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INTRODUCTION

A Brief History

Originally incorporated as a municipality in 1832, the City of Abbeville has deep roots in both South Carolina and American History. The city, which is part of Abbeville County, is known for playing a key role during the civil war as it is home to Secession Hill and the Burt-Stark Mansion, the “Birthplace and Deathbed of the Confederacy”. The city also served as the location in which American Vice President John C. Calhoun first practiced law and is home to historical landmarks such as the Abbeville Opera House, Trinity Episcopal Church, and the Belmont Inn, among many others.

Abbeville’s commitment to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage is so strong that in 2008, First Lady Barbara Bush designated Abbeville as a “Preserve America Community”. With this honor, Abbeville as a city and community is determined to make sustainable historic and cultural preservation a priority as they progress into the future growth and prosperity of this vibrant city.

Call to Action

As part of this commitment, Abbeville recognized that their downtown, also known to many as The Square, lacked the necessary strategic planning required to preserve what makes Downtown Abbeville a special and vibrant place, as the city progresses into the next decade. Therefore, the decision was made to move forward with the development of a strategic plan, focusing on the past, present, and future of the downtown, tempered by market and fiscal realities.

The City of Abbeville retained the professional services of Cardno to assist in the development of a Downtown Strategic Master Plan. Cardno assembled a project team possessing extensive experience with a reputation for innovation and effective implementation strategies. The team has worked to ensure that Abbeville’s values and goals were met at each step in the planning process.

The City’s objective was for Cardno and a select group of Abbeville’s core team members to focus on key aspects of Abbeville’s past, present,
and future potential in identifying strategic opportunities, all while preserving the special place that is Abbeville.

The goal of the following Downtown Revitalization Plan is to provide the community with a toolkit to preserve what makes Downtown Abbeville special, while outlining strategic opportunities to move the downtown forward and continue to be the vibrant destination for residents and visitors alike. In doing so it considers Abbeville’s many attributes and challenges that possess the potential to impact the recommended strategies as Downtown Abbeville advances over the next 5 years.

Abbeville Today

Abbeville has a number of unique attributes that position the Downtown area for a successful revitalization campaign:

- The City’s rich history and beautifully preserved architecture, including the Abbeville Opera House and Trinity Episcopal Church.
- Existing downtown lodging in the Belmont Inn which dates back to 1903 and offers visitors an expansive front porch to sit and enjoy the square.
- The preservation of The Square, which includes historically significant and attractive store fronts and facades, an improved streetscape, iconic brick paving, and a center park.
- The further development of the Historic Overlay District, which is enforced by the Historic Properties Protection Commission, who serves to preserve and protect the Downtown history through legislation and accompanying programmatic measures.
- The City’s willingness to introduce grants and other incentives intended to attract new businesses and investments in the downtown area.
- A number of regional attractions such as Parson’s Mountain Federal Park, Callhoun Falls State Park and nearby community and technical colleges (see Map 1, Regional Context).
- Annually programmed events including the Hogs & Hens Festival and the Spring Festival.
- The Downtown Abbeville Square Dollars Gift Card Program, run by the City of Abbeville and participating merchants to encourage shoppers to visit local businesses.

These existing “building blocks” were key to deciding our revitalization recommendations with a distinct emphasis on preserving the integrity of the Downtown Historic District. Some of Abbeville’s challenges which shaped our recommendations included:

- An 18% decline in population between 1990 (6,323 people) and 2014 (5,191 people), in a county that has also experienced double digit decline in population over the past 10+ years.
- A higher median age of 47.5 years old with approximately 1/3 of the City’s population being 60 years of age or older.
- Abbeville’s per capita income of $17,393 which lags that of Greenwood by 20% and the State by 33%. The City’s poverty rate for 2017 was estimated to be approximately 22.7% compared to the statewide average of 16.6%.
- Household vacancy rates which come out to 12% or 307 units, may be cause for concern as to the general condition of Abbeville’s housing stock. And the median home value for owner occupied units is $80,400 which is 40% lower than the statewide median home value.

As a general matter, older residents on fixed incomes will not provide the robust consumer base that a younger population might. The same limitation may be true for those already living below the poverty line. And lower per capita income levels and home values, may present a resident population that is challenged to support new downtown businesses at levels needed for those businesses to be successful and sustainable. Therefore, in addition to Abbeville’s “resident consumer” base, our evaluations and
recommendations incorporate the influence of neighboring and regional consumers or “destination consumers”. This combination of resident and destination consumers represent a total target population fully capable of supporting a revitalized downtown, given the appropriate mix of businesses and attractions. These are just a few examples of the challenges facing the revitalization of Downtown Abbeville, but it is important to note that they are simply that: challenges and factors to be recognized and managed.

The aforementioned challenges and attributes support the City’s continued efforts to amplify its historical and cultural significance. The following Downtown Revitalization plan will support Abbeville’s already in place efforts to:

• Enhance dining and retail experiences, building off of the available lodging already in place.
• Broaden the provided entertainment options as a draw to the City and tap into nearby parks and colleges to create new opportunities for patrons to be in Downtown Abbeville on a regular basis.
• Create new, innovative opportunities for employment in Downtown Abbeville, resulting in a new consumer base of employees who come to the downtown everyday.
• Promote creative housing options in Downtown, targeting young professionals and retirees alike.
2] APPROACH

Overview

Key aspects in producing this plan included confirming the city’s objectives and expectations, public engagement, data compilation and interpretation (including all relevant previous initiatives and studies), current and potential conditions assessments, vision and goal setting, and devising an achievable and quantifiable implementation framework.

