

Strategic Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

January 27, 2021

Aiken SC

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1. Executive Summary

The City of Aiken is a picturesque city of just under 32,000, located in western South Carolina. The City has long been an attractive destination for retirees, equestrian enthusiasts, and tourists interested drawn by its rich history and fine architecture. Some who are familiar with Aiken's historic small-town charm might be surprised to learn that the City is also at the heart of a burgeoning high-tech industry cluster, which has drawn a highly-educated workforce from around the country (and the world) to the Aiken-Augusta metropolitan area.

AECOM was engaged by the City of Aiken, beginning in April of 2019, to assist in the development of this strategic economic development strategy. The primary aim is to provide a guide for actions that can be taken to bring growth and investment and greater opportunity for existing and new residents. In February of 2020, AECOM held a two-day workshop with Aiken City officials and key stakeholders to discuss the City's past, present, and future. AECOM was given a tour of the City's historic downtown, many unique neighborhoods, key gateways, and commercial and employment nodes. Representatives discussed what they see as key impediments to the City's future growth and development, as well as areas of opportunity. These discussions provide the framework for this Strategic Economic Development Plan. Key issues that arose from the discussion include the following.

- **Resident attraction and retention**
Stakeholders noted that, although the City is an established destination for retirees, they have struggled in the past to attract and retain younger families and single young professionals. The City aspires to be a lifelong community, where residents who grow up in Aiken, or who come to the area to attend the university or work at one of the region's major employers, choose to stay, grow their careers, and put down roots in the City.
- **A need to identify target areas for growth and development**
One reason that Aiken has struggled to attract and retain a diverse resident population is a lack of available housing, at a variety of typologies and price points. Additionally, the City is aware of that both Millennials and Baby Boomers are increasingly demanding more mixed-use development within a close walk or bike ride of their homes. Because of limited available land, zoning restrictions, and other challenges, the City has struggled to come up with a strategy for targeted development/redevelopment in suitable locations that will provide more options to new and existing residents. The Downtown area and the City's Northside were both identified during discussions as areas that have significant potential.
- **The City does not feel prepared to leverage key investments/burgeoning industry clusters within the region**
Multiple concurrent investments are underway in the region: a DreamPort, a National Guard cybersecurity collaborative facility, is underway as well as an Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC). The U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence is located in Fort Gordon, GA. Aiken. The existing Savannah River Site (SRS) has long been a major employer for Aiken residents, with several new initiatives underway as well. The City would like to be in a better position to leverage these investments to grow their economic base and help attract new residents.
- **The City's irregular boundaries pose challenges for growth and development**
Annexing land is a challenging process for the City, but may provide Aiken needed room to grow and increase value overall.
- **Aiken's rich equestrian heritage, though well-known, has not been adequately leveraged to its full potential**
The City has a long history of involvement in the equine industry, and is home to the Aiken Steeplechase event, which is being moved to a brand-new racecourse on the east side of town. The City also boasts a famous, walled, historic "horse district," and 2,100-acre park (managed by a private foundation), with many miles of equestrian trails. However, the City has been unable to leverage those assets to generate significant economic development and attract visitation, outside of its twice-yearly Steeplechase events.

- **Gateways to the City do not reflect and enhance the true charm and appeal of Aiken's historic core**

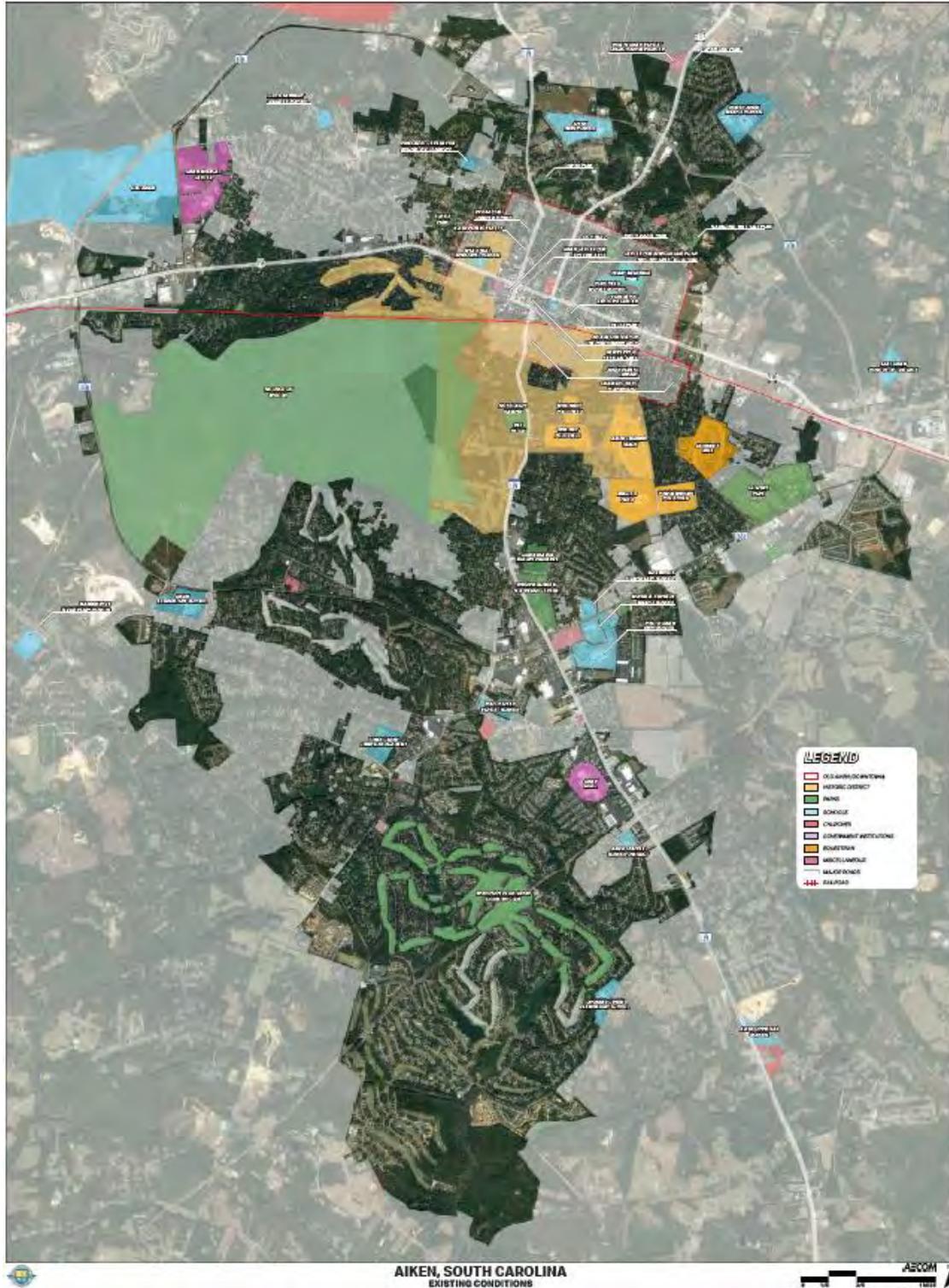
Aiken's "gateways," areas where major roads intersect and travelers cross from the County into the City, have suffered from neglect, underinvestment, and fragmented property ownership. They give no indication that visitors are entering a charming, historic community with beautiful boulevards and historic buildings. The first impressions these entrances give to visitors may be a barrier to the City's continued growth and development, and ability to attract and retain new residents

Building upon the wealth of information from the City's previous studies, vision studies, and strategic plans, AECOM has generated a list of targeted recommendations (see Section 4) that include actions, strategies, and projects to address the City's concerns, and build on Aiken's previous groundwork. Many of the recommendations focus on establishing new partnerships between the City, the County, the Aiken Chamber of Commerce, major regional employers, and other key business, civic, and neighborhood organizations. Communication, cooperation, and collaboration are major themes that arise in the recommendations. Focusing on areas of mutual benefit will allow the City and its residents and stakeholders to collectively focus their energies in ways that will improve quality of life and economic opportunity for all involved.

2. Background

2.1 Existing Conditions

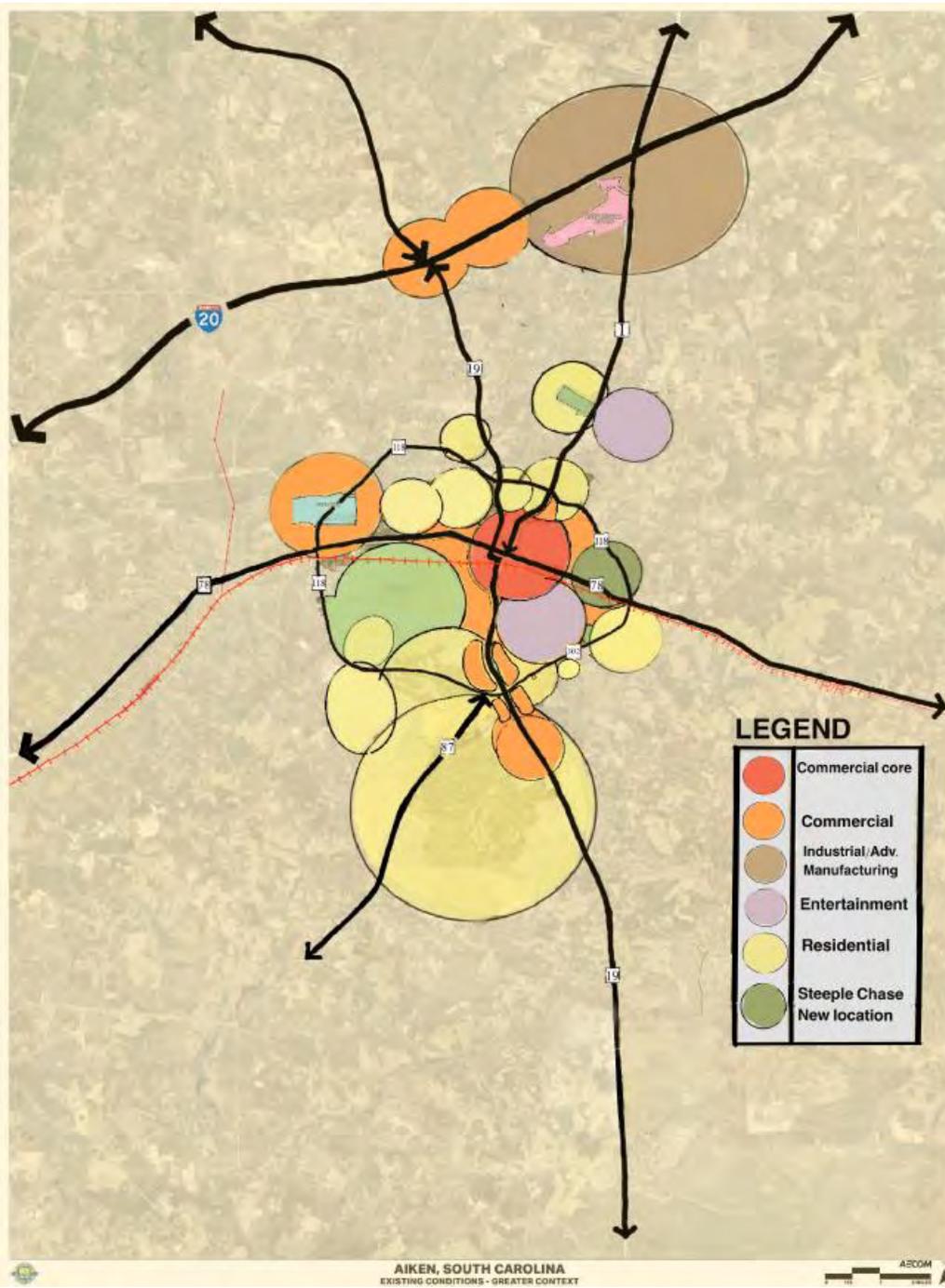
Figure 1: City of Aiken Existing Conditions Map



2.2 Existing Land Use and Character

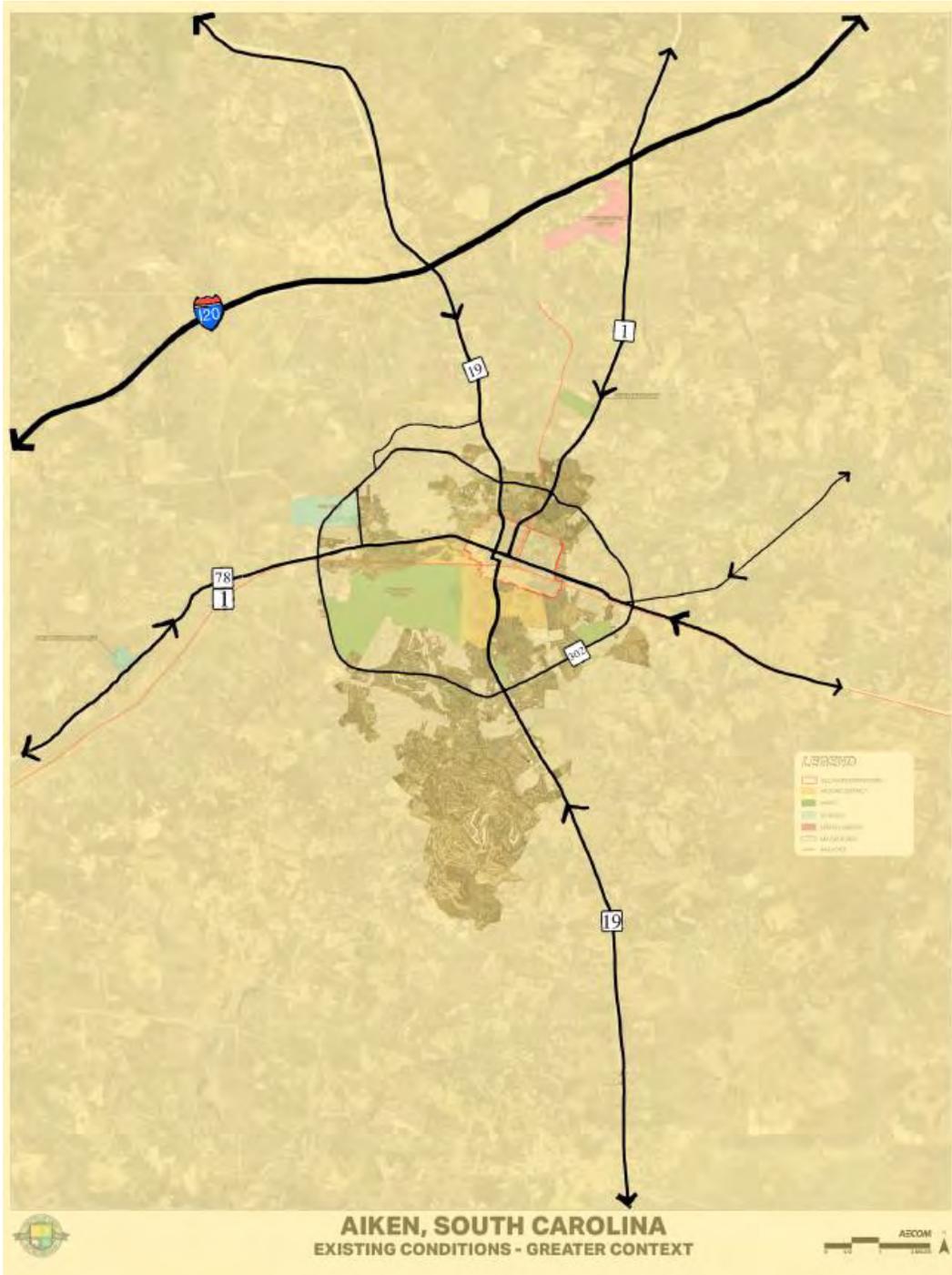
The City of Aiken, located just west of the South Carolina/Georgia Border, is slightly over 21 square miles, and is the county seat of Aiken County. Aiken has an historic downtown core, surrounded by many unique and beautiful neighborhoods that feature fine examples of nineteenth century architecture. The City's grand allees of live oak trees (as shown on the cover) are emblematic of its comfortable southern charm. Aiken is famous throughout the equestrian world for its twice-yearly Aiken Steeplechase horse racing event, traditionally held at Bruce's Field on the south side of the City, and is also home to the University of South Carolina at Aiken, which has an annual enrollment of approximately 3,500 students. The City was nominated as the South's "Best Small Town" in 2018 by Southern Living Magazine, and is a well-established destination for retirees drawn to its temperate climate and historic charm. Some of the City's key features are noted in Figure 1.

Figure 2: City of Aiken Existing Land Use Diagram



In terms of square miles, residential uses and open/natural areas dominate the City's footprint, with pockets of commercial and civic uses sprinkled throughout, as Figure 2 shows. There are some industrial/manufacturing uses along the City's periphery, some of which cross City boundaries into Aiken County.

Figure 3: City of Aiken Major Roadways



The City's major roadways, shown in Figure 3, have simultaneously responded to and helped shape the City's growth and development throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Routes 1, 78, and 19 cut through the heart of the City; Routes 19 and 1 connect the City to Interstate Highway I-20.

2.3 Previous Plans, Studies, and Strategies

The City of Aiken has engaged in multiple plans, studies, and strategies in recent years designed to guide the City's future growth and development. In order to ensure that this Strategic Economic Development Plan takes into account and builds upon previous hard work by the City and their partners, AECOM engaged in a comprehensive review of this information.

The following documents informed the development of this Strategic Plan:

1. Aiken's Tomorrow: Local Impacts, Global Impacts – City of Aiken - 2010
2. City of Aiken Annual Budget Fiscal Year 2018-2019 – City of Aiken - 2018
3. Plan Aiken Comprehensive Plan – City of Aiken - 2017
4. Northside Comprehensive Plan – McBride Dale Clarion - 2008
5. Old Aiken Master Plan – Aiken City Council - 2005
6. Union Street Area Plan – City of Aiken - 2012
7. Whiskey Road Corridor Study – LDR International - 2001
8. Aiken City Council Horizons – Aiken City Council - 2014
9. Investors Prospectus – City of Aiken - 2019
10. Regional Economic Benchmarking Report for Aiken County – USC Aiken School of Business Administration – 2017 Update
11. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Final Report – Community Designs, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Kalback Design Studios - 2016
12. Regional Workforce Study – TIP Strategies - 2015
13. Compelling Place to Live (CPTL) – Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2017
14. The Next Big Ideas, Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations Report – Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2013
15. Rental Housing Market Study of Aiken, South Carolina – Novogradac & Company, LLP - 2018
16. Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative – USC Aiken - 2019
17. Cybersecurity Collaborative – USC Aiken - 2019
18. Old Aiken Design Guidelines – Community Design Solutions & McBride Dale Clarion – 2018 Update
19. Public Library Renovation Press Releases – Friends of the Aiken County Public Library – 2019
20. Whiskey Road – Powderhouse Road Connector Studies – Carter Burgess – 2006 & W.R. Toole Engineers, Inc – 2012
21. Article re: Aiken Mall Mixed-Use Redevelopment – Aiken Standard – 2020
22. Aiken County workforce boom could come from SRS – Aiken Standard, 2020

AECOM's key takeaways from this review can be found in Appendix C, Aiken Document Review. This information was reviewed and discussed with City representatives at the February 2020 workshop, to ensure that this Strategic Plan would be thorough, well-informed, and not duplicate efforts.

2.4 Population and Housing

A high-level of understanding of the socioeconomic and demographic context for the City of Aiken provides an important baseline for making future recommendations for strategic economic growth and development.

Table 1: City of Aiken Demographic Profile, 2020 - 2025

	2020		2025		Est. % Change, 2025-2020		Est. CAGR, 2020 - 2025	
	Aiken City	SC	Aiken City	SC	Aiken City	SC	Aiken City	SC
Population	31,999	5,282,232	33,288	5,629,430	4.0%	6.6%	0.8%	1.3%
Households	13,989	2,060,684	14,606	2,198,480	4.4%	6.7%	0.9%	1.3%
Avg. HH Size	2.21	2.50	2.21	2.50	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Median HH Income	\$57,401	\$53,366	\$60,685	\$56,881	5.7%	6.6%	1.1%	1.3%
Families	8,719	1,365,992	9,055	1,448,950	3.9%	6.1%	0.8%	1.2%
Avg. Family Size	2.79	3.04	2.79	3.05	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%
Median Age	47.5	39.5	48.3	40.5	1.7%	2.5%	0.3%	0.5%

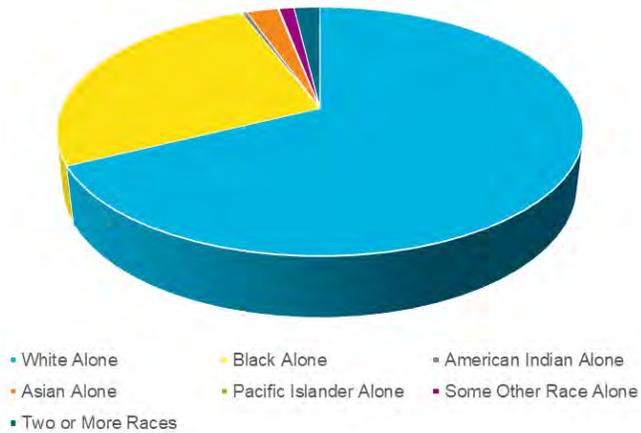
Source: ESRI Estimates, 2020

As ESRI estimates (projections based on Census data) show, Aiken's current population is projected to continue growing slowly, at an estimated compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.9 percent per year, with households growing at a similar rate, and families growing at a slightly slower annual rate of 0.8 percent between 2020 and 2025 (see Table 1). Aiken's growth is not keeping pace with the State of South Carolina overall; ESRI projects that population and households will grow at an annual rate growth rate of 1.3 percent, with the number of families

increasing annually by 1.2 percent. Aiken’s current average household size of 2.21 percent is smaller than the State’s (2.5 percent), as is the City’s average family size of 2.79 percent.

Median household income in Aiken City is approximately \$4,000 higher annually than the South Carolina median, and is projected to grow at a similar annual rate of 1.1 percent between 2020 and 2025. Despite the City’s high overall median income, ESRI estimates show that there is some disparity between income levels across City residents. Thirty percent of Aiken’s households bring in less than \$35,000 annually, yet 28 percent make more than \$100,000 per year.¹

Figure 4: City of Aiken Residents by Race



Source: ESRI Estimates, 2020

As previously discussed, Aiken City’s median age (47.5) is significantly higher (eight years) than the State median age of 39.5 and is expected to increase to 48.5 in 2025. Median age is high in Aiken, compared with the rest of South Carolina; however, the City’s age breakdown paints a more nuanced picture. Although residents 55 and older make up nearly forty percent of the population, an equal share are under the age of 34.²

Stakeholders noted during discussions that one of the City’s goals is to become a “place of choice” for young professionals and young families; it appears that the City may have already built some momentum among that demographic.

According to ESRI, Aiken is a majority-white City, with 68 percent of residents identifying as white alone, followed by 27 percent identifying as Black alone, as Figure 4 indicates. The next-largest shares (two percent each) identify as being multiracial or Asian. Three percent of residents identify as being of Hispanic origin.

The majority of Aiken residents appear to be highly educated: 43 percent of residents hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. Once again, however, there is some disparity, as residents who were not able to obtain either a bachelor’s or associate’s degree make up fifty percent of Aiken City’s adult population.³

Compared with Aiken County, the City has a higher percentage of renters, despite a median rent cost of nearly \$80 more per month, as Table 2 shows. However, the City has a lower percentage of renters than Augusta-Richmond County, which borders Aiken County on the south, just across the Georgia border. Home values in the City are significantly higher than in both Aiken and Augusta-Richmond Counties; in 2018, the median home value in the City of Aiken was approximately \$38,000 higher than Aiken County’s, and over \$75,000 higher than Augusta-Richmond County. Aiken City stakeholders have noted that they directly compete with both Aiken and Augusta-Richmond Counties for residents who are employed in the region; although both counties have slightly older housing stock, housing there overall is more affordable than in the City of Aiken, which could at least partially explain their ability to attract young professionals and families.

