block and HUD
- Grant from Paddle Nation to host water skills demonstrations
- Tony Hawk Foundation grant to better incorporate the skate park into the riverfront
- Aetna Foundation grant to offset costs of community health campaign

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Phoebe Health System
- Kiwanis, Rotary, Junior League, United Way, and other community service groups
- Albany State University
- Neighborhood associations
- Keep Albany-Dougherty Beautiful
- Church and religious organizations (Albany Baptist Minister’s Alliance, others)
- Industry and cultural institution sponsorship, underwriting or support: Phoebe Putney Health System, Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Dougherty County Board of Education, City of Albany, Albany State University, Albany Technical College, P&G, Dougherty County, Teleperformance, MillerCoors, Thrush Aircraft, UPS, FedEx
- Potential advisory committee members:
 - Middle and high school students
 - Save Albany members
 - ASU National Panhellenic Council

EXPECTED IMPACT

The goal of this idea is to help Albany find a sense of community all year round and outside of times of crisis. These community-focused and community-led days of civic pride will connect Albanians of different political, social, racial, economic and gender identities across community lines; encourage all Albanians to enjoy Albany’s natural resources; and promote public health and increased usage of Albany’s recreation infrastructure. The hope is that the rejuvenation of the “Only One Albany” campaign will increase marketing Albany to its own residents, encouraging them to appreciate their community and each other.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- A better sense of community connection, not just during tragic events, but throughout the entire year
- Creating Albany Service Day and getting all the community involved working on projects in their neighborhoods and improving the city’s beautification, residents will take more pride in where they live, work and do business.
- Tracking free admissions through the museums and parks
- Tracking of the attendees at the Albany Good Life Day
- Visitors’ foot traffic in the Albany CVB

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Albany State University Student Government Association

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SOWEGA WORKS

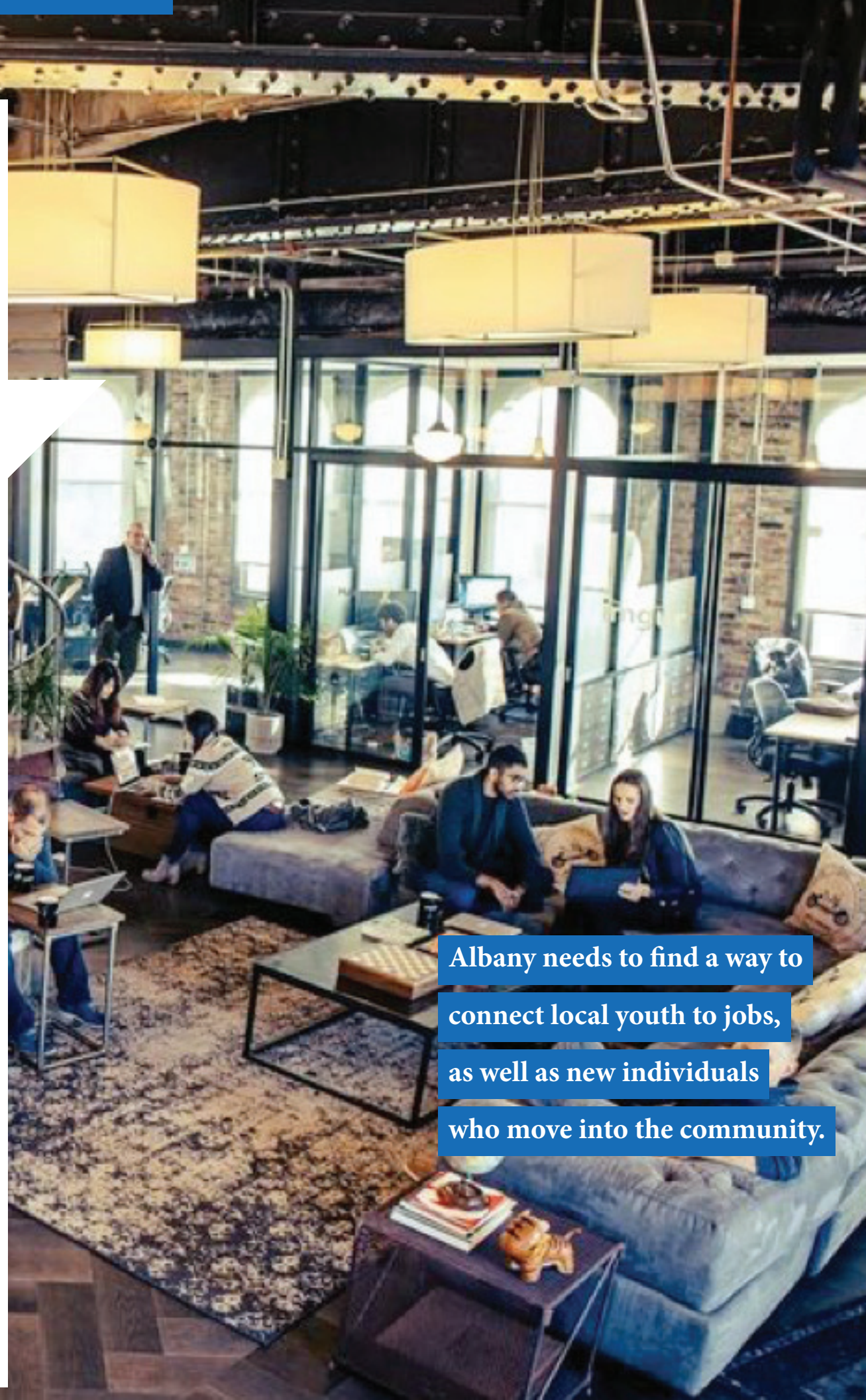
What can Albany-Dougherty County do to grow their talent pipeline and be the hub for innovation and business in Southwest Georgia?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Founded in 1836 by Nelson Tift, Albany, Georgia, was imagined as a prime location for shipping agricultural products due to its position alongside the Flint River. It began to grow quickly as cotton farmers discovered the ease of shipping down the Flint and into the Gulf of Mexico. When railroads came to Southwest Georgia, they allowed for more direct product shipment and therefore brought even more industries and a variety of agricultural products to the area. Over time, Albany became home to several national industries including: Merck, Firestone, Procter & Gamble, M&M Mars, Miller Brewing, Bob's Candies and the Marine Corps Logistics Base. Although not all of these large companies still call Albany home, it is still considered to be a town with a diversified industrial economy.

Albany is a city center for culture, shopping, education, healthcare and recreation in Southwest Georgia, but it struggles like many other communities across the country. According to Data USA, 33.8 percent of Albany residents live in poverty, a number higher than the national average, and only about one-third of the population is employed. Of those employed, a disconnect between existing job opportunities and the local workforce has been discovered. Albany needs to find a way to connect local youth to jobs, as well as new individuals who move into the community.

We are addressing these issues by offering three recommendations: a) a physical location that brings industry thought leaders and educational experts together called the Albany Innovation Village, or AIV, b) an extensive apprenticeship program for high school students to get direct experience in a technical field that could result in possible permanent, full-time employment, known as Apprenticeship Albany, and c) an external recruitment and branding campaign that reaches individuals outside of the Southwest Georgia area, encouraging them to **#ChooseTheGoodLife**.