Public Engagement

Early on in our process, the city identified a team of downtown business owners, public service providers, and other local and regional individuals, all of whom share the City of Abbeville’s commitment to revitalizing the downtown.

Out of these identified individuals two groups were formed. The first being the Core Leadership Team whose purpose was to refine key objectives and assure that the planning process stayed true to the City’s stated mission. This group participated in three workshops with Cardno and city staff to provide input on the downtown vision, goals, and strategical tactics. This team has also been identified to serve the city as an Advisory Board to see the plan through its implementation and ensure that the initial milestones are achieved in pursuit of the ultimate goals of the plan while staying true to the overall vision of the downtown.

The second group, the Key Stakeholders, which included business owners and others with vested interests in the downtown, was created for the purpose of collecting feedback and an assessment of the state of the downtown’s attributes and challenges, for the past, present and future.

Both groups provided excellent input as outlined in the following section of this plan and served to keep the planning process and our recommended strategies and tactical actions relevant, realistic, and achievable. Individuals who participated in both groups are recognized on the Acknowledgment Page of the plan.

The final draft of the Downtown Revitalization Plan was presented to City Council on in a public session, allowing additional public input.
What We Heard

The feedback gathered from the key stakeholder interviews, provided the city with a comprehensive summary of attributes, challenges, and important redevelopment themes that the community felt strongly about. Many of which supported some of the initial findings of the revitalization study.

When asked which attributes the Key Stakeholder group felt were strongest within the City of Abbeville, several common threads and sub-threads emerged. As represented in Figure 1, the strongest attributes included a Strong Sense of Community, Historic Identify and Preservation, Community Events and Programming, and an Inviting and Walkable Environment. When asked about the challenges Abbeville faced in achieving their goals for revitalization, the common threads that emerged from the Key Stakeholder group included Small Business Assistance, Infrastructure, Historical Perception and Inclusivity, and Housing. See Figure 2.
WHAT WE HEARD

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES FROM KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- ICONIC ARCHITECTURE
- HISTORIC BRICK SQUARE
- SUCCESSFUL FESTIVALS
- OPERA HOUSE PROGRAMMING
- RESPONSIVE CITY STAFF
- HISTORIC IDENTITY & PRESERVATION
- EVENTS, PROGRAMMING, & TOURISM
- INVITING & WALKABLE DOWNTOWN
- SENSE OF IDENTITY
- WELCOMING COMMUNITY

FIGURE 1
WHAT WE HEARD

DEFINING CHALLENGES FROM KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- Infrastructure & Parking
- Chamber Support
- Housing Options & Availability
- Multi-Family Options
- Invite Families & Minorities To Square
- Inflated Rent Pricing
- Inclusive & Diverse Programming
- Small Business Assistance
- Hours of Operation
- Dining Options
- Adult Education and Workforce Development
- Historical Perception
- School Facilities

FIGURE 2
Defining Redevelopment Themes

From the feedback and information gathered in both the Key Stakeholder Interviews and Core Leadership workshops, Cardno was able to draw four core redevelopment themes that fostered both the current attributes while addressing the challenges that the downtown faces. See Figure 3.

The first theme is Architecture and American History. It is without question that Abbeville’s existing unique identity and regional draw stems from its iconic architecture and place in history. It is important to set goals for the city that ensure the preservation of architecturally and historically significant buildings, landscapes, and landmarks, while also allowing the city to progress and attract younger generations and innovative business opportunities that benefit the regional economy.

The second theme, Arts & Cultural Events is an existing attribute to the downtown and should continue to leverage and bring additional residents and tourists to The Square on a weekly basis. By fostering the arts community and providing cultural event opportunities for a diverse group of people, The Square will become a more inclusive and diverse space for all the share.

The third theme, Retail, Dining, and Entertainment stems from the need to increase the viability of the existing tenants on The Square and to attract new businesses that provide a diverse range of reasons one might visit The Square.

The final theme, Downtown Housing and Employment, stems from the lack of available and diverse housing options in The Square. This would benefit the downtown by providing a more diverse resident base while bringing younger populations and more foot traffic to The Square. The need for more employment opportunities in The Square and within the downtown will serve as a driver to bring more daily users to The Square.

These four core themes will serve as a guide in setting the vision for the downtown, as well as the goals, and the strategical tactics in which the report will set to push the revitalization in a direction that best serves the needs and core values of the community.

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**REDEVELOPMENT THEMES**

ARCHITECTURE & AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ARTS & CULTURAL EVENTS

RETAIL, DINING, & ENTERTAINMENT

DOWNTOWN HOUSING & EMPLOYMENT

---

FIGURE 3
Downtown Abbeville & Study Area Defined

The study area for this planning exercise did focus heavily, but not exclusively on Downtown Abbeville. For example, we considered various economic and socio-economic factors across all of Abbeville and the nearby region for the potential to support existing and new downtown businesses. The same was true for a range of market conditions that were evaluated to understand their impact and interplay with our plan and the revitalization of the downtown. Still, the primary focus is the downtown itself.