Table 2: City of Aiken Housing Snapshot

Geography	Housing Units	% Renters	% Homeowners	Median Rent	Median Home Value	Median Year of Construction
Aiken City, SC	14,857	31%	57%	\$875	\$180,300	1986
Aiken County, SC	75,934	25%	63%	\$794	\$142,200	1985
Augusta-Richmond County, GA	86,169	39%	43%	\$851	\$104,600	1978

Source: 2018 American Community Survey

Like many small cities across the U.S., Aiken City’s unemployment rate skyrocketed in the spring of 2020, due to the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, going from three percent in January to 11 percent in April. However, the

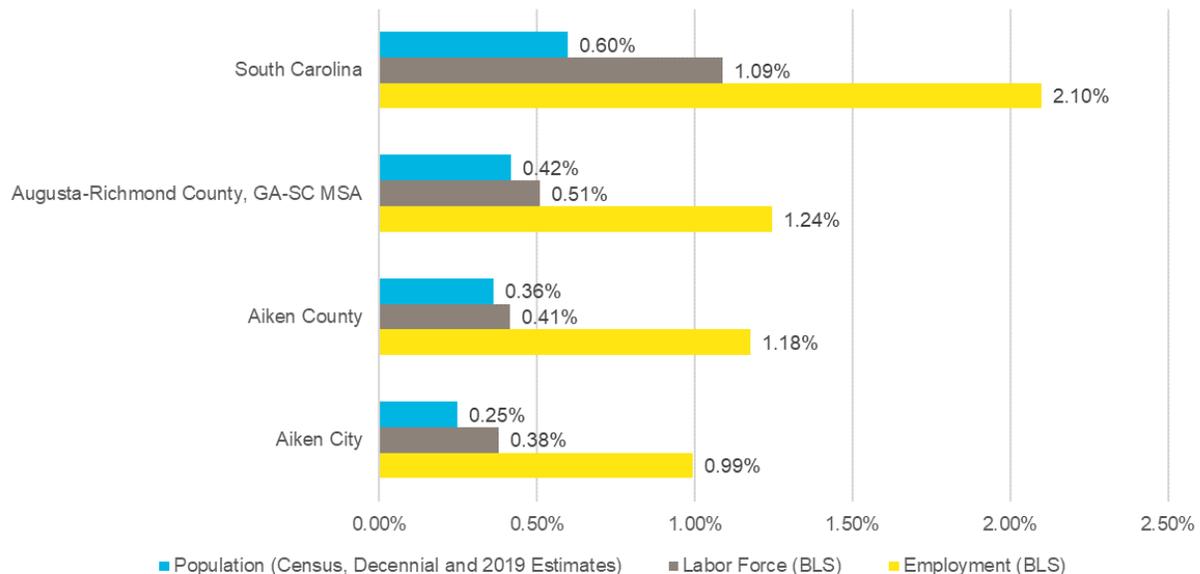
¹ See Appendix Table 1: City of Aiken Household Income Breakdown Estimate, 2020

² See Appendix Table 2: City of Aiken Population Age Breakdown, 2020

³ See Appendix Table 3: City of Aiken Population over Age 25 by Education, 2020

City has fared better than the state and the U.S. overall. The most recently available unemployment rate for the City is from August 2020, when the City had an unemployment rate of 5.8, much lower than its springtime peak, but still not at pre-pandemic levels. Although the City appears to be faring relatively well when compared with South Carolina and the U.S., the City's labor force participation has also fallen between four and seven percentage points below the State's over the past decade, which could mean that actual unemployment numbers are higher. Aiken's growth in population, labor force, and employment between 2010 and 2019 has lagged behind the County, the overall metro region, and the State, as Figure 5 shows.

Figure 5: City of Aiken Population, Labor Force, and Employment Growth vs. the Greater Region, 2010 - 2019



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020

Aiken's sociodemographic metrics indicate that, although it is a relatively affluent City overall, there may be some challenges in terms of economic and educational disparity that the City will need to focus their efforts on in the coming years.

2.5 Aiken's Major Industries: Overview

AECOM analyzed the City of Aiken's regional industry sectors and clusters, in order to determine existing conditions and make recommendations for leveraging future growth. Two key points emerged from this analysis:

- Aiken County has sustained considerable job growth above US average.
- The City of Aiken does not appear to be fully participating in county-wide economic activity

Examining current industry clustering trends, and understanding which industries are best poised for future growth, can help the City of Aiken take appropriate actions to ensure they are well-positioned to take advantage of this growth. An "industry cluster" is a regional concentration of related industries; one example would be "human health", covering group of industry sectors connected to health care provision.⁴ A regional economy's future growth relies heavily on its ability to specialize in high-value industries and capture economic advantages that accrue for firms when they are concentrated in the same place. Firms within a regionally concentrated cluster benefit from sharing facilities and exchanging knowledge to fuel innovation. Regional clusters can also result in deep labor markets, helping to efficiently match workers to the appropriate jobs.⁵

Industry cluster analysis helps determine how industry sectors, clusters and individual companies are positioned for future growth. AECOM developed a tool to analyze industry clusters based on the cluster's location quotient (LQ). LQs represent a cluster's regional concentration compared to that cluster's concentration in the United

⁴ US Cluster Mapping, Clusters 101

⁵ Brookings Institution Rethinking Clusters Initiatives, July 2018.

States. For example, health care jobs make up about eight percent of the US workforce. A regional economy with a concentration of 16 percent of health care jobs would have an LQ of 2, as health care jobs are twice as concentrated in that region compared to the US overall.

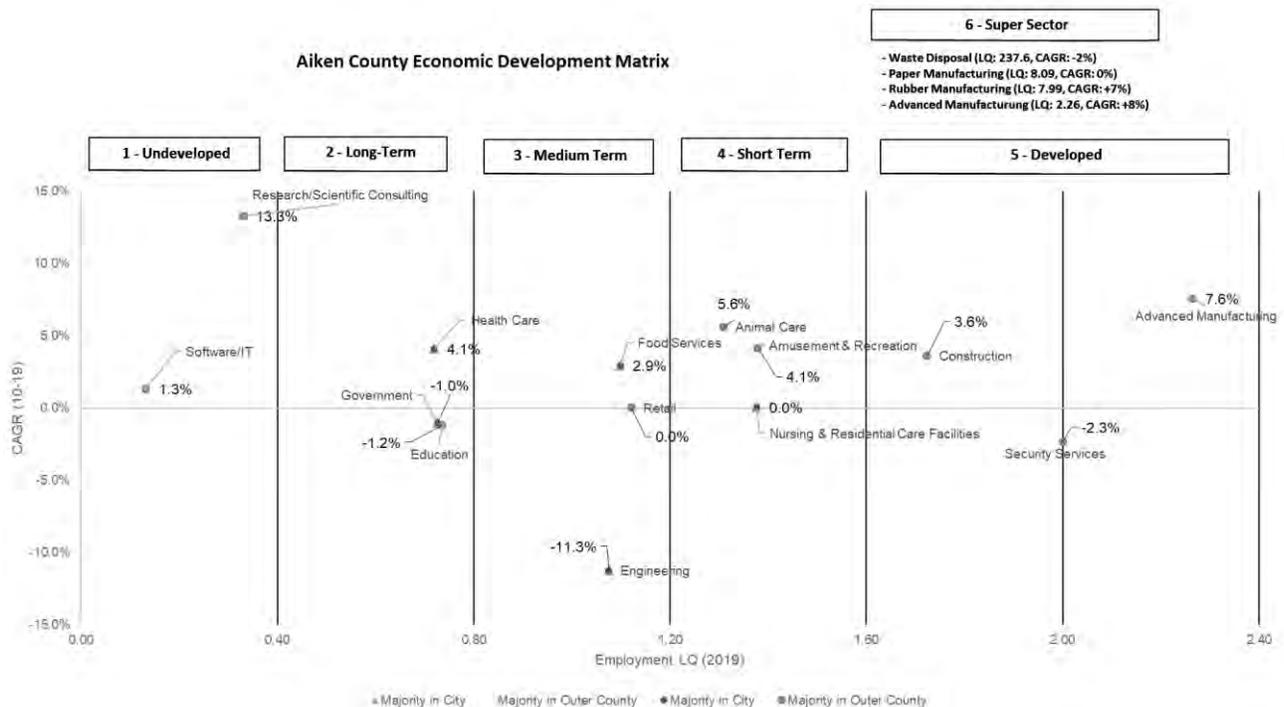
The tool assigns clusters to certain growth categories based on location quotient, each of which are associated with varying degrees of potential job growth. These categories are:

- Undeveloped Cluster, LQ <4: Under-developed clusters, which often have very low probability of substantial job increases.
- Long-term, LQ .4-.8: Considered long-term opportunities. These clusters have growth potential but are currently underdeveloped. Organic job creation is less likely without policy intervention.
- Medium-term, LQ .8-1.2: Job growth tends to be most consistent in clusters with LQs between .8 and 1.2 which are considered medium-term clusters.
- Short-term, LQ 1.2-1.6: Short-term growth clusters, which tent to already be well-concentrated locally relative to US averages. Higher rates of development and job creation can be expected.
- Developed Cluster, LQ 1.6-4: Considered to be mature in the context of US averages. While these clusters can continue to develop, volatility in job creation is increasingly common (i.e. job losses as well as increases).
- Super Sector, LQ > 4: Industry clusters with dramatically higher levels of industry concentration, also known as “super sectors” and have a unique ability to access global markets, which generally support significantly higher growth rates.

These growth categories were used to develop an economic development matrix for Aiken County in

Figure 6, which displays existing clusters based on their location quotients and CAGR from 2010 to 2019. The clusters presented are those that were found to be highly concentrated in Aiken, as well as those that seemed relevant to the region’s potential economic development strategies. The matrix also specifies whether the cluster is more concentrated within the City of Aiken vs. Aiken County.

Figure 6: Industry Clusters in Aiken City and Aiken County



Source: Emsi employment data to calculate LQ and CAGR; ESRI Business Analyst to calculate City vs. County concentrations

Industry growth outside of the City of Aiken can be attributed to the development of manufacturing firms throughout the county, particularly those specializing in rubber and paper manufacturing. The largest industry in Aiken County remains waste remediation, though the number of jobs in this sector shrank throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, largely due to a downsizing of the workforce at the Savannah River Site. However, the sector has seen growth over the last seven years, as SRS continues to renew contracts with firms that employ over 10,000 workers total. This has resulted in waste disposal being the most concentrated cluster in Aiken County, though most of these jobs fall under the umbrella of SRS.

The industry cluster that currently dominates in the City of Aiken is health care. Nearly 80 percent of healthcare jobs in Aiken County are within the City of Aiken, largely due to the presence of Aiken Regional Medical Center. Other industry clusters more concentrated in the City are nursing and residential care facilities, engineering, and food services. The health care field shows the most promise of growth, given its nationwide positioning as a long-term growth cluster. Aiken's aging population will almost certainly ensure that there is robust demand for health care services well into the future.

Although the most developed industry clusters in Aiken County are not concentrated within the City of Aiken, there are still opportunities for the City to benefit from the presence of these clusters. Aiken's plans for the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative at University of South Carolina (USC) Aiken, for example, presents an opportunity for the City to play a larger role in the County's existing Advanced Manufacturing cluster. It will be important for the City to help ensure that the AMC consults with and involves existing advanced manufacturing firms. Additionally, the proposed DreamPort Cybersecurity Collaborative can be leveraged to further expand Aiken's IT/software and research/scientific consulting clusters, which are currently undeveloped. Given that the City has two proposed initiatives that will help to create vibrant and collaborative innovation centers in IT and manufacturing, Aiken has a unique opportunity to participate in cluster-based economic development, which create a strong multiplier effect on the local economy, particularly if properly leveraged. It will be important for the City and its economic development partners to understand and adopt strategies that encourage the continued growth and development of these specific clusters.

3. Key Issues

During the two-day February 2020 workshop that AECOM held with City of Aiken stakeholders, several key issues for the City rose to the forefront of the discussion:

- **Resident attraction and retention**

Stakeholders noted that, although the City is an established destination for retirees, they have struggled in the past to attract and retain younger families and single young professionals. The City aspires to be a lifelong community, where residents who grow up in Aiken, or who come to the area to attend the university or work at one of the region's major employers, choose to stay, grow their careers, and put down roots in the City.
- **A need to identify target areas for growth and development**

One reason that Aiken has struggled to attract and retain a diverse resident population is a lack of available housing, at a variety of typologies and price points. Additionally, the City is aware of that both Millennials and Baby Boomers are increasingly demanding more mixed-use development within a close walk or bike ride of their homes. Because of limited available land, zoning restrictions, and other challenges, the City has struggled to come up with a strategy for targeted development/redevelopment in suitable locations that will provide more options to new and existing residents. The Downtown area and the City's Northside were both identified during discussions as areas that have significant potential.
- **The City does not feel prepared to leverage key investments/burgeoning industry clusters within the region**

Multiple concurrent investments are underway in the region: a DreamPort, a National Guard cybersecurity collaborative facility, is underway as well as an Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC). The U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence is located in Fort Gordon, GA. Aiken. The existing

Savannah River Site has long been a major employer for Aiken residents, with several new initiatives underway as well. The City would like to be in a better position to leverage these investments to grow their economic base and help attract new residents.

- **The City’s irregular boundaries pose challenges for growth and development**
Annexing land is a challenging process but may provide Aiken needed room to grow and increase value overall.
- **Aiken’s rich equestrian heritage, though well-known, has not been adequately leveraged to its full potential**
The City has a long history of involvement in the equine industry, and is home to the Aiken Steeplechase event, which is being moved to a brand-new racecourse on the east side of town. The City also boasts a famous, walled, historic “horse district,” and 2,100-acre park (managed by a private foundation), with many miles of equestrian trails. However, the City has been unable to leverage those assets to generate significant economic development and attract visitation, outside of its twice-yearly Steeplechase events.
- **Gateways to the City do not reflect and enhance the true charm and appeal of Aiken’s historic core**
The City’s “Aiken’s gateways, areas where major roads intersect and travelers cross from the County into the City, have suffered from neglect, underinvestment, and fragmented property ownership. They give no indication that visitors are entering a charming, historic community with beautiful boulevards and historic buildings. The first impressions these entrances give to visitors may be a barrier to the City’s continued growth and development, and ability to attract and retain new residents

The following sections discuss in more detail the challenges that the City faces in each of these areas and provide recommendations for action. A full list of recommended strategies and actions is detailed in Section 4 of this plan.

3.1 Resident Attraction and Retention

As previously noted, Aiken is an established destination for retirees, but the City is concerned about becoming overly dependent on one segment of the population to drive growth. If Aiken wants to continue to diversify their population base, the City will need to consider what types of residents they want to attract (additional retirees, younger professionals, young families, etc.), and engage in aggressive and targeted strategies to attract and retain those demographics.

Employment, housing, and education are major factors in most people’s decisions about where to live, particularly for people who plan to be in the workforce for the foreseeable future. As was discussed during the February workshop, the City is in the fortunate position of being within a reasonable commuting distance of several major employers; however, they have struggled to attract and retain young professionals/young families in recent years. Lack of a mix of housing types at varying levels of affordability is one factor that may be pushing new residents to other areas such as North Augusta or Aiken County; misperceptions about school quality in Aiken versus the surrounding areas is another. Finally, City stakeholders were concerned about a lack of amenities/options for entertainment and recreation that would attract a younger demographic.

Challenges:

- Public misperception that Aiken City’s school system is not as high-quality as those in neighboring counties, despite evidence to the contrary
- The City’s supply of middle-tier housing that might attract young professionals and families is inadequate
- Employees who move to the region for work often end up settling in Augusta, Columbia, or Aiken Counties, due to the perception that they have better school systems, and more housing options

Offering a mix of housing types at different price points, including single family attached and detached homes and multi-bedroom apartments and condos in locations convenient to schools, shopping, and entertainment areas, would help Aiken attract new residents across multiple demographic groups, and potentially reduce the number of young people leaving Aiken. The City recently completed a study of rental housing, which showed strong demand for additional rental units, particularly in downtown.⁶ The City may also want to consider conducting a comprehensive assessment of their public facilities, to determine areas that may be lacking. For example, the City has several large parks – are those parks convenient for most residents? What about residents who do not have

A Small-Town Magnet for Millennials: Columbus, IN

Columbus, IN, historically a small, working-class town of less than 50,000, has managed to attract and retain an increasing number of highly educated millennials in recent years. Cummins, Inc., a diesel engine company and the City's largest employer, is often the initial reason millennials come to the area, but many decide to settle in Columbus because of several factors, including the abundance of affordable housing, the City's unique architecture (which was recently featured in a documentary), its burgeoning craft beer and restaurant scene, and the closely-knit community fabric that new residents are welcomed into.

Source: Henderson, Tim (2017, November 5) Millennials to small cities: Ready or not here we come!. USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/11/05/millennials-small-cities-ready-not-here-we-come/830955001/>

access to a personal vehicle? Are there opportunities to build smaller pocket or neighborhood parks within walking distance of residential areas? City stakeholders agreed that unique amenities such as Hitchcock Woods, a 2,100-acre forested park featuring 70 miles of trails and operated by a private foundation, have been historically under-leveraged and underutilized. The City has multiple bars and restaurants downtown, and has historically had several programming/festivals, but City stakeholders are concerned that their entertainment options are not sufficient to attract entertainment-savvy millennials. It is recommended that the City engage with existing young leaders/professionals groups, like the Aiken Chamber's Young Professionals group, to learn more about

what types of entertainment options residents and prospective residents are most interested in seeing in the City.

Although close to half of Aiken's Public Schools have received "good" or "excellent" ratings by the SC Department of Education in recent years, according to City stakeholders, they are often perceived by outsiders as subpar compared with Augusta County's, and other surrounding suburbs.⁷ Good K-12 schools are a high priority for many young families, and the City is concerned that this misperception may be driving away potential residents. Changing the public perception of Aiken's schools may be a challenge, but it is an important issue to address if the City wants to attract and retain more young families.

Additionally, if the City wants to continue to be a destination for retirees looking for somewhere to live out there "golden years," it will be important to assess the quality and availability of healthcare services in and around the City, including the availability of specialists in fields like geriatrics and memory care, as well as assisted living and long-term care services and facilities. According to Emsi, which collects data on labor market analytics, Aiken has fewer options for ambulatory health services, hospitals, and nursing and residential care facilities than other retirement destination communities.⁸ Health care services are not always a primary concern for young families, but are still an important component of supporting a healthy community with a high quality-of-life.

There has been much speculation about the long-term impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on housing and employment trends. It is widely agreed that the pandemic has accelerated many trends that were already in motion; for example, young professionals leaving larger, more expensive cities for smaller cities and more suburban areas.⁹ This trend provides an opportunity for a smaller city like Aiken that is relatively affordable and

⁶ Aiken Chamber. (n.d.) *Study reveals demand for downtown housing*. Retrieved December 4, 2020, from <https://www.aikenchamber.net/rental-housing-study.html#:~:text=A%20rental%20housing%20market%20study,especially%20in%20the%20downtown%20area.&text=The%20demand%20analysis%20conclusions%20indicate,the%20entire%20city%20of%20Aiken.>

⁷ Wood, Larry (November 30, 2018) S.C. Report Cards: Nearly half of Aiken County Public Schools earn Excellent or Good ratings. *Aiken Post and Courier*. https://www.postandcourier.com/aikenstandard/education/s-c-report-cards-nearly-half-of-aiken-county-public-schools-earn-excellent-or-good/article_5d5ac499-0743-52c3-b9bb-156d22d0d3bd.html

⁸ See Appendix Table 4: Underdeveloped Industries, City of Aiken, 2020

⁹ Tonar, Remington and Ellis Talton (September 3, 2020) People Fleeing Big Cities May Spur Economic Growth In Smaller Metros. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellistalton/2020/09/03/people-fleeing-big-cities-may-spur-economic-growth-in-smaller-metros/?sh=61334b7752d6>

offers many quality-of-life benefits. However, one important trend to note is that, although some professionals are leaving higher-density urban areas for smaller communities, they still expect many of the same amenities in smaller cities and suburbs that they had in larger cities. These include access to parks and public spaces, as well as a walkable, mixed-use communities that offer shopping, dining, and services in the same convenient location.

Investing in multi-modal transportation infrastructure is another important way to not only better serve current residents, but to attract and retain a diverse population of new residents. Although Aiken may not have the population size or density for a robust fixed public transportation system, there are many lower-cost, smaller-scale alternatives that the City should explore for providing better linkages between homes, job centers, and retail and services. Increasing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, particularly in areas that the City has targeted for additional development, would offer alternative modes of transportation that are increasingly demanded by Millennials and Gen Z-ers, and help better serve existing residents who do not have access to a personal vehicle. Existing trails and paths should be clearly marked and well-publicized to residents.

3.2 Target Areas for Redevelopment

Downtown Aiken

During the February 2020 workshop, City stakeholders discussed a need for more housing/mixed-use residential development in the downtown area. Although downtown Aiken (prior to the coronavirus pandemic) has historically been a popular destination for shopping, entertainment, and dining out, the City would like to see it become more of a “18-to-24-hour” downtown, as well as a destination for residents and visitors.

Between 2000 and 2020, despite an overall annual City growth rate of 1.7 percent, Aiken City actually lost population within a one-mile radius of downtown, at an annual rate of -0.2 percent. Population loss within a half-mile radius of downtown’s core was worse, at an annual rate of -0.8 percent.¹⁰

According to American Community Survey data, Aiken has also seen a divergence between retail rents per square foot and building sales per square foot since 2010.¹¹ Data from CoStar suggests that building values are accelerating faster than rents. Previous experience with other downtown markets suggests that this divergence is not uncommon and is

usually linked to a relative scarcity of available space for sale, in context with a larger universe of potential buyers. In general, acceleration in downtown land and building values tends to drive interest in higher density development. Table 3 shows commercial rental rates, absorption, and vacancy in downtown Aiken’s core (a half-mile radius from City Hall) for the past decade. The City’s downtown has maintained a low commercial vacancy rate over the last ten years, but as previously noted, both office and other types of commercial rents have not increased, despite high demand and positive absorption over the past five years, with the exception of 2019. The City has also not added any inventory near the core of downtown over the last 10 years.

Challenges:

- Although downtown is a popular destination for residents and visitors living elsewhere, it lacks some of the features that would make it a live/work/play, 18-to-24-hour downtown
- Limited parking can be an issue
- There are limited housing options downtown
- There has been very little new development or significant redevelopment downtown in recent years that might create “buzz” and attract new residents
- The Hotel Aiken redevelopment has stalled, creating a “dead space” on a prominent block in downtown

¹⁰ See Appendix Table 5: City of Aiken Population by Area, 2000 - 2020

¹¹ See Appendix Table 6: Retail Rents Vs. Sales, Downtown Aiken, 2010 - 2019

Table 3: Downtown Aiken Commercial Real Estate Snapshot, 2010 - 2020

Period	Inventory Bldgs	% Vacant	Net Absorption SF	All Service Type Rent (Direct)	Office Base Rent (Direct)
2020 Q3	352	2.6%	17,046	\$13.84	\$12.78
2019 Q3	352	3.9%	-910	\$12.21	\$12.00
2018 Q3	352	2.7%	17,450	\$12.15	\$11.03
2017 Q3	352	3.1%	13,099	\$9.15	\$9.81
2016 Q3	352	2.2%	1,640	\$11.96	\$13.32
2015 Q3	354	2.9%	3,467	\$13.11	\$14.62
2014 Q3	354	4.9%	-840	\$12.00	\$13.55
2013 Q3	354	5.7%	-10,081	\$12.06	\$13.51
2012 Q3	354	4.5%	-5,640	\$12.10	\$13.14
2011 Q3	354	4.8%	-2,882	\$13.70	\$13.85
2010 Q3	354	6.3%	12,300	\$12.77	\$12.42

Source: CoStar, December 2020

Downtowns are complicated places, and Aiken’s is no exception; the combination of fragmented property ownership, aging public infrastructure, and buildings which are can be both historic and obsolete can pose challenges for large-scale redevelopment. For this reason, downtowns benefit from organizational capacity, to

Figure 7: Hotel Aiken, Downtown Aiken SC



Source: AECOM, 2020

offset otherwise fragmented relationships between property owners, tenants, and the public sector. This is where programs like South Carolina Main Street come in; Aiken is currently engaging in three-year Main Street “bootcamp” with SC Main Street. The importance of coordinating opening and closing hours, special programming, and cooperation/collaboration among small businesses downtown cannot be overstated. Shoppers like convenience; they would prefer to make a single trip (and only need to find parking once), then walk to multiple destinations. Limited parking in Aiken’s downtown may be another potential barrier for redevelopment. It is recommended that the City explore options for shared parking – for example, venues like theaters tend to need limited parking during the day, whereas

retail shops require less parking after seven or eight PM.

