

DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK

WORK PLAN



THE DOWNTOWN BRUNSWICK WORK PLAN

ECONOMIC VITALITY

Maintenance

LAND BANK: Identified as a major priority for the city in Blueprint Brunswick, developing a land bank for vacant properties in the city is an essential step toward addressing one of the primary issues of local residents. With support from the Brunswick Planning and Zoning Department and city attorney, the city and Glynn County Commission have officially adopted a land bank ordinance. Brunswick should use this tool effectively to encourage the continued revitalization of downtown.

DOWNTOWN GARBAGE COLLECTION STRATEGY: Many streets and sidewalks downtown are blocked by dumpsters and trash receptacles. The city should consider working with downtown property owners and waste contractors to limit downtown receptacles and develop a strategy for centralized collection of waste downtown.

EXPAND FAÇADE PROGRAM: Brunswick's vacant and aging building stock was a frequently addressed issue during conversations with local citizens. While the city's existing façade grants are supported by the Community Development Block Grant program, the city should consider funding companion programs like the city's Stabilization Forgivable Loan to assist building owners.

INCUBATOR VILLAGE: Brunswick's vacant properties are a frequently addressed issue in previous plans and were brought up often during conversations with community members. While these properties are significant roadblocks to success, they are also opportunities for the city. Working with a pri-

vate investor or the DDA, the city could consider rehabilitating key vacant properties as an incubator village for startup firms, artists, and more.

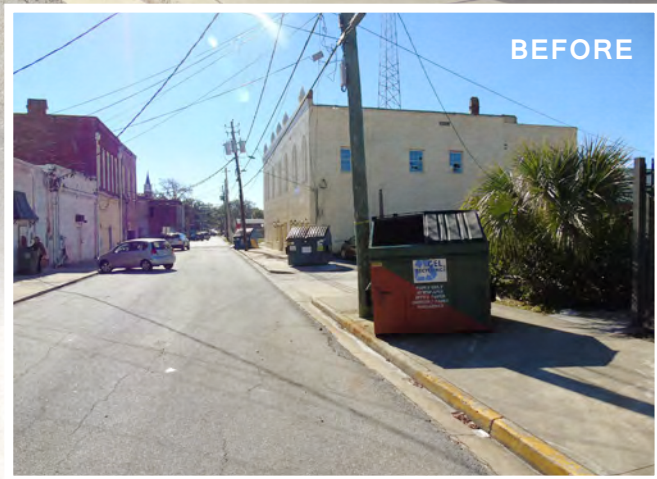
1315 UNION REVITALIZATION: Recently obtained by the city, the historical property at 1315 Union Street could be a model for the revitalization of historical residences downtown. The city should work with the Historic Brunswick Foundation and land bank to locate a partner organization or developer to rehabilitate the structure.

HOWE STREET COTTAGES: Now a colorful mix of attractive downtown residences completed by private developer Robin Durant, the once-vacant collection of cottages adjacent to Glynn Academy could serve as a model for further rehabilitation of downtown properties. Brunswick's Historic Preservation Board and local leaders should continue to assist the private rehabilitation of downtown properties by supporting State Historic Preservation Tax Credit applications, easing permitting, and marketing rental units as appropriate.

AFTER



BEFORE



DOWNTOWN GARBAGE COLLECTION

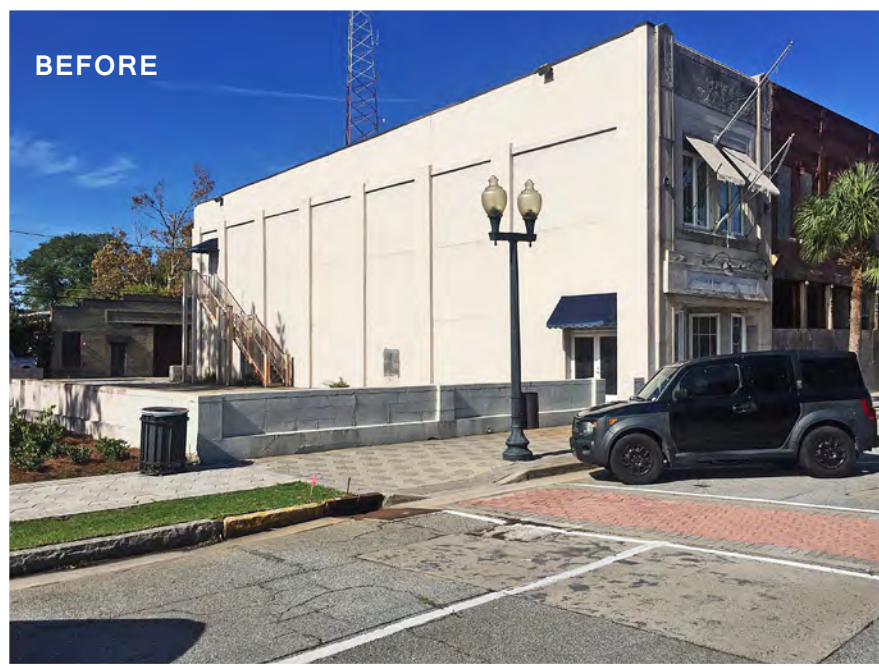
BEFORE: This photograph shows a view looking south down Grant Street. Here and elsewhere along downtown's side streets, unsightly dumpsters block pedestrian traffic along the sidewalk.