Accordingly it was necessary to define the limits of the downtown and its relevant characteristics, both presently and potentially. Historically, The Square has been the focal point of Downtown Abbeville, with the Historic District being the only delineated boundary of the downtown area. For the purposes of this study it was important to delineate a larger downtown boundary that not only includes The Square and Historic District limits, but also connects to additional commercial areas, residential areas, and cultural assets that support and define Downtown Abbeville. This new delineated Downtown Limit became the boundary for our study area and proposed measures of downtown revitalizations. See Map 2.

Downtown Abbeville Existing Conditions

To begin the physical redevelopment study of Abbeville’s Downtown, it was important to analyze the existing physical conditions of the newly defined limits of the Downtown, looking at the mix of downtown businesses, the condition of existing buildings and their associated property owners, the percentage of vacant buildings and properties, and the availability of public space and infrastructure. Map 3 of this report provides an inventory of the existing conditions of Downtown as outlined above.

Another consideration was existing zoning regulations, opportunities or possible barriers regarding downtown business uses and operational considerations.

By and large the current zoning regulations governing the downtown area are business friendly. Nonetheless there may be a few ways in which the city may extend or clarify their position regarding downtown business uses and operations:

- Ordinance allowing beer and wine along on the sidewalk, on The Square, and on Trinity Street with an event permit issued by the City
- Ordinance allowing restaurants to offer outside dining/seating including beer, wine, and alcohol sales
- Core Commercial District (CCD) allows second floor residences but not first. This is a historically common position, however some municipalities have begun to allow first floor residences to the rear of a business, where square footage for both business and residence is adequate: Florist, hair salon, art studio, music shop, etc.).
- CCD allows tourist homes which is a reasonable and good practice.
- CCD allows church, synagogue, temple, or place of worship, including religious education building, parsonage or parish house, off-street parking for members and visitors without pay, and recreation facilities. The City may want to exclude this use with the downtown square and along Trinity Street.

It is also recommended that the city look to amend the Historic Properties Protection (HPP) Ordinance to clarify and improve the design review process by granting staff level reviews, as may be deemed acceptable. This is a good practice and recommendation that should be considered across all municipal ordinances and approval requirements.
DOWNTOWN ABBEVILLE - EXISTING CONDITIONS

MAP 3

DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS
CSX RAILROAD ROW
MAJOR ROADS
MINOR ROADS

HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY
DOWNTOWN BOUNDARY

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

6 Downtown Revitalization Plan
Market Assessment

In 2018 the City commissioned the Retail Academy to develop a city-wide retail recruitment plan (see Attachment A for a summary of this study). Subsequent to the retail recruitment study the City commissioned this downtown revitalization study and plan.

The Retail Academy’s Retail Recruitment Plan (RRP) was comprehensive and well done. The focus of the RRP study was city-wide, while the Downtown Revitalization Study (DRS) focuses primarily on the downtown center. The differences here may be subtle but significant. For example, the types of businesses that fit one scenario (i.e., city-wide) do not always translate well to a downtown focus which has different needs and accommodations. Other differences might include permitted land uses, recruitment strategies, and potentially a different portfolio of development incentives. Both study scopes were and are relevant and valuable. It is simply a matter of one taking a more macro view and the other a more focused, or micro view, of Downtown Abbeville.

The RRP population statistics which were evaluated to determine market leakage, spanned 5, 10, and 15 minute drive times from Abbeville’s Dollar General located on South Main Street. For our DRS purposes and assessment of the Downtown’s market reach, we focused on the 5 and 10 minute drive times. Any greater distances may have targeted businesses more befitting a major corridor or highway location (i.e., general merchandise stores and gasoline stations), or even placing them in competition with the Greenwood shopping complex.

The RRP pegged overall market leakage at $55 million. Market leakage within a 10 minute drive of downtown accounted for $38 million. For the purposes of the DRS, we discounted roughly half of this estimate or that portion attributed to general merchandising which was $7 million. We also eliminated gasoline station estimates which were $3 million, bringing the 10 minute drive estimate down to roughly $28 million. We believe these adjustments presented a more realistic estimate for the targeting of market leakage and business types best matching the character of Downtown Abbeville. This includes neighborhood scale building equipment stores, garden centers, food-service and drinking places, food and beverage stores, home furnishing stores, hair and nail salons, clothing accessories stores, hobby/coffee/book/music stores, and other neighborhood scale businesses.

The 15 minute drive time estimates in the RRP, while perfectly reasonable in a rural setting, began to present a choice between driving to Abbeville or Greenwood. As we proceeded with our downtown study, we continued to draw a line between retail offerings that fit Abbeville and which do not compete with the likes of retailers along the Greenwood corridor. Still, as can be seen in the table that follows (See Figure 4), the more affluent population of consumers is in this most distant market which has the highest median household income, the highest average home values, and the largest daytime population and labor force. This more distant population segment was identified as a primary segment of a broader “destination consumer” population along with corresponding strategies for capturing a share of this market segment.