One of the major barriers to new development/redevelopment in downtown Aiken are the small parcel sizes and fragmented property ownership. This makes it difficult for both public and private entities to assemble land for larger-scale redevelopment. The Hotel Aiken redevelopment project was cited by City stakeholders as another ongoing challenge; the developer had planned to revamp the historic hotel, which is one of downtown’s most notable buildings, but the project has been delayed for several years, and residents complain that it is an eyesore in its current state. Aiken also has the unique challenge of preserving its notable historic architecture, while making room for new growth, so the City will need to partner with the Historic Aiken Foundation and other stakeholders to ensure that the downtown’s charming historic character is preserved, while also encouraging new growth and development and higher densities where appropriate.

During the February workshop, participants noted that, although there is some programming downtown in the form of festivals and events, there are opportunities to better activate the downtown area and make it a more vibrant, lively space. It is recommended that the City engage the Aiken Chamber’s Young Professionals group, along with local artists, musicians, and other residents involved in the arts and entertainment fields, to explore options for

unique, regular programming and entertainment offerings downtown that will attract a wide audience, including tourists/non-Aiken residents.

Aiken's Northside

According to Aiken City stakeholders, the City has seen significant growth in its Northside in recent years. The area is largely residential, with pockets of commercial along Highway 1. Historically, Aiken's Northside neighborhoods have been lower income, but the City has seen more middle-income families moving to the area in

Challenges:

- Residents are concerned that increased growth and redevelopment in Northside will also increase gentrification pressures
- The City has struggled to compel owners of vacant/neglected properties, many of whom live elsewhere, to sell or otherwise improve those properties
- There is a general public perception of Aiken's Northside as a "high-crime" area

recent years, attracted by its charming mid-century bungalows and ranches and relatively affordable home prices, compared with the rest of the City.

The City recently completed its first phase of Generations Park, which covers 118 acres and hosts an amphitheater, a large playground, a picnic shelter, walking trails, and plenty of green open space for residents to use and enjoy. However, along with that growth has come increasing concern among residents about the pressures of gentrification. The City has been actively working to improve the neighborhood, and is engaged in a

comprehensive Northside Revitalization effort, along with Habitat for Humanity, to help residents with home repairs. Involving residents and stakeholders in all City initiatives and decisions impacting Aiken's Northside as actively as possible will help allay fears about the potential negative consequences of redevelopment and will ensure that new development/redevelopment on the Northside benefits as many existing residents as possible.

Along with concerns about gentrification, City stakeholders have noted that they have had challenges with the owners of vacant or neglected properties in the area. Many of these properties have been willed to heirs who do not live in Aiken, and for whatever reason are unmotivated to sell the properties. Because they do not live in the area, they are also unmotivated to make improvements/keep the properties in a state of good repair. In addition to being eyesores, these properties negatively impact the value of surrounding properties, and are contributing to Aiken's shortage of missing-middle and/or workforce housing and a lack of available properties for residential development.

One of the key challenges on Aiken's Northside is the common public perception that it is a high-crime area. Again, the City has been working to address this through its Safe Communities initiative, a "unified, proactive community approach to engage, educate and encourage recurring offenders to change their behavior and make healthy life choices."¹² The City has had some success in reducing crime in Northside, and improving public perception, but many residents still consider the area unsafe, particularly for families with young children. The City will need to continue to engage in aggressive efforts to both reduce crime and alter public perception of the Northside area and ensure that misinformation is corrected, in order

Reducing the Negative Impacts of Gentrification: East Palo Alto, CA

Anyone who follows tech is aware of the enormous gentrification pressures on Palo Alto, CA following the tech boom of the 1990s. Luckily, the community acted swiftly to protect existing lower-income residents. The city enacted a suite of policies, including:

- "Just cause" eviction protections
- Rent control
- Condominium conversion limitations
- Inclusionary zoning

Despite growing in population by 22% between 1990 and 2013, East Palo Alto remains a predominantly low-income minority community. While housing costs have increased astronomically throughout the rest of the City and region, housing in this area remains relatively affordable relative to household incomes.

Source: Crispell, Mitchell. (April 7, 2016). *How'd they do it? A look at three places that avoided gentrification.* Urban Displacement Project. <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/blog/how%E2%80%99d-they-do-it-look-three-places-avoided-gentrification>

¹² City of Aiken Safe Communities. (n.d.) Retrieved December 4, 2020 from <https://www.cityofaikensc.gov/aiken-safe-communities/>

to continue attracting residents and new residential development.

As in Aiken's downtown, fragmented property ownership and lack of available large parcels for development/redevelopment also presents a challenge for the Northside. Much of the area is also zoned for lower-density single family residential. While this may be appropriate in some areas of Northside, if the City wants to significantly increase its housing stock, it may need to consider re-zoning some parts of the Northside to higher densities and allow for a broader mix of uses. As previously mentioned, many young professionals/families are increasingly demanding amenities like parks, shopping, dining, and entertainment closer to where they live, preferably within a short walk or bike ride. Along with examining current zoning, the City will need to increase its efforts to make the Northside more bicycle and pedestrian friendly, as that is something that Millennials and Gen Z-ers have come to expect. The Aiken Municipal Development Commission can play a key role in working with local residents and stakeholders to assemble properties in areas where higher-density mixed-use, mixed-income redevelopment would be appropriate. The City will need to explore both "carrot" (incentive) and "stick" (enforcement) options for parcel assembly, including stronger enforcement of property maintenance codes, liens for tax evasion/nonpayment, and attractive options for property owners interested in selling. Making the process of selling/donating land to the City/Development Commission should be as transparent and streamlined as possible. It is important that the City publicize/be transparent about their land-banking goals, not only to protect themselves from controversy, but to make residents aware of their options.

3.3 Leveraging Investment

The City of Aiken and the greater Aiken/Augusta region has seen several significant investments in recent years, which have brought jobs/new residents and increasing public attention to the area. The region has a long history of attracting well-educated science and tech-based workers; the SRS has been operational since the 1950s, and employs close to 11,000 workers, many of whom live in Aiken and the surrounding counties. In addition to the processing and storing of nuclear materials, the SRS is home to extensive research and development (R&D) operations.

In recent years, USC Aiken has seen significant growth in student enrollment, and offers multiple programs in high-tech fields, including computer sciences, industrial engineering, and chemistry. The University also has several initiatives in the works that will bring jobs and significant investment to the region: the DreamPort, a National Guard

cybersecurity collaborative facility, will be built on USC Aiken's campus, and is a \$15 million investment, and will build on the synergies already generated by the U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence at Fort Gordon, GA. The Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC), the result of a public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of Energy's National Laboratories and USC Aiken, is also planned for USC Aiken's campus, and will employ approximately 100 people. Aiken and the surrounding region have quickly become a hub for multiple tech-related industries, and the City of Aiken would like to position themselves to leverage these investments for the benefit of their residents and businesses.

It is important to understand how the ongoing pivot toward advanced manufacturing will impact land use and employment in and around Aiken. In general, advanced manufacturing has been generally defined as a family of manufacturing activities that:

- Depend on the use and coordination of information, automation, computation, software, sensing, and networking;
- Utilize cutting-edge materials, advanced processes, and emerging capabilities in the physical and biological sciences (nanotechnology, chemistry, and biology).
- Advanced manufacturing production is also additive; products move through several assembly stages using third party logistics providers, linked by nimble supply chains.

Challenges:

- **City stakeholders are concerned that not enough has been done to prepare for several major investments in the region, and would like for Aiken to better position itself to take full advantage of these opportunities**
- **How will the City provide adequate housing and public facilities for a potential influx of new residents as a result of these developments?**

- Are highly aligned with research and development and closely associated with workforces that are strong in STEM fields, including science, technology, engineering, and math.

As quality expectations are already consistently high, companies are compelled to compete on price and contemplate purchase of capital equipment to increase capacity. This reality has implications for state incentives for manufacturing, which remain linked to job creation. Research shows that university-linked research and development (R&D) has been a recurring economic development driver. Over the last 30 years, attraction of R&D has been consistently seen as a route to expand local economic activity, create new businesses that foster productivity improvement and innovation, and drive job creation.

The WestEdge Innovation District, Charleston, SC

Led by the City of Charleston, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) and the MUSC Foundation, the WestEdge innovation district is a multi-phase, multi-use development located adjacent to MUSC that is anchored by 138,000 SF of office and research space, and features 587 apartments, a hotel, a Publix Super Market, shops, restaurants, and outdoor cafes.

The next phases of the development will include over 300,000 additional square feet of office/medical/research spaces, 1,100 more units of housing, as well as a fitness/wellness center and a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian network linking the development with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Source: MUSC Discovery District Innovation in Action: WestEdge. (n.d.) Retrieved December 4, 2020. <https://www.westedgecharleston.com/musc-discovery-district/>

Since the 1980's, the pursuit of research and development as drivers for innovation and economic development has been a recurring theme, with regions focused on the goal of attracting higher wage employment, spin-off development, and related economic value added. Attraction of R&D activity has been consistently seen as a key route to expand an area's economic base, creating industries that foster productivity improvement and constant innovation, creating new spin-off businesses opportunities. Universities have been crucial anchors of this activity, initially sponsoring the development of research parks all over the world, and more recently, providing a platform to leverage public and private research grants into new spin-off companies.

Universities have always been at the forefront of research and innovation, particularly since the 1980's when an initial wave of university-led research parks opened. Universities have always been crucial anchors, initially sponsoring the global development of research parks to create locations where public and private research grants can be leveraged to create new spin-off companies.

While the "research park" model has been around for more than 30 years, recent evolution in the model is important, linked with two explicit transitions that have emerged in the past 15 years:

- From traditional university-led research development to explicit tech transfer and partnership with the private sector
- From isolated suburban corridor and campus locations to more compact locations, connected by transit and anchored by a more diverse mix of uses

"Innovation Districts" are increasingly seen as essential locations where federal funding for research is leveraged to spin off ideas into private sector opportunities. These place-based environments become key ingredients in innovation, as immediate proximity creates opportunities for "accidental collisions" or "deliberate serendipity" between industries. Through these synergies, successful innovation centers are able to create place-based outcomes that private-sector companies increasingly seek out to access and cultivate talent. In addition to other businesses focused around advanced manufacturing and cybersecurity, other tech businesses dealing in software and IT tend to cluster around these industries. It is recommended that the City of Aiken explore options to establish one or more innovation districts, potentially in collaboration with Aiken County, which will allow the City to take advantage of synergies created by the explosive growth in high-tech industry in the region. As previously discussed, the process of "clustering" of high-tech industries in the area is already occurring; the City would do well to position itself to provide an attractive location for the other businesses that will begin to cluster around the DreamPort, AMC, and Fort Gordon's Cybersecurity Headquarters.

These investments provide a unique opportunity for the City to leverage the momentum already underway; however, the City will need a comprehensive approach to avoid being “left out” of the coming influx of jobs and new residents to the region. Branding and targeted marketing will be a key piece of the puzzle, and it is recommended that the City work closely with the Aiken Chamber, USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, and the Aiken Municipal Development Commission to ensure that they have a suite of strategies ready to deploy, including a portfolio of potential sites for innovation district(s), an aggressive campaign to make potential new residents aware of Aiken as a “community of choice” for living and working, opportunities for workforce training and development, and a strong understanding of immediately-available space for additional cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, software/IT, and R&D development (while development of the innovation district is underway).

3.4 Creating Room to Grow

The City of Aiken’s irregular boundaries have posed challenges for the City’s growth and development over the last several decades. Although the City has the option to annex land from Aiken County, it is often a lengthy and complicated process. However, if the City wants to continue attracting new growth and new residents, streamlining the annexation process will need to be a key consideration for Aiken going forward.

The authority to change municipal boundaries in South Carolina is defined under Title 5 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.¹³ In general, annexations can be controversial, and tend to be driven by:

- Response to consistent growth and the need to extend municipal services.
- Need for improved municipal services in unincorporated areas, including challenges with failing septic systems and contaminated wells.
- Economic development opportunities, primarily larger sites for intensive commercial/industrial uses, where access to water and sewer is essential
- Proactive planning for annexation of rural/extraterritorial jurisdictional areas, expressly to manage growth

Challenges:

- The City of Aiken’s irregular boundaries present a barrier to the City’s ability to grow and expand
- Aiken County does not have public water and sewer; most sites in the County are on well/septic and/or private systems
- Annexation can be a complicated and politically fraught process

State law allows for annexation petitions for contiguous property based on set percentages of residents who are in favor of the annexation. Eligible property owners (otherwise called “freeholders”) are residents above 18 years of age, who own property within a proposed annexation area. In general, annexation petitions which have less than 100 percent of eligible property owners are subject to additional rules and constraints and are therefore more difficult. The annexation petition requires information regarding expected zoning for the identified area to be annexed. State laws allow residents to opt-out of the proposed annexation.

The main policy debate about annexations centers on whether a proposed annexation is in the best interests of a host municipality, in terms of enhanced tax base or population size, or more explicit net increases in local government revenue which offset increased costs of service delivery. In general, proposed annexations are reviewed in terms of costs and benefits, mitigated by the need to clarify speculative development; that is, extending sewer and water into currently vacant areas to encourage future development. A critical component of any cost-benefit analysis of a proposed annexation is analysis of a potential increase in revenue vs. costs associated with provision of public utilities, fire and police services, and the improvement of existing roads. In some cases, annexations will create significant capital improvement costs to expand water and wastewater treatment facilities as well.

¹³South Carolina Code of Laws Unannotated. (n.d.). *Title 5 - Municipal Corporations*. Retrieved December 4, 2020, from <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t05c003.php>

Annexation Success Story: Charlotte, NC

A growing city of nearly 873,000, Charlotte, NC has quickly outgrown its original boundaries. Since 2018, the City has annexed nearly 800 acres from Mecklenburg County. Due to state laws, Charlotte must rely on voluntary annexation petitions. Landowners (often private developers) approach the city and request that their property is incorporated into city limits.

The voluntary annexation process gives the City less control over where their boundaries are expanded, but also helps to reduce controversy and smooth the process. If Aiken can make voluntary annexation more attractive for landowners through targeted growth strategies and economic development initiatives, they may be able to grow more organically in the future.

Sources: Portillo, Ely. (September 4, 2019) *Charlotte Is Growing - Literally - As The City Annexes More Land*. UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. <https://ui.uncc.edu/story/charlotte-growing-literally-city-annexes-more-land>

Items for Aiken to consider regarding annexation include:

- Annexation can increase costs to new residents, and are sometimes only partially offset by savings in insurance
- Existing buildings may not conform to city building and zoning codes
- Some rural users (farmers in particular) don't benefit from access to public infrastructure
- The city's existing treatment capacity for water and wastewater must be considered
- Identification of the areas on Aiken's Northside that would be target areas for annexation, and to what extent are the existing roads, streetlights, etc. in need of updating, and what the costs would be to extend utilities
- Are there any target areas where Aiken can encourage annexation that could potentially be rezoned for higher densities in the future?
- To what extent have homes/businesses

in the unincorporated area been built to different standards, and would that create code compliance issues for Aiken?

- Are there areas where municipal services are a real and pressing need? For example, areas where there is large-scale well/septic failure occurring?

AECOM recommends that the City of Aiken engage in a comprehensive study of the costs and benefits of large-scale annexation (potentially as part of the Capital Improvements Plan update process), and determine what course of action would most benefit the City's economic base, without adding significant capital costs to serve new residents. Regardless of what the City decides to do to give themselves room to grow, working to better foster increased communication/collaboration with Aiken County would be an ideal first step.

3.5 Leveraging Aiken's Equestrian Heritage

The City of Aiken has a long and storied equestrian heritage. The Aiken Steeplechase Association, founded in 1930, hosts annual races that draw more than 30,000 people each year. Among horse enthusiasts, the area is also well-known for its outstanding thoroughbreds, who compete in both steeplechase and flat racing. Training and race preparation facilities are an important component that attract owners, trainers, and veterinarians to Aiken for several months at a time. The City is home to Bruce's Field, which has hosted the Aiken Steeplechase for the last 54 years.¹⁴ Aiken is in the process of building a new racecourse to replace Bruce's Field on Rudy Mason Parkway on the City's eastern edge.

Challenges:

- The City has a well-established equine heritage, but the horse community has a reputation for being "exclusive"
- Unique equestrian amenities like Hitchcock Woods are underutilized by residents and visitors alike
- City stakeholders feel that Aiken's rich horse heritage and strong ties to the equine industry have been significantly under-leveraged

¹⁴ South Carolina Office of Tourism. (n.d.). *Aiken: A History of Equestrian Excellence*. Discover South Carolina. Retrieved December 4, 2020 from <https://discoversouthcarolina.com/articles/aiken-a-history-of-equestrian-excellence>

During the February workshop, it was noted that outside of the annual Aiken Steeplechase event, the City has not been able to leverage its renowned equine heritage into any other significant economic development opportunities. Aiken's horse community, many of whose members live in the historic Horse District section of the City, has a reputation for being somewhat insular. As previously noted, the City is also home to a 2,100-acre park, Hitchcock Woods, that is a popular location for trail riding, but is not well utilized by the rest of the community. The City's historic, picturesque downtown would make an ideal location for horse-drawn carriage tours, but regulations have complicated efforts to provide them on a regular basis.

The new 241-acre Steeplechase site currently under construction on

Aiken's east side is another opportunity for the City to leverage going forward. The new development will bring renewed attention to the City's equine industry and is an opportunity for the City to renew conversation about the future of the equine industry in Aiken. There may be opportunities for ancillary/complementary development on or near the site to serve racegoers, horse owners/breeders, and other stakeholders. It is recommended that the City consider exploring other options to activate the site/increase utilization as much as possible throughout the year. Youth camps, training opportunities for equestrians, and other large-scale events (both horse-related and non-equestrian events) could be held during the off season, generating additional revenue for the City.

There are multiple examples throughout the U.S. of successful equine-focused economic development. Tryon

Figure 8: Image from Aiken's 2009 Steeplechase Celebration



Source: Wikimedia Commons (n.d.). Retrieved December 4, 2020 from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Road_cart_from_Carriage_Parade_after_1st_Race_3426681228.jpg

Kentucky Horse Park: Lexington, KY

In 1978, the Kentucky Horse Park, a 1,224-acre working horse farm and an educational theme park, opened in Lexington, KY. The equestrian facility is dedicated to "man's relationship with the horse." The park is open to the public and offers a twice-daily "Horses of the World" Show, showcasing both common and rare horses from around the globe. The park also has a 260-site campground, shops, and restaurants.

According to the Lane Report, the Kentucky Horse Park contributes \$200 million in direct economic impact to the state annually. According to a recent study, the overall equine industry in KY study showed the equine industry in Kentucky had a \$3 billion economic impact, and generated over 40,000 jobs.

Sources: Doolin, Anne Charles. (October 11, 2013). *Measuring Kentucky's equine industry. The Lane Report.* <https://www.lanereport.com/25093/2013/10/measuring-kentuckys-equine-industry/>; Kentucky Horse Park (n.d.). Retrieved December 4, 2020 from <https://kyhorsepark.com/>

Equestrian Center in Mill Spring, NC is a 1,600-acre multi-use equestrian center with a racetrack that also offers lodging, shopping, dining, golfing, and winery tours. Tryon also hosted the 2018 FEI World Equestrian Games.¹⁵ The equestrian center generated an estimated \$53 million in economic impact for Polk County-area businesses in 2015.¹⁶ Because Tryon is multi-functional, it attracts both horse-enthusiasts and regular tourists alike, and generates revenue for the tourism, retail, and service industries. Another example of a multi-use equestrian facility that has generated significant benefits for the surrounding area is the Virginia Horse Center in Lexington, VA, which generated an estimated \$95 million in economic impact to the

¹⁵ Martin, Edward. (July 30, 2018). Monstrous impact likely from Tryon equestrian center's September event. *Business North Carolina*. <https://businessnc.com/monstrous-impact-likely-from-tryon-equestrian-centers-september-event/>

¹⁶ Justice, Leah. (January 14, 2015). Tryon Equestrian Center projected to have \$53M economic impact in 2015. *Tryon Daily Bulletin*. <https://www.tryondailybulletin.com/2015/01/14/tryon-equestrian-center-projected-to-have-53m-economic-impact-in-2015/>

state in 2019, and supports nearly 900 jobs.¹⁷ The 600-acre Horse Center features nine show rings, eight schooling rings, a 4,000 seat coliseum, eight barns, a tractor pull, campgrounds, special event spaces, and a café.¹⁸ The Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY is another example of a multi-use equestrian center that has generated major economic impact for the region (see case study call-out for additional information). All of these examples provide models of successful equine-focused facilities that have been able to generate significant revenues, and spur additional economic growth in their respective regions.

USC Aiken offers a pre-veterinary science pre-professional program, which is another opportunity for the City to partner with the University to link students and professionals in the veterinary field with an interest in the equine industry to Aiken's existing horse-enthusiast community. Opportunities for partnerships between the City, the University, and the non-profit Aiken Steeplechase Association should be explored that would link students with opportunities for on-the-job training in the equine veterinary field. If significant interest is generated, USC Aiken may be able to expand their veterinary program offerings, and create a direct path for students interested in equine medicine to co-ops, internships, and ultimately, full-time employment in the field, which would be another strategy for increasing resident retention and reducing brain drain.

3.6 Enhancing Aiken's Gateways

Aiken's physical position in South Carolina and the Southeast is quite advantageous in terms of its regional linkages. It is an easy location to visit from Atlanta GA, Augusta GA, Columbia SC, Charlotte NC, Asheville NC, and Charleston SC and conversely easy for residents to travel to those locations as well as many vacation areas in several nearby mountain areas, lakes, and beaches on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. Interstate 20 is approximately ten miles to the north of Aiken, providing easy access to and from Aiken.

In meetings with stakeholders and during the February 2020 workshop, desire was expressed to identify and celebrate key entrances to Aiken. While the roads may be familiar to most residents, it may be less obvious to the many visitors to Aiken at exactly what point they have arrived at their destination. For a relatively modest investment, key entrances can be marked in a variety of creative solutions with signs, markers, columns, or archways. Several potential locations have been identified for gateway enhancements:

1. From the West – Route 78 at the intersection of Vacluse Road, close to the site of the old County Hospital
2. From the East – East Richland Ave and Park Avenue
3. From the South - Whiskey Road at East Pine Log Road
4. From the South - Whiskey Road at Talatha Church Road
5. From the North – US Route 1 at Hampton Avenue

Gateways at any or all of these locations also reinforce the areas we recommend for focus on redevelopment. These areas of focus are shown in Figure 9, and suggested projects and strategies to consider for those areas are discussed in more detail in Section 4.

¹⁷ *Virginia Horse Center's Economic Impact Delivers \$94.9 Million to Commonwealth in 2019* (February 8, 2020). Virginia Horse Center Foundation. <http://vahorsecenter.org/vhcf-in-the-news/#:~:text=Virginia%20Horse%20Center's%20Economic%20Impact%20Delivers%20%2494.9%20Million%20to%20Commonwealth%20in%202019&text=According%20to%20the%20report%2C%20operations,economic%20activity%2C%20supporting%20896%20jobs.>

¹⁸ *Virginia Horse Center*. (n.d.). Retrieved on December 4, 2020 from <http://vahorsecenter.org/>

Figure 10: Suggested City Gateway Improvements



DISCLAIMER: THIS DISPLAY IS FOR CONCEPTUAL RENDERING ONLY. SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON FINAL SURVEY AND DESIGN. USERS OF THIS INFORMATION/DATA SHOULD REVIEW OR CONSULT THE PRIMARY INFORMATION AND DATA SOURCES TO ASCERTAIN THE USABILITY OF THE INFORMATION.



AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA PROPOSED GATEWAY

AECOM

4. Action Plan

The following tables recommend a series of actions, strategies, partnerships, and projects that will help empower the City of Aiken to achieve many of its economic and social development goals. With continued focus and targeted investment, Aiken can continue to strengthen its identity as a “lifelong community” - a community in which to live, work, learn, play, and grow.

