

DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK

# WORK PLAN



## THE DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK WORK PLAN ORGANIZATION

**PARKING IMPROVEMENTS:** Re-stripping Downtown Parking: Downtown Brunswick's streets contain many opportunities for on-street parking. While many spaces are already properly delineated, some spaces have faded. When spaces are not properly striped, many motorists assume that they are not allowed to park on downtown streets. The city could better utilize downtown streets, invite visitors, and bring more parking downtown by re-stripping faded on-street parking spots downtown.

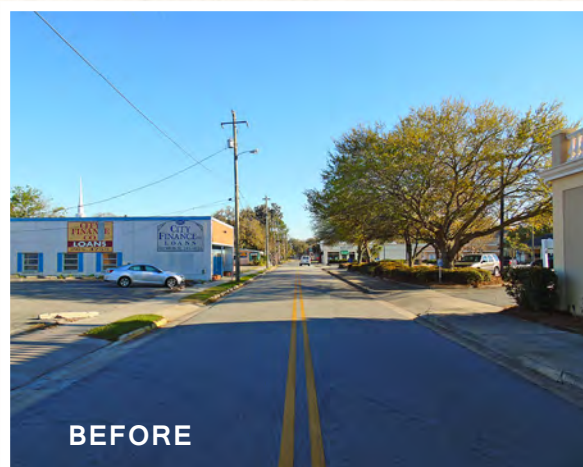


**TEMPORARY EVENT PARKING:** Particularly during popular community events like First Friday, downtown visitors often find it difficult to park conveniently downtown. While there are only so many on-street spaces and public lots downtown, many large surface lots exist for private business, local churches, and other institutions. Particularly during public events, the DDA could consider developing an MOU with property owners to allow the public to use these lots after the close of business hours.



**BEFORE:** After normal business hours, many private parking lots are empty. Evening is also the prime time for people to enjoy downtown’s amenities. On-street parking can easily fill up in the evenings, making it difficult to find a spot. Partnering with local businesses and utilizing private lots after hours could make downtown parking more accessible.

**AFTER:** Highlighting where patrons can utilize park free after hours is key to making this plan work. Placing chalkboard sandwich board-style signage and balloons draws attention to the location of these potential lots. This simple quick fix could also add character to the streetscape.



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## ORGANIZATION

### PARKING SIGNS ON GLOUCESTER

**BEFORE:** In order to draw drivers off of Gloucester to adjacent free public parking lots, chalkboard signs need to be paired with something larger along this main corridor. Currently, no indication of off-street parking is given on this section of Gloucester. The painted no parking zone provides ample space for addressing this issue.



BEFORE



AFTER

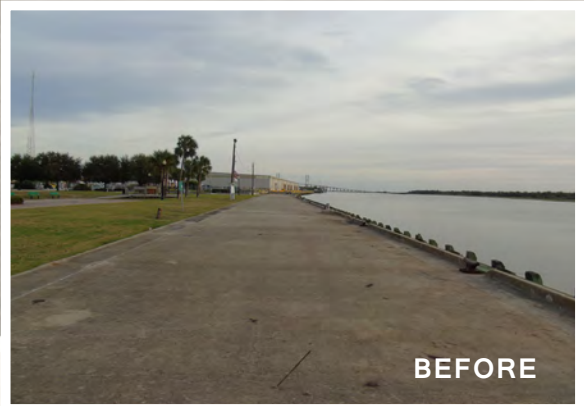
**AFTER:** Keeping consistent with the rows of palm trees on the opposite side of Gloucester, here a palm is placed in a movable container in the no parking zone. It is adorned with an artistic free parking sign that directs drivers down the side street. Such a sign meets multiple demands by greening the streetscape, adding character, and increasing pedestrian safety.



## COLLEGE OF COASTAL GEORGIA CONNECTIONS

Located just northeast of downtown, Brunswick's College of Coastal Georgia is a growing hub for the city and major potential stakeholder in the future of the city. Brunswick's local leaders should work closely with the college to bring courses downtown. Georgia State University's growing presence in Atlanta or the revitalization of Savannah facilitated by the Savannah College of Art and Design could serve as models for an ideal city-college relationship. Relationships between developers and CCGA need to be fostered to ensure adequate student housing in the city. The College of Coastal Georgia Foundation should be courted to assist with off-campus development.