AFTER: By re-stripping existing on-street parking and creating new spaces to relocate dumpsters along one side of the street, pedestrians can travel along the sidewalk without messy obstructions. This night view rendering illustrates how string lights could make downtown's side streets more safe and inviting.

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EXPAND FAÇADE PROGRAM:

BEFORE: This building on Newcastle Street has great outdoor space and provides a unique development opportunity along Brunswick's main downtown corridor.

AFTER: The rendering shows a restaurant design concept with outdoor patio seating and large printed or painted murals on the side of the historical building.



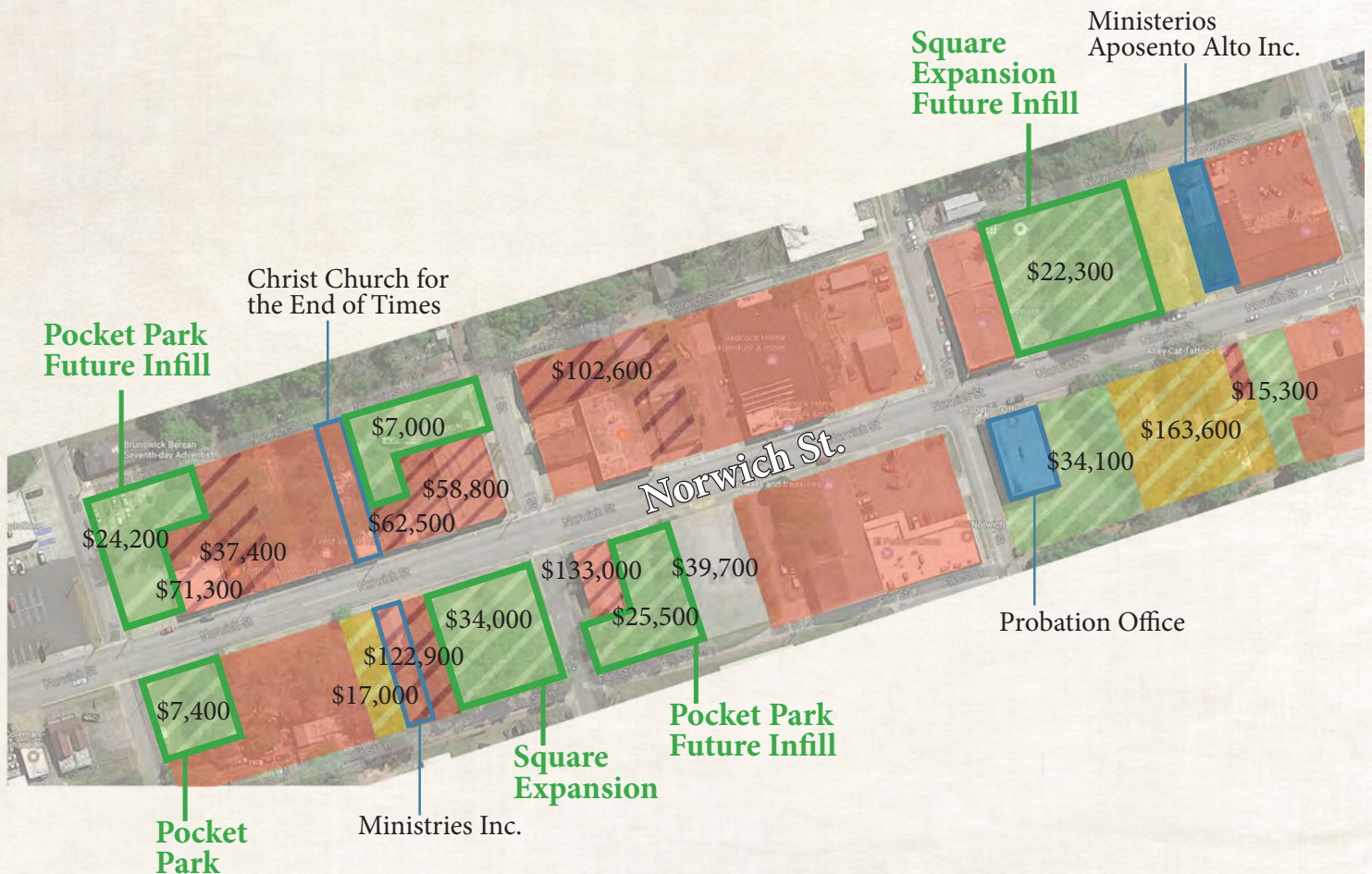
AFTER

ECONOMIC VITALITY

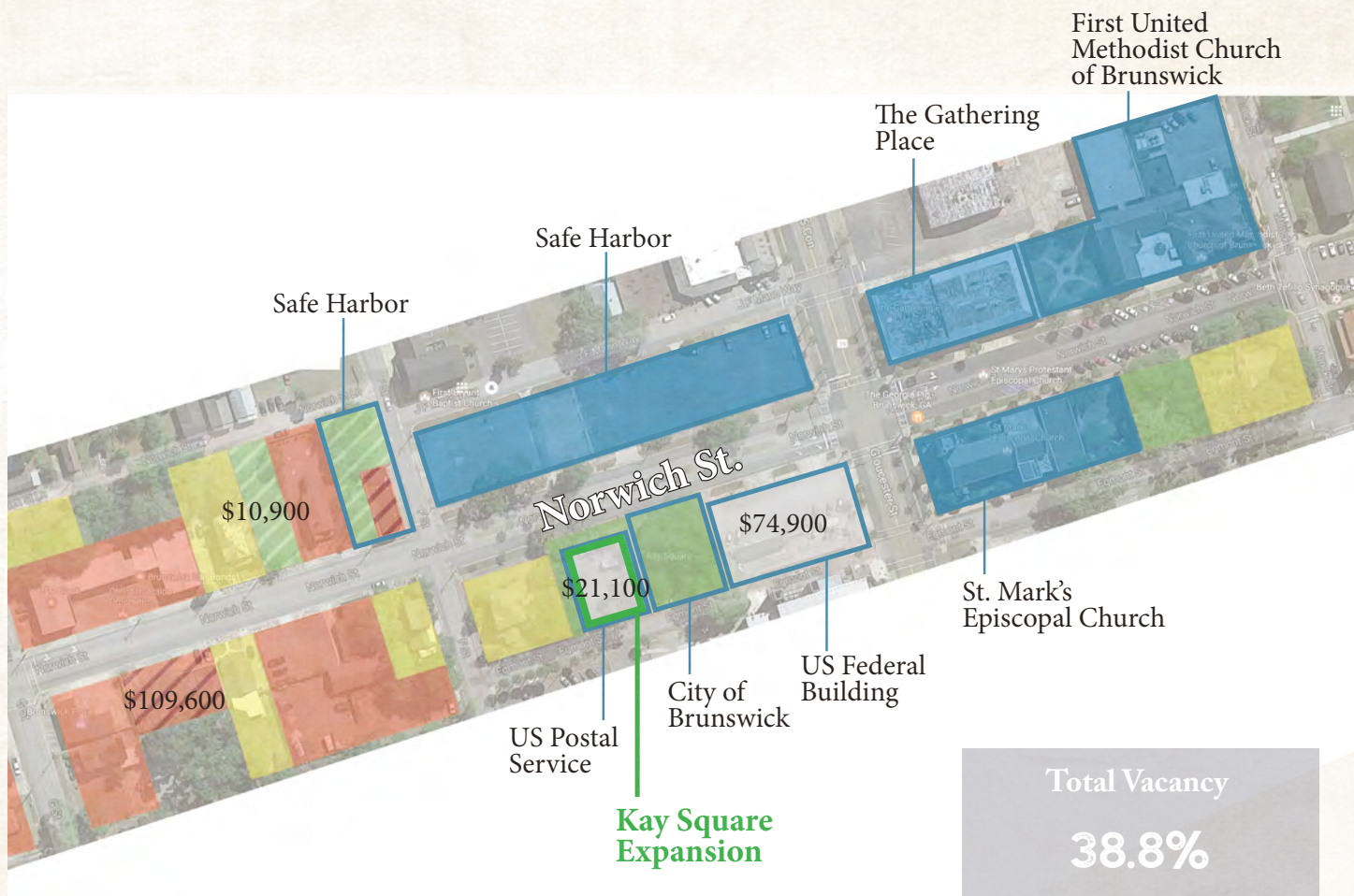
NORWICH CORRIDOR PHASED REDEVELOPMENT

Once a thriving gateway to the city, since the late 1960s, Norwich Street has suffered extensively from economic decline and the long-term effects of suburban flight. With almost 40% of the properties along these blocks now vacant, city leaders must attract activity and fill gaps here to bring economic vitality back to this key corridor and other downtown neighborhoods. The plan below illustrates extending the streetscape improvements seen throughout downtown to the Norwich corridor. With the installation of landscaped medians, street trees, bump-outs, crosswalks, and more, this plan is a combination of short- and long-term investments. Taken together, these improvements can slow traffic, increase safety, invite investment, and visually tie Norwich to the remainder of downtown. Implementing these improvements is a first step to invite activity and reestablish Norwich as a vibrant corridor and gateway to downtown.

In addition to streetscape improvements, this plan visualizes a more robust city effort to revitalize this critical downtown neighborhood and transform downtown. Through a joint effort of Brunswick's Downtown Development Authority and Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA), the city could utilize tools like the recently established land bank to begin acquiring vacant properties along these key blocks leading into downtown. Doing so could appeal to interested developers, create the opportunity to have a say in attracting compatible infill development, and address the long-term redevelopment of the corridor. Acquiring vacant properties would show real dedication to the corridor's success and give the public power over redevelopment. To better inform decision makers and provide a strategy for the long-term redevelopment



of the corridor, the plan below breaks down current uses of parcels along these four key blocks of Norwich Street. Currently, of the total landscape studied, 21.5% of the land is composed of undeveloped vacant lots and 17.3% of parcels are occupied by vacant buildings, making for a total vacancy rate of 38.8%. Based on property assessments gathered from the Glynn County Board of Assessors, the DDA or URA could purchase the entirety of vacant lands and buildings along these blocks for just over \$1 million. Drawing from recent sales in the area, sale prices would more than likely be less than assessed values, as recent sales have often been roughly half of the assessed value. The city could opt to purchase just the undeveloped vacant lands, with a substantially lower cost of \$168,500.