The recommendations are grouped into two categories: suggested overall actions and strategies to address the issues and key concerns identified throughout the discovery and workshop process, and a more targeted list of specific projects that AECOM recommends the City explore.

Overall actions and strategies are grouped by the following categories:

- Suggested strategies for attracting a diverse resident population
- Target areas for additional development/investment
- Ways to leverage catalytic investments occurring in the City and greater region
- Creating room for the City to grow and expand their service areas
- Suggestions for better leveraging Aiken’s rich equestrian heritage
- Ways to enhance the City’s gateways and create a “sense of place”

Suggested projects to explore are focused on Aiken’s core, including the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. This list of projects is based around key areas of focus discussed during the February workshop. Additionally, other actions that the City has previously taken under consideration and/or that are currently in the planning phases are listed in Appendix A.

4.1 Recommended Actions/Strategies

Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Recommended Leaders*	Timeframe
Retain and Attract Diverse Residents			
Provide a range of housing types at diverse price points	Use 2020 Rental Housing Market Study as a baseline for conducting a study/gap analysis to identify Aiken's goals for increasing both for-rent and for-sale housing supply	TBD	Short-term
	Explore inclusionary zoning, tax credits, and other regulatory and incentive options for encouraging the private sector to invest in developing "missing middle" housing in Aiken, with Downtown being one area of focus	TBD	Short-term
	Work with community stakeholders to identify target areas for residential development/redevelopment within their communities, with the downtown area of Aiken being one area of focus	TBD	Short-term
	Work with the Aiken Municipal Development Commission and local CDCs to coordinate the acquisition and assembly of land and/or derelict properties, to be repackaged as available sites for medium-density housing/mixed-use, mixed-income residential and marketed to the development community where appropriate	TBD	Mid-term
	Continue to work with local community development organizations (i.e. Second Baptist CDC) to coordinate targeted infill redevelopment of vacant/derelict properties	TBD	Mid-term
	Work to revise current zoning ordinance to re-zone properties low-density single-family residential properties for additional medium-density residential development, where appropriate	TBD	Mid-term
	Issue RFPs for land assembled for housing development/redevelopment to the development community; ensure community and local stakeholder involvement throughout the process	TBD	Mid-to-long-term
Invest in healthcare services	Work with local providers to ensure that existing facilities and services are connected with those who need them through targeted outreach, marketing, and community engagement	TBD	Short-term
	Consider the formation of a health care foundation to support strategies to target and retain more specialists to Aiken, particularly in geriatrics, memory care, and other specialties that serve an aging population	TBD	Mid-term
	Partner with local hospitals and care facilities and evaluate incentives to support expansion of health care services, to provide more services locally, so residents don't have to travel outside the City/County for treatment	TBD	Mid-term
	Partner with local care facilities and industry groups to explore ways to provide differing levels of care to aging residents, from independent living through full-time nursing care, and in-home health treatment options	TBD	Mid-term

<p>Invest in minority and women's business development</p>	<p>Design and implement programming to build bridges and share resources to maximize a more equitable, diverse and inclusive community for all. One focus would be improving access to tools, resources, funding and business opportunities for Minority and Women's Business Enterprise (MWBE) businesses. Another focus would be on improving access to education and workforce training resources and opportunities necessary to move people into higher paying jobs.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Invest in existing parks, and create more small parks/green spaces close to residential areas that provide opportunities for recreation and socialization</p>	<p>Partner with residents and community organizations to offer more programming/amenities at existing parks, and ensure that those parks are well-advertised and accessible to as many Aiken residents as possible</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Assess current inventory of parks and open space by neighborhood; engage neighborhood associations, schools, and community groups to explore areas of need</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Engage the Aiken Chamber's Aiken Young Professionals Group to lead discussions on strategies to attract young professionals and young families to Aiken; encourage them to survey their peers on changes they would like to see the City make going forward</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Offer more programming/amenities at existing parks; ensure that parks are well-advertised to residents</p>	<p>Partner with local neighborhood associations and other community organizations to create more small parks/green spaces close to residential areas that provide opportunities for recreation and socialization</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
<p>Invest in K-12 education</p>	<p>Work with Aiken Public Schools to launch a public campaign on social media and other platforms to correct misperceptions about public school quality in Aiken; ensure that this information is available to local businesses, particularly real estate professionals. This should include search engine optimization, to ensure correct information is readily available to residents and prospective residents doing web searches about Aiken school quality.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Partner public schools with local institutions of higher learning (USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College) to offer apprenticeships and co-ops for high-school students, aligned with opportunities in R&D, advanced manufacturing, and software / IT.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
<p>Increase public awareness of Aiken as a "Community of Choice"</p>	<p>Engage in a targeted marketing campaign to ensure that visitors and people moving to the region for work are aware that Aiken is a "community of choice." Ensure that region's top employers have direct access to information on housing, schools, and amenities in the City of Aiken to use for recruiting and new hires. Update City/Chamber websites to direct potential residents to more information about schools, housing, and the high quality-of-life in Aiken</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

<p>Invest in multi-modal transportation infrastructure linking homes, job centers, amenities, and retail/services</p>	<p>Although Aiken may not have the population size or density for a robust fixed public transportation system, there are many lower-cost, smaller-scale alternatives that the City should explore for providing better linkages between homes, job centers, and retail and services. Increasing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, particularly in growth centers, would both better serve existing residents, and offer alternative modes of transportation that are increasingly demanded by Millennials and Gen Z-ers.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-to-long-term</p>
<p>Identify Target Areas for Investment</p>			
<p>Incentivize medium-to-high density residential mixed-use development downtown</p>	<p>Work with the Aiken Municipal Development Commission, local business leaders, and other City economic development stakeholders to increasing awareness of available incentives for downtown development/redevelopment</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Engage community stakeholders in creating a broader vision for a live/work/play, 18-to-24-hour downtown; use this vision to guide future development in downtown</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Explore options for more flexible zoning and/or special districts (including special taxing districts such as TIFs) to encourage higher-density, mixed-used/mixed income development, and options for incentivizing affordable housing, including density bonuses, tax credits/incentives, public service enhancements, etc. Again, ensure that any changes made are appropriately communicated to the broader development community</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
<p>Engage in partnerships to assemble land/properties for redevelopment in target growth areas</p>	<p>Explore options for property acquisition by the City/Aiken Municipal Development Commission of parcels that can be acquired, assembled, and developed for medium-to-high-density mixed-use, mixed-income residential development</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
<p>Consider policies and regulations to encourage infill redevelopment</p>	<p>Enforce existing zoning and building code property maintenance and upkeep regulations; write tickets and issue fines for properties not in compliance</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
	<p>Initiate tax-foreclosure on properties that are both tax delinquent and vacant; work with local CDCs to find optimal solutions for redeveloping properties that have reverted to the City through this process</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
	<p>Explore options for additional regulations/enforcement measures to discourage property neglect and vacancy, including additional tax penalties for structures vacant longer than a certain time period (i.e. six months), similar to the "vacancy tax" recently adopted by the City of Los Angeles, CA</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
<p>Consider implementing protections for existing residents from gentrification</p>	<p>Explore options for implementing eviction protections, rent control, inclusionary zoning, and other policies and regulations designed to reduce gentrification pressures on existing residents</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>

<p>Explore new programming and entertainment options downtown</p>	<p>Engage the Aiken Chamber's Young Professionals group, along with local artists, musicians, and other stakeholders involved in the arts & entertainment fields to explore options for unique, regular programming and entertainment offerings downtown that will attract a wide audience, including non-Aiken residents.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Explore opportunities for shared parking downtown</p>	<p>Engage in a parking study of downtown. Determine when "peak parking hours" are for businesses downtown, and explore opportunities for businesses with different parking needs to share parking areas. Analyze opportunities to create additional parking in areas where vacant land is unsuitable for new development; consider underground, elevated, and/or stacked parking options, to allow more cars to park in a smaller footprint.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-to-mid-term</p>
<p>Leverage Catalytic Investments</p>			
<p>Build strong relationships with the region's top employers, local economic development organizations, and other key stakeholders</p>	<p>Ensure regular communication between local economic engines and the Aiken Chamber and other economic development entities. This will allow top employers to ensure that their needs (for an educated workforce, room for growth/expansion, etc.) are being met by the City/region, and in turn, allow the City to work on creative ways to leverage the presence of these key organizations into additional economic development opportunities for complimentary businesses/encourage "clustering"</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Establish an Innovation District near USC Aiken</p>	<p>Examine opportunities to establish a special district close to USC Aiken, such as the WestEdge Innovation District in Charleston, to foster clustering of businesses linked to advanced manufacturing, software/IT and technology, and take advantage of existing synergies in the region. The district should be mixed-use in nature, providing access to retail, dining, housing, and other amenities, in support of new research and production facilities operated by the private sector/universities</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-to-long-term</p>
<p>Provide workforce development opportunities for Aiken residents</p>	<p>Strengthen partnerships between USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, major employers, and the local community to ensure that Aiken residents have the opportunity to gain skills and abilities that match what the region's top employers are looking for. Implement new and/or strengthen existing programs that provide a smooth "pipeline" from USC Aiken, Aiken Technical, and local high schools to jobs in the region through co-op, internship, and apprenticeship programs</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>
	<p>Establish a small-business incubator in Downtown and/or at USC Aiken/the proposed Innovation District to nurture local small businesses and encourage entrepreneurship. Encourage existing successful Aiken-based small- and medium-sized businesses to "mentor" start-ups/new businesses</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Mid-term</p>

Create Room to Grow			
Evaluate capacity of City Utilities to Expand Sewer Capacity in Support of Annexation Efforts	Evaluate capacity of City Water and Wastewater utilities to support provision of public water and sewer as part of annexation strategies. Conduct outreach with residents to understand concerns related to annexation. Confirm the business case for annexation	TBD	Mid-Term
Work to improve City/County communication and collaboration on key issues	Establish a working group between Aiken City and Aiken County to regularly meet to communicate/collaborate on areas of mutual benefit/concern	TBD	Short-term
Leverage Aiken's Equestrian Heritage			
Engage with local horse-enthusiast community stakeholders	Explore options for an Equine Heritage committee/task force of representatives from the equine community and other key stakeholders to establish goals for the equine industry in Aiken and the broader region, and guide equine-related economic development initiatives. Invite representatives from other communities that have successfully leveraged their equine resources for growth and economic development (Lexington, KY; Lexington, VA; Mill Spring, NC, etc.) to advise on best practices	TBD	Short-term
Partner with Hitchcock Woods Foundation to find areas of mutual benefit	Increasing utilization of Hitchcock Woods, and awareness of the park as a unique community amenity, would benefit both the Foundation and the City. A partnership between the Foundation, the City, the Chamber, and other stakeholders would allow the Foundation to leverage other resources to raise awareness of the park, improve programming options, and encourage visitation by both residents and visitors/tourists	TBD	Short-term
Engage in a study to determine ways to leverage existing horse-industry-related assets in Aiken into a broader economic development strategy	It is recommended that the Equine Heritage committee/task Force engage industry experts to study the City/greater region for opportunities for a "destination" facility similar to the Kentucky Horse Park or Tryon International Equestrian Center that will both draw visitors/tourism to the region and provide an amenity for new and existing Aiken residents. This could be either at the new Steeplechase Site or at another location, if it is better-suited	TBD	Mid-term
Leverage new Steeplechase site	Leverage the attention/publicity Aiken is receiving for the new Steeplechase Site into a broader discussion about the future of the equine industry in Aiken; explore options for ancillary development to the site designed to serve racegoers, horse owners/breeders, and other stakeholders.	TBD	Short-term
	Explore other opportunities for new Steeplechase site utilization year-round, including camps, training, and other uses that would keep the site active and well-utilized during the off-season.	TBD	Mid-term

<p>Work with USC Aiken to provide students with opportunities in the local equine veterinary industry</p>	<p>USC Aiken offers a pre-veterinary science pre-professional program. This is another opportunity for the City to partner with the University to link students and professionals in the veterinary field with an interest in the equine industry to Aiken’s existing horse-enthusiast community, and increase resident retention</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Enhance Gateways</p>			
<p>Invest in enhancement and improvements to Gateways and parkways</p>	<p>Confirm key entrance and exits to/from Aiken and invest in infrastructure to highlight these points. Develop maintenance plan along parkways and streets in Aiken for tree pruning, better visibility, lighting, and sidewalks where needed.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>
<p>Boost pedestrian and multi-modal accessibility</p>	<p>Identify key pedestrian crossings (existing and needed) and develop improvement plan for crosswalks with striping, lighting and warning lights. Create bike and walking promenades and paths for greater connections in neighborhoods to parks, schools, community centers, and shopping.</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Short-term</p>

*Leading organizations to be assigned at a later date by the City of Aiken/appropriate stakeholder groups

4.2 Recommended Projects to Explore

Recommendation	Implementation Strategies	Recommended Leaders*	Timeframe
Downtown Core			
Develop Hotel Aiken site	Conduct market study to confirm optimal development plan for the hotel building and parcel with/without) adjacent parcels. Consider residential housing on upper floors of hotel; parking on adjacent sites as part of any new construction. Bar / restaurant / entertainment as part of the development.	TBD	Short-term
Conduct in-depth market analysis	Assess current and potential market conditions and projections for retail, restaurants / bars, residential, hotel. This will further inform the optimal plan for the Hotel Aiken building and parcel.	TBD	Short-term
Assess grant programs as incentives for development	Assess using grant programs for rebuilding / refreshing facades, installation of grease traps, green infrastructure and district-scale stormwater management solutions.	TBD	Short-term
Assess and reinstate/reinvigorate Main Street program or a similar program	Review Aiken's experience as part of the South Carolina Main Street program, successes achieved, and challenges. Confirm benefit of continued participation.	TBD	Mid-term
Adjacent to Downtown Core			
North			
Develop neighborhood services and housing	Assess development potential of former Sav-A-Lot site for grocery and neighborhood retail with housing.	TBD	Short-term
Strengthen connection along Route 1 to I-20	Assess connecting Generations Park via a multi-modal trail. Identify potential sites along Route 1 for development.	TBD	Mid-term
East			
Assess development opportunities on East Richland Ave	Identify derelict, underdeveloped or inactive sites; combine with gateway enhancements to invigorate entrances and exits	TBD	Short-term
Develop amenities / services for Citizens Park	Identify 10-12 acres in or adjacent to Citizen's Park for development of a hotel and restaurant for families and athletes attending tournaments and games at Citizen's Park.	TBD	Mid-term
South			
Enhance South Boundary Avenue / gateway opportunities	Explore strategies for highlighting South Boundary Avenue as a connector / gateway between Hitchcock Woods and Aiken's downtown core. Build into marketing and branding materials; explore connections to community assets such as the Aiken Historical Museum.	TBD	Mid-term
West			
Explore development potential of Old County Hospital site	Enhance west entrance of Aiken with potential townhome / small village type development. Link development via multimodal paths to the Lessie B. Price Community Center and Eustis Park Playground	TBD	Short-term
Identify location(s) at or adjacent to USC Aiken and develop master plan for an innovation center associated with the AMC and DreamPort	Build on momentum created by investments in cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing to further catalyze investment and development of innovation economy.	TBD	Short-term

*Leading organizations to be assigned at a later date by the City of Aiken/appropriate stakeholder groups

4.3 Conceptual Redevelopment: Former Save-a-Lot Grocery Store Site, North Aiken

Another key gateway point for the City, this site previously held a Save-a-Lot grocery store, which recently closed. This area has been identified by City stakeholders as a target area for redevelopment. AECOM created a conceptual site sketch plan to reimagine the site as a mixed-use, mixed-income development with residential townhomes, a grocery store, multimodal pedestrian paths, and green/open space. Figure 11 shows the site as it currently exists; Figure 12 illustrates the site's connections to other key areas of the City, and Figure 13 shows a conceptual sketch plan of what a mixed-use redevelopment of the site could look like.

Figure 11: Former Save-a-Lot Site Location

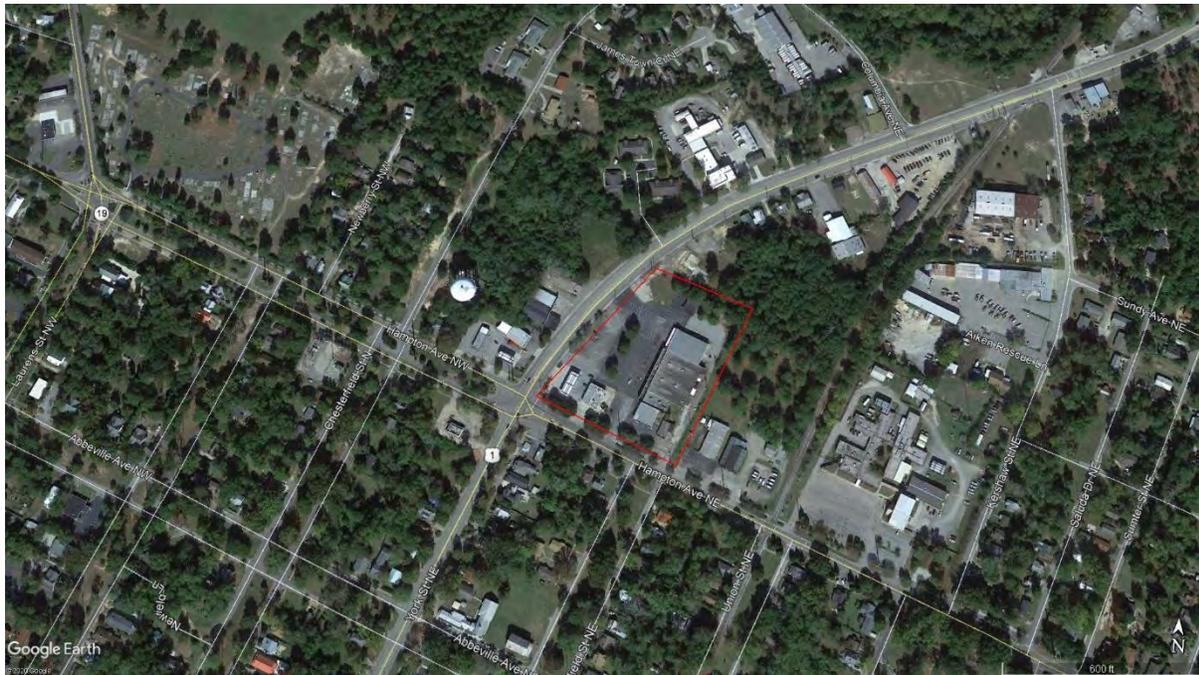


Figure 12: Site Connections to Other Key Areas

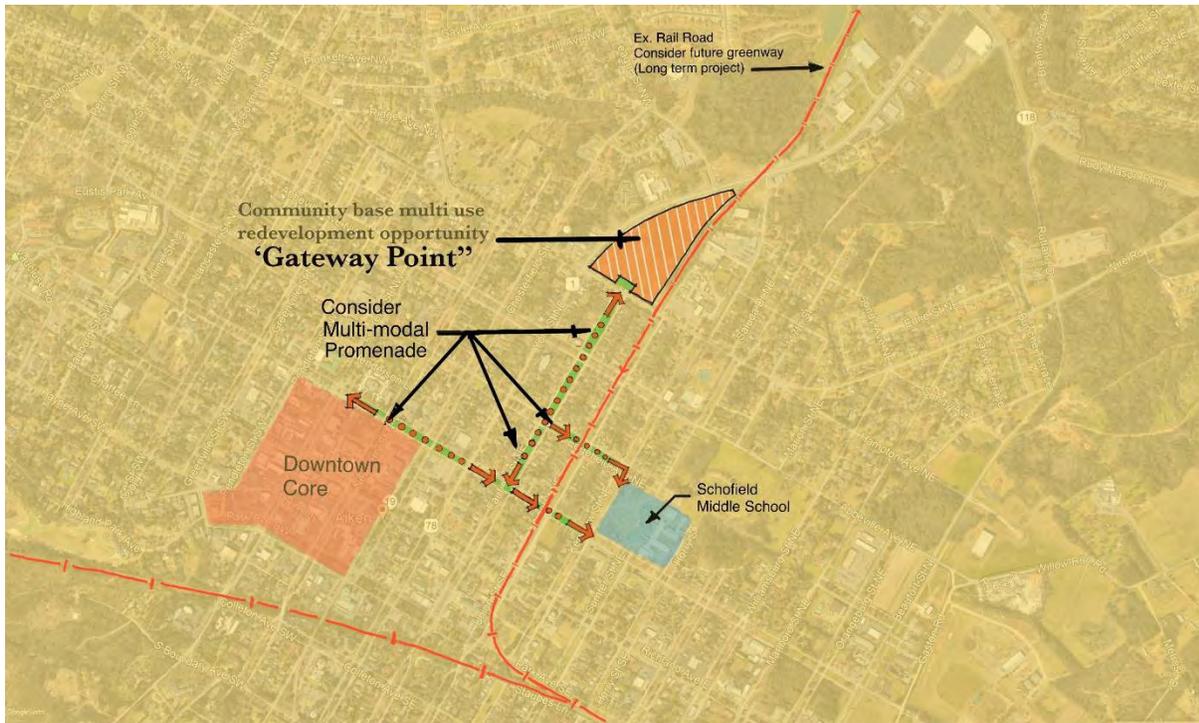


Figure 13: Conceptual Site Sketch Plan



4.4 Recommended Sources of Information on Funding

There are many local/regional, state, and national programs and initiatives that may be able to assist Aiken with finding appropriate sources of funding for studying, planning, and executing projects and initiatives. The City of Aiken has a state Opportunity Zone (Census Tract 4003021400), which is eligible for additional federal incentives, and is an attractive investment opportunity for private development. A list of organizations that offer additional information on grants, incentives, and other types of funding for economic development planning and implementation is below:

National

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Smart Growth America
- The Urban Land Institute
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Smart Growth Funding Opportunities
- National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Program
- U.S. Economic Development Administration
- The National Endowment for the Humanities
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture
- The American Planning Association Foundation

State

- South Carolina Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program
- Municipal Association of South Carolina
- South Carolina Association for Community Economic Development
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
- South Carolina Department of Commerce
- South Carolina Rural Infrastructure Authority

Local/Regional

- Lower Savannah Council of Governments
- Community Foundation for the Central Savannah River Area
- Habitat Aiken

4.5 Conclusion

The City has expressed a desire to become a lifelong community, where opportunities for obtaining, and maintaining, a high standard of living and quality of life exist for residents at every age and stage.

What are the features of a lifelong community?

- **Provides housing and transportation options** that are affordable, accessible, located close to services, and ensure that residents of all ages and abilities can access services and remain independent.
- **Encourages healthy lifestyles** by through walkable, safe design that promotes physical activity and social interaction and enable easy access to food and healthcare.
- **Provides access to necessary amenities, services, and information** such as grocery stores, drugstores, physician's offices, childcare and adult care, and in-home care services. Access to important information, such as wayfinding signs to local amenities and services and information about available services, are prevalent and informative

Aiken already has many of the building blocks of a lifelong community: a strong street network that facilitates connectivity; an attractive and walkable downtown core; green space, parks, and community centers that facilitate social interaction and physical and mental well-being; and, most importantly, residents and leaders who exhibit enormous “pride of place,” and work tirelessly to improve their neighborhoods and greater community. These actions, strategies, and recommended areas of focus are intended to help the City leverage its many existing assets and resources to build upon the groundwork already laid by previous studies, plans, and initiatives to strengthen the City’s identity as a “community of choice,” where all residents have the opportunity to live, work, and thrive, at every age and stage in life.

Principles of Lifelong Communities

Connectivity

Options for getting from one place to another, reducing traffic. Street network that supports multiple modes of transportation.

Pedestrian Access and Transit

Vibrant streetscapes, destinations to walk to, connected and safe sidewalks.

Neighborhood Retail and Services

Services within walking distance of housing to reduce auto travel and dependency, increase walkability, and create community hubs.

Social Interaction

Adequate green space, community centers, neighborhood gardens

Diversity of Dwelling Types

Residents can remain in their communities as their needs and preferences change

Healthy Living

Environment that promotes physical activity (trails and bike paths), neighborhood-scale groceries offering fresh fruits and vegetables, health clinics and medical offices within walking distance

Consideration for Existing Residents

Options for existing residents to remain in the community as redevelopment occurs.