# THE DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK WORK PLAN ORGANIZATION





## Creating a Destination

**MARITIME INFRASTRUCTURE:** Resulting from a DDA collaboration and generous funding from Georgia Power, recent dock improvements and a new power supply at the Mary Ross Waterfront Park dock enable larger vessels and longer stays on Brunswick's waterfront. Contractors have also begun improving the existing docks at the site. The recent visit of the *Ocearch* research vessel is one example of a unique floating attraction now able to use Mary Ross Park. The city should continue working with the private sector and community partners to encourage a vibrant maritime culture at the park.

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**BEFORE:** Mary Ross Park is the only public space along Brunswick's reason for being: the waterfront. The park could be an anchor for recreation and relaxation among local residents, regional visitors, and working-day commuters. However, this view of Mary Ross Park's landing leaves much to be desired. Offering no waterfront seating, shade from the midday heat, or fisherman-friendly infrastructure, this space has limited utility beyond enjoying the view for a few minutes. Given its spectacular views and constant breezes, with limited improvements this area is ripe with potential.

**AFTER:** A row of live oak shade trees, movable tables and chairs, artistic benches, string lights, and angler-friendly amenities such as a fish-cleaning station, and railings to lean on transform the space into a usable, welcoming, and interactive area. The ability to move furniture into or out of the shade gives freedom and comfort for locals to better enjoy their park experience. The fisherman-friendly infrastructure encourages a daily presence, while the string lights invite nightly walks around the waterfront. All of these factors enliven the park and increase the daily presence regardless of events happening at the park.

## THE DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK WORK PLAN

# PROMOTION

**DOWNTOWN COMMUNICATIONS:** Communicating everything going on in downtown Brunswick is a full-time job. Currently the DDA operates a popular Facebook profile advertising events like First Friday. Listing all of the activities going on downtown and posting a yearly calendar of events here could help spread the word about everything happening in the city. A Downtown Brunswick app could deliver notices of downtown events directly to subscribers' phones.

**HIRE A PROGRAM MANAGER:** Having enough staff dedicated to improving downtown daily remains a challenge for Brunswick and many cities undertaking revitalization efforts. To help ease this burden, the city increased the DDA's budget to fund a Program Manager position. By selecting a program manager, the city and DDA have signaled their commitment to fostering a vibrant downtown.

### *Creating a Destination*

**DOWNTOWN BIKE RENTALS:** Brunswick's compact layout, scenic neighborhoods, and coastal topography make the city ideal for exploring by bike. The city could build on Brunswick's appeal to bicyclists by offering bike rentals. The city could continue to grow as a destination for bicyclists by developing bike paths, designating bike lanes, and creating bike-friendly connections to Jekyll and St. Simons Island.

**BRUNSWICK BIKE TOUR:** Brunswick's compact plan and flat topography make the city an ideal biking destination. The city should consider working with the Historic Brunswick Foundation or similar community groups to conduct regular themed bicycle tours of the city. These tours could prove to be unique draws that play on the city's rich history and attract tourist traffic from the surrounding Golden Isles.

**LOW COUNTRY BOIL AT MARY ROSS PARK:** Programmed events attract needed activity to Brunswick's waterfront. Working

with the local shrimp industry, the DDA could sponsor an annual low country boil along the waterfront. If successful, Brunswick could claim the title of Georgia's largest low country boil, creating a unique draw and claim to fame. This event could build on the Lyons Club moving their annual barbecue cook-off to Mary Ross Waterfront Park from Jekyll Island.

**BRUNSWICK STREET DANCES:** To draw activity downtown from the surrounding county and the islands, the city must have unique attractions that play on Brunswick's existing culture and atmosphere. Simply closing off selected downtown streets once a month and encouraging local musicians to perform could create a regular attraction and encourage the city's growing reputation as a creative, artistic community.

**KAYAK INFRASTRUCTURE:** Attracting activity to Brunswick's waterfront is essential to realizing the city's potential. Southeast Adventure Outfitters leads a Brunswick kayak tour focused on the Marshes of Glynn east of the city. The city or DDA should consider working with Southeast Adventure Outfitters to develop a downtown kayak outpost along the East River.

