

BRUNSWICK'S TOP ISSUES

LOTS OF PLANS, NOT ENOUGH IMPLEMENTATION

GATEWAYS & SIGNAGE

IMPROVING GATEWAYS / CONNECTING BAY STREET

SAFETY

LIGHTING / PARKING / INCREASE DOWNTOWN POLICE PRESENCE

PUBLIC & PRIVATE MAINTENANCE

VACANCY ISSUES & NEGLECT / CODE ENFORCEMENT

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

ATTRACTING DINING, RETAIL, & WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT / INCENTIVES / CREATING A DESTINATION

MAINTENANCE

Brunswick's stock of available historical properties are an asset that can attract potential investors. However, the sheer number of vacant, derelict, and ill-maintained properties in the city emerged as a top issue during discussions with community members. Particularly in Brunswick's surrounding residential neighborhoods and along the Norwich corridor, the many vacant and blighted properties discourage activity, invite crime, and send a negative message to residents, visitors, and potential investors. Many local residents and urban pioneers who have rehabilitated properties in these areas complained about the inconsistency of the city's code enforcement, with habitual violators seeming to get off the hook for unsafe property conditions. These residents in particular prioritized more consistent and stringent enforcement of the city's existing codes, pushing redevelopment through a land bank authority, and punishing absentee landlords and owners who refuse to maintain their properties.

Throughout the public input process, many locals advocated marketing the city's many available historical homes to potential investors. Doing so could help draw resilient local entrepreneurs and invested community members to help make

Brunswick a great place to call home. Addressing issues of vacancy has long been a goal for the city, with recommendations in plans dating back to at least 2001. While plans like Blueprint Brunswick recommended a land bank to address the number of vacant properties in the city, only in the past few months have city officials collaborated to create this critical tool to address vacancy in the city.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program address critical issues of maintenance and vacancy in the city:

- *Design: Art in Vacant Storefronts*
- *Economic Vitality: Land Bank*
- *Economic Vitality: Downtown Garbage Collection Strategy*
- *Economic Vitality: Expand Façade Program for Building Owners*
- *Economic Vitality: Incubator Village*
- *Economic Vitality: 1315 Union Revitalization*
- *Economic Vitality: Howe Street Cottages*

MAINTENANCE

FLATIRON BUILDING, 221 MONCK STREET

BEFORE: Located at the corner of Grant and Monck streets downtown, the flatiron building at 221 Monck Street is a fine example of the wealth of historical commercial architecture downtown. This and adjacent vacant commercial properties could be refurbished to house downtown businesses, offices, and lofts. This street could benefit from more shade, removing unattractive dumpsters, and installing better pedestrian accommodations.

AFTER: With refurbished façades, new plantings, string lighting, and enhanced pedestrian accommodations, the site has been transformed into a thriving corner downtown. Restored historical buildings housing local businesses and downtown living help preserve the character of downtown while bringing people and activity to the area.



BEFORE



AFTER

SAFETY

More than anything else, ensuring a safe experience downtown for residents and visitors is essential to bringing the community to the area and attracting investment downtown. Public input participants routinely ranked safety as the number one issue that must be addressed downtown. While the Brunswick Police Department has performed admirably and crime is down significantly over the past decade, fighting the perception that Brunswick is unsafe remains critical for city leaders, downtown business owners, and other stakeholders. Working to improve the maintenance of downtown properties and address derelict conditions ties directly to the demand for a safe downtown climate. By tackling broken windows, hazardous conditions, and more, the city sends a message that Brunswick will not tolerate crime. Many locals suggested further combating the perception and reality of crime downtown through better lighting and a more accessible and visible police presence. Promoting recent declines in crime; ensuring better maintenance of downtown properties, parking lots, and public spaces; and building a resident population downtown would all significantly combat the negative perception of safety downtown.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program address downtown safety:

- *Design: Downtown Lighting*
- *Design: Downtown Lighting: String Lights*
- *Design: Lighting Downtown Buildings*





AFTER

BEFORE: One block east of Newcastle Street, Richmond Street serves back-of-house functions for businesses along downtown's main drag. The lack of shade, absence of street lights, various service uses, and overhead wiring here make Richmond Street uninviting both during the day and in the evening hours.

AFTER: This rendering illustrates the same area of Richmond Street after landscaping the existing parking lot, improving the sidewalk, and adding string lighting to create a more inviting and safer feeling street.