Source: Lifelong Communities Handbook, Atlanta Regional Commission

5. Appendix

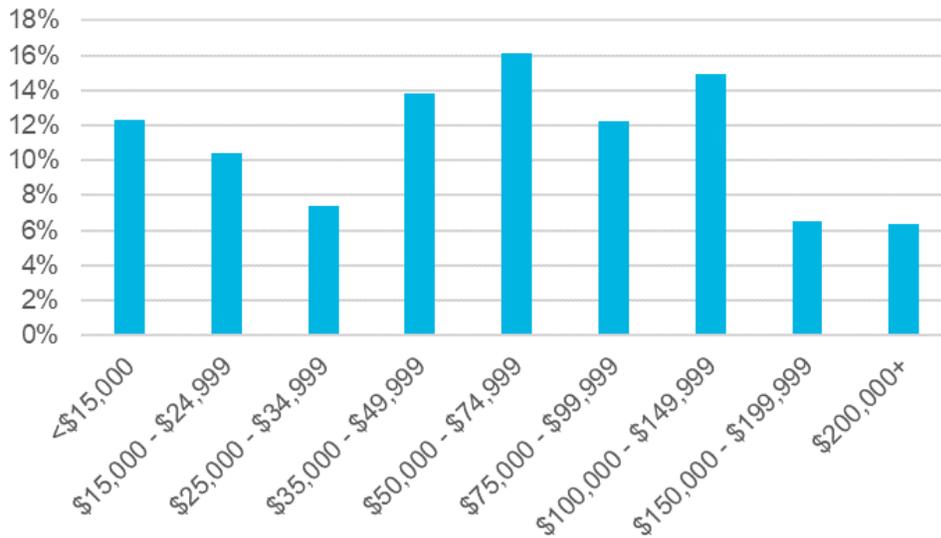
Appendix A: Actions Already Underway

These actions are currently under consideration by the City. Each are in various stages, from early concept planning to cost estimates and funding plans under development. Further analysis is warranted on these actions to determine needed prioritization and if and how these projects achieve the City's vision for growth as a lifelong community.

1. Whiskey Road Corridor
 - a. Powderhouse Connector
 - b. Pawnee/Neilson Connector
 - c. Dougherty Road
 - d. East Gate Connector
 - e. Whiskey Road
 - f. Pine Log to Powderhouse Road
2. University Parkway
3. Water
 - a. Water Distribution Modeling
 - b. New Water Treatment Plant
4. Sewer
 - a. Sewer System Modeling
5. Stormwater
 - a. Citywide improvements
 - b. Hitchcock Woods stormwater improvements
6. Aiken Together – these projects enhance and feature the diverse cultural, historic and recreational offerings of Aiken.
 - a. The Center for African-American History, Art, and Culture
 - b. The Aiken Visitors Center and Train Museum
 - c. Savannah Heritage Museum

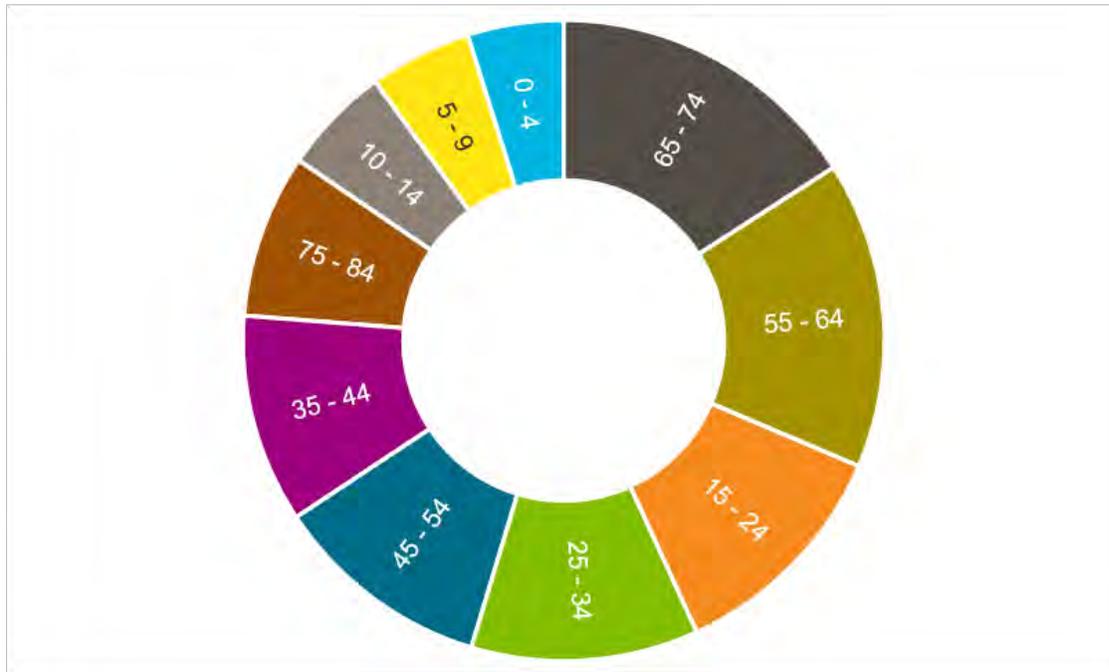
Appendix B: Supporting Tables

Appendix Table 1: City of Aiken Household Income Breakdown Estimate, 2020



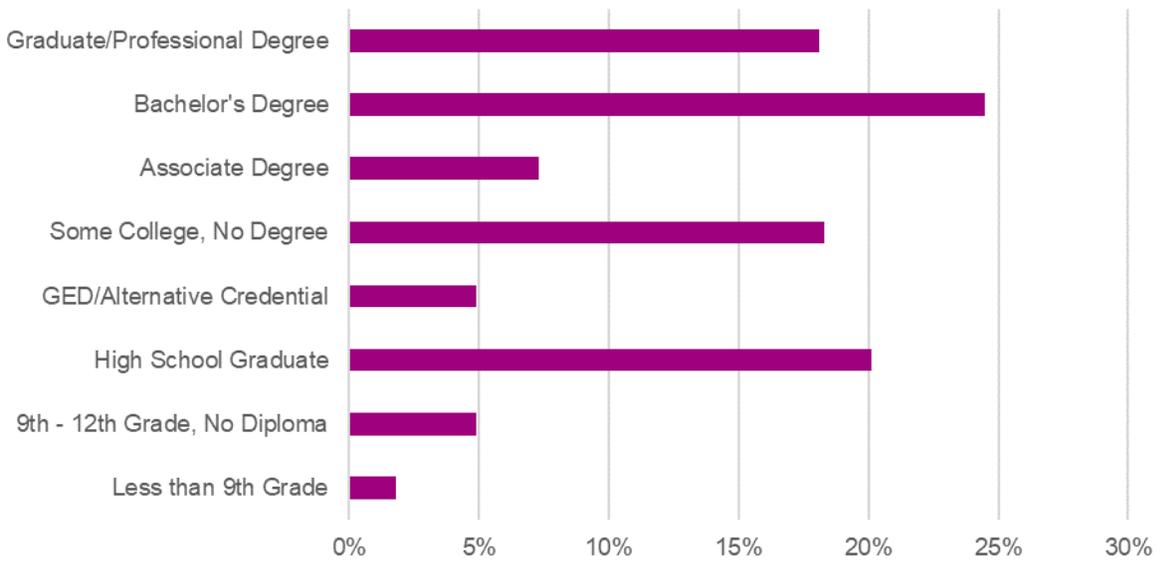
Source: ESRI, 2020

Appendix Table 2: City of Aiken Population Age Breakdown, 2020



Source: ESRI, 2020

Appendix Table 3: City of Aiken Population over Age 25 by Education, 2020



Source: ESRI, 2020

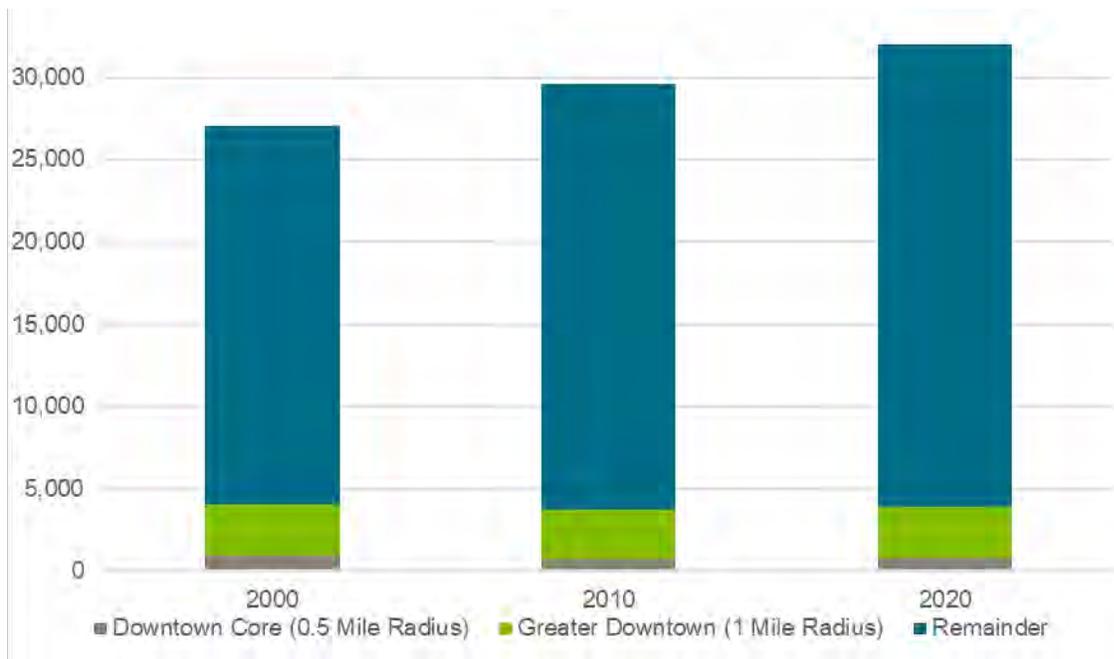
Appendix Table 4: Underdeveloped Industries, City of Aiken, 2020

Industry (NAICS)	Top Retirement Counties LQ Range*	Aiken LQ
Ambulatory Health Services (621)	1.38-1.78	0.84
Hospitals (622)	1.23-1.84	0.53
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (623)	1.88-2.63	1.37
Golf Courses and Country Clubs (71391)	3.37-4.79	3.76
Offices of Real Estate Agents and Brokers (5312)	1.42-3.24	0.63

*Minimum and maximum location quotients among the 5 counties with highest percent of 65+ residents and population over 100k (Charlotte, Citrus, Sumter, Sarasota, Highlands counties in FL)

Source: EMSI; AECOM 2020

Appendix Table 5: City of Aiken Population by Area, 2000 - 2020



Source: ESRI, 2020

Appendix Table 6: Retail Rents Vs. Sales, Downtown Aiken, 2010 - 2019

Downtown Averages	2010/2011	2018/2019	CAGR
Rents (All Retail)	\$15.36	\$12.92	-2.10%
Rents (Retail under 5,000 SF)	\$14.29	\$15.58	1.10%
Rents (Retail over 5,000 SF)	\$16.06	\$9.34	-6.50%
Building Sales (per SF)	\$68.00	\$111.83	6.40%

Source: ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates

Appendix C: City of Aiken Document Review



City of Aiken Document Review

Technical Memorandum, January 21, 2020

Purpose of this Technical Memorandum

As described in the opening statement and “Project Scope of Services” in the December 12, 2019 *Economic Development & Master Planning Services*, “The City of Aiken (Client) wants to forge a path forward for its growth and development, and to this end, is seeking the services of consultants to create a roadmap that leads to this goal.” As an initial due diligence step in the AECOM Master Planning team’s process, the team has reviewed applicable material from numerous documents. Each of the 21 documents was reviewed and high-level goals, themes, conclusions, and recommendations were outlined. Specific, actionable vision statements were pulled out of each of these documents and organized into overarching themes. Finally, the specific projects that were mentioned in these documents are denoted and, where possible, entered into a GIS database.

Table of Contents

Strategic Plan Review.....Pages 2-15
City Vision Alignment Review.....Pages 16-34
List of Specific Projects from Aiken Documents.....Pages 35-45

Documents reviewed include:

1. Aiken’s Tomorrow: Local Impacts, Global Impacts – *City of Aiken - 2010*
2. City of Aiken Annual Budget Fiscal Year 2018-2019 – *City of Aiken - 2018*
3. Plan Aiken Comprehensive Plan – *City of Aiken - 2017*
4. Northside Comprehensive Plan – *McBride Dale Clarion - 2008*
5. Old Aiken Master Plan – *Aiken City Council - 2005*
6. Union Street Area Plan – *City of Aiken - 2012*
7. Whiskey Road Corridor Study – *LDR International - 2001*
8. Aiken City Council Horizons – *Aiken City Council - 2014*
9. Investors Prospectus – *City of Aiken - 2019*
10. Regional Economic Benchmarking Report for Aiken County – *USC Aiken School of Business Administration – 2017 Update*
11. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Final Report – *Community Designs, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Kalback Design Studios - 2016*
12. Regional Workforce Study – *TIP Strategies - 2015*
13. Compelling Place to Live (CPTL) – *Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2017*
14. The Next Big Ideas, Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations Report – *Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2013*
15. Rental Housing Market Study of Aiken, South Carolina – *Novogradac & Company, LLP - 2018*
16. Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative – *USC Aiken - 2019*
17. Cybersecurity Collaborative – *USC Aiken - 2019*
18. Old Aiken Design Guidelines – *Community Design Solutions & McBride Dale Clarion – 2018 Update*
19. Public Library Renovation Press Releases – *Friends of the Aiken County Public Library – 2019*
20. Whiskey Road – Powderhouse Road Connector Studies – *Carter Burgess – 2006 & W.R. Toole Engineers, Inc – 2012*
21. Article re: Aiken Mall Mixed-Use Redevelopment – *Aiken Standard - 2020*



Strategic Plan Review

1- Aiken's Tomorrow: Local Impacts, Global Impacts – *City of Aiken - 2010*

- i. The City of Aiken wrote a living document in 1992 in response to the question: "How will the City of Aiken survive a major reduction in the work force at the Savannah River Site?" Thus embarked a two-year planning process that resulted in a comprehensive approach to identifying the goals and priorities for Aiken as it moved into the future. It was updated again in 2000 and then expired in 2010, at which point 400 people participated in the creation of this document, which carries on in the same spirit.
- ii. Goals are parceled into Aiken's priorities as four different visions of Aiken's character:
 - a. Historic City
 - b. Family City
 - c. Business City
 - d. Green City
- ii. Goals for Aiken as a Historic City:
 - a. Preserving Aiken's history
 - b. Showcasing Aiken's history
 - c. Redevelop older buildings and landmarks into event venues and day destinations
- iii. Goals for Aiken as a Family City:
 - a. Promote healthier lifestyles
 - b. Promote environmental stewardship
 - c. Support education
 - d. Support families and family-related activities
 - e. Promote employment opportunities
- iv. Goals for Aiken as a Business City:
 - a. Encouraging entrepreneurship
 - b. Supporting local business owners
 - c. Assertively market Aiken on a more widespread basis
 - d. Mentor newer work force members
 - e. Encourage talented workers to live in Aiken
 - f. Foster greater City-County intergovernmental cooperation
 - g. Continue public-private partnerships
 - h. Improve shopping and dining choices
 - i. Develop better parking
 - j. Improving communication
 - k. Providing better access to city procurement processes
 - l. Studying City fees to see what improvements could benefit these businesses
 - m. Providing more comprehensive internet-based information
 - n. Providing access to City policy makers
- v. Goals for Aiken as a Green City Include:



- a. Connect our parkways and pathways
- b. Ecotourism
- c. Transportation opportunities
- d. Promote responsible energy use

2- City of Aiken Annual Budget Fiscal Year 2018-2019 – City of Aiken - 2018

- i. This document details the budget for City of Aiken’s government. In FY 2018-2019, the City received \$56,935,700 in revenue and spent that same amount. The largest revenue source was Charges for Services at \$22M, and the largest Expenditure was Engineering & Utilities at \$14M. This document also details the City’s Mission, Vision, and Core Values, short-, intermediate-, and long-term priorities, and its Strategic Business Plan. Furthermore, it goes into detail about the City of Aiken’s history, demographics, culture, and its variety of assets. Finally, the document includes a list of Aiken’s Fiscal Policies.
- ii. City of Aiken’s Mission Statement: “Government and citizens working together to preserve and to continue to improve the quality of life in the City of Aiken, making it the best possible place to live.”
- iii. Vision Statement: “To support connectivity, encourage diversity, strive for authenticity, increase inclusivity and allow all residents to share in the city’s prosperity.”
- iv. City of Aiken’s Core Values:
 - a. Respect for people
 - b. Effectiveness in the use of public funds
 - c. Support for people
 - d. Encouragement for idealism, creativity, and innovation
 - e. Responsiveness to the public
 - f. Commitment to excellence
 - g. Responsibility for the environment
 - h. Support for business development and citizenship
 - i. Commitment to the total community
- v. Includes short, intermediate, and long range priorities
- vi. Strategic Business Plan Elements:
 - a. Improve Public Infrastructure
 - b. Improve Department Efficiency
 - c. Manage annexation
 - d. Economic Development
 - e. Improve traffic and walkability
 - f. Improve property maintenance
- vii. The Budget in Brief includes the following:
 - a. Public Safety
 - b. Infrastructure
 - c. Quality of Life
 - d. Capital Projects Sales Tax (CPST) IV



- e. Trees Program
- f. Building the Future on Historic Foundations

3- Plan Aiken Comprehensive Plan – *City of Aiken - 2017*

- i. Foundational document that guides all aspects of Aiken’s growth and development for the 10 years following the plan’s adoption on 2016. This plan provides long-range strategic direction to the city’s governing body as it develops and implements projects, programs, and policies that shape Aiken’s future. This document is ordered into 9 “elements” which are as follows:
 - a. Population Element – Unpacks demographic nuances. Current residents would like to ensure that Aiken’s future will attract not just retirees, but people of all ages.
 - b. Economic Development Element – Discusses Aiken’s assets as they relate to its economy. Intangible aspects such as the town’s charm and friendly yet cosmopolitan character and tangible aspects such as its historic downtown, green spaces, and unique neighborhoods alike are important to the City’s strength. Must preserve character while also not be afraid of change. Manufacturing, education and medical facilities, retail and food services, and high tech professional and technical service sectors are areas citizens believe should be fostered.
 - c. Natural Resources Element – Aiken’s character is significantly tied to its landscape. “Greenspaces”, “forest canopy”, and “parkways” are typical answers when citizens are asked about preservation priorities. Hitchcock Woods is at the top of the list as described in the document as the single most important natural feature of Aiken. Plan addresses key aspects of natural resources for Aiken, including water sources, soils and farmlands, watersheds and floodplains, topography and its relation to erosion and hydrology, and finally the city’s land cover.
 - d. Cultural Resources Element – Aiken has been popularized as an eclectic and elegant Southern city with deep equestrian roots. Three historical events are key: construction of the Charleston and Hamburg, SC railroad line in the 1830’s; the reputation as a winter resort for equestrian sports in the 1880’s; and the establishment of the Savannah River Site for the development of nuclear materials in the 1950’s. The City offers many other amenities including visual and performance arts, museums, events, activities, historical sites, and higher educational opportunities.
 - e. Community Facilities Element – Purpose is to identify the city’s public facilities and services that are supportive and necessary for future population and development projections. Included is an analysis of parks and recreation facilities, water infrastructure, solid waste infrastructure, fire protection, educational facilities, and libraries.



- f. Housing Element – Important theme for striking a better balance for Aiken as a whole. Demographic balance, affordability, and in-town housing opportunities are top priorities for stakeholders.
- g. Land Use Element – Generally broken into zoning policy and development standards policy. Although most character areas of the city are well-established, policies can be amended to shift the character and quality of future development and add density. This will also have effects on the walkability and bikeability of the area at hand. However, citizens have expressed more interest in gaining value from development standards than zoning.
- h. Transportation Element – Overview of facilities, including major road improvements, new road construction, public transit, bike and pedestrian projects, and other elements of the network. Citizens expressed concern about the following challenges: traffic conditions, public transportation, and lack of multimodal facilities. Whiskey Road was specifically identified as an opportunity.
- i. Priority Investment Element – Discussion of funding sources and mechanisms for the above.
- ii. Guiding Principles:
 - a. Growth – The City will grow in an orderly and efficient manner that enhances equity and strengthens the local economy while preserving Aiken’s unique character.
 - b. Connectivity – The City will become a community with strong physical, social, and economic connections that tie the community together and reinforce a sense of shared responsibility, pride, and ownership of the city as a whole.
 - c. Transformation – The City will embrace and facilitate the positive transformation of the community through compatible growth, redevelopment, and expansion of economic opportunity
 - d. Consistency – The City will develop and implement policies, programs, and regulations that ensure the consistent and equitable delivery of services, quality of development, and availability of municipal infrastructure throughout the city
 - e. Balance – The City will become a community that is balanced in all respects, including demographically, economically, and in its approach to growth and the environment
 - f. Investment – The City will invest its resources in a manner that ensures that its municipal infrastructure, human resources and programs meet both current needs and prepare the city for growth.

4- Northside Comprehensive Plan – *McBride Dale Clarion - 2008*

- i. This plan lays out a vision for the future growth of the Northside Area, which is the area to the North of the City limits and South of I-20. Although this area is outside the City



limits, this planning document was a City staff exercise and did not include County officials. A 25-30 year planning horizon is used to guide the development of the area towards a commonly agreed upon final state. As of this plan's writing, 15,000 acres of the land in the study area was undeveloped or used for agriculture. There are many constraints, largely revolving around the rural character of the area. These constraints include a limited roadway network, little to moderate sewer/water access to watersheds, and the presence of wetlands. It was estimated that the Northside could grow by as much as 17,800 people in 8,300 new homes by 2035. Maps out the Northside into Growth Concept Planning Areas, of which there are nine, where a series of development guidelines are outlined. Generally this area is intended to be more rural in character than the rest of Aiken proper.

- ii. Guiding Principles:
 - a. The physical character of the area – especially at gateway locations (interchanges) and major corridors – will be of a high design quality.
 - b. Public areas – especially roads and rights-of-way – will be maintained with a high-level of functionality and design quality.
 - c. Key natural resources – especially water quality – will be protected.
 - d. Key historic and cultural resources – like historic family farms and rural landscapes – will be protected and enhanced. Village-like mixed-use nodes will be the preferred pattern of development.
 - e. Village-like, mixed-use nodes will be the preferred pattern of development.
 - f. Residential development will be in the form of neighborhoods that offer a range of housing choices.
 - g. Existing residential areas will be stabilized and enhanced.
 - h. Roadway connectivity will be improved, including but not limited to new East-West connector routes.
 - i. A range of transportation choices will be considered in new development, including cars, bikes, pedestrians, and public transportation to connect people to places.
 - j. Open space – some with recreational opportunities – will be provided.
 - k. Key locations for economic development opportunities will be identified and enhanced.
 - l. Development will be focused on areas that possess adequate infrastructure.

5- Old Aiken Master Plan – Aiken City Council - 2005

- i. Master plan for Aiken's downtown core encompassing the original grid. Sets a clear vision and outlines a set of policies and action steps to guide development and revitalization of Old Aiken. Lays out the history of Aiken from its inception along the Charleston-Hamburg railroad. Rights of way were generally 150 feet in width with blocks 300 feet by 600 feet. Centered in these rights of way are 70' wide parkways which are "rare jewels" that are important to Aiken's character.