Another interesting and valuable dimension of the RRP was the interplay between drive times and geography along with tapestry (i.e. lifestyle) segmentation. The total population estimated in the RRP trade area was 77,435 people. Here again we would consider many within this larger population as individuals of the defined “destination consumers” with the potential to support truly unique and/or exceptional dining, entertainment, and retail experiences in Downtown Abbeville.

The dominant tapestry or lifestyle of the trade area defined by a three mile radius of Abbeville was of the greater interest for the DRS purposes. It is within this area that there is the highest density of people, employers, and “relevant” retail
competition. It is also within this area that we find the highest concentrations of Small Town and Midlife Constants (AKA GenXurbans), along with of course a sprawling number of Rural Bypasses. But, it is not until the study limits reached the outskirts of Greenwood, approximately 8 miles from Downtown Abbeville, before there was significant diversity in lifestyles and an up-tick in median household income observed. Here again this was an important data point for this study as we began to develop target and capture strategies for neighborhood scale downtown businesses. See Figure 5.

Imagine viewing the map as a face of a clock with the three o’clock corridor radiating out from Abbeville toward Greenwood as the “more” target rich trade area, where median household incomes are in the $50,000 to $75,000 range. Compare this to the six and twelve o’clock corridors topping off at $50,000 and the nine o’clock at topping off at $25,000. Consider also that Midlife Constants posting a median household income of $53,200 whereas the Small Town Simplicity and Rural Bypasses tapestries record median household incomes of $31,500 and $33,000 respectively. Proximity, lifestyle, and income levels are all important factors in deciding to favor of one business type or option over another in deciding to start or expand downtown businesses

The RPP’s peer analysis of neighboring counties is useful on a macro level, but less so for purposes of our focus on Downtown Abbeville. Yet, many of the types of downtown retail businesses cited in the RRP study fit nicely with a revitalized Downtown Abbeville, including clothing/apparel stores, coffee shops, hair salons, restaurants, among others. But the majority of retail prospects cited, while relevant to development along Route 72 or other major corridors, are probably not a good match for the Downtown including Wendy’s Bojangle’s, Waffle House, and Dairy Queen.

For purposes of the DRS, the 10 minute drive time data is probably the more representative of what we would consider Abbeville’s “resident” population. The RPP’s Drive Time Demographics reported a population within a 10 minute drive of Downtown Abbeville that included 3,346 households with a $30,940 median household income, a daytime population of 9,232, and a labor force of 6,612.

The two most significant data factors for the DRS purposes are Daytime Population and Labor Force.

10 Minute Drive Time Daytime
Population 9,232 Number of Households 3,346

5 Minute Drive Time Daytime
Population 7,649 Number of Households 2,415

The RRP report was very thorough and useful for its intended purpose which was a city-wide view of factors impacting retail opportunities for Abbeville. Much of the information contained in the report was transferable to our examination of Abbeville’s Downtown Revitalization, with exceptions already noted.
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<th>5-Mile Radius</th>
<th>10-Mile Radius</th>
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<td>-1.00%</td>
<td>-0.23%</td>
<td>-1.02%</td>
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<td>Median HH Income 2018</td>
<td>$29,758</td>
<td>$31,366</td>
<td>$39,626</td>
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<td>Current Year Average Age</td>
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<td>Daytime Population</td>
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REGIONAL ANALYSIS

FIGURE 5 (FROM RETAIL ACADEMY REPORT)
3] VISION, STRATEGIC GOALS, & TACTICS

Pathway to Downtown Abbeville Revitalization
Vision, Strategic Goals, and Tactics

The revitalization of smaller cities and towns, such as Abbeville, present some unique challenges: proximity to good paying jobs, affordable housing options, quality health care options, and appealing shopping and entertainment options. Conversely, lower living costs, a sense of community and community safety, parks and recreation, and good schools will serve to offset many of these challenges. Other important community assets might include community character and ambiance, walk-ability, broadband, the arts, and a viable main street or downtown. All of which are attributes present in Abbeville right now.

Devising a successful revitalization strategy for Abbeville was conditioned upon an objective assessment of the City’s strengths and weaknesses which craft a vision that was attainable and sustainable. Strategies were created and aimed to be more inclusive, work with government regulations to be user and business friendly, with the ability to fund said vision and launch a framework for maintaining the selected revitalization goals.

Cardno held a workshop with the Core Leadership team to craft the vision statement for the downtown. The group strove to create a vision statement that was future oriented while fitting of the history and culture of the city and was inspired by the enthusiasm and commitment reflected in the cities values to provide purpose and direction for the revitalization of the downtown.

Once the vision statement was agreed upon, it was then important to set goals, make a plan to achieve them, and establish a delivery and maintenance framework that is lasting, including long term redevelopment. Still, the Strategic Goals and Tactics that follow should be considered a starting point. The recommended framework and mechanisms for advancing the plan shall also
be the means by which new goals and tactics will be introduced, advanced, and modified, over the course of time. Abbeville’s greatest challenge for success will be establishing an organizational framework and capacity to carry forward the recommendations in this plan.