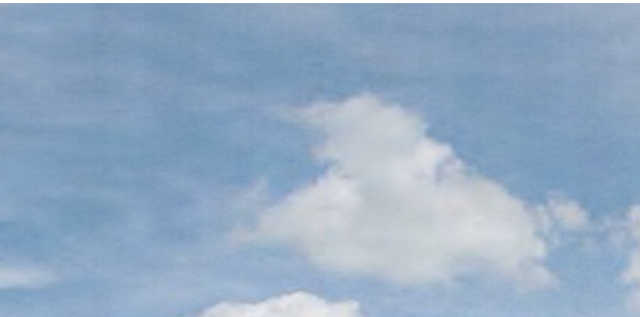
GATEWAYS & SIGNAGE

Brunswick's reputation as the Gateway to the Golden Isles relies on the city's proximity to Jekyll, St. Simons, and Sea Island. Any visitor driving to these destinations must pass through Brunswick via US Highway 17 (Glynn Avenue) or US Highway 341 (Bay Street). With a location near busy Interstate 95 and a downtown sandwiched between two major tourist corridors, the city could do more to attract visitors already passing through the city. During public engagement sessions, locals noted that all too often motorists along all three key corridors leading into downtown Brunswick are greeted by vacant properties, unattractive surface parking lots, and tired commercial buildings. Attractive signage and gateways at key vehicular intersections and major access corridors into downtown could invite exploration and provide a critical first impression for potential visitors and investors. The city should work to develop a phased approach to address the appearance of major corridors. Planting street trees, removing unnecessary curb cuts, installing rain gardens and planted buffers, promoting façade grants and rehabilitation, and making related improvements would all work to improve quality of life for local citizens and encourage a welcoming experience for visitors.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program address gateways and signage leading to downtown:

- *Design: Hip Wayfinding*
- *Design: Gateway/Corridor Redevelopment: Gloucester Street, Norwich Street, and Bay Street*
- *Design: Gloucester Streetscape Improvements*
- *Design: Gateways: Glynn Avenue and Gloucester*
- *Design: Gateways: Howard Coffin Fencing*
- *Design: Gateways: Methodist Hut on Gloucester*
- *Design: Gateways: Highway 341 at Newcastle and Bay Street*
- *Economic Vitality: Norwich Street Improvements*





BEFORE: The photograph shows a view of the intersection of Bay Street and Newcastle at the entry of downtown. The view is currently dominated by wide asphalt paving and harsh concrete medians with an absence of shade, sidewalks, and landscaping. Currently, no welcome signage exists to notify visitors that downtown restaurants, shops, and more are located straight ahead.

AFTER: The rendering shows reconfiguring and simplifying the intersection with Bay Street. Existing concrete medians have been removed and replaced with attractive landscaping to welcome visitors and provide shade. In addition to a new shaded median along Bay Street, existing medians along Newcastle Street have been extended to expand the footprint of downtown and invite activity. Mirroring the look of the new gateway at US 17 and Gloucester, new signage imparts a sense of arrival for visitors.

BRIDGING THE GAP / BAY STREET

While locals cherish downtown Brunswick's compact, gridded streets, walkability, and connectivity, many highlighted the notable gaps that limit connectivity between downtown and the city's once teeming waterfront. Public input participants identified Bay Street (US-341) as a major barrier separating downtown from the city's waterfront and Mary Ross Waterfront Park. The excessive width of Bay Street's travel lanes, speeding vehicles, broad expanses of unshaded asphalt, and lack of accommodation for bikers and pedestrians all work to sever connectivity between downtown and Mary Ross Park and discourage visitors from exploring Brunswick's waterfront. During interviews, focus groups, and the town hall, many community members prioritized connecting the gap between downtown and Brunswick's waterfront as the primary objective of any successful downtown planning work. For any further development of the city's waterfront to be successful, improving access between downtown and the riverfront is essential. With corridor improvements planned from 2001 onward, any further delay in connecting downtown to the waterfront threatens the fate of ongoing public investments in the area. With a \$15 million improvement plan at Mary Ross Waterfront Park underway, city leaders must work hard now to connect downtown to the waterfront.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program work to allay gaps in connectivity downtown:

- *Design: Connecting Downtown and the River*
- *Design: Downtown Streetscape Improvements*
- *Design: Ninety-Nine Liberty Trees*
- *Design: Complete Streets Ordinance*
- *Economic Vitality: Waterfront Tax Allocation District*

BEFORE: Bay Street's excessive width, lack of pedestrian connections, and absence of shade disconnect downtown Brunswick from the city's historic waterfront. Reducing the width of asphalt, planting trees, and planning accommodations for pedestrians could invite more activity to the city's waterfront.



BEFORE



AFTER: By reducing the excessive width of paving and travel lanes, replacing the existing concrete medians with plantings, and developing a multi-use trail and pedestrian connections within the existing right-of-way, Bay Street transforms from a tourniquet dividing the city to a vibrant coastal boulevard between downtown and the waterfront. Improvements to Bay Street include planted bump-outs, the addition of a landscaped median that acts as a bioswale, delineated on-street parking, crosswalks, and a new 10' multi-use trail located in a formerly underutilized parking lane.