EXISTING LAND USE:

9.7%		Institutional	5.9%		Vacant Residential
38.1%		Commercial	2.1%		Open Space
11.4%		Vacant Commercial	21.5%		Vacant Open Space
7.5%		Residential	3.8%		Parking

Total Vacancy
38.8%

Cost to Acquire Total Vacant Parcels:
\$1.02M

Cost to Acquire Vacant Open Space:
\$168,500

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INCUBATOR VILLAGE

BEFORE: Following population decline over the decades, underused spaces dot the landscape throughout Brunswick. Located on Norwich Street, the former garage pictured is a flexible space brimming with potential. While the continuous curb cut allows easy vehicular access, public space and entry points are undefined. Reprogramming the many garage bays presents a multi-functional opportunity for the property owner.

AFTER: Utilizing vacant spaces in creative ways captures the artistic character and culture of Brunswick. Creativity should be encouraged all along the Norwich corridor to rehabilitate vacant properties. Tapping into the creative workforce within Brunswick keeps this property authentic and inspires the surrounding neighborhood to stay funky. The flexible, creative, and cost-effective solution shown here encourages local small business ventures. In addition, multiple businesses housed under one roof maximizes the existing building's potential for the landowner. Several viable ventures could be located under one roof at a lower cost and with limited total overhead. Small, viable retail or restaurants like these could enliven the community by creating eclectic social spaces that celebrate Brunswick's character.

The multiple bays provide a unique business opportunity as well. Food truck owners can house their trucks when not in use, and can also do all of their prep work on-site. This business model is a cost-effective way of providing support for several small business owners, and can include ventures such as catering services, bakeries, and other startups.

The reclaimed wood planters define the space and can be placed on casters, further enhancing the space's flexibility for fluctuating customer intensity. The plantings green the space, add shade, and provide seasonal color, while also creating a buffer between the seating area and the road.





BEFORE



AFTER

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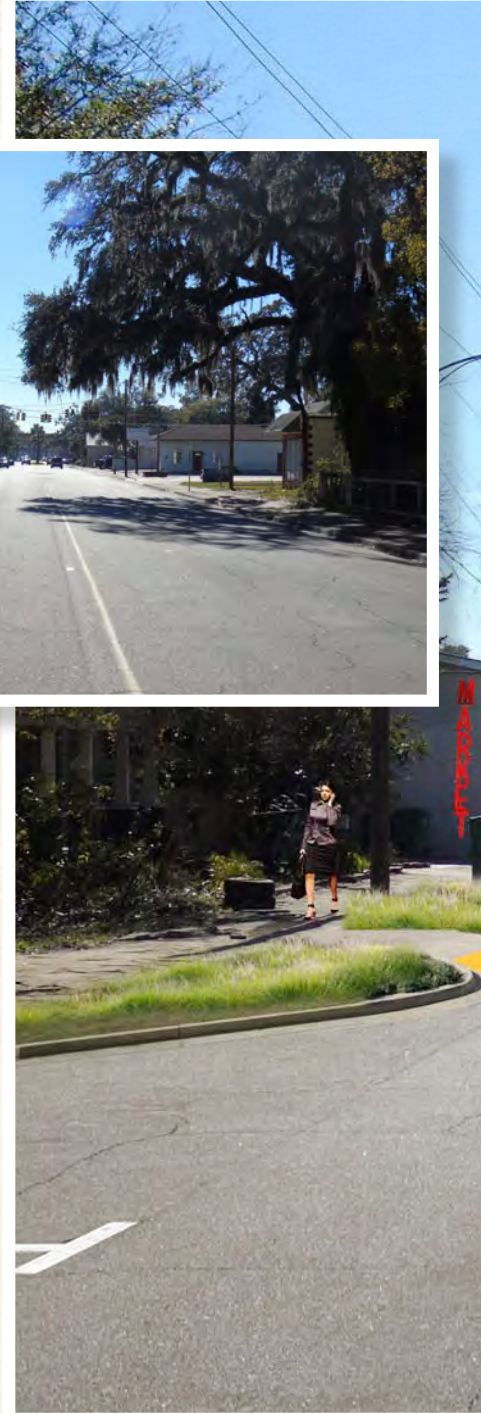
Gateways & Signage

NORWICH STREET IMPROVEMENTS: Norwich Street was a frequent topic during public input sessions. Locals want the city to extend streetscaping, enhance lighting and safety, and address blight throughout this major corridor. Working with the local community, the city should develop a phased strategy to implement streetscaping improvements, rehabilitate troubled properties, and attract development to Norwich Street. Improvements could include unleashing local artists and encouraging the creativity of the local community to address persistent problems. The city could use the newly formed land bank and additional tools to revitalize the first four blocks of Norwich first. Subsequent phases could move away from downtown to revitalize the whole corridor over time.