Albany needs to find a way to connect local youth to jobs, as well as new individuals who move into the community.

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SOWEGA WORKS INNOVATION VILLAGE

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the Albany Innovation Village, AIV, is to be the catalyst for developing world-class technical talent for manufacturing. The Albany Innovation Village would strive to be a conduit between industry and education with a primary focus on meeting the needs of local businesses through the recruitment of talent.

As a physical location, preferably in Downtown Albany in close proximity to Albany State University East Campus, it will be a meeting place that brings

together thought leaders and educational experts to seed innovative thinking and to enable collaboration in design, technology, products, services and business models. Including such amenities as shared workspaces, a business café, meeting centers and free WIFI, the AIV will become a modern hotspot designed to give people a more productive and inventive work experience. It will also provide employees and employers a resource center as staff of the AIV help candidates find and apply for jobs, train current and potential employees, and function as a lab for developing new technologies. A potential

development site for the Albany Innovation Village is that of the Civic Center parking lot, on the corner of Front Street and Oglethorpe Boulevard, due to its prime proximity to both ASU and the Hilton Garden Inn, located just across the street. Parking spaces lost due to development would be replaced with a parking garage on the adjacent corner.

The AIV can also become a convening space for nonprofit organizations that are focused on workforce development. By creating and strengthening a nonprofit network, redundancy will be decreased and efficiency will be increased. The nonprofits will help to better

connect jobseekers to career and educational opportunities.

PROJECTS

THE OVERALL COMMUNITY

- To be a shared workspace, business cafe and meeting center. To provide public and private workspaces with free WiFi, as well as meeting rooms that can be rented hourly. The environment would be specifically designed to give people a more productive and innovative work experience.
- To serve as a job resource center for students or job hunters, including a job board and career advising, hosted by trained representatives employed by AIV.
- To serve as a Human Resources center for local businesses with a job board.
- To serve as a point of contact for business, industry and the public sector to communicate their workforce needs. Can host industry roundtable and different nonprofit organizations' meetings.
- To promote strategies to encourage lifelong learning and improve workplace skills.
- To assist in the development of new training programs to benefit the local/regional workforce.
- To conduct planning, oversight and evaluation of local workforce development

programs, including staffing programs for businesses needing skilled workers, entry-level workers, professional/highly skilled workers and internships. This type of recruitment would be a service the AIV provided to a business.

- To offer advice regarding workforce policy and programs to local elected officials, employers, education and employment agencies and citizens. We believe that creating positive events for all to attend will move this community together in a meaningful direction



ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM

- Develop a strategic plan for design, development and implementation of the Albany Innovation Village AIV.
- Identify goals of the AIV and key measures of success (which could include participation rates, amount of funding secured, growth of talent pipeline, etc.).
- Deliver idea to the industry roundtable meeting. Ask educational partners to attend meeting. Get initial feedback from meeting.
- Talk with potential partners and funders about the campaign; involve them in the planning process to get buy-in and support.
- Research target audience – what problems there are, what barriers they face.
- Form a task force made up of individuals from all sectors to implement timeline plan.
- Develop strategic mission for AIV.

LONG-TERM

- Evaluate strategic plan and amend based on community feedback.
- Plan “next steps” to deliver development and implementation of AIV.
- Develop and deliver a messaging campaign to introduce the broader community to the AIV.
- Re-evaluate key measures of success.
- Find a space for the center, preferably in the Downtown Albany.
- Monitor progress according to key measures of success; make changes as needed and keep all stakeholders



informed of progress.

- Document and report success and shortcomings of AIV (through annual reports published and made available to public).

BUDGET

Costs may differ depending on exact location. Buildingguide.com estimates that a retail or commercial build should be estimated from \$30 to \$40 per square foot. A 30,000-square-foot building would cost around \$1,200,000. A 15,000-square-foot building would cost an average of \$600,000.

PUBLIC/COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The public will benefit in two ways. 1) Having a place to conduct business, work, meetings and participate in community activities at AIV. This will lead to networking experiences, social experiences and catalyst for innovation and for ideas to develop. 2) The public will be able to use AIV as a resource for job placement, educational opportunities, soft skills development and résumé building.

EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Educational partners with AIV can experience greater enrollment in educational programs, degrees and certificates. Partners could also enhance their educational footprint on the Albany-Dougherty County region through not only educational programs but also by awareness by collaborating with AIV to host events and programs.

BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

- Increased employment to fill employment vacancies
- Lower employment turnover due to finding more specific candidates through AIV
- Potential increase in brand awareness of participating companies and organizations
- Using AIV as a workforce pipeline for employment needs as needed

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

This project can only be successful through public and private partnerships. This is a good time in Albany to build off of the existing synergy around public/private partnerships (for instance the success of Pretoria Fields). The Albany Innovation Village (AIV) has the potential to tap into the Downtown revitalization efforts that are currently taking place. With so many unoccupied buildings Downtown, there are many opportunities for the City of Albany (or another entity) to “gift” space in kind for the AIV.

Low interest loans through the federal government could provide funding opportunities. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, which supports the creation of new rural jobs and creates a revolving loan fund. The USDA also has a loan guarantee program, which makes it more feasible for rural companies to gain funding through lenders. Another possible funding opportunity may come from the USDA’s Rural Business Enterprise Grant Program.

Many foundations, including the Walmart Foundation, the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation, and the Bloomberg Philanthropies have increased their support for innovative strategies aimed at increasing workforce participation and closing the skill gap between potential workers and available jobs (<https://news.walmart.com/news-archive/2015/02/26/walmart-and-the-walmart-foundation-announce-16-million-in-grants-to-seven-nonprofits-to-provide-training-education-and-career-pathways-for-us-retail-workers>). The AIV is uniquely positioned to tap into those funding streams as well as the renewed interest in innovation and workforce development.

In addition to loans and grants, local companies could be sponsors that get naming rights in turn for their sponsorship.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Susan Harwood Training Grant Program
- Albany Area Chamber of Commerce and member businesses
- Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission
- Albany-Dougherty Industry Roundtable members
- Dougherty County School System
- Albany State University
- Albany Technical College
- City of Albany
- Dougherty County
- Georgia Department of Economic Development could be a partner, since the mission of AIV is aligned with the mission of the department.
- The Technical College System of Georgia Workforce Division (formerly known as Georgia Department of Economic Development Workforce Division).
- Georgia Department of Labor is another potential partner, as it already implements programs designed to bridge the gaps between employers and employees; by partnering with the AIV the department could better leverage its own resources.

SOWEGA WORKS APPRENTICESHIP ALBANY

DESCRIPTION

One of the questions presented to Albany Young Gamechangers was: What can Albany-Dougherty County do to grow its talent pipeline and be the hub for innovation and business in Southwest Georgia? We think a portion of this idea focuses specifically on the industry, manufacturing and technical skill jobs. Within that sector, we discovered a disconnect between existing job opportunities and the local workforce. The remaining portion of the question focuses on how we can get highly skilled professionals talented interested in moving to Albany-Dougherty County.