PARKING

Due to a street grid and layout devised more than a century prior to the invention of the automobile, accommodating parking in Brunswick's historical core remains a challenge. Throughout the public input process, many locals cited improving downtown parking as a top issue facing the city. While noted as an issue that needs to be addressed, other participants felt that with the exception of high volume events and busy meal times, parking capacity is generally sufficient downtown. Although the city contains a wealth of on-street parking spots and a number of public lots exist within the downtown core, many of these parking opportunities are unmarked or not easily visible to visitors. Improving the lighting and signage of downtown parking lots, better directing visitors to public parking, and marking all public spaces could all help address parking problems downtown.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program address downtown safety:

- *Organization: Parking Improvements: Re-striping Downtown Parking*
- *Design: Downtown Lighting*





BEFORE: Like other side streets and alleys downtown, Grant Street contains many on-street parking opportunities and performs additional service functions for property owners.

AFTER: Here Grant Street is shown resurfaced, with parking opportunities clearly marked and new string lighting enhancing safety and ambiance along this back street. By clearly marking existing parking opportunities, visitors could better utilize parking downtown. Attracting businesses like the one shown to Brunswick's side streets is key to creating a vibrant experience throughout downtown.

CREATING A DESTINATION

With the relocation of Highway 17 out of the downtown core and the explosion of new development on St. Simons Island and in unincorporated Glynn County surrounding Brunswick, downtown faces more competition than ever before for local and visitor foot traffic. During the public input process, many residents of surrounding communities and the islands noted that aside from community events or business at the courthouse, their neighbors often do not have much reason to come downtown. These residents in particular would like to see downtown Brunswick alive daily with a greater variety of local dining, specialty retailers, nightlife, and attractions for locals. Locals suggested many concepts for a downtown attraction. In order for Brunswick to be the downtown destination for the surrounding community, the area must offer many potential draws. In addition to increasing the city's retail, dining, and entertainment offerings, the Brunswick community must build on the city's vibrant culture and strong local arts scene to create a unique destination downtown unlike any other in the region. One way to do so is to 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.

In addition to boosting downtown as a local destination, many residents expressed the need for a major tourist attraction downtown. While public input participants put forth a diverse array of potential downtown attractions, most agreed that a tourist draw downtown should build on Brunswick's unique maritime heritage, the city's wealth of historical ar-

chitecture, and the surrounding natural splendor of Georgia's coastline and the Golden Isles. Creating new opportunities to attract both locals and regular visitors downtown could prove a successful strategy for long-term economic stability and growth in the area.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program work to create a destination for locals and visitors downtown:

- *Organization: Maritime Infrastructure*
- *Organization: College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA) Connections*
- *Promotion: Downtown Bike Rentals*
- *Promotion: Brunswick Bike Tour*
- *Promotion: Low Country Boil at Mary Ross Park*
- *Promotion: Brunswick Street Dances*
- *Promotion: Kayak Infrastructure*
- *Promotion: Sunset Bar at Mary Ross Park*
- *Promotion: Food Trucks at Mary Ross Park*
- *Promotion: Norwich Street Saturday Events*
- *Design: Mary Ross Waterfront Park Improvements*
- *Design: Queen Square Revitalization*
- *Design: Link the Georgia Coastal Greenway to Downtown*
- *Design: Link the Georgia Coastal Greenway to Downtown: Master Trail Plan*
- *Economic Vitality: Riverside Environmental Center*
- *Economic Vitality: Lofts Downtown*
- *Economic Vitality: Retail Incubator*
- *Economic Vitality: College Shuttles Downtown*
- *Economic Vitality: Downtown Brewery*
- *Economic Vitality: Richland Rum*



AFTER



BEFORE

BEFORE: Located along an otherwise busy stretch of Newcastle Street, this long-vacant commercial building needs a lot of rehabilitation work.

AFTER: Recently acquired by a local investor, this property could house a downtown brewery. This type of destination attraction would be a boon for downtown and create a draw to the area.

PROMOTION / MARKETING

From fraying layers of peeling paint on a turn-of-the-century warehouse and a centuries-old live oak overtaking a sidewalk to glimpses of cobblestone beneath a pothole, Brunswick's laid-back coastal attitude and the unique patina of this historical town help create a magical experience for many residents and visitors. The city's proud local residents, urban pioneers, creatives, and spirited entrepreneurs see the tremendous potential of the city's historical properties, coastal location, strong local arts community, and quality of life. Brunswick's character as a place of "high ceilings and low expectations" shapes the community and creates a distinctive selling point to potential visitors, residents, and investors. Many would like to see Brunswick promoted to like-minded parties interested in building new lives in this history-rich environment. In addition to the downtown development authority's (DDA) currently successful promotion of downtown shops, restaurants, and events, the city should consider marketing Brunswick "warts and all" both regionally and nationally to attract new residents and potential investors. Targeting those with the resources to appreciate and rehabilitate Brunswick's culture and historical housing stock will help facilitate wider revitalization throughout the city.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program focus on continuing to successfully promote downtown to local residents as well as marketing the city to a wider audience:

- *Organization: Downtown Communication*
- *Organization: Hire Program Manager*
- *Promotion: Marketing Brunswick*
- *Promotion: Billboard Advertising*
- *Promotion: Manage Downtown Facebook Profile*
- *Promotion: Manage Downtown Instagram Account*
- *Promotion: First Friday*
- *Promotion: Christmas Parade*
- *Promotion: Rhythm on the River*
- *Promotion: Tree Lighting and Holiday Decor*
- *Promotion: Develop Mobile-Friendly Maps*
- *Promotion: Peaches to the Beaches Yard Sale*
- *Promotion: Media and Marketing Strategy*
- *Economic Vitality: Property Listing on DDA Website*
- *Economic Vitality: Arts-Based Branding Downtown*
- *Economic Vitality: Board of Realtors Meet and Greet/Information Session*



BILLBOARD CONCEPT: The billboard design above is one of an endless possibility of concepts that could work on billboards along the interstate. "Slow down in Brunswick" is an example of a simple catchphrase that could be used to capture the lifestyle and relaxing coastal culture of the city.



BRUNSWICK BILLBOARDS: Brunswick's strategic location near I-95 creates many opportunities for the city. By promoting downtown with billboards and signage along the interstate, local business owners might benefit more from this steady stream of traffic.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

From beloved local restaurants and watering holes to boutique shops and services, local businesses are the backbone of downtown Brunswick, attracting activity downtown, contributing to the local culture and tax base, and stabilizing the local economy. To create the vibrant downtown experience desired by the community, address challenges like building vacancy, and create a safe and welcoming downtown for all users, Brunswick must put a premium on nourishing a culture of entrepreneurship and cultivating a warm climate for investment. Throughout the public input process, downtown's devoted entrepreneurs, local investors, and small business people all noted that business development downtown is a key priority for the city. Many cited the need for incentives to allow interested investors to rehabilitate downtown buildings and attract the diversity of dining, retail, and other businesses necessary to create a local destination. Other participants mentioned growth areas and roadblocks to business growth, including a slow building-permitting process and excessive fees for liquor licensing, among other issues. Additionally and often echoing points in previous plans for the city, locals throughout the community identified the need for decent jobs, workforce development, and transit throughout the city to rebuild a vibrant local economy for future generations.

The following items included in the Downtown Brunswick Work Program focus on building a culture of entrepreneurship in the city, incentivizing investment, and creating a stable and sustainable local economy:

- *Economic Vitality: One-Stop Shop for Permitting*
- *Economic Vitality: Develop Form-Based Codes for New Development*
- *Economic Vitality: Update Old Town National Register District*
- *Economic Vitality: Hire Economic and Community Development Director*
- *Promotion: Education and Outreach for Historic Preservation*
- *Promotion: Tourism Product Development Resource Team Visit*
- *Design: Oglethorpe Block Architect*
- *Economic Vitality: Alcohol Ordinance*
- *Economic Vitality: Historic Tax Credit Consultant*
- *Economic Vitality: Incentive Package*
- *Economic Vitality: Downtown Grocery*
- *Economic Vitality: FLETC Housing*



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, we heard the desire for a downtown grocery store. This building could offer a perfect downtown co-op location with ample square footage. It could be a local marketplace that could serve as a grocery and local market for multiple uses.

BRUNSWICK DOWNTOWN MASTERPLAN

"From water to water."

Following a review and analysis of current conditions in Brunswick, an extensive public engagement process, and a comprehensive review of previous plans and proposals for the city, faculty and staff at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government collaborated with the citizen-led Brunswick RSVP Steering Committee to develop a guiding masterplan for the future of downtown Brunswick. This plan is intended to address the top issues that emerged during public input sessions with citizens from throughout the community, which include bridging the gap to connect downtown with the waterfront, improving the condition of downtown parking, addressing the appearance of major corridors, creating an environment for growth along Norwich and other corridors, and creating a local destination downtown. Within the plan, these issues are addressed by extending streetscaping improvements, shade, and sidewalks along Bay Street, Gloucester, Norwich, and throughout downtown; connecting downtown to the proposed Georgia Coastal Greenway; and continuing to establish downtown Brunswick as a vibrant local destination by attracting appropriate infill development in key locations.





Downtown Brunswick

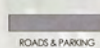
Conceptual Masterplan



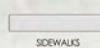
STREET TREES



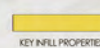
PUBLIC PARKING



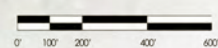
ROADS & PARKING



SIDEWALKS



KEY INFILL PROPERTIES



0' 100' 200' 400' 600'



NORTH