BEFORE: This section of Norwich already boasts handsome shade trees, and successful businesses anchor either end of the block. However, central commercial spaces remain largely vacant and the excessive width of travel lanes here encourage traffic to speed dangerously through the area.

AFTER: The addition of tree-filled medians, mid-block crosswalks, landscaped bump-outs, and exciting signage encourage traffic to slow down, and make crossing the street safer for pedestrians. Vibrant signage allows local businesses to stand out while making the street feel more active and occupied.





AFTER

ECONOMIC VITALITY

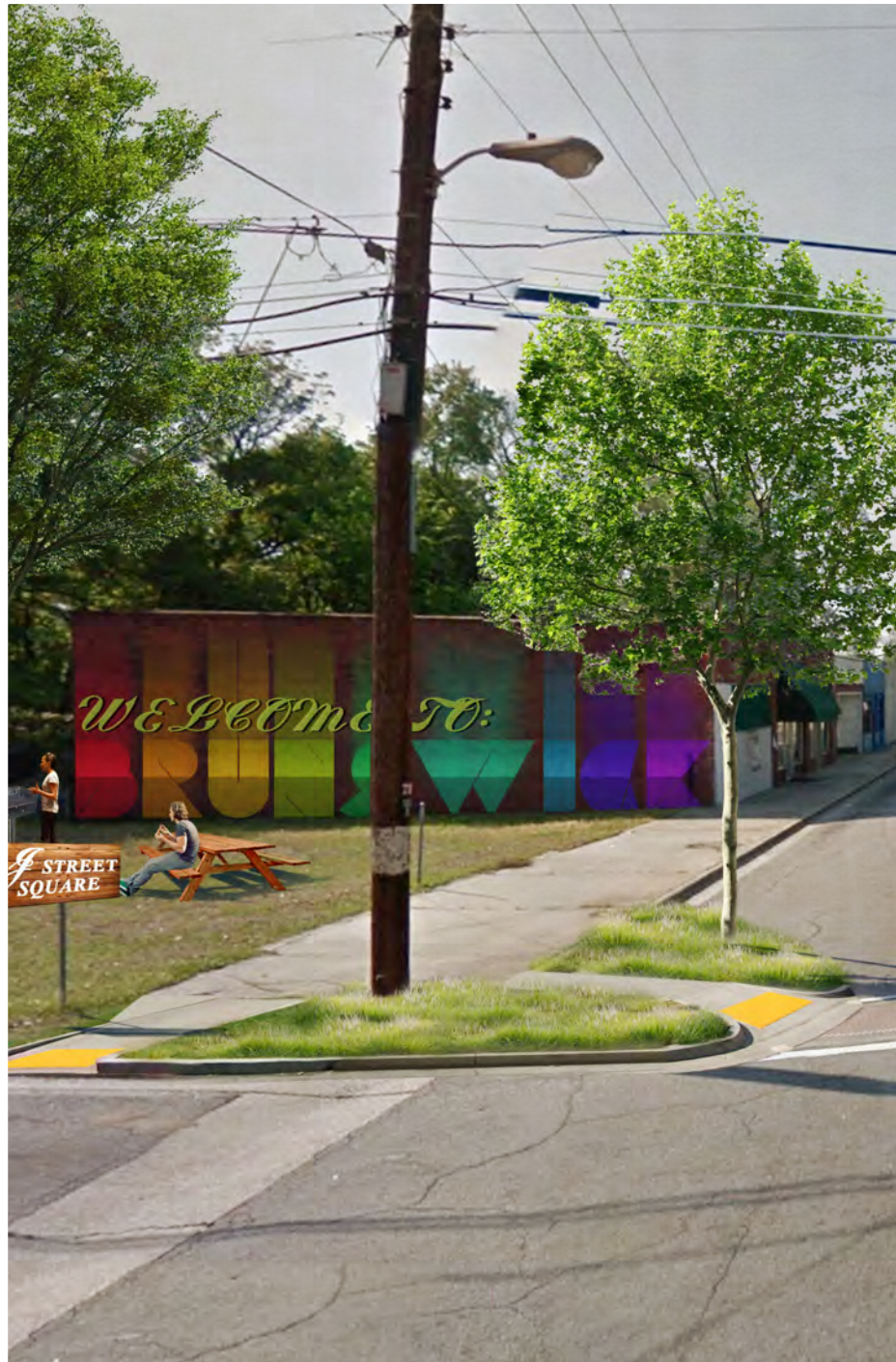
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NORWICH AND J STREET INTERSECTION