First, if Albany is going to succeed, the gap between gainful employment and local qualified applicants must be bridged. This is best achieved when educators and regional manufacturing industry create apprenticeships to train the future workforce for opportunities that are currently vacant and opportunities that will be demanded in the future. The best example of a successful apprenticeship program that turns apprenticeships into long-

term employment opportunities within technical trades and manufacturing is a program called KY FAME, also known as GO FAME or FAME USA.

In this particular instance, a program created to mirror KY FAME in Albany-Dougherty County would take current high school students and place them into an apprenticeship with local industry. Students in KY FAME must acquire eight to 10 hours of educational contact time (two full days) and a minimum of 24 hours of workforce experience (three full



days) through a sponsor's facility (for a competitive wage) each week.

At the completion of the program, students will have mastered a multi-layered technical skill set, obtained up to two years of work experience required for jobs needed to be filled in the community, and have the opportunity for full-time employment through a local, sponsoring employer. Programs such as this create a pipeline of highly skilled manufacturing talent. The apprenticeship shows



opportunities to individuals who otherwise would not have known those opportunities for local, gainful employment existed. To fill the existing jobs and to properly educate the future local workforce for maximum success in the coming decades, a program such as this must be implemented so that the workforce is trained for the coming task, and local industry's employment needs are met.

Albany is already at the forefront of innovation when it comes to bridging the gap between the potential workforce and current job opportunities. Albany must stay on this trajectory. The industry roundtable is a discussion between Albany and local industry to make sure the local industry gets what it needs from Albany, and vice versa. Albany Technical College is currently changing its curriculum to accommodate the fast-changing world of technology and trying to satisfy the employment demands in and around Albany - see the new Albany Technical College Transportation Academy. The creation of the 4C Academy is the critical first step in starting an apprenticeship program such as KY FAME.

The state of Georgia recognizes that we must close this gap, statewide, if we are going to succeed in the future. Georgia and the federal government are backing their words with actions and money. Governor Deal introduced the High Demand Career Initiative in 2014, asking local industry to identify their top needs, and Georgia's colleges and technical universities responded with new, appropriate curriculum. WorkSource Georgia is the state's federally-funded employment and training system, working to connect talent with opportunity. Go Build Georgia is a program designed to educate young Georgians on the value and benefits of skilled trades. All of these sources could be tapped to solve Albany's workforce shortage.

Albany must continue to innovate. Programs are being developed by current leadership and they should continue to be improved upon so Albany is an attractive site for business now and in the future, and we think Apprenticeship Albany could be the community's next chapter of connecting skilled labor to local industry needs.

ACTION STEPS

- The Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission and Albany Area Chamber of Commerce leadership, which oversee the Industry Roundtable, reach out to the points of contact for KY FAME/GO FAME/FAME USA to understand more of their processes and concepts to determine what can be utilized along with Albany's current initiatives.
- The EDC and Chamber speak with local leaders and/or possible employers to gather what jobs are regularly needed, jobs with high turnover, and job requirements and qualifications. This could be achieved by using the organizations' contact lists. It is highly likely that the success or failure of a program such as this would depend on current Industry Roundtable participants, such as Mars Wrigley Confectionery, Procter & Gamble and other large employers.
- With the help of leadership from Albany Technical College, Dougherty County School System and the 4C Academy, determine a list of jobs that are in high demand within the community. Compare that list with the programs currently offered through our local education providers and determine whether new curriculum/ apprenticeships need to be developed.
- Adjust KY FAME's current



apprenticeship credit programs/timeline according to the demands of the 4C Academy and each employer.

- Develop criteria for students and employers wanting to participate.
- Create a review board that consists of faculty and leadership from 4C Academy and Albany Technical College and local employer-participants to assess the success of the program and adjust accordingly on an annual basis.
- Develop a marketing plan to gather the attention of students in the local high schools.

BUDGET

The leadership of this idea could be fulfilled by current organizations: The Albany Area Chamber of Commerce and/or the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission. This would save costs of the full-time work involved in coordinating a program such as this. The cost of the apprenticeships – pay, training, etc. – would be paid for by each participating business. The cost of each apprenticeship would differ depending on the work and training necessary.

EXPECTED IMPACT

Increased high school graduation rates due to youth seeing opportunities beyond high school that require a high school degree; increased Albany Technical College enrollment in high demand career paths; increased percentage of jobs filled through Albany Technical College industry partnerships; decrease in Albany-Dougherty County poverty rate within a decade of program implementation due to increase in gainful employment.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

The cumulative funding for this undertaking will be from a combination of sources: Dougherty County School System, each participating employer, state funding through Governor Deal's High Demand Career Initiative, etc.

With the training and time of the children no longer being spent entirely under the supervision of the Dougherty County School System, there may be existing funds that could go toward this project from the school system.

If a student does an apprenticeship at a business, the bulk of the cost of that apprenticeship will be paid for by the employer, since the employer will see the greatest benefit once the apprentice becomes a productive, long-term employee.

Funding could also come from Governor Deal's High Demand Career Initiative. The initiative is trying to solve the exact problem that this program would be attempting to tackle: training a local workforce for current job opportunities. For instance, certain technical college degree tracks are eligible for the Strategic Industries Workforce Development Grant (SIWDG). They are: Commercial Truck Driving, Diesel Mechanic, Early Childhood Care/Education, Healthcare Technologies, Information Technology, Practical Nursing, Welding.

With this being a priority for the entire state, local leaders and the business community, funding could be sought from several sources, including the ones listed above.

SOWEGA WORKS

#CHOOSETHEGOODLIFE CAMPAIGN

DESCRIPTION

This idea addresses Albany's ability to attract a highly trained, professional-level workforce. Albany, historically known as "The Good Life City," was once seen as a mecca for entertainment in the Southeastern United States, boasting lifestyle assets such as the Radium Springs Resort and Casino, destination restaurants and a vast array of arts and cultural attractions.

Recently, the City has adopted the brand, "Only One Albany, Georgia," an internally-directed campaign encouraging residents to celebrate the rediscovery of these many still-existing assets, along with the new appeals being added through Downtown revitalization. The proposed "#ChooseTheGoodLife" campaign seeks to complement the existing internal branding initiative with an external push to market the community's assets as they relate, specifically, to the young professional demographic based on cost of living, lifestyle assets and professional opportunity.

In order to attract industry and innovation, we must be

equipped with a talented workforce, and in order to attract that talent, we have to sell the idea of a strong quality of life. Albany currently struggles to attract and retain top talent in the young professional demographic due to a lack of social motivation and awareness of professional and personal opportunity.

Albany does maintain a millennial community through its two higher educational institutions, Albany State University and Albany Technical College, and the presence of young workers and entrepreneurs, providing a clear opportunity to capitalize on this existing demographic through this workforce recruitment and retention initiative. "#ChooseTheGoodLife" seeks to share their stories and better understand and provide for their needs, wants and passions. This campaign will modernize and amplify the messaging around life in "The Good Life City," establishing it as a unique and viable location for young professionals to jumpstart their careers and continue to build their personal and professional lives.