- ii. The overarching goal of the plan is to retain Old Aiken’s character. Traditional, small-town living at a human scale must be preserved. People should feel like they belong.
- iii. Future themes for Old Aiken:
 - a. Attractive parkways and other rights-of-way – The parkways must be protected and enhanced, and, where feasible, reestablished or established for the first time. Other rights-of-way, including those belonging to the railroad, must be properly maintained and enhanced.
 - b. Strong residential base – More people should live in Old Aiken both to provide more of a sense of community as well as to support an increased number and variety of businesses.
 - c. Strong retail in the downtown core – More businesses are needed to serve residents, attract visitors, increase activity in the evening, and to provide employment.
 - d. Maintenance of property – Structures and vacant land must be maintained both to enhance the appearance of Old Aiken and to encourage private investment.
 - e. Appropriate design of structures and public improvements – Old Aiken is of great historical importance. Historic districts and structures must be protected as should the original street grid system. Steps should be taken to protect the attractiveness of the area and improve those areas which are less appealing. New construction should be appropriate.
 - f. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly – Old Aiken, especially downtown, will increasingly become more active and automobile traffic will increase. A balanced transportation system is needed; the impact of the automobile on the area should be minimized so that walking and bicycling are emphasized. The feasibility of public transportation should be regularly evaluated and, if appropriate, implemented.
 - g. Visible public facilities and uses – Public uses are a strong determining factor in the health of Old Aiken. Governmental buildings demonstrate the City’s commitment to the area as well as providing landmarks which help create a sense of place. Additional recreational opportunities strengthen the area’s appeal for residents and enhance its small-town, neighborhood character.
 - h. High quality of life – Old Aiken should be safe and clean with high-quality public services.

6- Union Street Area Plan – City of Aiken - 2012

- i. The reconstructed 1899 Aiken Depot opened its doors in September of 2010 and serves to this day as the city’s visitor’s center and train museum. This development should serve as a catalyst for the development of this area. This plan is intended to layout a vision for the public and private development that is anticipated to occur in the 31 acre area surrounding the reconstructed depot. The plan includes: gateway and



roundabout locations, building renovations, improvements to Gyles Park, a variety of mixed-use developments, parking lots, and infill developments. Recommendations:

- a. Land Use and Urban Design – In addition to future land use, this section considers zoning issues, and presents concept plans for the entire study area and Gyles Park.
- b. Character – Design principles, architecture, and streetscape improvements are addressed.
- c. Catalyst Projects – Projects that should stimulate activity are addressed including mixed-use development, the Heritage Interpretive Walk, and infrastructure improvements
- d. Implementation – Recommendations to implement the Plan include those for partnerships, funding, and continued planning and evaluation.
- e. Strategy Chart – The major tasks needed to implement the Plan are listed.

7- Whiskey Road Corridor Study – LDR International - 2001

- i. In 2001 the City of Aiken conducted a corridor study for a 3-mile section of Whiskey Road. The goal was to develop enhancement recommendations that would improve the physical environment, enhance the pedestrian access/circulation, and increase parcel access. The recommendations establish a basis to organize and develop the public and private realms by defining a consistent and uniformly high level of quality throughout the Whiskey Road Corridor study area.
- ii. Mission Statement: “Enhance the appearance and function of Whiskey Road Corridor through improvements in the transportation management of Whiskey Road and the visual appeal of local businesses.”
- iii. Goals:
 - a. Create a high quality environment that will retain and enhance businesses (e.g. landscaping, streetscape, signage, parking locations, screening)
 - b. Improve transportation management to decrease traffic problems (e.g. center lane alternatives, curb and gutter improvements)
 - c. Promote inter-parcel access to curb cut/parcel access consolidation for increased efficiency.
 - d. Enhance pedestrian accessibility (e.g. pathways and pedestrian crossings)
- iv. Recommendations:
 - a. Uniform speed limit of 35 mph, and 45 mph south of Chukker Creek Rd.
 - b. Establish a design theme for the primary and secondary gateways to include items such as decorative lighting, banners, plant material, and public art.
 - c. Install concrete curb and gutter throughout. Place utilities underground.
 - d. Install acceleration, deceleration, and turning lanes only where needed.
 - e. Maintain trees beneath utility poles.
 - f. Reduce curb cuts, increase inter-parcel linkages, delineate pedestrian crossings, and provide traffic calming measures.



- g. Many recommendations regarding parking along Whiskey Road.
- h. Many recommendations regarding landscaping – pick specific pilot landscaping project to promote planting/landscaping recommendations
- i. Lighting recommendations
- j. Pedestrian access/circulation

8- Aiken City Council Horizons – Aiken City Council - 2014

- i. Powerpoint presentation detailing the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for City of Aiken. Provides updates on some of the City’s recent efforts, including fencing around Citizen’s Park, the Northside Revitalization Initiative, construction in the Edgewood community, development at Toole Hill, the Governor Aiken Park improvements, and perception of safety in the Crosland Park neighborhood. Provides short-term goals for 2013-2014 and progress made on those goals.

9- Investors Prospectus – City of Aiken - 2019

- i. Makes the case for investing in Aiken. Aiken was recognized with the All-America City Award by the National Civic League and was named the best small town of the south by Southern Living. The northern portion of the city is covered by an Opportunity Zone, which provides federal capital gains tax advantages for investments made in the area. Potential areas for investment/development include York Street, Laurens Street, Hampton Avenue, and Richland Avenue. At the end of the document is an existing conditions analysis of economics and demographics in the census tract at hand. There are also a handful of potential projects for which the city is seeking investment.
- ii. Assets:
 - a. Recreational activities – polo matches, equestrian training facilities such as the Aiken mile and training track, and a horse racing hall of fame.
 - b. Aiken State Park – golf, outdoor recreation, camping, boating
 - c. Arts and culture – Aiken County Historical Museum, Aiken Center for the Arts, Art & Soul of Aiken art gallery.
 - d. Three historic architecture districts
 - e. Center for African American History
 - f. USC Aiken and Aiken Technical College
 - g. City of Aiken Regional Airport, formerly the Aiken Air Force station
 - h. Part of the Fort Gordon Cyber district
 - i. Savannah River Site, key U.S. Department of Energy industrial complex
 - 1. Processes and stores nuclear materials in support of national defense and nuclear proliferation efforts. Also develops and deploys technology to improve the environment and treat nuclear/hazardous wastes left over from the Cold War.
 - 2. Provides over 11,000 jobs
 - 3. \$2.6 billion annual regional impact
 - 4. Spends \$200 million annually in local procurements



- j. Military Related growth
 - 1. Annual economic impact: \$776.3 million
 - 2. Number of jobs supported: 5,649
 - 3. Labor income generated: \$285.3 million
- k. Hitchcock Woods: among the largest urban forests in the nation, with about 2,100 acres. 65 miles of sandy trails.
- l. Hopeland Gardens: 14-acre public garden. Webbing paths lead visitors through alleys of 100-year old oak trees, fountains, a reflection pool, and Aiken's thoroughbred Hall of Fame & Museum.
- m. The Depot: Recreation of the old train depot which now serves as visitor center and museum showcasing Aiken's locomotive history.
- iii. Top growing industries in the MSA are construction followed by health care, food services, and administrative support and waste management and remediation
- iv. Top employers
 - a. 11,200 at the Savannah River Site
 - b. 2,100 at Amick Farms poultry processing plant
 - c. 1,486 at the Bridgestone PSR (Passenger Car Radial Tires) plant
 - d. 1,103 at Kimberly-Clark Corporation

10- Regional Economic Benchmarking Report for Aiken County – USC Aiken School of Business Administration – 2017 Update

- i. Lays out the demographics of Aiken. The City has a large elderly population – 24.6% of citizens are over the age of 65. Furthermore, the proportion of children declined from 2010 to 2015, implying that there are fewer young people in Aiken. Educational attainment in Aiken county lags behind the country and South Carolina. 1,535 more people commute to Georgia from South Carolina for work than vice versa. Information regarding incomes (TCPI, TPI, PCPI, and Median Household Income). The number of pending house sales increased by 6.1% from 2015 to 2016, indicating an increasing interest in buying a house in Aiken County.

11- Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Final Report – Community Designs, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Kalback Design Studios - 2016

- i. Report on workshop that addresses four of the nine recommendations in the Strategic Plan. These four recommendations are: Market Analysis; Parkway Design & Connectivity; Branding & Marketing; and Implementation Strategies.
 - a. Market Analysis – Population in downtown's primary trade area has experienced steady growth and this growth is expected to continue. Trade area has the largest percentage of elderly, but also has a growing family population. Several opportunities for new retail are identified.
 - b. Parkway Design & Connectivity – these recommendations revolve around beautifying the parkways and making them accessible and useful for the citizens



- of Aiken. Includes two sample study areas that have specific recommendations along with plan view design.
- c. Branding & Marketing – provides recommendation for a city logo and common colors. Wayfinding system should be introduced as part of the brand.
- d. Implementation - Parking was the single biggest issue that merchants and the general public mentioned as an impediment to a convenient business climate in the downtown area.

12- Regional Workforce Study – TIP Strategies - 2015

- i. Analyzes the workforce in a nine-county region that has a civilian workforce of over 400,000. The region is projected to have over 37,000 job openings between 2014 and 2019, but 80 percent of these jobs openings are replacements, meaning that they occur due to turnover, including attrition and retirement. By contrast, only 7,600 of those jobs are new jobs. There is also a looming wave of retiring workers that will pose a significant challenge. Students in the region are not choosing education programs that match the high demand occupations. Includes an implementation matrix.

13- Compelling Place to Live (CPTL) – Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2017

- i. Recognizing that the City of Aiken needs to become more attractive to more workers, the Aiken Chamber Chair and Chamber President appointed the Compelling Place to Live Task Force in 2017. This task force spent four months researching the trends, preferences, and habits of young families with children and young professionals. The two overarching recommendations revolve around aggressively marketing Aiken. Includes a list of short-term and long-term actions that the city can take.

14- The Next Big Ideas, Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations Report – Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2013

- i. This document lays out the need for Aiken to be a competitive city that can attract and retain talent and high-paying jobs. The Blue Ribbon Panel reviewed reports of cities across the country to understand the secrets of their success. The main conclusion is that economic vitality and quality of life are the two main ingredients to success, but that economic vitality is the more important of the two. Recommendation categories:
 - a. Economic Vitality Recommendations – Involve developing physical infrastructure, refining processes, networks, and services, and attracting the necessary talent and capital.
 - b. Public Schools and Higher Education – Aiken County schools are deteriorating due to lack of capital funding. Aiken is ideally suited for a STEM Magnet school with a K-16 program. New legislation for a one-cent sales tax option could help realize initial capital goals of Aiken County Public Schools.
 - c. Leadership and Vision Recommendations – The community should establish systems to cultivate, educate, inspire, and engage leaders.



- d. Green Space and Public Spaces and Entertainment Recommendations – Aiken has an interesting constellation of districts that could be enhanced with anchor projects. A visionary approach is needed to identify these districts and to evaluate opportunities for anchors. Must also link these districts with connective corridors. Two prized characteristics are restored downtown buildings and preserved layout of parkways. The community should identify and adopt sustainable best practice into its planning guidelines. Development should be conducive to pedestrian and bicycle access, and sensitive to indoor/outdoor values.
- e. Image Marketing Recommendations – Aiken has many attractive qualities and diverse recreational activities. There are various opportunities for consolidating and enhancing the online presence of these attributes. This is a relatively low cost means for elevating Aiken’s image.

15- Rental Housing Market Study of Aiken, South Carolina – Novogradac & Company, LLP - 2018

- i. Studies the economy, demographics, rental housing stock, demand for housing, and proposed construction for Aiken.
 - a. Economy - The largest portion of employment of individuals living in downtown Aiken is in the healthcare/social assistance sector (22.1%), followed by the manufacturing and retail trade sectors (13.5% and 12.8%, respectively). According to the Census Bureau, 2,964 individuals are employed in downtown Aiken. The workforce at Savannah River Site is expected to change greatly over the next five years, as an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 workers will retire and need to be replaced. It is expected that these retirees will stay in Aiken after they retire, meaning that the new hires that will replace them need new housing stock. Overall, the economy appears to be strong with increasing total employment and a decreasing unemployment rate.
 - b. Demographics - Aiken is expected to experience slight increases in total and senior population and number of households through 2022. The three greatest population cohorts are 60-64, 65—69, and 55-59. One-person households are most common in downtown, indicating demand for smaller rental housing unit types, and two-person households are most common in the greater City and the MSA. Median household income in downtown is lower than the city, MSA, and nation as a whole, indicating demand for affordable rental housing.
 - c. Rental Housing Stock – There are no multifamily apartment complexes located in downtown Aiken. The document notes that although there is demand for senior housing in the market, it is not viewed as being as substantial as the demand for general population housing. The strongest demand for housing and the most feasible type of development in downtown is noted as being for middle- to upper-income market rate housing. In this section 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom rental units are identified as the targets of the study. Square foot



- ranges suggested to represent the ideal balance between space and marketability are provided, as well as recommended price ranges.
- d. Summary of Interviews – Several major themes. Few recently constructed market rate multifamily rental developments throughout Aiken over the last decade. Few vacancies in existing multifamily developments. There is a lack of multifamily rental units in the downtown area. However, downtown is also one of the most desirable places to live. Some obstacles include the cost of land, land owners’ unwillingness to sell said land, and the lack of parking downtown. Overall, it is estimated that the downtown area and the City could support between 50 to 200 additional multifamily rental units over the next 1-3 years.
- e. Demand – There is demand for 125 affordable units in the market through 2022 and 314 market rate units through 2022.
- f. Proposed Construction – Discusses a handful of rental unit developments that are under construction, proposed, or possible in the future. If all goes according to plan, 406 rental units of varying type would be added to Aiken.

16- Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative – USC Aiken - 2019

- i. The Federal FY2020 Budget endorses a \$50 million investment for construction of a 60,000 square foot Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative (AMC) facility to be built on the north side of USC Aiken’s campus. The AMC is conceived as a bustling innovation hub where the latest processes can enhance advanced manufacturing and industry in the region. Students, scientists, and engineers will collaborate here to create new knowledge. Will include labs, industrial workspace, and office space.

17- Cybersecurity Collaborative – USC Aiken - 2019

- i. The National Guard is planning to create a cybersecurity ecosystem in Aiken County that leverages the missions of Fort Gordon, the Savannah River National Laboratory, and the National Guard Cyber complex. This will help South Carolina keep pace with increasing cyber threats and technology initiatives. This building will be called the National Guard Readiness Center and Cyber DreamPort and will be built on USC Aiken’s campus. \$15M from state funding with a \$15M federal funding match.

18- Old Aiken Design Guidelines – Community Design Solutions & McBride Dale Clarion – 2018 Update

- i. Intent is to ensure that new construction and proposed alterations of existing properties will not adversely affect the architectural character of Old Aiken. Provides property owners information about maintenance, repair, rehabilitation, and historic or distinctive characteristics of the buildings in Old Aiken. The Design Review Board adopted the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation as the basis for guidance on rehabilitation design for historic properties. Generally the idea in downtown Aiken is to design with an eye for the pedestrian. In any case, this is the design manual for streetscape in downtown Aiken.



- ii. Goals of the Old Aiken Design Guidelines
 - a. Protect the unique architectural characteristics of Aiken’s downtown buildings and environment located within the Old Aiken Overlay District.
 - b. Provide a guide for renovation and new construction.
 - c. Provide an objective guide for design review decisions.
 - d. Ensure compatibility of design guidelines with the vision and goals of the Old Aiken Master Plan.
 - e. Develop guidelines that direct the physical design of downtown without creating unnecessary barriers to development.
 - f. In general, the goals of the Old Aiken Design Guidelines are:
 - 1. Preserve and enhance the aesthetic beauty of the downtown district
 - 2. Protect and celebrate the heritage of Aiken
 - 3. Preserve and protect older architectural features
 - 4. Maintain a pedestrian friendly environment
 - 5. Use historic assets for economic development and community revitalization
 - 6. Promote heritage tourism
 - 7. Foster appropriate development

19- Friends of the Aiken County Public Library Press Releases – *Friends of the Aiken County Public Library – 2019*

- i. These press releases detail the recent agreement between the Friends of the Aiken County Public Library and the Aiken County Council to fund \$3M in improvements to the Aiken County Library. With the Friends providing \$500,000 to match the Council’s \$1M investment, the first phase will focus on making the front entrance steps safer and more accessible and making the rear entrance meet ADA requirements. The next phase, with similar amounts of funding, will focus on modernizing the two floors of the building. One article says the 1st and 2nd floor while the other says the 2nd and 3rd floor will be renovated. The second phase, designed by McMillan Pazden Smith, will begin when a contractor has been selected.

20- Whiskey Road – Powderhouse Road Connector Studies – *Carter Burgess – 2006 & W.R. Toole Engineers, Inc - 2012*

- i. The goal of these studies is to establish a preferred alignment, right-of-way, and cost estimate for a new road that allows for east-west travel between Whiskey Road and Powderhouse Road, as well as a possible north-south connection between Pine Log Road and Whiskey Road and/or Powderhouse Road. Roads in this South Aiken area have poor level of service and are projected to be worse by 2030. Furthermore, the section of Whiskey Road between Pine Log Road and Powderhouse Road is the location of significant safety concerns, including a crash rate over three times the statewide rate. 9 different alignments are detailed in the 2006 document and one is detailed in the 2012 study, the latter being the basis of the new roadway linework as seen in the Previously Proposed Project map.



21- Articles re: Aiken Mall Mixed-Use Development – *Aiken Standard, 2020*

- i. At the most recent “State of the City” address, Southeastern Development Associates (SDA) announced a mixed-use redevelopment plan for the Aiken Mall. Phase 1 calls for 256 luxury apartments. Future phases will include a hotel, retail, and dining establishments. These markets will be class A, meaning the asking price will be market rate or better. Vic Mills, CEO of SDA, cited the success of the nearby Colony at South Park along Whiskey Road, “the number one multifamily community” in Aiken. Investment in the apartments alone will be more than \$30 million. Demolition of the mall is expected to begin around early to late summer. Construction is projected by early 2022.



City Vision Alignment Review

The following excerpts are vision statements, goals, recommendations, or strategies that are taken from each of the 21 documents reviewed. These statements are organized into themes that arose in the course of reviewing these documents. This list is not necessarily exhaustive of vision statements, goals, recommendations, or strategies, but is rather intended to be a foundation for the ongoing discussion between the Client and AECOM to ensure a fine-tuned understanding of the project's final vision.

Documents referenced and used in this analysis, to varying degrees, include:

1. Aiken's Tomorrow: Local Impacts, Global Impacts – *City of Aiken - 2010*
2. City of Aiken Annual Budget Fiscal Year 2018-2019 – *City of Aiken - 2018*
3. Plan Aiken Comprehensive Plan – *City of Aiken - 2017*
4. Northside Comprehensive Plan – *McBride Dale Clarion - 2008*
5. Old Aiken Master Plan – *Aiken City Council - 2005*
6. Union Street Area Plan – *City of Aiken - 2012*
7. Whiskey Road Corridor Study – *LDR International - 2001*
8. Aiken City Council Horizons – *Aiken City Council - 2014*
9. Investors Prospectus – *City of Aiken - 2019*
10. Regional Economic Benchmarking Report for Aiken County – *USC Aiken School of Business Administration – 2017 Update*
11. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Final Report – *Community Designs, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, and Kalback Design Studios - 2016*
12. Regional Workforce Study – *TIP Strategies - 2015*
13. Compelling Place to Live (CPTL) – *Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2017*
14. The Next Big Ideas, Blue Ribbon Panel Recommendations Report – *Greater Aiken Chamber of Commerce - 2013*
15. Rental Housing Market Study of Aiken, South Carolina – *Novogradac & Company, LLP - 2018*
16. USC Aiken: Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative
17. Cybersecurity Collaborative
18. Old Aiken Design Guidelines – *Community Design Solutions & McBride Dale Clarion – 2018 Update*
19. Friends of the Aiken County Public Library Press Releases – *Friends of the Aiken County Public Library – 2019*
20. Whiskey Road – Powderhouse Road Connector Studies – *Carter Burgess – 2006 & W.R. Toole Engineers, Inc - 2012*
21. Article re: Aiken Mall Mixed-Use Redevelopment – *Aiken Standard - 2020*

Recurring themes in the documents noted above that following text of this document include:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Historic Preservation | 6. Education |
| 2. Multigenerational Community | 7. City Governmental Functions |
| 3. Business | 8. Land Use |
| 4. Environment | 9. Infrastructure |
| 5. Transportation | 10. Built Environment |



City of Aiken Document Themes

1- Historic Preservation - History is an incredibly important theme throughout these Aiken documents. History should firstly be protected, preserved, and enhanced as development occurs. Between the historic character of the downtown, assets like the Hitchcock Woods, the train depot, the lasting equestrian community, and the City's parkways are all important aspects of Aiken's character. These should be highlighted to set Aiken apart from its peer cities.

a. Conservation-

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 3 - "Adopt updated ordinances that foster increased property values for restored properties."
2. Page 3 - "Identify best practices for revitalizing historic structures to be even more compatible with modern day use."
3. Page 3 - "Encourage redevelopment of properties for reuse when possible in lieu of new construction."

ii. planAiken

1. Page 123: "Preserve and protect Aiken's historic structures, sites, and other cultural resources to enhance the connection between the city's past and present."
2. Page 123 & 178 "Continue to implement design regulations in the historic portions of the city to ensure that the aesthetic quality of the city's historic downtown and neighborhoods are not negatively impacted by redevelopment activity."

iii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 13 - "Structures should be protected and enhanced."

iv. Union Street Area Plan

1. Page 30 - "Downtown Aiken's uniqueness is defined by the historic building fabric and character. In developing the Union Street Area, every effort should be made to retain this historic character... encourage reinforcement of Aiken's historic downtown character, while also permitting contemporary interpretations that respect the scale and character of traditional downtown Aiken."

v. Northside Comprehensive Plan

1. Page 19 - "Key historic and cultural resources - like historic family farms and rural landscapes - will be protected and enhanced."

b. Showcase the History -

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 3 - "Expand current projects and events that showcase Aiken's rich history and enhance tourism to our city by supporting new events that complement existing events."
2. Page 3 - "Promote events attractive to all ages. Encourage events that will allow younger generations to learn from, and share with, older generations."



3. Page 3 - "Work in cooperation with local institutions and organizations to keep Aiken's history and traditions of interest to future generations."
4. Page 3 - "Encourage cultural and arts events that feature Aiken's history."
5. Page 4 - "Review the community events calendar to determine how current annual events can be held at existing historic venues to promote their use."
6. Page 4 - "Develop more events with a 'day-trip' or 'overnight stay' tourism impact."

2- Multigenerational Community - This theme is present in almost all of the reviewed documents. Aiken has successfully marketed itself thus far as a retirement city, but now it seeks to market itself to the younger generations. The City is committed to having a multigenerational population. It seeks to attract young professionals and families to sustain and surpass the success it has already established. Much of this effort will revolve around marketing Aiken and making more events geared towards young professionals and burgeoning families, but the other side of the coin will involve making Aiken a more attractive place to raise a family.

a. Promote Wellness

i. Aiken 's Tomorrow

1. Page 5 - "Analyze opportunities for reinvestment of wellness-based savings into our city."
2. Page 5 - "Establish or augment a facility for basic health care services to economically challenged individuals that also provides wellness education."
3. Page 5 - "Determine feasibility of ordinances that promote public health."

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 14 - "Old Aiken must be a safe place and perceived that way."

b. Intergenerational Living

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 3 - "Work in cooperation with local institutions and organizations to keep Aiken's history and traditions of interest to future generations."
2. Page 4 - "Phase in amenities to existing venues that make them attractive to all generations."
3. Page 7 - "Mentor students in public initiatives to invest them into their community."
4. Page 7 - "Encourage students of all ages to become interested in the future of Aiken."
5. Page 7 - "Encourage cultural, arts, performing arts, and other programs as learning opportunities."
6. Page 8 - "Build future city facilities with a multi-use/multi-generational appeal."
7. Page 8 - "Identify existing City programs that could be readily adapted to be cross-generational."

ii. planAiken



1. Page 124 - "Encourage community-wide events that appeal to multiple demographics including students, young professionals, families, and retirees."

c. Market Aiken

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 9 – "Continue working with the Economic Development Partnership, university, and technical college faculty and administration, and other area organizations to attract employers to this area."
2. Page 11 – "Find other media to provide a more welcoming environment for locally-owned businesses."
3. Page 11 – "Develop a marketing concept plan complete with branding, logo redesign, and marketing strategies."

ii. planAiken

1. Page 37 - "Develop and implement a marketing plan aimed at diversifying the mix of new residents who are attracted to move to Aiken, with a goal of increasing the population of young families and professionals."
2. Page 87 - "Expand community branding initiatives outside of their traditional areas of application, such as downtown and the historic areas of the city to reinforce a shared identity."
3. Page 123 - "Expand community branding initiatives outside of their traditional areas of application, such as downtown and the historic areas, to reinforce a shared identity."

iii. Compelling Place to Live (CPTL)

1. Page 3 – "Create an aggressive image and marketing strategy to recruit and retain the future workforce of Aiken."
2. Page 3 – "Utilize digital tools to market Aiken and share Aiken resources with community members."
3. Page 13 – "There needs to be a strategic and specific targeted marketing plan for the retention and recruitment of early career professionals and families with children and this information needs to be shared with employers in the region."
4. Page 14 – "Develop a plan to recruit a mix of specialty shops and national name/chain stores in the downtown area."
5. Page 17 – "Develop new community-oriented workforce talent marketing materials for Aiken and create marketing packets to be shared with employers in their talent recruitment efforts."
6. Page 21 – "Market Aiken as 'close to everything' and market the downtown area on I-20."
7. Page 25 – "Market the local college and university and the workforce and quality of life contributions they make to Aiken."

d. Develop, Retain, and Attract Talent

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 9 – "Identify opportunities to develop a more diverse work force."