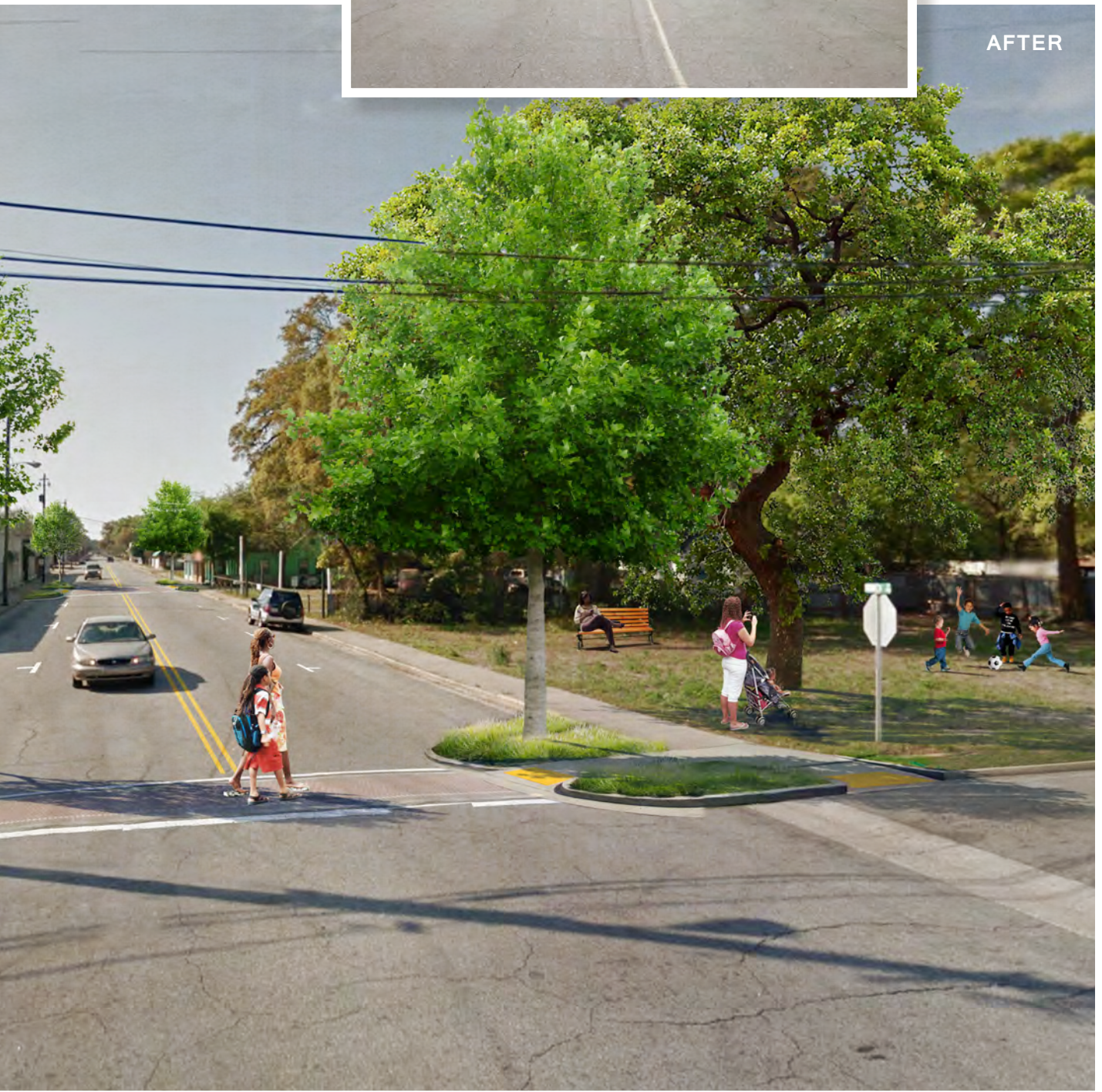
BEFORE: The J Street intersection serves as the entrance to Norwich's commercial district and is the first gateway Brunswick residents experience as they enter downtown. The vacant lots and neglected buildings here make this area feel unsafe, while the wide streets encourage drivers to move quickly. However, these vacant spaces and buildings provide an excellent opportunity for the city to address the look and feel of the Norwich corridor.

AFTER: The addition of street trees and cross-walk bump-outs slow traffic and make crossing the street safer and more pleasant. Empty walls are prime real estate for beautification with murals that boast Brunswick's vibrant arts scene and intense local pride. Picnic tables, benches, grills, trees, and signage turn these empty lots into valuable public spaces for children and local residents while activating these otherwise underutilized areas.





BEFORE



AFTER

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NORWICH SIGNATURE SQUARE EXPANSION

BEFORE: This series of connected lots is located adjacent to Central Hardware on Norwich Street. The buildings on these lots were recently razed, leaving a massive green space with plenty of potential as an active community space.

AFTER: Transforming these empty lots into a future Signature Square could enliven the corridor and spur development. Signage, murals, and basic maintenance are necessary investments to establish the squares. Picnic tables, grills, and benches help reclaim these spaces for public use, and could help this space become a point of pride for the neighborhood.



AFTER



BEFORE



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Connecting the Gap

WATERFRONT TAX ALLOCATION DISTRICT: While ambitious plans exist for Brunswick's riverfront, funding must be raised to realize the city's vision. Creating a tax allocation district (TAD) along the river could help the city fund essential improvements.

Creating a Destination

RIVERSIDE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER: Envisioned in Blueprint Brunswick and further discussed in the recent Mary Ross Waterfront Park Plan, a Coastal Environmental Center on the East River supported by the Department of Natural Resources could help activate Brunswick's riverfront and create a unique draw downtown. Such a center could leverage the city's reputation as the Gateway to the Golden Isles and create a new attraction unavailable on the islands.