ACTION STEPS

Develop young professional/millennial growth committee and establish committee chair. This could go further and become a salaried position or paid internship, reinforcing the City's commitment to millennial growth by including this individual on pay roll.

Work with stakeholders to establish unified commitment to the cause. Stakeholders should include business (large and small), academia, local and state chambers of commerce, local economic development agencies, real-estate brokerages, entertainment venues and airport authorities.

Secure funding. Buy-in should come from local and state government entities, university outreach/marketing funds, corporate sponsorships, etc.

Develop content that supports a specific call to action. Work with corporate sponsors, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce, entrepreneurs and influencers in local politics to secure and develop content.



Secure marketing agency. Schedule out calendar for features including video features, photoshoots and interviews.

Launch campaign. The campaign launch should be a three-pronged approach to: City, Business and Academia. Content will be disseminated in a variety of formats including billboard promotions, website/app launch at annual luncheons/"State of..." addresses. Incorporate wearable collateral, T-shirts, totes, bumper stickers, magnets, hats.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The purpose of the #ChooseTheGoodLife campaign is to attract and retain millennials and young professionals to the region, more specifically Albany, Georgia. Success will be defined by the influx of individuals considering Albany a viable option for life after college or life as a young entrepreneur or professional, as well as measurable marketing goals. Over time, Albany should expect to see an increase in young professional residents. In addition, this campaign assists in promoting the state of Georgia as a state with diverse living options and helps to rebrand the region as inclusive and diverse.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission
- Albany Area Chamber of Commerce
- The City of Albany
- Dougherty County
- Georgia Chamber of Commerce
- Albany State University
- Albany Technical College
- Albany-Dougherty Industry Roundtable members
- Chamber of Commerce member businesses

BUDGET

ITEM	COST
Program Manager Salary	\$35,000
Research/Travel Costs associated with Program Manager	\$15,000
Program/Development Costs	\$150,000 (secure through sponsorships)
Total	Approx. \$200,000



CITATIONS & RESOURCES

"Albany." New Georgia Encyclopedia, www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/counties-cities-neighborhoods/albany.

"City of Albany." Planning Documents and Reports | City of Albany, www.albanyga.gov/about-us.

"Albany, GA." Data USA, datausa.io/profile/geo/albany-ga/.

"Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission - GA Industrial and Commercial Sites and Buildings." Albany-Dougherty EDC | Business Site Selection, www.albanygaprosector.com/.

"Is Shared Workspace the Right Solution for Your Remote Employee?" HireJar.com, 28 May 2018, www.hirejar.com/blog/shared-workspace-right-solution-remote-employee/.

"Adopting the Public Private Partnership Model." THISDAYLIVE, 11 May 2016, www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/11/adopting-the-public-private-partnership-model/.

Lerman, Robert. "Expanding Apprenticeship Opportunities in the United States." Brookings, Brookings, 28 July 2016, www.brookings.edu/research/expanding-apprenticeship-opportunities-in-the-united-states/.

"KY FAME, an Apprenticeship-Style Workforce Training Program, Adds Chapter in Northeast Region." Think Kentucky, thinkkentucky.com/newsletter/articlePage.aspx?x=03312016_KYFAME.html.

Agadmin. "Home." There's Only One Albany, Georgia, 21 Aug. 2014, onlyonealbany.com/.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Albany Technical College

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Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission

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Albany Technical College

THE FLINT CONNECTION

How can Albany-Dougherty County improve efficiency and effectiveness of the community to meet current and future challenges?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flint River is a natural landmark integral to the core of Albany-Dougherty County's identity. With a host of South Georgia tributaries flowing into this river, the network of connectivity symbolizes the value of collaboration. As Henry Ford said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." The community must work together, eliminating agency and jurisdictional lines, to provide exemplary service delivery, which can only enhance the quality of life for all Albany-Dougherty County residents.

Conversations with a wide array of community leaders and residents revealed the rich history of the Flint River, including devastating floods and extreme droughts that once crippled the community. Nevertheless, the Flint continues to flourish. Like the river, Albany-

Dougherty County has exhibited unyielding resiliency. From a history of political strife and segregation, to debilitating natural disasters like the flood of 1994 and more recently the tornadoes of 2017, the "Good Life City" has historically rallied in times of despair to work together for the greater good of all segments of the community. It is imperative that this camaraderie is not isolated to the challenging times. Building on the momentum and heightened sense of togetherness experienced during the recent natural disasters, it is the ideal time to implement bold changes to improve the overall quality of life for all Albany-Dougherty County residents.

It seemed only fitting that **The Flint Connection** should serve as the name to represent 10 members of Young Gamechangers challenged by the Albany-Dougherty County leadership to recommend sustainable solutions to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the city and county governments. Intense research and deliberation shaped these bold "tributary" ideas formulated to bolster community pride, increase connectivity and ultimately enhance Albany-Dougherty County's ability to effectively and efficiently serve the community. It is our hope that the big three ideas presented spark innovation and collaboration with a

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TEAM MEMBERS

Melanie Harris
Cox Automotive
Sandy Springs, GA

John Inman IV
Raymond James
Albany, GA

Jessica Marshall
Deerfield Windsor School
Albany, GA

Eric Mosley
Troup County Board of Commissioners
Lagrange, GA

Kimberly Scott
Horizons Community Solutions
Albany, GA

Ashia Sims
October Social Media
Atlanta, GA

Eric Strunz
Georgia Budget and Policy Institute
Atlanta, GA

Gina Webb
Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs
Bronwood, GA

Marsellas Williams
Cobb County
Marietta, GA

Jamila Young
Moore Legal Solutions
Atlanta, GA

receptivity toward unconventional strategies that address the ever-present challenges associated with making Albany-Dougherty County the best place to live, work and play for all.

1. Connect the Dots: Community Web Portal
2. Connect-ED: Unified Dougherty County High School and Albany State University
3. Connect the Community: Consolidated Albany-Dougherty County Government

INTRODUCTION

There's only one Albany, Georgia. The mantra adopted by the City of Albany in a 2014 rebranding campaign promotes a spirit of unity. Aligning with this theme, The Flint Connection has vetted various entities and processes to determine key areas of focus that will make a lasting impact on overall community effectiveness and efficiency.

Stakeholders across the community expressed appreciation for the wide range of services provided by city and county governments, which highlighted an opportunity to make those services easier to access. A unified community web portal for services from the City of Albany, Dougherty County and the Albany Area Chamber of Commerce would help residents find what they need quickly and easily. Whether it's paying a water bill, getting a business license or learning about community events and resources, people often do not know which department or agency to contact. A single portal can be built on top of the existing website infrastructure that guides visitors

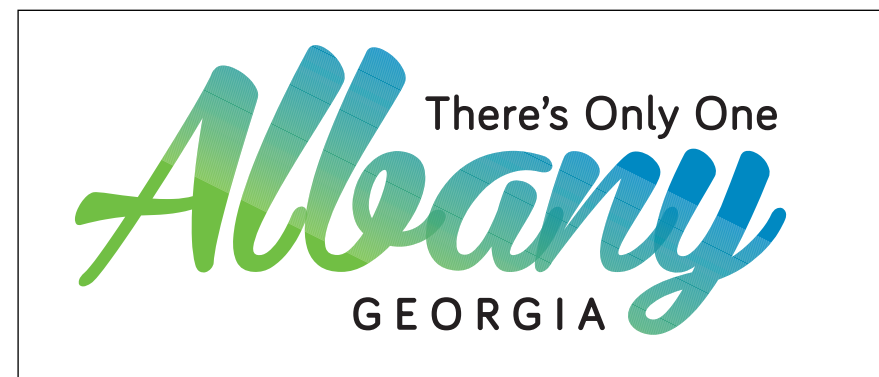
through specific requests (e.g., how to report a pothole) then links them to the relevant website to handle the request.