2. Page 12 – “Develop more externship opportunities with students – whether traditional or nontraditional students.”
 3. Page 12 – “Inventory features of communities that attract – and retain – newer workers. Adapt results for use in Aiken.”
 - ii. planAiken
 1. Page 87 - “Encourage workforce development programs between Aiken Technical College, USC Aiken, Aiken Public Schools, SRS, and other industrial interests in the area.”
 - iii. The Next Big Ideas
 1. Page 8 – “Make it a top priority and a daily function of the Chamber to cultivate opportunities for new businesses and to attract innovators and entrepreneurs. The goal is to create jobs, attract young professionals, generate tax revenues, stimulate investment, and improve property values.”
 - iv. Compelling Place to Live
 1. Page 3 – “Aiken is an excellent place to live, work, and play, but to remain vibrant, it must become more attractive to new workers, families, with children, and early career professionals.”
 2. Page 12 – “Develop a comprehensive talent recruitment resource to be shared with employers where the benefits of living, working, and playing in Aiken are profiled.”
 3. Page 14 – “Provide more impromptu music events, sidewalk art shows, and street artists to attract people to downtown frequently. Events like the Aiken Music Fest and the Woodside Food Truck Rally outside of downtown are also important. All of these events need more advertising in areas where younger people can be reached.”
 4. Page 14 – “Make a concerted effort to be inclusive by creating a sense of belonging.”
 5. Page 17 – “Create a virtual “young professional welcoming package” that includes Aiken’s vision and commitment to a multigenerational community, with identification of assets specific to the interests of young professionals and young families.”
 6. Page 19 – “Consider loans or incentives to help organizations to open new accredited day care options.”
 7. Page 25 – “Provide employers information about the schools to share with employees and prospective employees.”
 8. Page 25 – “Highlight Aiken’s schools in marketing pieces to be used in the newspaper, on social media, and in relocation information.”
- 3- **Business** – It was recognized many times over that Aiken needs to be “open for business.” This goes especially for the downtown area, with many of the vision statements revolving around more interesting shops and things to do in the downtown area, but this theme extends over the entire City of Aiken. Entrepreneurship was another typical refrain, with calls to create “Innovation Hubs” and an environment conducive for startups in order to attract young millennial talent. Local business is also seen as a cornerstone of a healthy downtown, and steps should be taken to bolster them and attract them.



a. **General Retail**

i. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 12-13 – “The commercial core, roughly the area bounded by Barnwell Avenue, Newberry Street, Park Avenue, and Pendleton Street, and by Richland Avenue, Union Street, Park Avenue, and Newberry Street, should have more retail businesses offering a wider range of products and services.”

ii. Whiskey Road Corridor Study

1. Page 5 – “Create a high quality environment [along Whiskey Road] that will retain and enhance businesses (e.g. landscaping, streetscape, signage, parking locations, screening)”

iii. Compelling Place to Live

1. Page 14 – “Incentivize longer hours of operation of existing downtown businesses.”

b. **Employment Opportunities**

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 9 – “Promote green jobs.”
2. Page 9 – “Identify top “Jobs of the Future” and establish the most business friendly environment to attract them.”

c. **Encourage Entrepreneurship**

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 10 – “Establish entrepreneurship zones.”
2. Page 10 – “Encourage innovative approaches to enabling entrepreneurship.”

ii. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report

1. Page 60 – “The market data indicates a clear demand for additional food related services in Aiken. Food trucks have emerged as a national trend that allows a low barrier to entry for entrepreneurs to venture into the food service industry.... In Aiken, mobile food services are currently not allowed by City ordinance (meanwhile they are being encouraged in nearby cities)... A thoughtful food truck ordinance that protects existing bricks and mortar restaurants as well as encouraging this emerging trend would enhance the appeal of downtown while fostering entrepreneurship.”

iii. The Next Big Ideas

1. Page 8 – “Identify and improve processes, networks, and services for cultivating an ‘entrepreneurial ecology.’”
2. Page 8 – “Explore the logistics and funding for creating a business incubator.”

iv. Compelling Place to Live

1. Page 17 – “Create Entrepreneurial hubs to assist entrepreneurs of all ages to develop, launch, and grow a business idea.”



d. Support Local Business

- i. Aiken's Tomorrow
 - 1. Page 11 – “Perform a cost-benefit analysis on proposed City ordinances that affect business operations.”
 - 2. Page 11 – “Find other ways to promote doing business in Aiken.”
 - 3. Page 11 – “Conduct a top-to-bottom review of City ordinances and their impact upon local businesses.”
- ii. planAiken
 - 1. Page 88 - “Collaborate with economic development interests to assess the diversity of the local economic base and work to identify and recruit emerging industries and economic sectors that will ensure that the local economy is sufficiently diversified to withstand market downturns and respond to changing economic trends.”
- iii. The Next Big Ideas
 - 1. Page 8 – “Identify venture capital resources within the community for local business opportunities.”

e. Policies and Regulation

- i. Aiken's Tomorrow
 - 1. Page 14 – “Compare Aiken’s fee structures to other communities to see what approaches best assist these businesses.”
- ii. planAiken
 - 1. Page 88 - “Conduct an audit of the city policies that affect business to ensure that regulations are equitable and promote the city’s economic development goals..”

4- Environment – Aiken’s natural resources are frequently mentioned as one of its greatest assets. The Hitchcock Woods, the Hopeland Gardens, and especially the parkways are jewels that should be protected, enhanced, and highlighted. The Clemson Urban Ecology Lab has also made its home in Aiken, and partners with the city to ensure its urban ecology is vibrant.

a. Ecotourism

- i. Aiken's Tomorrow Page 15
 - 1. Page 6 – “Explore potential environment-related events to hold throughout the year.”
 - 2. Page 6 – “Re-establish the City Arboretum Trail.”
 - 3. Page 6 – “Find other Aiken environmental features to spotlight.”
 - 4. Page 15 - "Develop our Green Infrastructure Project as a ‘learning lab’ for best sustainable practices for communities to protect ecology in urban environments.”
 - 5. Page 15 – “Use Aiken’s designation as a Tree City USA to foster tourism interests and learning opportunities.”

b. Green Infrastructure

- i. Aiken's Tomorrow
 - 1. Page 6 – “Complete the green infrastructure pilot project.”



2. Page 13 – “Include parking options in green spaces designs, especially opportunities for excess, overflow parking for special events.”
- ii. planAiken
 1. Page 104 - “Develop a ‘green infrastructure’ plan that assesses the conditions of the city’s natural assets, with a particular focus on issues related to stormwater runoff.”
- iii. Union Street Area Plan
 1. Page 32 – “Consistent with the ‘green infrastructure’ project recently completed in downtown, parking and hardscape surfaces should minimize impact of the additional development through the use of permeable or porous surfaces.”
- iv. The Next Big Ideas
 1. Page 8 – “Collaborate with the City of Aiken and Aiken County as anchor institutions to attract and support the startup of Clemson University’s Urban Ecology Center.”

c. **Stewardship**

- i. Old Aiken Master Plan
 1. Page 13 – “Environmental quality should be protected and enhanced.”
- ii. Northside Comprehensive Plan
 1. Page 18 – “Key natural resources – especially water quality – will be protected.”

5- Transportation – Most often when transportation is mentioned, it is mentioned in the context of providing a variety of transportation options. The sentiments noted in the documents reviewed are often particularly concerned with promoting the use of walking and biking, which has the dual purpose of attracting millennials and providing the elderly the mobility they need to be independent. Public transportation is also mentioned for the same reasons, but it is typically nonspecific and restricted to limited shuttle capabilities to key locations around town. Although vehicular traffic is said not to be a priority, most of the specific projects revolve around roadway corridors and often involve widening.

a. **Traffic/Vehicular**

- i. Aiken’s Tomorrow
 1. Page 16 – “Find alternatives to merely widening roads that are more cost effective.”
 2. Page 16 – “Utilize traffic management surveys to identify trends in traffic patterns to best plan for future traffic arteries.”
- ii. planAiken
 1. Page 195 & 206 - “Prepare and implement a collector street plan to establish alternate transportation routes for vehicular traffic through the city and between major employment centers, commercial nodes, and residential neighborhoods to improve connectivity and alleviate congestion.”
- iii. Whiskey Road Corridor Study



1. Page 5 – “Improve transportation management to decrease traffic problems. (e.g. center lane alternatives, curb and gutter improvements)”

b. Parking

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 13 – “Find easy alternatives for providing more parking spaces in congested areas.”
2. Page 13 – “Identify sites to alleviate parking pressures.”
3. Page 13 – “Conduct studies of future parking demands.”
4. Page 13 – “Identify sites for creative parking solutions.”

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 13 – “Reasonable efforts should be made to provide adequate on-street and off-street parking that is accessible and well-designed but does not disrupt the fabric of Old Aiken or make it less pedestrian-friendly.”

iii. Union Street Area Plan

1. Page 31-32 – “Parking within the Union Street area should be limited to on-street spaces and interior or side yard lots with no on-site parking in front of the buildings. On-site parking in front of the buildings is more suburban in nature, does not contribute to pedestrian character, and interrupts the line of storefronts which help define the public space.”

iv. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report

1. Page 59 – “Parking was the single biggest issue that merchants and the general public mentioned as an impediment to a convenient business climate in the downtown area.”
 - a. Specific tactics are noted on same page.

c. Alternative Transportation Opportunities

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 6 - "Promote alternative modes of transportation."
2. Page 6 – “Install infrastructure to refuel or recharge all-electric vehicles.
3. Page 6 – “Support infrastructure to refuel or recharge other types of alternative fuel vehicles.”
4. Page 7 – “Develop new sidewalks at and around public school in the city limits.”
5. Page 8 – “Build more bicycle paths to connect with those already constructed.”
6. Page 16 - "Find alternative transportation choices and promote them."
7. Page 16 – “Encourage use of alternative fuel vehicles.”
8. Page 16 – “Promote public transportation choices.

ii. planAiken

1. Page 195 & 206 - “Develop a plan to provide city-wide pedestrian and bicycle connections via the parkways, trails, multi-use paths, bike lanes, and sidewalks throughout the city, with a focus on connecting schools, parks, residential neighborhoods and primary commercial areas.”

iii. Old Aiken Master Plan



1. Page 13 – “Old Aiken should be a place where pedestrians and bicyclists feel welcome.”
2. Page 13 – “The automobile and other motorized vehicles must be accommodated but not at the expense of pedestrians and bicyclists.”
3. Page 13 – “Public transportation should be promoted to minimize the impact of the automobile.”
- iv. Union Street Area Plan
 1. Page 31 – “Buildings should encourage the use of sidewalks, while public spaces should be designed with pedestrian amenities, adequate light and shading, pedestrian-oriented signage, etc. Similarly, efforts should be made to enhance the area’s pedestrian connections to adjacent neighborhoods, uses, and downtown.”
- v. Whiskey Road Corridor Study
 1. Page 5 – “Enhance pedestrian accessibility (e.g. pathways and pedestrian crossings)”
- vi. Northside Comprehensive Plan
 1. Page 20 – “A range of transportation choices will be considered in new development [in the Northside area], including cars, bikes, walking, and public transportation to connect people to places.”
- vii. Compelling Place to Live
 1. Page 13 – “There is a strong desire for better designed walkways and bike-paths that connect the city and encourage people to live or visit downtown.”
 2. Page 21 – “Expand connectivity through the addition of sidewalks and bicycle lanes.”
 3. Page 21 – “Add Car Share and Bike Share programs around the greater Aiken area.”
 4. Page 21 – “Adopt a regional approach to transportation and consider how to bring tourists to Aiken during special events.”
 5. Page 21 – “Establish key gathering areas and design a shuttle route to provide limited, reliable transit.”

d. Maintenance/Funding

i. planAiken

1. Page 148 & 195 & 208 - “Systematically assess the condition and function of transportation infrastructure throughout the community in order to prioritize an effective and efficient maintenance and improvement program.”
2. Page 195 - “Utilize development agreements, tax increment financing, and similar instruments to finance necessary infrastructure improvements to facilitate growth while limiting the financial impact on the city.”

ii. Compelling Place to Live

1. Page 21 – “Leverage state funding by adopting a “fix-it-first” approach to roads; patching, and upgrading what currently exists first, before adding new roads.”



6- Education – This is seen as one of the most important attractors for young professionals who have or wish to start a family. Aiken County public schools have been considered by some, according to some documents, less desirable than schools in the surrounding area. This causes people to live outside the City limits, which means that the city does not get that tax revenue.

a. Support Education

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 7 - "Encourage students of all ages to become interested in the future of Aiken."

ii. The Next Big Ideas

1. Page 4 – "...one topic clearly dominated in discussions with the full Panel. All members of the Panel participated in frequent and prolonged conversations, over the course of many meetings, about the condition of Aiken County Public School facilities. It was noted repeatedly by multiple sources that families moving to Aiken for new employment often choose to reside elsewhere, so that they may send their children to public schools with superior facilities."
2. Page 9 – "Facilitate the formation of an Education Task Force to investigate funding options for capital investment in public school facilities (one-cent sales tax option, bond referendum, etc)."

iii. Compelling Place to Live (CPTL)

1. Page 12 – "Advocate as a community for increased funding for early literacy programs in the Aiken School system and form business and industry support for Aiken’s college and universities with letters and personal visits to state legislators for financial support on par with other institutions in the state."
2. Page 25 – "Continue to support school improvements through the 1 penny tax."
3. Page 25 – "Support the use of technology in the classroom to connect parents to the educational enterprise."

b. Develop Partnerships

i. PlanAiken

1. Page 87 - "Encourage programmatic connections between local institutions of higher education and medical institutions in order to enhance Aikens education and medical sectors."
2. Page 87 - "Encourage workforce development programs between Aiken Technical College, USC Aiken, Aiken Public Schools, SRS, and other industrial interests in the area."
3. Page 87 & 123 - "Develop partnerships for programming and events that improve connections between USC Aiken and the community as a whole."

ii. The Next Big Ideas

1. Page 9 – "Support the commitment of the leaders of Aiken County Public Schools, University of South Carolina Aiken, and Aiken Technical College to collaborate on developing a STEM Magnet School for Aiken County."



7- City Governmental Functions

a. Foster Intergovernmental Cooperation

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 12 – “Inventory overlaps in strategic plans of City and County plans.”
2. Page 12 – “Identify and eliminate barriers to cooperative efforts.”
3. Page 12 – “Establish a joint City/County Planning Committee to address urban area issues.”

ii. planAiken

1. Page 148 & 195 & 207 - “Actively participate in regional planning and financing initiatives to ensure that regionally funded projects reflect the needs of the City of Aiken.”
2. Page 148 - “Jointly plan with Aiken County to define, on a periodic basis, an urban growth area for the city of Aiken, within which Aiken County would defer rezoning property to suburban or urban densities without the agreement of the city.”
3. Page 179 - “Coordinate with Aiken County to adopt and enforce development regulations that standardize key elements of the character of future development along major road corridors leading into the City of Aiken.”

b. Public-Private Partnerships

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 13 – “Develop an inventory of potential opportunities and projects for joint public-private partnerships.”

ii. PlanAiken

1. Page 146 & 206 - “Collaboratively work with property owners and interested developers within key transition areas to develop plans for public/private partnerships for investing in infrastructure to help facilitate development.”
2. Page 147 & 207 - “Seek partnerships with community groups, educational institutions, governmental agencies and commercial ventures to leverage the planned investments by outside groups to support the city's infrastructure needs, such as recreational facilities.”
3. Page 195 & 207 - “Partner with Aiken County and SCDOT to plan for and implement improvements to the US Highway 1 corridor from I-20 to the city limits with a goal of developing a unified, functional, and aesthetically appealing entryway into the city.”

c. Social Media Presence

i. Compelling Place to Live

1. Page 12 – “Create clearly visible website links to organizations and community agencies through which prospective and existing residents can gain easy access to information about the City of Aiken and the surrounding communities, including quality of life, arts, entertainment, child care and after school activities, and transportation information.”



2. Page 12 – “Develop a comprehensive inventory of available housing along with a clear explanation of available entry points to rental and purchase for prospective families...”
3. Page 18 – “Utilize a “One Stop” community calendar of arts and events.”
4. Page 19 – “Create a place where organizations can provide quarterly updates and information about after school and summer opportunities.”
5. Page 21 – “Create a database that provides information on transportation options.”
6. Page 25 – “Provide information on the types of schools available and the quality of each in an easy to locate, easy to read/use website.”

d. Annexation

i. planAiken Page 37

1. Page 37 - “Prepare and implement an annexation plan with the goal of incorporating all ‘donut holes’ and immediately adjacent neighborhoods and commercial areas into the city, with a priority focus on areas that are connected to municipal utility services.”
2. Page 147 - “Adopt and enforce utility extension policies that are firm in their requirement for annexation upon the receipt of services from the city, or upon meeting all legal requirements for qualification for annexation.”

e. Facilities

i. planAiken

1. Page 147 & 207 - “Provide modern and efficient facilities for all municipal departments and their operations which are also designed to accommodate future growth.”
2. Page 147 & 208 - “Continue to systematically assess the condition and need of community facilities and infrastructure in order to prioritize effective and efficient maintenance and/or expansion program(s) to ensure a quality system of service delivery.”
3. Page 207 - “Annually review, revise, and adopt a capital improvement plan as part of the city’s budget to ensure that both municipal infrastructure and major departmental equipment needs are identified, planned, for and funded each fiscal year.”
4. Page 207 - “Prepare regular assessments of municipal infrastructure to utilize in adjusting the capital improvement plan.”
5. Page 207 - “Provide funding support to ADPS at a level that is requisite with the department’s needs for continuing to provide high quality and efficient services to the city, including maintain its outstanding ISO fire insurance rating.”

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 13 – “Public structures should serve as visual anchors and catalysts for development.”
2. Page 13 – “Special uses to serve residents may be needed.”



8- Land Use

a. Residential

i. planAiken

1. Page 62 & 179 - "Continue to support the development of new residential units in the downtown core and along the periphery of downtown through incentive based programs and a favorable regulatory environment."
2. Page 62 & 180 - "Reduce regulatory / procedural barriers and implement development incentives as part of the review and revision of the zoning ordinance with the goal of encouraging and supporting a mix of housing types throughout the city that meets the needs of a population that is diverse in terms of age, family structure, and income."

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 12 – "More people should be living in Old Aiken to increase the level of activity, promote a sense of community, and attract a greater variety of businesses."
2. Page 12 – "The dominant land use [for Old Aiken] should be encouraged for detached single-family dwellings."
3. Page 12 – "Owner-occupation of single-family dwellings is vital to the stability of neighborhoods."
4. Page 12 – "Non-residential uses cannot be allowed to negatively affect the character and livability of residential uses."
5. Page 13 – "New residential construction should meet a certain standard of design to protect the character of Old Aiken."

iii. Strategic Plan

1. Page 64 – "...Aiken should explore additional housing development in the core of the community looking at a variety of options including: upper floor development over retail in the core of downtown, mixed use infill development on vacant and/or underutilized sites, site assembly for single family detached or townhouse style development adjacent to or near downtown, and rehabilitation of existing housing stock in the core of the community."

a. Specific tactics are noted on page 65.

iv. Northside Comprehensive Plan

1. Page 19 – "Residential development [in the Northside area] will be in the form of neighborhoods that offer a range of housing choices."

v. Compelling Place to Live

1. Page 13 – "...suggestions included the need to bring more residential opportunities to downtown Aiken."
2. Page 23 – "Encourage investors and contractors to build higher density and more affordable housing options."

b. Development and Growth

i. Aiken's Tomorrow



1. Page 4 – “Phase in amenities to existing venues that make them attractive to all generations.”
 2. Page 4 – “Develop year-round music venues.”
 3. Page 13 – “Encourage infill of small, vacant commercial properties.”
 4. Page 13 – “Determine best practices for filling empty big boxes.”
- ii. PlanAiken
1. Page 87 & 178 - “Adopt and utilize economic incentives and other policies to help focus development and redevelopment activity into areas of the city that are primed for transformation.”
 2. Page 87 - “Work with economic development interests to identify and preserve future industrial sites for their highest and best use.”
 3. Page 87 & 178 - Develop incentives for the reuse and repurposing of legacy commercial sites and shopping centers along the city’s major road corridors.”
 4. Page 87 - “Continue to develop policy to encourage and enhances economic opportunity in North Aiken.”
 5. Page 88 - “Adopt policies and incentives to encourage downtown business growth in sectors that will contribute to its vibrancy, with a particular focus on extending the period of activity downtown later into the evening.”
 6. Page 178 - “Prepare or update small area plans for each distinct area of the city to provide detailed land use and development character guidance for each of the city’s neighborhoods and commercial activity areas. The highest priority for plan development and updates should be given to areas experiencing the greatest growth pressure. These area-specific plans should be reviewed and updated following each major review and update of the Comprehensive Plan.”
 7. Page 178 - “Jointly plan with Aiken County to define, on a periodic basis, an urban growth area for the city of Aiken, within which Aiken County would defer rezoning property to suburban or urban densities without the agreement of the city.”
 8. Page 178 - “Review and revise the City’s zoning ordinance, zoning map and subdivision regulations to ensure that the regulatory environment meets the city’s goals for facilitating high quality growth.”
 9. Page 178 - “Review and realign the zoning map to ensure consistency with the city’s development goals and reduce regulatory and procedural barriers to growth.”
 10. Page 178 & 206 - “Collaboratively work with property owners and interested developers within key transition areas to develop plans for public/private partnerships for investing in infrastructure to help facilitate development.”
 11. Page 178 - “Prioritize the creation or updating of detailed master plans for the following areas: the Whiskey Road Corridor, the University Parkway area, the intersection of US 1 and Highway 118, and update the Old Aiken Master Plan to address the ongoing growth and expansion of the downtown commercial core.”



12. Page 178 - "Enhance the City's development regulations to ensure that requirements for high-quality development are generally applicable throughout the city instead of being narrowly, inconsistently, or subjectively applied to individual sites as they are developed."
 - iii. Old Aiken Master Plan
 1. Page 12 - "Appropriate uses should be encouraged for the large number of small lots."
 2. Page 13 - "The appearance of commercial and institutional structures will directly affect the character of Old Aiken, and regulations are needed to assure that the design is appropriate."
 - iv. Union Street Area Plan
 1. Page 30 - "Development should respect the scale of historic Aiken's downtown including building massing, arrangement on the site, and building height... Development patterns for historic downtowns like Aiken would have buildings of larger scale on key corners, or as institutional or civic uses such as the old Hotel Aiken (anchor lot) as well as the Aiken County Judicial Center and area churches (community uses)."
 - v. Northside Comprehensive Plan
 1. Page 19 - "Village-like, mixed-use nodes will be the preferred pattern of development [in the Northside area]."
 - vi. Compelling Place to Live
 1. Page 23 - "Create incentives for purchasing and upgrading underdeveloped properties near the downtown core."
- c. **Zoning**
- i. Old Aiken Master Plan
 1. Page 12 - "Changes to the Zoning Ordinance are needed to encourage residential development."
 - ii. Union Street Area Plan
 1. Page 22 - "Elimination of setback requirements allowing buildings to extend to the property lines is a key element in accomplishing development consistent with the downtown district."
 - iii. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop
 1. Page 61 - "Every planning and economic development study that has been performed for downtown Aiken has noted the need to introduce infill development as a way to 'expand' the downtown area.... When new construction commences in downtown it needs to be of a density and design motif that will be sympathetic to the existing design and planning framework found there. In this way, traditional approaches to zoning that are prescriptive (e.g. stipulated by a strict height dimension) need to give way to approaches that are descriptive in nature (e.g. stipulated by number of floors approach."
- d. **Maintenance**
- i. Old Aiken Master Plan



1. Page 12 – “Railroad rights-of-way should be maintained and enhanced so that they are an asset and do not detract from community appearance.”
2. Page 13 – “Property should be maintained and not be allowed to become overgrown with vegetation or a depository for trash and garbage.”
- ii. Northside Comprehensive Plan
 1. Page 18 – “Public areas – especially roads and rights-of-way – will be maintained with a high level of functionality and design quality.”