DOWNTOWN VISION
The City of Abbeville is striving to have a Downtown that is business friendly, architecturally significant, and steeped in American history, offering an iconic town square that is walkable, safe, and welcoming to residents and visitors of all ages. It is a thriving center for the arts and cultural events as well as a mix of unique retail, dining, and entertainment attractions, making Abbeville “Pretty. Near. Perfect.”

STRATEGIC GOALS

STRATEGIC GOAL #1:
Leverage Abbeville’s architectural significance and place in American History

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
- Accentuate the historic district and properties (e.g., signage, street lighting, stamped cross walks
- Install Historic District Street signage by 2021 on all streets within the Historic District
- Install signage for the “Shops on Trinity” and “Washington Street Shopping District” by 2021
- Complete the Streetscape Project behind the Opera House by 2023
- Historic preservation tax credits
- Set a minimum threshold for offering tax abatements for improvements to Historic Commercial Property
- Continue the Implementation of the Historic District Building Improvement Grant for the preservation and restoration of commercial property within the Historic District
- Expand American and cultural heritage promotional and educational events
- Offer assistance, financial or operational, to the Heritage Festival
- Work with local and regional Historic Groups to ensure the preservation and marketing of Abbeville’s Historic Sites; including cemeteries, buildings, and heritage districts
STRATEGIC GOAL #2:
Brand Downtown Abbeville as a local and regional center for the arts and cultural events that appeals to a broad range of personal and societal preferences.

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
- Continue to grow festivals and outdoor events
- Brand “On the Square”
  - Begin using “#onthesquare” for Downtown Cultural Events. Engage with other Downtown Actors to increase the usage of this Branding
  - Develop an “On The Square” logo for Downtown
- Position “On The Square” as that special place where artists, musicians, writers, architects, photographers, graphic designers locate and collaborate
- Encourage businesses and other organizations to host events in addition to the City’s Lineup to further the On the Square Branding and increase Downtown Activity
  - Engage with the Belmont Inn, Chamber of Commerce, Trinity Photography, as well as other local businesses and organizations dedicated to the arts to expand public events “On The Square”
- Continue to expand the number and type of events at the Opera House by hosting weekly events, positioning it as the region’s premier performing arts center
  - Host weekly events at the Opera House
- Encourage private, charitable donations and corporate giving to the arts and Historic Preservation
  - Consider establishing a 501C3 for this role or working with an existing 501C3
STRATEGIC GOAL #3:
Establish the downtown as a local and regional destination for retail, dining, and entertainment attractions that are uniquely Abbeville.

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
- Establish a Business Retention program to encourage businesses to stay downtown
  - Maintain Business Grant Program in Place, potentially expand the Grant Offerings
  - Have a tax and/or Utility credit in place by 2022 for property and business owners who undertake major renovations to their downtown buildings
- Promote complementary business clusters (i.e., art supplies, studios/lessons, galleries, antiques, a music store, craft galleries, culinary supplies, etc.)
  - Signage for Different Downtown Districts by 2021
  - Recruit businesses that match prevailing business clusters
  - Create events which feature certain districts (i.e., St. Patty’s on Trinity Street)
  - Investigate funding for additional street-scape, wayfinding and traffic volumes and directional analyses
- Act on the advancement of the catalyst sites and design concepts in this plan
  - Continue to market the sites to potential investors
  - Apply for USEPA Brownfields grants in 2019 and 2020 to fund assessment and remediation activities at distressed downtown sites
- Increase the City’s Partnership with the Downtown Merchants Association by increasing operational support as needed
  - Continue to work with the Merchants on current events and others which will help increase Downtown Foot Traffic
  - Increase merchant participation in Opera House Events
- Review local ordinances for potential added flexibility to include store front outdoor seating, dining, drinking, and performing (see Appendix B Review of Existing Zoning Regulations)
  - Complete ordinance review by 2021
STRATEGIC GOAL #4:
Promote a mix of downtown housing options

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
- Implement grants, tax credits, utility credits, and other incentives to property owners for adding housing in downtown
  - Promote housing options in the downtown and transition areas (i.e., second floor condos and apartments, workforce housing, town-homes)
- Identify available parcels for new multi-family housing development or redevelopment, both owner and renter occupied
- Ensure that existing development ordinances and public utilities pose no barriers to a range of housing options
  - Examine ordinances so that they promote housing
- Establish downtown social groups around young professionals, artists, recent new parents, and the like focusing on younger families and young adults
  - Look at resurrecting the “Opening Nighters” Group in some fashion. Build upon Opera House attendance
  - Look to the Chamber or Downtown Merchants to lead this initiative

STRATEGIC GOAL #5:
Attract local businesses and entrepreneurs to locate and grow downtown employment.

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
- Partner with colleges, medical facilities and manufacturers to establish a downtown presence
  - Continue to work with Erskine on internship program
  - Reach out to local industries about a Downtown Customer Service Office
  - Work with the County, Economic Development Partnership to establish an industrial presence in Downtown
- Initiate a retail recruitment plan targeting the type and scale of businesses that best match Abbeville
  - Continue to reach out through the business grants program
  - Utilize retail strategies data
- Offer support for Business Incubation Facilities
  - Work to create additional partnerships within the community to support business incubators
- Encourage neighborhood scale businesses (e.g., pizza parlor, coffee shop, used book and music store, small deli, bakery, wine and cheese, health food, mail/shipping etc.)
- Increase the marketing and frequency of the FCCF and Chamber’s existing entrepreneurial development classes and training
  - Work with the Small Business Development Council to increase their presence in Abbeville
- Continue to expand Parking Options Downtown to handle additional residents and business activity
STRATEGIC GOAL #6:
Establish an efficient sustainable framework for advancing Abbeville’s planned initiatives for the revitalization of its downtown.