**SUNSET BAR AT MARY ROSS PARK:** To realize the community's vision for Brunswick's waterfront, the city must reprogram the riverfront as a community hub and asset. Perhaps in concert with a Food Truck Night program, the DDA could work with downtown restaurateurs to sponsor a biweekly Sunset Bar at Mary Ross Park, with al fresco cocktails and appetizers. While increasing activity on the riverfront, money raised from the program could help fund park improvements.





**FOOD TRUCKS AT MARY ROSS PARK:** Bringing regular activity to Mary Ross Park catalyzes momentum for the city’s ambitious park plans. Working with existing organizations, the DDA should consider creating a regular Food Truck Night at the park with a portion of the proceeds funding park improvements. Such a program would bring new flavors to downtown while attracting activity to the park.

**BEFORE:** While Mary Ross Waterfront Park has the potential to be a cherished community attraction, currently the park remains underutilized and existing facilities are often neglected. Particularly in the evening hours, more programmed events at the park could attract community members and encourage Brunswick’s citizens to take advantage of stunning sunsets and waterfront views here.

**AFTER:** This rendering proposes a fun and creative solution to several common issues downtown by building on the desire to create diverse dining opportunities, the need for more evening activity, and the potential of Mary Ross Park as a community attraction. Here an evening food truck festival provides new opportunities for local entrepreneurs while bringing life and activity to a neglected corner of this community resource.

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## PROMOTION

### *Promotion & Marketing*

**NORWICH STREET SATURDAY EVENTS:** Activating Norwich Street was a frequent topic in both public input sessions and the review of previous plans for the city. Building on the city's successful First Friday program, Brunswick could explore bringing distinctive programming to Norwich Street on Saturdays. Events like a food truck fair or monthly street market could help attract activity and build the momentum necessary to attract development to this major corridor.

**MARKETING BRUNSWICK:** From fraying layers of peeling paint on a building and a centuries-old live oak overtaking a sidewalk to glimpses of cobblestone beneath a pothole, Brunswick's unique patina helps create a magical experience for residents and visitors. In addition to Brunswick's low cost of living, sunny climate, and scenic coastal location, the city's sometimes derelict architecture and pleasant decay make Brunswick a perfect fit for certain potential residents. The city should consider marketing the city "warts and all" in regional publications like *Southern Living* and *Garden & Gun*. The city could also target "snowbirds" of a romantic bent in the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Toronto Sun*. Targeting those with the resources to appreciate and rehabilitate Brunswick's culture and historical housing stock will help facilitate wider revitalization throughout the city.

**BILLBOARD ADVERTISING:** Brunswick's strategic location along I-95 ensures that steady streams of regional visitors bypass the city. To fully take advantage of this traffic just six miles from downtown, the city and DDA could develop an attractive billboard to promote downtown dining and entertainment options to interstate travelers.

**MANAGE DOWNTOWN FACEBOOK PROFILE:** Facebook and other social media platforms provide great promotional tools for downtown businesses. Once operated by a private social media agency, control of downtown Brunswick's Facebook

profile recently has been returned to the DDA. In addition to continuing to keep a central downtown Brunswick Facebook profile up-to-date, the DDA could provide training to downtown merchants on how to use Facebook to promote downtown to visitors.

**MANAGE DOWNTOWN INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT:** Instagram is a social media platform built around users sharing photos and videos. The visual nature of Instagram creates a free promotional tool that allows downtown dining, retail, and other businesses to advertise their wares. The DDA should continue to promote downtown Brunswick on Instagram and build the city's presence on this platform. Additionally, the DDA could consider training downtown merchants in appropriate promotional uses of Instagram.

**FIRST FRIDAY:** Brunswick's popular monthly First Friday program continues to attract evening activity downtown. Attendance at the event is growing, and the city should work to maintain this successful community attraction. Continuing to promote First Friday, attract diverse musical acts, and expand the event to a wider swath of downtown could over time help to ensure the vibrant downtown experience desired by the community.

**CHRISTMAS PARADE:** A tradition for over 30 years, events like Brunswick's beloved Christmas Parade help to attract activity downtown and create a comfortable regular opportunity for locals to rediscover downtown. Following a move to evening hours, the parade now brings desired after-5:00 activity downtown. The city and DDA should work to continue funding and promoting the parade and similar events.