LOFTS DOWNTOWN: Downtown housing represents a major opportunity to activate the city with a resident population. The city could work with the DDA and private developers to create incentives for rehabilitating downtown housing and creating lofts in downtown buildings.

RETAIL INCUBATOR: Significant demand exists for increasing the diversity of businesses downtown. The city or DDA should work with private developers or foundations to transform vacant storefronts and commercial buildings into retail incubators, offering short-term leases to potential business owners wishing to open "pop-up" retail outlets. Working with existing flex space and downtown property owners, the

city could develop a retail incubator program to bring fresh retail options downtown while addressing vacancy issues and luring activity downtown.

COLLEGE SHUTTLES DOWNTOWN: Many locals would like to see the presence of the College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA) expanded downtown as well as new public transportation options in the city. Brunswick could consider partnering with CCGA to fund a shuttle service from downtown to the college campus northeast of the city. Such a service would make downtown housing a viable option for students and increase the draw of events like First Friday.

DOWNTOWN BREWERY: Public-private cooperation is key to revitalizing Brunswick's many vacant historical properties. In the middle of downtown, 1317 Newcastle is a long-vacant commercial property recently acquired by an owner interested in rehabilitating the downtown building. For this and other similar properties, the city and DDA should work with private property owners to expedite rehabilitation and assist with relevant permitting.

RICHLAND RUM: Attracting the Richland Rum distillery is a major coup and an unequalled attraction for downtown Brunswick. With construction in process, the city should continue to support restoration efforts, back tax credits, and promote the distillery to visitors. The presence of the distillery could be used as the foundation for creating a lively downtown entertainment and dining district.



INFILL DEVELOPMENT

BEFORE: Currently vacant and overgrown, this lot at the corner of Newcastle and Monck streets occupies a prominent location downtown. This site holds long-term potential for infill development downtown.

AFTER: With the adjacent 1800s commercial building restored and serving as the home of a downtown brewery, this formerly vacant lot has been transformed into a corner market and beer garden. With decorated shipping containers, vintage trailers, and a pea gravel courtyard, this flexible and casual concept creates a hub of downtown activity while providing local entrepreneurs and startups an innovative and creative market for their wares.



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Promotion & Marketing

PROPERTY LISTING ON DDA WEBSITE: The many available and vacant properties in downtown Brunswick emerged as a frequent issue in discussions with the community. To help market these properties to potential investors, the DDA should collaborate with local real estate agents to list available properties in a central online location like the DDA website.

ARTS-BASED BRANDING DOWNTOWN: The city should see everything as an opportunity for local arts downtown. Water towers, vacant storefronts, bike racks, blank walls, dumpsters, and every element of Brunswick's streetscape should be seen as a blank canvas for local artists. By encouraging artistic expression throughout the city, Brunswick can build on the city's reputation as an arts-friendly community and create an authentic and enriching experience downtown.

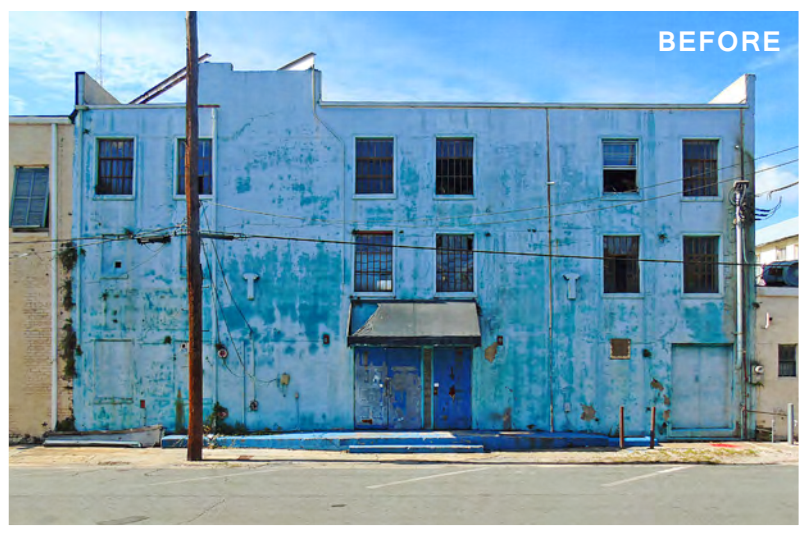
BOARD OF REALTORS MEET AND GREET/INFORMATION SESSION: Local real estate agents are often the first contact out-of-town investors have in Brunswick. Getting these key players invested in downtown is essential to revitalizing the city. The DDA or local leaders could consider creating an annual Realtors Meet and Greet/Information Session. While building important relationships, this program could help to disseminate information about local tax incentives and potential development in the city.

OCTOPUS MURAL CONCEPT

BEFORE: This distinctive building on Richmond Street fronts busy Newcastle Street. By addressing the appearance of side street buildings, the city could invite more activity and enhance the perception of safety on downtown's secondary streets.

AFTER: By attracting the skills of some of Brunswick's talented artistic community to create a striking mural downtown, this building is transformed into an iconic downtown landmark.