CORRESPONDING TACTICAL ACTIONS:
• Establish the City as the lead agency responsible for the overall execution of this plan and for each individual assignment under this plan
• Maintain the existing Advisory Board as a mechanism for invested organizations and actors to provide feedback on revitalization efforts
• Encourage city-led coalition partnerships (i.e., Abbeville Chamber of Commerce, Abbeville’s Downtown Merchants Association, Abbeville’s Artists Guild, Abbeville County, Historic Properties Protection Commission, Upper Savannah Council of Governments, and Freshwater Coast Community Foundation, and the SC Arts Commission)
Approach to Redevelopment

In addition to understanding the economic needs for the downtown, as well as the city’s vision and goal for the downtown, it is important to understand the existing physical conditions of the downtown as well as the opportunities and constraints for its redevelopment. As part of the approach to the Downtown Revitalization Study, we analyzed the existing physical conditions of the newly defined limits of the downtown, looking at the mix of downtown businesses, the condition of existing buildings and their ownership, the percentage of vacant buildings and properties, and the availability of public space and infrastructure conditions and needs. Map 3 of this report provides an inventory of the existing conditions of Downtown as outlined above. We also reviewed existing land uses compared to vacant properties in order to gain an understanding of the percentage of vacancies and identify opportunities for redevelopment, new infill development, and recommend the best uses for each. Map 4 provides a graphical representation for the current mix of existing land uses and vacancies. Once redevelopment opportunity sites had been identified, it was important to recommend redevelopment uses for each. In addition to identifying redevelopment uses, the groupings of compatible uses and districts were also considered. Redevelopment uses included new housing and mixed use opportunities, infill residential opportunities, public space and parking opportunities, as well as cultural asset opportunities that support the SC Cultural District pursuit.

Redevelopment Catalyst Opportunities

The Abbeville Opera House is perhaps the best example of how a catalyst site draws people to a downtown. For years the Opera House has served Abbeville well as a magnet bringing residents and visitors alike to Downtown Abbeville. For this reason it is featured prominently in this discussion of catalyst sites. The positive effects that the Opera House has had on Abbeville’s revitalization efforts is the very reason the City will be expanding programming and making additional renovations and technological investments in this unique, historical Abbeville icon.
The Redevelopment Plan identified two other redevelopment catalyst sites. These two sites are considered first step opportunity sites for redevelopment of the downtown. These sites will serve as primary drivers for redevelopment while striving to achieve the city's revitalization vision & goals. The following pages provide a deeper dive into the identified redevelopment catalyst sites and analyzes the commercial property value of each, the best recommended uses and provides renderings suggesting the building and or site up-fit to assist in marketing to potential tenants.
EXISTING LAND USE
MAP 4
Downtown Revitalization Plan

REDEVELOPMENT CATALYST OPPORTUNITY PLAN
MAP 5
EXTERIOR - WEST PICKENS STREET

EXTERIOR - SOUTH MAIN STREET

INTERIOR - FIRST FLOOR

**REDEVELOPMENT CATALYST SITE [2]**

**FORMER COURTYARD CREATIONS BUILDING - EXISTING**
REDEVELOPMENT CATALYST SITE [2]
FORMER BELK BUILDING - PROPOSED
EXTERIOR - TRINITY STREET

INTERIOR - FIRST FLOOR

REDEVELOPMENT CATALYST SITE [3]
FORMER BELK BUILDING - EXISTING
REDEVELOPMENT CATALYST SITE [3]
FORMER COURTYARD CREATIONS BUILDING - PROPOSED
Abbeville Arts and Historic Culture

Abbeville’s unique history and culture is one of the draws that bring visitors and residents alike to the downtown on a daily basis. As part of the effort to revitalize downtown, this plan serves as a tool to inventory existing cultural assets that make up the downtown fabric. See map 6. As defined by the South Carolina Arts Commission, existing cultural assets include the following:

• Galleries/ Studios
• Historic Sites/ Architecture
• Historic Monuments & Markers
• Museums
• Community Centers
• Visitor Center/Chamber
• Parks, Gardens, & Urban Plazas
• Churches & Religious Institutions
• Recreation & Trails
• Market Space
• Schools
• Restaurants, Pubs, Coffee Shops
• Unique Retail, Antiques & Consumer Goods
• Community Paper, Journal, Publications

In addition to preserving the existing cultural assets of Abbeville’s downtown, it is important to develop new cultural opportunity sites to continue to expand on the vibrancy of the city while attracting new visitors to Abbeville each year. As defined by the South Carolina Arts Commission, proposed cultural assets may include, but are certainly not limited to the following list:

• Gallery/ Studios Space
• Art Incubator/ Education Centers
• Urban Park & Plaza Spaces
• Museums
• Public Art Display Space
• Murals
• Sculpture Garden
• Pop up installation opportunities
• Recreation and Trails
• Public Market Space
• Outdoor Music Venue
• Outdoor Theater Venue
• Outdoor Restaurant Space