As a regional hub, Albany-Dougherty County is responsible for educating a great portion of Southwest Georgia's workforce through secondary and postsecondary educational programs. A steep decline in the student population has occurred over the last decade, leading to the closing of Albany High School in 2017. Data shows that 100 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch, demonstrating widespread community poverty. To bolster support for the community's public school system and leverage existing resources, a unified high school is proposed. With approximately 3,000 students currently enrolled in Dougherty County public high schools, a unified campus, structured like many university campuses, would expose students to world-class facilities and give them the chance to experience a winning environment that stimulates competition and success academically, socially and athletically.

The recent consolidation of Albany State University and Darton State College has created a unique opportunity for the education hub to further support the community. With five miles between the

Albany State University West and East campuses, a looming physical divide stagnates its unification. By combining the west campus with the historic east campus and burgeoning downtown area, it would not only help close the physical gap, but also make practical use of some of the underutilized Downtown buildings such as the Government Center.

The City of Albany and Dougherty County represent one of the few Georgia communities that remains unconsolidated as a one municipal county. The 2017 natural disasters impacting Albany-Dougherty created an opportunity for the two governing bodies, often siloed, to rally together in response to the aftermath of the devastating storms. Consolidation of the two governmental systems would allow the community to consistently run more efficiently by creating streamlined services and a stress-free user experience for citizens and businesses. The City of Albany and Dougherty County officials should work together to thoughtfully evaluate the functionality of government departments, agencies and processes to determine opportunities for consolidation. This plan would offer practical ways to eliminate duplication of services and allow Albany-Dougherty County to function at its highest level of efficacy.



THE FLINT CONNECTION CONNECT THE DOTS

DESCRIPTION

Communities that create an easy path for citizen and visitor access will reap the bounty that a fully engaged constituency can bring. "Connect the Dots" is more than just another big idea, but an opportunity to take an easy, inexpensive step toward a more streamlined and efficiently run government. It's a two-pronged call to action for Dougherty County, City of Albany, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce, Board of Education and Albany State University to more effectively connect with the community it serves.

SCOPE

One prevailing issue we found when researching challenges with government efficiency was communication between the residents of Albany and Dougherty County and the various government departments and employees. While all of the government entities have their own website, each one exists on its own. This could - and does - lead to communication gaps for anyone seeking information. We recommend the creation





of a unified web portal that provides a one-stop shop for citizens and visitors alike to access the governmental and not-for-profit resources available through Albany-Dougherty County. Citizens of the City or unincorporated County could access billing for electricity, sewage, water, wastewater, internet and gas. The Albany Convention and Visitors Bureau could direct more outside entities to the site to inform visitors of resources available throughout Dougherty County, including local farmers markets, special events at the Flint RiverQuarium and large concerts at the Civic Center.

The potential value of a single web portal for government services consistently emerged in our conversations with community stakeholders, business leaders, pastors, entrepreneurs and everyday citizens. We think that the new unified web portal layout and design should reflect the history and unique culture of Albany-Dougherty County. Rich historical photographs coupled with a fresh, modern design should greet visitors immediately upon opening the web page. A great example of an all-exclusive web portal is that of the City of Metter, Georgia.

This first step will begin to create a genuine engagement between the community leaders and the citizens they serve. This new web portal may not create instantaneous trust between the citizens and its leaders, but will serve as a clear path toward long-term community engagement and provide a convenient resource to help citizens and visitors access government services.

ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM AUGUST 2018 - DECEMBER 2018

- Establish a working group from the City, County, School Board, Chamber, etc.
 - Choose people that are currently involved in the communication and digital departments to help ensure a level of web and communication savvy within the group
- Create a priority list of websites/entities that will be linked directly to the web portal

- Investigate similar communities that have taken this simple step in unifying its web engagement to identify practical and effective ways to implement this plan
- Research expanded use of FlexBill (current payment system) to both local governments to incorporate any additional functionality in the web portal

MID-TERM JANUARY 2019 - JULY 2019

- Create a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Services to implement the web portal
- Enter into a contract with selected vendor for creation of a unified web portal and set project timeline for completion and soft launch of May 1
- Hard launch of new Albany-Dougherty County web portal on July 1, 2019

LONG-TERM JULY 2019 - JULY 2020

- Address a single-sign for individuals to use across all websites offering government services
- Train employees and conduct public meetings to continue to educate them about new levels of access to information and resources through the web portal
- Create and implement an incentive-based communication campaign in the community to encourage adoption of the portal

BUDGET

Total Cost: Up to \$39,000 for contracted services to include consultation, design, layout and hosting fees if applicable. This upfront cost can be reduced by engaging the local IT staff from both the City and County.

The cost would include professional consultation, page design, copywriting, SEO, layout and hosting. Ongoing cost for web hosting could be incurred if the City or County did not want to host locally. Options to offset the cost include utilization of local

government information technology departments or by engaging local residents with professional skills in web design.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- City of Albany
- Dougherty County Board of Commissioners
- Albany State University
- Albany Area Chamber of Commerce
- Local businesses (IT/marketing Firms)
- Dougherty County Board of Education
- Individual donors
- Local hotel/motel tax revenues earmarked for marketing and tourism