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TREE ART

KEITH JENNINGS TREE CARVINGS: In the 1980s, artist Keith Jennings decided to make his mark on St. Simons Island, carving faces on a few selected specimens of the island's famous live oak trees. Each hand-carved, unique face took the artist between two and four days to complete. Brunswick could consider recruiting Mr. Jennings to carve his unique faces on some of downtown Brunswick's signature trees. The city could also encourage local artists to create their own designs to add a little more character and whimsy downtown.



PHOTO CREDIT: GAG Daily

TIPSY McSWAY'S FUN CUTOUT

DOWNTOWN PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES: Tippy McSway's is a favorite local bar and grill and a common downtown gathering place for residents and visitors. This life-size cutout uses the existing Tippy's logo to create a fun photo opportunity for visitors passing by on the sidewalk.



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Business Development

ALCOHOL ORDINANCE: Locals want more entertainment and dining options downtown. Many local restaurateurs commented on the excessive fees the city charges for alcohol licenses. The city could consider reducing licensing fees in the downtown central business district to encourage more dining and entertainment. Researching alcohol ordinances in similar cities could help city officials gain perspective on potential roadblocks to local entrepreneurs in Brunswick's Code of Ordinances.

HISTORIC TAX CREDIT CONSULTANT: Brunswick's many historical properties and the nationally registered Brunswick Old Town Historic District enable property owners to take advantage of the National Park Service's tax credit and other programs. The city could consider hiring a historic tax credits expert to leverage these properties and ensure property owners are getting the benefits they are entitled to. City officials could charge a greatly reduced tax credit application preparation fee or waive a preparation fee for residences.

INCENTIVE PACKAGE: Bringing good jobs and new businesses downtown remains a key priority for Brunswick citizens. Brunswick should look into all options available to attract decent jobs and employers. The city should consider reaching out to attract ideal businesses from outside the community. In addition, developing a targeted incentives package could help lure desired businesses downtown. While considering additional targeted incentives, the DDA, city staff, and Economic Development Authority leaders should collaborate to compile a thorough list of all existing incentives and promote incentives already offered locally to potential investors.

DOWNTOWN GROCERY: Attracting a downtown grocery has been a goal for Brunswick for many years. The city should research large, central sites downtown that could house a potential grocery. By developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with potential property owners at a key downtown location, the city could help attract a small grocery store to the area.

FLETC HOUSING: Brunswick's Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) brings significant activity, jobs, and federal investment to the city. The thousands of annual recruits enrolled at FLETC represent a major untapped market for downtown housing. The city should work with FLETC, the DDA, and private developers to tailor downtown housing and lofts for FLETC recruits.

ONE-STOP SHOP FOR PERMITTING: While the condition of downtown buildings emerged as a critical issue during public input sessions, many property owners criticized the red tape involved in restoring historical properties downtown. At the same time, attracting investment and infill construction are top community priorities and essential for the long-term economic health of the city. Working with the DDA, city staff should develop a complete list of all required steps and permits needed to develop new construction or rehabilitate historical properties in the city. Following a thorough review and internal audit of these permitting requirements to determine what is necessary, the city should consider creating a one-stop shop for renovations, with a streamlined permitting process and incentives for redeveloping derelict properties.



DEVELOP FORM-BASED CODES FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT: The community sees attracting infill housing and ensuring that new development complements Brunswick's historical architecture as key priorities. Developing form-based codes should help Brunswick maintain the physical characteristics and scale of beloved historical neighborhoods while allowing for compatible infill development.

UPDATE OLD TOWN NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT: Old Town Brunswick's status as a National Register Historic District makes certain tax and rehabilitation programs available for applicable property owners. The city should consider expanding National Register protection to buildings constructed through 1966 and promote the benefits of register status to property owners.

HIRE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: To realize residents' goal of a more activated and lively downtown Brunswick, the city needs an employee dedicated to attracting development to the community every day. To address this need, the city has hired a full-time Economic and Community Development Director to pursue economic development opportunities throughout the city. The city should continue to select qualified professionals to address long-term priorities.

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BAY STREET BUILDING

BEFORE: Located along a major downtown corridor at the corner of Bay and Monck streets and boasting a large outdoor space, this property has significant potential for redevelopment.

AFTER: The rendering shows a restored building with a new covered patio. Although the building could become a home to many different types of businesses, a restaurant or café could take advantage of the opportunity for outdoor seating. Landscaping improvements along Bay Street are also shown, including new planted bump-outs and shade trees.

BEFORE



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DOWNTOWN CO-OP CONCEPT

BEFORE: Brunswick is not lacking in unique historical structures. This building sits on Gloucester Street and is currently owned by First United Methodist Church.

AFTER: Throughout the public input process, residents voiced the desire for a downtown co-op store. This building could offer a perfect downtown location with ample square footage. Brunswick could work to recruit a co-op business to this site or a similar location downtown.



INFILL AT NEWCASTLE AND MONCK STREETS

BEFORE: The vacant, unkempt corridor at Newcastle and Monck Street is a key infill opportunity downtown. Bringing activity to this corner is essential to creating a vibrant downtown experience.

AFTER: By attracting infill development in scale with and complementary to surrounding historical buildings, this building brings activity to this once desolate corner.



AFTER



BEFORE