Abbeville should strive to promote arts and culture by adding 3 to 5 Cultural Opportunity sites by 2024. See map 7 for recommended cultural asset opportunity sites. As one of the four themes driving the pathway to redevelopment in downtown Abbeville, the Arts and Historic Culture is already an existing asset for the city that can easily be built upon to make Abbeville a premier cultural destination in South Carolina.
Key - Existing Cultural Assets

1. Abbeville Civic Center
2. The Burt-Stark Mansion
3. First Baptist Church
4. McGowan House
5. Abbeville Presbyterian Church
6. Bernibrooks Inn
7. Main Street United Methodist Church
8. Sacred Heart Catholic Church
9. The Village Grill
10. China Kitchen
11. The Livery Stable - Event Hall
12. Trinity Episcopal Church
13. Abbeville Mt. Carmel ARP Church
14. Natty’s on Trinity
15. Maria’s Mexican Restaurant
16. Greater Abbeville Area Chamber of Commerce
17. Red Barn Likker
18. The Historic Square
19. The Rough House
20. Abbeville County Court House
21. Abbeville Opera House
22. The Belmont Inn
23. Wings 101
24. Talk of the Town Eatery & Catering
25. Main Street Coffee Company
26. Abbeville Youth Center
27. Off the Hook Seafood & Grill
28. Theo’s Deli and Seafood
29. Abbeville Museum & Historic Former Jail
30. St James African Methodist Episcopal Church
31. Secession Hill - Historic Site
32. Wilson Hill Park
33. Soul Restaurant
34. Chestnut Street Park
35. Twin Dragon Chinese Restaurant
36. Jefferson Davis Park
37. Southern Succotash
PROPOSED CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY SITES

MAP 7
An implementation framework (see Figure 6) that is inclusive builds community support, and will often yield additional community resources. Abbeville is fortunate to have had a number of community leaders and downtown stakeholders involved in the formation, development, and implementation of this plan. Their combined knowledge, experience, and shared commitment to the revitalizing downtown all add up to a highly probable and successful program.

Core Leadership Team and Advisory Board

- Blake Stone, City Manager, City of Abbeville
- Mike Clary, Community Development Director, City of Abbeville
- Stephen Taylor, Economic Development, Abbeville County
- Andy Timmerman, Abbeville First Bank
- Shannon Sears, WCTEL
- Bethany Stoll, Main Street Coffee Company
- Rick Green, Upper Savannah COG

This city-led revitalization program requires strong leadership and an ability to stay the course. Fortunately, Abbeville has fielded a team of proven managers, leaders, advisors and coalition partners (see Figure 6). It will be their combined responsibility to implement and manage all aspects of this program, its: launch, tactics and initiatives, milestones, mid-course adjustments, unanticipated opportunities and failings, and the program’s very existence through the accomplishment of the Plan’s stated objectives and goals. Each of these program elements will also require that the program team secure and
sustain public enthusiasm and participation. Finally, the team will need to keep a pulse of their progress, by measuring and quantifying their accomplishments as well as shortfalls, hold one another accountable to assignments and deliverables, celebrate their successes, and remain open to new and better ideas for revitalizing of Downtown Abbeville. The team is strong, experienced, and committed to Abbeville’s success as well as their own.

**Success Metrics and Milestones**

Each of the Plan’s six overarching goals have metrics that determine and define their individual success (a measurable result tied to a predetermined point in time). One additional measure of progress over time or even in near real time is accomplished by identifying “key milestones” tied to each of the success metrics. In this way progress may be monitored and adjustments can be made as may be required on a regular or ongoing basis (i.e., quarterly).
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

CITY OF ABBEVILLE COUNCIL

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PROGRAM
Blake Stone, Abbeville City Manager

COALITION PARTNERS
Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce
Downtown Abbeville Merchants Association
Upper Savannah Council of Governments
South Carolina Arts Commission
Freshwater Coast Community Foundation (FCCF)
Abbeville County Economic Development Board