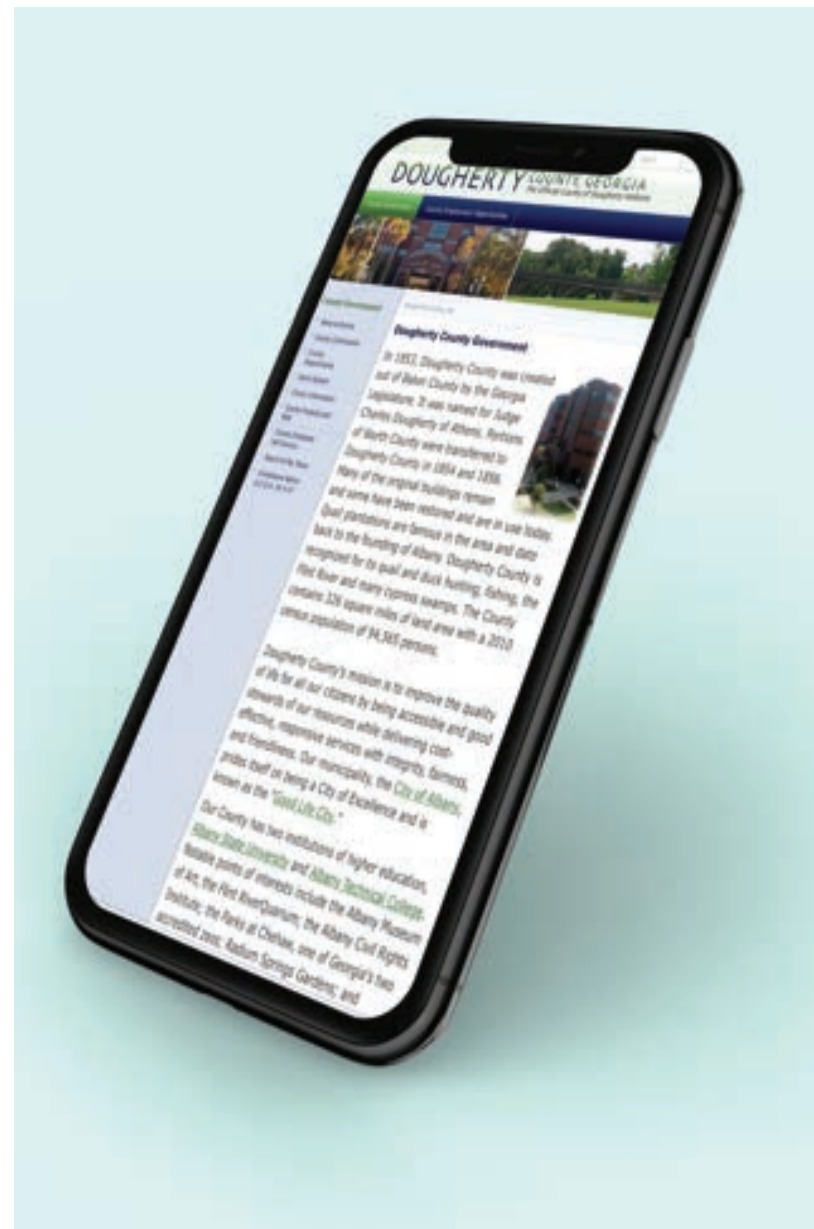
POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- City of Albany
- Dougherty County Board of Commissioners
- Albany State University
- Albany Area Chamber of Commerce
- Dougherty County Board of Education

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

This idea will be successful if a unified web portal for local government services is launched by mid-2019. Overall impact should be measured by quantitative and qualitative metrics:

- Quantitative website analytics can assess portal usage, including number of web visitors and session duration.
- Optional surveys presented to portal visitors can ask for ratings of the user experience, ease of accessing relevant information and even qualitative feedback about the helpfulness of the portal.



SOWEGA WORKS CONNECT-ED

DESCRIPTION

Eighty-one percent of the student population in the Dougherty County School System is considered economically disadvantaged. The idea of education as the fundamental pulse of life is impaired when there is an everyday struggle to provide the bare essentials. Although the city of Albany is rich in culture and history, it is not currently synonymous with scholarship.

Education is the heartbeat of any great community. Acquiring and imparting knowledge is human nature. It is how we grow, change and mature both individually and collectively.

With centralized, visible and tangible models of success, the personal value of education that much of this city has can be transformed. It's time for Albany to get connect-ED.

SCOPE

In order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the public education system in Albany-Dougherty County and to meet future challenges that could face Albany State University (ASU), a facility shift for ASU and a consolidation for the high school level of the Dougherty County School System should be considered.

ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY SHOULD CONSIDER:

A unification to one campus for ASU; using Albany State East campus solely.

Expanding the East Campus across the river into Downtown Albany, using existing Downtown building space for classrooms and other academic affairs as well as student housing.

Leasing/purchasing the Government Center located in the heart of Downtown.

- Given that many of the current governmental offices have already been relocated and the building is not currently being utilized to its maximum efficiency, this shift would prove successful for ASU, the City of Albany and Dougherty County.
- The revenue from the lease agreement would yield the cost of successful renovation for use by ASU.
- Redesign concept of Government Center





REDESIGN CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT CENTER



Modeling successful university campuses built around cities such as Columbus State University, Georgia Tech or Virginia Commonwealth University.

Creating a wellness center where students and the general population can receive treatment from an onsite Physician's Assistant and students in health sciences programs can work. This would create experiential learning opportunities all while generating revenue for the university and aiding in ASU's overall support of the community.



COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY
COLUMBUS, GA



GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,
ATLANTA, GA

DOUGHERTY COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM (DCSS) SHOULD CONSIDER:

- The consolidation of three current high school campuses: Dougherty Comprehensive High School, Monroe Comprehensive High School and Westover Comprehensive High School.
- The use of the current Albany State University West Campus as a unified consolidated high school in the DCSS for 10th through 12th grades.
- The adoption of Monroe Comprehensive High School as a ninth grade academy given its recent \$30 million renovation schedule



VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY,
RICHMOND, VA



expectations." The goal is that "every student views learning as a lifelong opportunity which will prepare them educationally for a global society."

THE NEW STRUCTURE OF DCSS WOULD PROVIDE THAT:

- All students in the DCSS have equal access to the same faculty, administration and curriculum tracks.
- Academic magnet programs such as Dougherty's School of Leadership and Fine Arts, Monroe's Pre-engineering, Math and Tech Center, and Westover's Medical Academy will be housed on one campus giving students more access to choice education. To honor the rich legacy of all county high schools, buildings housing the various academic magnet programs will be named in honor of the former high schools. Additionally, current facilities at ASU West Campus will structurally enhance these programs.

and the success of the former on site ninth grade academy previously housed at Dougherty County High School.

a predictably prosperous Downtown Albany.

- Expanding culturally in order to create more innovative and creative classroom settings.
- Serving the community through developing an academic standard associated with the city of Albany and its people, thus improving the reputation of the University altogether.

The mission of DCSS is "to provide a safe, supportive, nurturing and cultivating environment where students can learn and achieve academically beyond all

The vision statement of ASU says "[it] will be a world-class comprehensive university and a powerful catalyst for the economic growth and development of Southwest Georgia ...recognized for its innovative and creative delivery of excellent educational programs, broad-based community engagement and public service, and creative scholarship and applied research, all of which enrich the lives of the diverse constituencies served by the University."