**RHYTHM ON THE RIVER:** Annual events encourage locals and visitors to explore restaurants, retail stores, and other local businesses downtown. Unlike other events, Rhythm on the

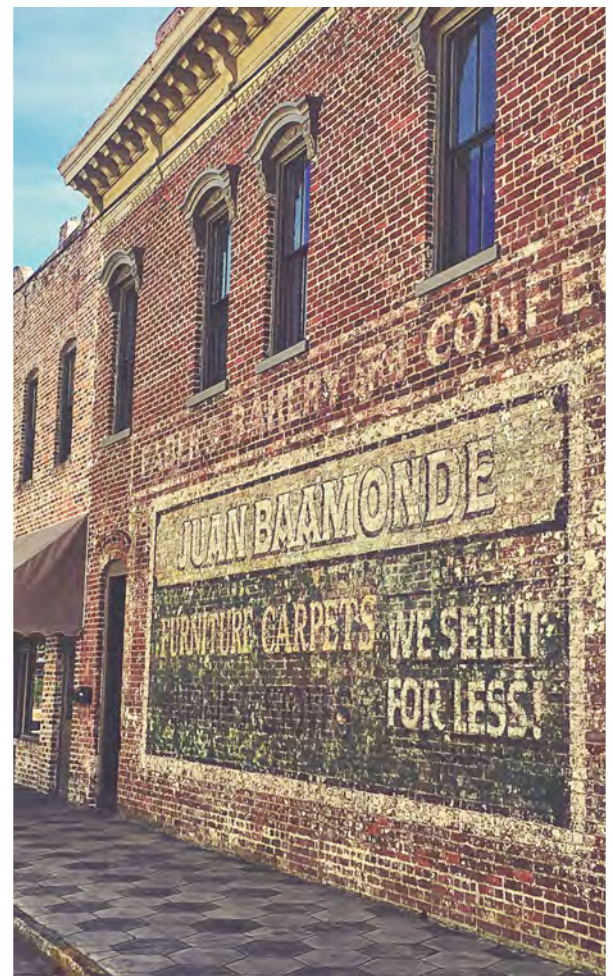
River helps to activate Mary Ross Waterfront Park and bring the community to Brunswick's riverfront. To grow and expand this event, the DDA could work with local merchants to attract food trucks. Supplementing the event by bringing in fun new attractions or even staging a floating musical parade could celebrate Brunswick's waterfront and rich culture.

**TREE LIGHTING AND HOLIDAY DECOR:** Lighting street trees and decking out downtown with seasonal decor enhances the atmosphere of the area and helps to create a pleasant downtown experience for visitors. The DDA and city employees should continue working together to rotate, replace, and install festive decorations each year.

**DEVELOP MOBILE-FRIENDLY MAPS:** Brunswick's historical architecture, bike routes, and ancient live oaks are just a few examples of assets that could be better leveraged by developing mobile-friendly maps. Working with the Historic Preservation Board and other interest groups, the DDA could collaborate to develop easily accessible tourist maps of relevant downtown attractions.

**PEACHES TO THE BEACHES YARD SALE:** Stretching along Highway 341 from Barnesville to the Golden Isles, Peaches to the Beaches is Georgia's largest yard sale and an important regional event. City DDA staff should continue working to bring Peaches to the Beaches to the Brunswick waterfront and promote this annual event.

**MEDIA AND MARKETING STRATEGY:** Promoting the programs, businesses, and events in Brunswick is key to creating a community destination and attracting activity downtown. Using print, social media, and other outlets, the city should work with the recently hired program manager at the Brunswick DDA to pursue a comprehensive strategy to market activities downtown.



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### *Business Development*

#### **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION:**

Downtown Brunswick's status as a National Register District entitles property owners interested in preserving historical homes to certain benefits and programs. Brunswick's Historic Preservation Board should consider working with downtown property owners and potential investors to promote these benefits and other tools available to preserve and renovate homes.

#### **TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE TEAM VISIT:**

The Tourism Product Development (TPD) team at the Georgia Department of Economic Development assists public and private clients with technical assistance and helps pair government and other clients with financial resources. The city, county, and Golden Isles Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) have arranged a strategic visit with the TPD to help increase the tourism potential of the city. Pursuing similar opportunities will help the city continue to grow Brunswick as a destination.





PROMOTION