ADVISORY BOARD
(Informal Group Designed to provide feedback on the Revitalization Effort)
Mike Clary, Community Development Director
Blake Stone, City Manager
Stephen Taylor, Economic Development, Abbeville County
Andy Timmerman, Abbeville First Bank
Shannon Sears, WCTEL
Bethany Stoll, Main Street Coffee Company
Rick Green, Upper Savannah Council of Governments
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Milestone #1</th>
<th>Milestone #2</th>
<th>Milestone #3</th>
<th>Coalition Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1: Leverage Abbeville’s architectural significance and place in American History</td>
<td>Contribute a minimum of $10,000 per year to Tourism Marketing of the Downtown Area</td>
<td>Expand American and cultural heritage promotional and educational events</td>
<td>Offer assistance, financial or operational, to the Heritage Festival in September</td>
<td>SC Arts Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: Brand Downtown as a local and regional center for the arts and cultural events that appeal to a broad range of personal and societal preferences</td>
<td>Brand “On the Square”, begin using #ontesthesquare for Downtown Cultural Events</td>
<td>Position “On the Square” as that special place where artists, musicians, writers, architects, photographers, graphic designers locate and collaborate</td>
<td>Develop “On the Square” logo for branding</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; SC Arts Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Establish the downtown as a local and regional destination for retail, dining, and entertainment attractions that are uniquely Abbeville</td>
<td>Occupy Redevelopment Catalyst Sites 1 and 2 with new commercial tenants</td>
<td>Initiate a retail recruitment plan targeting the type and scale of businesses that best match Downtown Abbeville</td>
<td>Establish downtown social groups around young professionals, artists, recent new parents, and the like focusing on younger families and young adults</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: Promote a mix of downtown housing options</td>
<td>Review zoning ordinance to ensure it is compatible with a wide array of Downtown Housing Options</td>
<td>Ensure that existing public utilities pose no barriers to a range of housing options</td>
<td>Communicate zoning changes to area realtors and property owners</td>
<td>Upper Savannah Council of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5: Attract local businesses and entrepreneurs to locate and grow downtown employment</td>
<td>Implement Erskine College Internship Program Downtown</td>
<td>Apply for USEPA Brownfields grants to fund assessment and remediation activities at distressed downtown sites</td>
<td>Establish Support for Business Incubator</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; FCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6: Establish an efficient sustainable framework for advancing Abbeville’s planned initiatives for the revitalization of its downtown</td>
<td>Market the plan to public and work to build coalitions</td>
<td>Increase partnerships with Downtown Merchants Association &amp; Chamber</td>
<td>Annual Celebrations of Success</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1: Leverage Abbeville’s architectural significance and place in American History</td>
<td>Invest in one building per year through the Historic District Building Grant</td>
<td>Install Historic District Street Signage by 2021 on all streets within the Historic District</td>
<td>Encourage private, charitable donations and corporate giving to the arts, consider establishing a 501C3 in cooperation with the Chamber</td>
<td>SC Arts Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: Brand Downtown as a local and regional center for the arts and cultural events that appeal to a broad range of personal and societal preferences</td>
<td>Increase attendance to Opera House Events to over 10,000</td>
<td>Reach two million in economic impact from festivals and events</td>
<td>New sound and lighting systems in Opera House</td>
<td>Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Establish the downtown as a local and regional destination for retail, dining, and entertainment attractions that are uniquely Abbeville</td>
<td>Implement the Energy Efficiency Grant for Business Owners</td>
<td>Investigate funding for additional streetscape, wayfinding and traffic volumes and directional analyses</td>
<td>Encourage neighborhood scale business (i.e., pizza, coffee, used book and music store, deli, bakery, wine and cheese, health food, mail/shipping etc.)</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: Promote a mix of downtown housing options</td>
<td>Establish Public Incentives to promote housing as a priority</td>
<td>Establish grants, utility tax credits, and other incentives to property owners adding housing in Downtown</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Upper Savannah Council of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5: Attract local businesses and entrepreneurs to locate and grow downtown employment</td>
<td>Complete an additional Public Parking Project</td>
<td>Establish a Business Retention program for existing downtown businesses to stay downtown</td>
<td>Promote complementary business clusters (e.g., art supplies, studios/lessons, galleries, antiques, a music store, craft galleries, culinary supplies, etc.)</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; FCCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6: Establish an efficient sustainable framework for advancing Abbeville’s planned initiatives for the revitalization of its downtown</td>
<td>Re-evaluate progress by 2022</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1: Leverage Abbeville’s architectural significance and place in American History</td>
<td>Work with existing 501C3 to encourage private donations to the arts and historic preservation</td>
<td>Work with local historic groups to increase charitable giving to historic properties</td>
<td>Complete 50% brick replacement project</td>
<td>SC Arts Commission &amp; Greater Abbeville Area Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2: Brand Downtown as a local and regional center for the arts and cultural events that appeal to a broad range of personal and societal preferences</td>
<td>Increase Opera House attendance to 15,000</td>
<td>Abbeville as the Regional Center for artists, musicians, writers, designers, photographers</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SC Arts Commission &amp; Greater Abbeville Area Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Establish the downtown as a local and regional destination for retail, dining, and entertainment attractions that are uniquely Abbeville</td>
<td>Have Downtown Abbeville Commercial Properties at a 90% occupied rate</td>
<td>Increase restaurant &amp; retail sales by 50%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; Downtown Merchants Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: Promote a mix of downtown housing options</td>
<td>Have one building add average of one apartment a year for ten years until housing is a component of 80% of Downtown Buildings</td>
<td>New________ with the downtown and/or Transition Areas</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Upper Savannah Council of Governments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5: Attract local businesses and entrepreneurs to locate and grow downtown employment</td>
<td>Have Downtown Abbeville Commercial Properties at a 90% occupied rate</td>
<td>Create technical/business/retail incubators and co-working spaces</td>
<td>Partner with medical facilities and manufacturers to establish a downtown presence</td>
<td>Greater Abbeville Chamber of Commerce &amp; FCCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6: Establish an efficient sustainable framework for advancing Abbeville’s planned initiatives for the revitalization of its downtown</td>
<td>Re-evaluate Advisory Board for necessary changes</td>
<td>Explore Leadership Options and Transitions with Greater Private Sector responsibilities</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>SC Arts Commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>