With a centralized campus and growth into Downtown, ASU will stay true to its vision by:

- Allowing students at ASU to find more involvement in Downtown Albany and a desired voice to serve the community.
- Fostering economic development through student spending and university-related revenues, tying itself directly to the regrowth and reestablishment of





- Westover and Dougherty High be repurposed and utilized for community affairs such as:
 - Physical space or satellite campus for Georgia Virtual Schools
 - After-school programs for local elementary schools, the Boys & Girls Club and other nonprofit organizations, which would lay the groundwork for the mission of DCSS
 - Museum space to highlight the history of the education system in Albany as well as its ties to the Civil Rights Movement
 1. Encouraging former students to donate memorabilia and artifacts to include in the museum would create a sense of ownership and connectivity back to the community.
 2. Alumni days could also be held in conjunction with the space to maintain the sense of pride in each individual high school, including the previously closed Albany High.
 - Rental space for banquets, parties and community events that would generate revenue for DCSS

- Health programs and wellness clinics for the community
- Fields and athletic facilities utilized by county parks and recreation to accommodate a booming program for all kids
- The 4C Academy would remain in use for a lottery of 9th and 10th grade students. With its easy accessibility to 4C, Monroe Comprehensive High School is a great choice for a ninth grade academy. These freshmen at Monroe would potentially be able to walk to 4C, provided safety measures were taken. Tenth grade students would be a short bus ride from the main campus.
- Dougherty High School be reclassified in the GHSA as one of the biggest in the state. Athletic programs could grow with an increased number of participants. Larger sports programs will help attract and recruit the best coaches and create a winning atmosphere where talented athletes will be able to prosper. The new consolidated high school will be comparable to successful area programs such as the ones in Lowndes County and Valdosta.
 - Continued use of newly renovated Hugh Mills Stadium for football and track and field with easier scheduling from one large athletic program rather than three smaller ones
 - Use of other pristine athletic facilities on ASU West Campus

ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM AUGUST 2018 - DECEMBER 2018

- Institutional strategic planning with neutral facilitators to create vision, mission and strategic direction for new initiatives
- Develop relationships with potential investors to facilitate extra costs not covered by the educational entities
- Study the positive opportunity costs as compared to the fiscal amounts associated with such merger and consolidation
- Create joint grants task force to increase leverage for increased funding opportunities
- Apply for tax initiatives such as E-SPLOST
- Survey parents of DCSS students to gauge readiness and support of a consolidated campus
- Identify ambassador teams made up of parents, students and staff to host community listening sessions to identify concerns associated with a merger; ambassadors will also serve as "cheerleaders" to foster community support and buy-in for the new institution
- Create a one campus unification plan for ASU
- ASU should tour model college campuses with a downtown presence, student wellness centers, etc. (Georgia Southern University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Columbus State University, Virginia Commonwealth University)
- ASU should conduct gap analysis for certificate and degree program offerings to identify ways to connect to Downtown while also tapping into the city's richest natural resource, the Flint River.

MID-TERM JANUARY 2019 - JULY 2019

- Establish a plan for lease of Government Center by ASU and begin renovation
- Pilot merge extracurricular high school group to assess dynamics and readiness for consolidation (e.g. Beta Club, HOSA, etc.)

- Launch development campaign to fund wellness center repurposing. Former ASU athletes and Albany natives who found success in professional athletics will be able to fund the student wellness center. The largest contributing donor will have the building named after him/her.

LONG-TERM JULY 2019 - JULY 2020

- Purchase or lease of ASU West Campus by the Dougherty County School System
- Merger to create the 10th-12th grade campus and 9th grade academy

BUDGET

ASU WEST CAMPUS AT 2400 GILLIONVILLE ROAD

- Estimated value: \$100 million - total land/building assessment
- Cost for Dougherty County Schools
- Income for ASU

LEASE OF THE GOVERNMENT CENTER IN DOWNTOWN ALBANY

- Estimated fair market value: \$15 million
- Lease TBD: Currently owned by ADICA (Albany-Dougherty Inner City Authority)
- Renovation budget

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Dougherty County Public School System
 - Title I funds
- E-SPLOST initiative
- State funding through Facilities Services
- University Systems of Georgia - Albany State University
- Bonds from ADICA for building improvements at the Government Center repurpose site
- Revenue to the city from the leasing of the Government Center
- Existing city and county budgets to help with the renovation of the Government Center
- Existing Downtown business investors to develop other properties in preparation of the sale to ASU
- Local celebrities and alumni of DCSS and ASU with a desire to invest in the success of their community
- Foundations and Grantmaking agencies (eg. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Healthcare Georgia Foundation, Georgia Healthcare Foundation and various other groups interested in developing the community to improve overall health outcomes; using these financial resources would require inviting members of the community to utilize ASU facilities to improve overall quality of life)
- Social Impact Investment Bonds

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- 4C Academy
- Albany Technical College
- Albany State University
- Dougherty County School System
- Dougherty County Parks and Recreation

- Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital
- Dougherty County School System Alumni

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

FOR DOUGHERTY COUNTY SCHOOLS:

Through these efforts, Albany-Dougherty County will create a positive vision for DCSS students and faculty alike that lends itself to strengthening the importance of secondary and higher education. High school students will have access to a top-of-the-line student center with dining options, extracurricular spaces for games, clubs, leisure and lecture halls as well as pristine athletic facilities, including a cross country course, soccer fields, softball field, baseball field, training facilities, basketball gym, indoor walking track, rock climbing walls and aquatics. Arts programs will be strengthened with an increased number of students and a consolidated budget.

Allowing students in the DCSS access to a college-type setting for high school, like the current ASU West Campus, will better prepare them for the future and allow them to see that college is not out of reach. Their personal value of education in general will become consistent with the mission of the DCSS.

The intangible measure of success will come with a renewed sense of community. Consolidation to one high school would create a unified front that would strengthen the DCSS mission of creating lifelong learners and providing students with top-notch facilities and academics. Rather than competing against one another while representing different schools, young adults would be given the opportunity to compete with one another in a healthy environment that would foster growth and challenge them academically, athletically and socially.

Long-term success will show in an increased number of high school graduates and a higher success rate post-graduation. There will also be an increased retention of 9th grade students and increased community partnership and engagement with the DCSS.

FOR ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY:

An ASU presence Downtown will better its academic reputation and enhance its role in the greater Albany community. The move will not only strengthen the university, but also the city as a whole, fostering economic growth in the downtown area while helping to increase enrollment and attract a more diverse student body.

ASU will benefit from an increased capacity for grant making, enhanced community engagement, increased enrollment and retention, improved student satisfaction surveys, improved student health, diversified university revenue streams and increased academic centers responsive to the unique challenges of Southwest Georgia.



THE FLINT CONNECTION

GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION

DESCRIPTION

We recommend a three-year plan toward consolidation of the City of Albany and Dougherty County governmental systems through the guidance and expertise of the faculty and staff at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) at the University of Georgia. We highly recommend the involvement of both the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) in the process.

SCOPE

Georgia has more city/county consolidations than any other state due to having fewer legal differences between entities than in many other states. Currently, Albany-Dougherty County is one of few municipalities of its size in the state of Georgia which remains unconsolidated. It is also a one municipality county. The consolidation of our governmental system will create a more effective and efficient government. A more streamlined and unified government would alleviate the stresses that



affect many citizens within the current system. A great example of a successful city/county consolidation comes from nearby Macon-Bibb.

To better serve its community, the City of Albany and Dougherty County officials will need to work together to thoughtfully determine which entities of government are functioning at their highest effectiveness and efficiency in order to implement a consolidation plan.

Consolidation will help spur economic development in the area, allowing small businesses and companies to expand and invest into the community with less hurdles and more ease.

The city and county governments have been effective over the past several years in providing many shared services - like the planning and permitting office. This provides a model of success that can be used for additional overlapping areas and shared services within the city and county governments.

The city and county governments considered consolidation in the past. A feasibility study was conducted by ASU. The City Commission voted that



consolidation be taken to the state legislation in a 4-3 vote and the County Commission voted 3-4 to not have it taken to the state legislation for a draft charter. Because of these votes, the consideration of consolidation was not taken to a public referendum. The citizens have been vocal that they would like the opportunity to take a vote on consolidation.

Albany-Dougherty County is at a pivotal time where a change needs to be made. Consolidating the government would allow for a necessary reset that will spark change and forward thinking toward innovative ideas and a more inventive generation of leaders.

There are several hurdles and roadblocks that will be uncovered throughout this process. Below are a list of potential roadblocks:

- Race relations need to be addressed throughout the process. Many have stated that this was a contributing factor preventing previous attempts at consolidation.
- Because the City of Albany is a MEAG community could create a significant roadblock to the process. This needs to be addressed with MEAG and

state legislators from the beginning of the process.

- Law enforcement and constitutional officers need to be brought to the attention of the CVIOG.
- Lack of most effective and comprehensive consolidation team
- Lack of education of the general public
- Support of the state legislators

ACTION STEPS

SHORT-TERM (FIRST 6 MONTHS - 1 YEAR)

- Connect with ASU to gain insight on the feasibility study they did in 2015 to inform the direction of the new study
- Develop a study to determine why previous charters for consolidation have failed
- Reach out to the CVIOG at the University of Georgia to conduct a new feasibility study on merging the city and county governments

THE PREVIOUS STUDY THE CARL VINSON INSTITUTE DID IN 2005 EXAMINED SEVERAL AREAS:

1. The cost of equalization of personnel fringe benefits to the higher-benefit level
 2. The cost of equalization of personnel salaries to the higher-salary level
 3. The cost and savings expected from consolidation of specific departments or functions
 4. The savings produced by freeing up personnel who are currently engaged in intergovernmental coordination
 5. The cost of planning for and developing new policies and ordinances for the consolidated government
 6. The new revenue produced by the consolidated government being able to collect franchise fees
 7. The loss of revenue due to only one government being able to collect the financial institutions tax.
- <https://cviog.uga.edu/services-and-research/state-and-local-government-services/local-government-consolidation.html>

THE CARL VINSON INSTITUTE IS INVOLVED WITH:

- Helping leaders evaluate the most important issues involved in a change
- Studying all of the factors and consequences
- Facilitating focus groups and information sessions
- Drafting a charter that details structure, powers and duties of the proposed new government and providing the insight to submit this charter to the Georgia General Assembly
- An alliance of community leaders should be designated and/or appointed to serve in conjunction with both governmental groups when addressing problem-solving activities.
 - Develop a schedule of community leaders and elected government officials to meet on a bimonthly basis
 - This should take place in a casual environment with discussion of current and future problems. Individuals will rotate in a “fireside chat” environment, welcoming others for candid and honest conversation.
 - Discussion of the units of government that could easily function as one entity, i.e. planning, public works, fire/police/EMS
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses of each entity - each entity should do this for themselves and for its opposition
- Engage state legislators in a conversation with MEAG officials to discuss the feasibility of consolidating city and county government
 - An initial meeting with MEAG officials to determine how the MEAG Territorial Act could possibly be altered to allow for the new consolidated government to assume the bond with which the City of Albany is already involved
 - A meeting with state legislators to ensure that the legislators would be

willing to introduce a new proposed charter if the city and county governments agree to the consolidation

MID-TERM (YEAR 2)

- Begin a community education campaign with the assistance of the CVIOG and other recently consolidated governments such as Athens/Clarke County and Macon-Bibb
- Hold public forums to ensure that the concerns and needs of the citizens and business community are heard throughout the process. Public forums must be held and a campaign must be run to educate community voters on the benefits of consolidation and the importance of their vote. Social media and other forums should be used to attract a younger demographic to the polls
- The city and county can begin the consolidation process by creating combined health and wellness centers. The city and county currently run individual health and wellness centers for their employees
 - The same company is contracted for the city and county health and wellness centers.
 - The county has a small facility Downtown close to the county employees.
 - The city currently operates in a mobile unit located further from city employees.
 - The city and county could create a consolidated health and wellness center which could be a cost saving for the city and county as well as locate it close to all employees.

LONG-TERM (YEAR 3)

- Start the full consolidation process while employing the guidance of the CVIOG
- Draft the charter for a new government to be proposed to the Georgia General Assembly; submit for approval

- Public vote
 - If passed, new officials will run for election.
 - If it fails, a study of public opinion should be done to find out why. The referendum can be revisited and brought to vote again.

BUDGET

- There will be a cost to run the feasibility study that could range from \$10,000 to \$150,000
- The opportunity cost of the time and energy that will be spent on this project

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Engage the State House of Representatives and the Senate to help with grants to fund the project. The City of Albany and Dougherty County Board of Commissioners should match what the State House and Senate contribute.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Carl Vinson Institute at the University of Georgia (CVIOG)

As part of the community leadership cohort:

- Representatives from Albany State University
- Representatives from Albany Technical College
- Specific individuals within government and business
 - Jeff “Bodine” Sinyard, Past Chairman of Dougherty County Commission
 - Spencer Lee and/or Nathan Davis (city and county attorneys)
 - Lamar Hudgins, County Commissioner
 - Bob Langstaff, City Commissioner

- Anthony Jones, County Commissioner
- Matt Fuller, City Commissioner
- Chris Cohilas, Chairman of the Dougherty County Commission
- Dorothy Hubbard, Mayor, City of Albany
- Sharon Subadan, City Manager, City of Albany
- Michael McCoy, Interim County Manager, Dougherty County Board of Commissioners
- Justin Strickland, President/CEO, Albany Dougherty Economic Development Commission
- Jackie Teemer, Interim Downtown Manager
- Geoffrey Sudderth, Head of School, Deerfield-Windsor School
- Bo Henry, Owner, Stewbos
- Pace Burt, Local Business Developer
- Bárbara Rivera Holmes, President/CEO, Albany Area Chamber of Commerce; Board of Regents University System of Georgia
- Ken Dyer, Superintendent, Dougherty County School System
- Marion Fedrick, Interim President, Albany State University
- Dr. Anthony Parker, President, Albany Technical College
- Local pastors (must have representation from a variety of ethnic communities - Caucasians, African Americans, Latinos)

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Citizens and business professionals more easily navigate the complex government system in the community
- More cohesive community
- Reduction in costs in both governments as service delivery costs would decrease substantially
- Through a consolidated government, population numbers would increase and the government would apply for federal and state funding as one entity. With the increase in population numbers, Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Funding would likely increase allowing for more impact in the community. The increased population would allow for better opportunities for funding requested from state and federal governments.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ted Baggett
Carl Vinson Institute of Government

Edwin Boyd
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City of Metter

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Marine Corps Logistics Base
Candidate for State Representative
District 153

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Mayor
City of Albany

Bob Langstaff
City Commissioner
City of Albany

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Project Manager
Civic Plus

Ewell Lyle
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