9- Infrastructure

a. Drinking Water and Wastewater

i. planAiken

1. Page 146 & 206 - “Prepare a long-range utility plan that defines the extent of planned water and sewer extensions and the timing of capacity improvements. Ensure that the utility plan is consistent with the long-range transportation plan and other infrastructure planning documents and the city’s Capital Improvement Plan.”
2. Page 146 & 206 - “Utilize development agreements, tax increment financing, and similar instruments to finance necessary infrastructure improvements to facilitate growth while limiting the financial impact on the city.”
3. Page 146 - “Consider the use of impact assessments for major development projects that utilize standardized formulas to assess the cost of mitigating development related impacts to municipal infrastructure and require developers of such projects to contribute to those costs.”
4. Page 146 - “Conduct an audit of the provision of city services, with a particular focus on ensuring that businesses and residences located outside of the city are not receiving services, such as solid waste collection, which they are not paying for.”
5. Page 146 & 207 - “Utilize regular, recurring, sources of funding to finance anticipated infrastructure maintenance and capital investment needs.”
6. Page 146 & 207 - “Ensure that user fees for municipal services, such as water and sewer, are sufficient to fund known maintenance needs.”

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 13 – “Utilities must be adequate to serve the residents, businesses, and other uses.”

10- Built Environment

a. Parkways

i. Aiken’s Tomorrow

1. Page 6 – “Interconnect our parkways with pedestrian-friendly pathways.”



2. Page 15 – “Use results of our pilot Green Infrastructure Project to identify opportunities to interconnect our parkways.”
 3. Page 15 – “Revisit prior parkway designs to see where historic promenades were located.”
- ii. planAiken
 1. Page 104 - “Prepare a plan for the ongoing utilization and maintenance of the city’s parkways with a focus on balancing the competing needs and desires of each neighborhood and commercial corridor for the future use and aesthetic of the parkways in their area.”
 - iii. Old Aiken Master Plan
 1. Page 12 – “The parkways are the jewels of Aiken, and they should be well-maintained, improved, and wherever possible, expanded.”
 - iv. Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report
 1. Page 18 – “PARKWAY DESIGN PRINCIPLES:
 - a. Respect the Historical Context – but reclaim the Parkways Intent
 - b. Increase connectivity, circulation, linkages to and from the median areas as well as within the Spaces
 - c. Mature tree preservation is paramount
 - d. Ensure user safety/security & comfort
 - e. Landscape treatments will vary from one section to the next with the mature trees providing the uniform consistency and design driver
 - f. Increase the visibility/views into & across the parkway to new park spaces, buildings, and parking
 - Define the View Window (Between 3’ and 12’)
 - Remove overgrown shrubs & understory planting
 - Prune/limb up existing trees
 - Will help to reduce physical/psychological barrier to storefronts and parking
 - Reduce pedestrian conflicts with existing plant materials
 - g. Provide signage & way finding
 - h. Provide seating and gathering opportunities
 - i. Increased usage through Park amenities and potential park programming
 - j. Provide consistent pedestrian scaled lighting
 - k. Each parkway section is unique (within the overall Parkway design strategies)
 - l. Existing trees will guide design
 - m. Respond and program each section according to context & use (i.e. Residents vs. Downtown)
 - n. Everyone Has A Role
 - o. Think Creative”
 2. Page 59 – “The parkways are the single biggest identity-generating elements in downtown... Their original intent was to be utilized as pedestrian pathways within a park-like setting that would connect neighborhoods to downtown and vice versa. However, over the years,



these parkways have become overgrown and have taken on a 'sacred' status that almost forbids anyone from interaction with them.... (T)hese parkways could be restored to their original intent...."

a. Specific tactics are noted on page 60.

b. Streetscape

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 8 – "Continue to install lighting, curbing, sidewalks, and landscaping in appropriate areas of the city."
2. Page 13 – "Install pedestrian-friendly infrastructure at key locations throughout the city."
3. Page 16 – "Underground utilities where most feasible."

ii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 12 – "The street rights-of-way outside of the parkways should complement the parkways and reflect the City's commitment to high-quality design of public spaces."

c. Parks and Greenspaces

i. Aiken's Tomorrow

1. Page 4 – "Fund green space/open space acquisitions adjacent to historic structures."
2. Page 15 – "Where appropriate, make all City-owned green spaces multi-use venues."

ii. PlanAiken

1. Page 37 - "Continue to direct resources towards parks and recreation programming that fulfills the needs of residents of all ages and abilities."
2. Page 147 & 206 - "Ensure that investments and funding for resident oriented services, such as park development and recreational programs, are distributed throughout the city in a manner that equitably reaches the entire community."

iii. Old Aiken Master Plan

1. Page 14 – "Green space other than the parkways should be readily available especially for passive recreation."



List of Specific Projects from Aiken Documents

What follows is a list of projects that were mentioned in the 21 documents reviewed. Each entry includes the excerpt where the project was mentioned or a brief summary of the mention. These projects are broken up into four sections. The first section contains the projects that are specific and have been located on the GIS map. The second section contains the projects that are specific enough to imply that they have been located on a map in the past, but not enough information was provided in the respective report for the project team to be able to locate them on a map. The third and final section contains projects that are more general in nature, such as “install street lighting throughout the downtown area.”

Specific Locatable Projects

This section is comprised of projects that are specific enough in nature that they can be pinpointed on a map. See GIS for specific locations.

GATEWAYS

G1: Western Gateway - Former Aiken County Hospital - Investor’s Prospectus (Page 24) – Aiken Hotel Redevelopment would create a strong gateway for the western part of the city.

G2: Eastern Gateway - Richland Ave - Investor’s Prospectus Page 36 – Richland Avenue has the potential to be the eastern gateway into the community if it is developed correctly.

G3: Southern Gateway – Whiskey Rd @ East Pine Log Rd - Whiskey Road Corridor Study (Page 10)

G4: Southern Gateway – Whiskey Rd @ East Pine Log Rd - Whiskey Road Corridor Study (Page 10)

G5: Roundabout at Park Avenue and Union Street – Union Street Area Plan (Page 24) – “The Park Avenue/Union Street roundabout is suggested to enhance the sense of arrival to the union street area...” Mentioned to create a gateway to the Union Street Area and clean up the awkward intersection.

OTHER GATEWAYS:

Northside Major Gateways - Northside Comprehensive Plan (Page 18)

- Interstate-20 interchange with U.S. Route 1
- Interstate-20 Interchange with State Route 19

Whiskey Road Corridor Secondary Gateways – Whiskey Rd Corridor Study (Page 11)

- East Gate Drive
- Dougherty Road
- Powderhouse Road
- Chukker Creek Road

MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS

M1: Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment –

- Investors Prospectus (Page 24) – New ten acre mixed use development is proposed for the Old Aiken County Hospital.



- Rental Housing Market (Page 10) – “As previously discussed, Mr. Bland, among others, reported that The Marian Group, a Kentucky-based company, is considering purchasing a large site along Richland Avenue from Aiken County that was formerly the site of the county hospital. This site is located in the western portion of downtown, approximately 0.5 miles west of Laurens Street and, while the current plans are not available as The Marian Group is currently trying to determine the highest and best use of the site, a portion of the site is proposed to be developed with up to 200 multifamily rental units.”

M2: Save-a-Lot Redevelopment – Investors Prospectus (Page 26) – At the intersection of Hampton Ave and York Street. The grocery store is now vacant. Ideal project is a mixed-use development.

M3: Jackson Petroleum Site – Investors Prospectus (Page 30) – Located at the corner of Williamsburg Street and Richland Avenue, this site was formerly used by a petroleum distributor for commercial sales and warehousing needs. Ideally commercial on the bottom floor, residential on top.

M4: Gyles Park Multi-Family / Mixed Use Development – Union Street Area Plan (Page 24) – “Additional residential and commercial uses in the area will help to maintain a high level of activity and liveliness; increased residential density is vital to the redevelopment of the area. Reasonably priced housing options should be provided, which will be accomplished by offering smaller units at higher densities. The housing should front on the green space presented by the parkways and Gyles Park. Additional land area for the mixed-use development can be gained by closing Cumberland Lane.”

M5: Union Street Mixed Use Development –

- Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “Business storefronts along Union Street should be developed to provide additional affordable services to the community. The buildings should provide mixed-use opportunities with retail space at street levels with residential or office units above....”
- Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “Two of the existing structures facing Union Street may be worthy of renovation to become part of the new mixed-use development. Additionally, two occupied structures along Richland Avenue could, with façade improvements, compliment the proposed infill between them.”

M6: Richland Avenue Mixed-Use Development – Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “The undeveloped parcels along Richland Avenue offer a prime opportunity for an office/retail buildings with upper story residential.”

M7: Residential/Mixed-Infill – Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “Several vacant parcels offer opportunities for residential infill. These could be duplex units to allow an increased density. These parcels also offer opportunity for mixed use infill.”

M8: Aiken Mall Redevelopment – Aiken Standard Article – Planning to demolish the Aiken Mall and install a mixed-use development. Intended to include 256 luxury apartments that will be Class A, meaning full market rate. Demolition is set to begin early to late summer and the project is estimated to be complete by 2022



RESIDENTIAL

R1: Hahn Village Site Redevelopment – Investors Prospectus (Page 28) - Hahn Village is a public housing development in the City of Aiken and is set to be razed, paving the way for 20 acres of new development.

R2: Union & Barnwell – Investor Prospectus (Page 34) - The Union Barnwell site is located at the intersection of Union street and Barnwell Avenue. There is desire for multi-family housing.

R3: Second Baptist Residential – Investor Prospectus (Page 34) - Second Baptist Church owns approximately 40 additional undeveloped acres southeast of their Dupont Landing development that includes frontage along York Street. About half is developable and would ideally include single-family residential.

R4: 156 Williamsburg and 141 Marlboro – Investor Prospectus (Page 36) - Two warehouses located at the corner of Williamsburg Street, NE and Marlboro Street, NE in the Richland Corridor development area would be ideal for multifamily housing

R5: Dupont Landing II – Rental Housing Market (Page 10) – “Dupont Land II was granted LIHTCs in 2016 for the new construction of a 42-unit LIHTC development to be located at 150 Columbia Avenue NE... This property is going through the entitlements process and construction has yet to begin.”

R6: Park Avenue Multi-Family – Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “Additional housing opportunities could be provided along Park Avenue across from Gyles Park. These units would be lower in density and offer quad or duplex units.”

R7: Whiskey Rd @ Powderhouse Rd Townhomes – Rental Housing Market Study (Page 10) – “Mr. Bland also reported that a 116-unit owner-occupied attached townhome-style development is proposed at Whiskey Road and Powderhouse Road.”

PARK/PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS

P1: New Park – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 32) – “Establish a new park at the intersection of Beaufort Street and Park Avenue to be named after an important person of the East Old Aiken area.”

P2: Hopelands/Rye Patch Complex – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 3) – “Renovate outbuildings in the Hopelands/Rye Patch Complex.”

P3: Carolina Bay Nature and Meeting Center – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 7) – “Build the Carolina Bay nature and meeting center.”

P4: Citizens Park Sports Complex – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Build Phase II of the walking track at the Citizens Park Sports Complex.”

P5: Gyles Park Improvements – Union Street Area Plan (Page 24) – “Improvements to Gyles Park to make it more accessible and to accommodate events will make residential development more appealing.”

P6: Crosland Park Redevelopment – Horizon’s (Page -) – “Conduct a top-to-bottom review of our Crosland Park Redevelopment Project to evaluate best practices to maximize returns in this Northside Neighborhood.” Also mentions progress to date on this project to make this area perceived as safe.



P7: Park Avenue Concept A – Laurens Street to Newberry Street – Strategic Implementation Workshop Report (Pages 19 -22) - Includes full concept plan for this section of parkway.

P7: Park Avenue Concept B – Fairfield Street to Union Street – Strategic Implementation Workshop Report (Pages 23 -25) - Includes full concept plan for this section of parkway.

P9: Establish/Extend Parkways – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 17) – “Consider extending existing parkways within the original 1835 grid wherever possible, such as on Williamsburg, Beaufort, and Orangeburg Streets. Complete the original street layout from the 100 block north on Marlboro Street so the lanes are separated, and the parkways are reestablished.”

P10: Eustis Park Senior/Youth Center –

- a. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Build the Eustis Park Senior/Youth Center.”
- b. Horizons (Page -) – “Continue with a design for a Senior and Youth Center at Eustis Park. Explore Opportunities for a Northside Recreation Facility.”

CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS

C1: Municipal Building Expansion

- a. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 4) – “Expand the municipal building.”
- b. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 10) – “Include retail space in the Municipal Building expansion project.”

C2: Renovating First Floor of Aiken City Hall – Horizons (Page -) – “Develop a plan and then renovate the First Floor of Aiken City Hall on Park Avenue. A consulting firm has been retained and is scheduled to conduct a stakeholder meeting in February 2014.”

C3: Aiken County Public Library Renovation – Friends of Aiken County Public Library Press Release (Page 1) – Both articles dedicated to the subject. The Friends are offering to fund \$1M of the renovation to match the Aiken County Council’s \$2M funding from the Capital Projects Sales Tax IV fund. The first phase of the renovation, slated for January 2020, will make the front steps and entrance safer and more accessible and will make the rear entrance meet ADA requirements. The second phase will modernize the 1st and 2nd or the 2nd and 3rd (the articles contradict each other).

C4: Union Street Civic Plaza - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 33) – “Evaluate the redevelopment of the east side of Union Street from Park Avenue to Barnwell Avenue as a civic plaza to include governmental offices, meeting space, and an outdoor space for large public gatherings.”

C5: Freight Station – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 32) – “Consider relocating the freight station from behind the Coward Corley building to the intersection of Park Avenue and Williamsburg Street so that it has more visibility; this site, the historic location of the freight station could be a terminal for either trolley or [horse] carriage rides.”

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS

S1: Aiken Learning Center – Investor Prospectus (Page 40) - Would provide non-traditional education courses and training for non-traditional students to advance into full-time employment.



S2: New Technical Education Campus – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 33) – “Consider development of a campus for technical education in either the area bounded by Barnwell and Richland Avenues and Williamsburg and Beaufort Streets, or north of Hampton Avenue near Union Street to train nearby residents in various trade skills in the tradition of Schofield School, perhaps as a satellite of Aiken Tech.”

OTHER

O1: Former Second Baptist Church on Laurens Street – Investor Prospectus (Page 38) - Located at the intersection of Abbeville Avenue and Laurens Street, the building is currently a school operated by Second Baptist Church. The Church is willing to sell the building or partner with a developer looking to adaptively re-use the current building. Community wants adaptive reuse, redeveloping it into office space, residential houses, or a mixture of the two uses.

O2: Saint Mary’s Sanctuary – Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “Saint Mary’s Help of Christians Catholic Church proposes to build a new sanctuary with meeting rooms, classrooms, and offices on Fairfield Street north of Sea Lane. The concept plan presented here encourages Saint Mary’s development plans to provide a street front presence along Fairfield Street, develop internal parking (g), and allow a business retail structure (f) to be developed along Union Street.”

O3: Richland Avenue Office/Commercial Infill – Union Street Area Plan (Page 25) – “The vacant parcel along Richland Avenue should be developed as office or commercial infill.”

AGRICULTURAL SITES

Developing former agriculture sites – planAiken (Page 158-159) – Displays and describes a map of agricultural sites throughout Aiken that are ripe for redevelopment.

NEW ROADWAY

N1: Northside Major Thoroughfare Plan – Northside Comprehensive Plan (Pages 74 -77) - Details the proposed road additions to the Northside area in order to support the expected growth.

N2: Dougherty Road Improvements – Horizon’s (Page -) – “Pursue a plan to connect Dougherty Road to the Publix Shopping Center. The real estate has been obtained and we now have title to it. The owner is scheduled to vacate this property February 7th, 2014. We have engaged W.R. Toole Engineering to design an attractive entrance into their center. We are also in conversation with the Center owners and tenants to let them know how we are proceeding. We will also share the concept for this entrance once it is developed with are residents.”

WIDENINGS

W1: Hitchcock Parkway Widening –

- a. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 16) – “Widen Hitchcock Parkway where appropriate.”
- b. planAiken (Page 185) – “Operational improvements such as the construction of turn lanes, shoulders, passing lanes, and intersection improvements along Hitchcock Parkway.” This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 1



priority funding for committed projects in the 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program. Such projects were programmed to commence preliminary engineering, right-of-way-acquisition, or construction during the 2015-2018 planning period.

- c. ARTS 2035 LRTP (Page 226) – “Widen Hitchcock Parkway (SC 118) from 2 to 4 lanes between Huntsman Drive to SC 302 (Silver Bluff Road) with full landscaped median and turn lanes as needed and multiuse path along the entire project limits.”

W2: University Parkway Widening –

- d. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 16) – “Widen University Parkway.”
- e. planAiken (Page 185) – “Widen University Parkway from 3 to 5 lanes.” This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 1 priority funding for committed projects in the 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program. Such projects were programmed to commence preliminary engineering, right-of-way-acquisition, or construction during the 2015-2018 planning period.

W3: Park Avenue –

- f. Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 17) – “Study Park Avenue as four lanes from Union to Gaston Streets and, if possible, provide a center parkway.”

W4: Widen Edgefield Highway – planAiken (Page 185) - This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 2 priority funding for committed projects in the 2019-2029 medium-range planning horizon.

W5: Widen Charleston Highway – planAiken (Page 185) – “Widen Charleston Highway from 2 to 4 lanes.” - This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 3 priority funding for committed projects in the 2030 to 2040 planning period.

CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

C1: Whiskey Road Projects

- a. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 16) -
 - i. “Build the Whiskey Road to Corporate Way/Centennial Parkway connecting road.”
 - ii. “Connect Whiskey Road to Powderhouse Road from East Gate Drive to the east.”
 - iii. “As funding and approvals are obtained, build more Whiskey Road right-of-way corridor improvements.”

C2: Colleton Avenue/Williamsburg Street – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Encourage connectivity to Colleton Avenue to draw shoppers in to the eastern part of Old Aiken, with particular emphasis on improving Williamsburg Street.”

C3: Silver Bluff Road – planAiken (Page 185) – “Intersection and corridor improvements on Silver Bluff Road.” This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 1 priority funding for committed projects in the 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program. Such projects were programmed to commence preliminary engineering, right-of-way-acquisition, or construction during the 2015-2018 planning period.



C4: Railroad Xing at Park Avenue and Williamsburg Street – planAiken (Page 185) - This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 2 priority funding for committed projects in the 2019-2029 medium-range planning horizon.

C5: Dougherty Road Improvements – planAiken (Page 185) – “On Dougherty Road, add a flushed median (3rd lane) and double left turn lanes onto Whiskey Road with traffic.” This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 2 priority funding for committed projects in the 2019-2029 medium-range planning horizon.

TRAILS/GREENWAYS/MULTI-USE PATHS

T1: Greenway along University Parkway – planAiken (Page 185) – “Construct a bicycle/pedestrian greenway along University Parkway from Robert M Bell Parkway to Edgefield Highway (SC-19).” - This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 3 priority funding for committed projects in the 2030 to 2040 planning period.¹

T2: East Pine Log Multi-Use Path – planAiken (Page 185) – “Construct a bicycle/pedestrian multi-use path from East Pine Log Road to Corporate Parkway.” - This is one of the projects from the ARTS 2040 LRTP that were ranked tier 3 priority funding for committed projects in the 2030 to 2040 planning period.

T3: Multi use path around Hitchcock Woods – Compelling Place to Live (Page 13) - Mentioned as a “big hairy idea.”

BIKE LANES

B1: SC-19 Bike Lane – planAiken (Page 185) – “Construct a striped bike lane along SC 19 from Hampton Avenue to Shiloh Heights Rd.”

B2: Hayne Avenue Bike lanes – Horizons (Page -) – “We have an application pending with SCDOT for bike lanes on Hayne Avenue from downtown to Richland Avenue.” NOTE: I just looked at this location on Google Earth and found that there is a bike lane, but it is on only one side, is only 4 feet wide, and is right next to a 20 foot travel lane.

STREETSCAPE

ST1: Park Avenue –

- a. Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Study and, if feasible, implement the creation of a pedestrian promenade with amenities (such as wide sidewalks, benches, and shade trees) to encourage pedestrian use on the north side of the Park Avenue right-of-way.”
- b. Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 29) – “Consider the redesign of the north side of the Park Avenue right-of-way and consider a pedestrian promenade with amenities (such as wide sidewalks, benches, and shade trees) to encourage pedestrian use.”

SIDEWALKS

SW1: Park Avenue Add & Repair - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Repair and add sidewalks along... Park Avenue.”



SW2: Hayne Avenue Add & Repair - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Repair and add sidewalks along Hayne Avenue...”

SW3: Barnwell Avenue Add & Repair - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Repair and add sidewalks along... Barnwell Avenue...”

SW4: Hampton Avenue to Pinecrest School - Horizons (Page -) – “We are also determining the feasibility of sidewalks on Hampton Avenue from Pendleton Street to the entrance to Pinecrest School.”

NOTE: PROJECTS FROM AIKEN COUNTY URBANIZED AREA BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN

All other corridor projects that are depicted on the Previously Proposed Project map but not specifically mentioned in the project list above are from the Aiken County Urbanized Area Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan. Sidewalk projects are not included in the Previously Proposed Project Map because the Bicycle & Pedestrian plan recommends sidewalks for every corridor in the city limits of Aiken.

Specific but Non-Locatable Projects

This section is comprised of projects that refer to specific points but were not specific enough to be pinpointed in the GIS map.

1. **Green Infrastructure Pilot Project** –
 - a. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 6) – “Complete the green infrastructure pilot project.”
 - b. Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 15) – “Develop our Green Infrastructure Project as a ‘learning lab’ for best sustainable practices for communities to protect ecology in urban environments.”
2. **ADPS Training Grounds** – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 7) – “Renovate and improve the ADPS training grounds and promote its multi-use classroom.”
3. **Northside Park** – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Build the Northside Park at the former landfill site.”
4. **Northside Revitalization Project** – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Finish the Northside Revitalization Project.”
5. **New Medical Clinic**- Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 33) – “Work with the hospital to encourage a medical clinic to be located in the area north of Hampton Avenue and east of Union Street.”
6. **New Library Extension** – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 34) – “Encourage the establishment of a library extension north of Hampton Avenue near Union street.”
7. **City Recycle Center into Park** – Horizons (Page -) – “Proceed with the redevelopment of our City Recycle Center into a multi-use and passive city park facility. Environmental considerations have delayed this project, described as ‘a tough nut to crack.’”
8. **Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative** – Whole article dedicated to the subject - “Across the street from the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center.”
9. **National Guard Dreamport and Readiness Complex** – Whole article dedicated to the subject - Built somewhere on USC Aiken Campus.



10. **Bike Routes from Colleges to Downtown** – The Next Big Ideas (Page 11) – “Assist GAIT in organizing the effort to establish bicycle routes from the University of South Carolina Aiken and Aiken Technical College to downtown, and between the two campuses. Further advocate for bike racks downtown and outdoor furniture in parkways.”
11. **Pathway from South Aiken High School to Aiken Mall** – Annual Budget (Page 18)
12. **Demo 200 Program** – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 35)

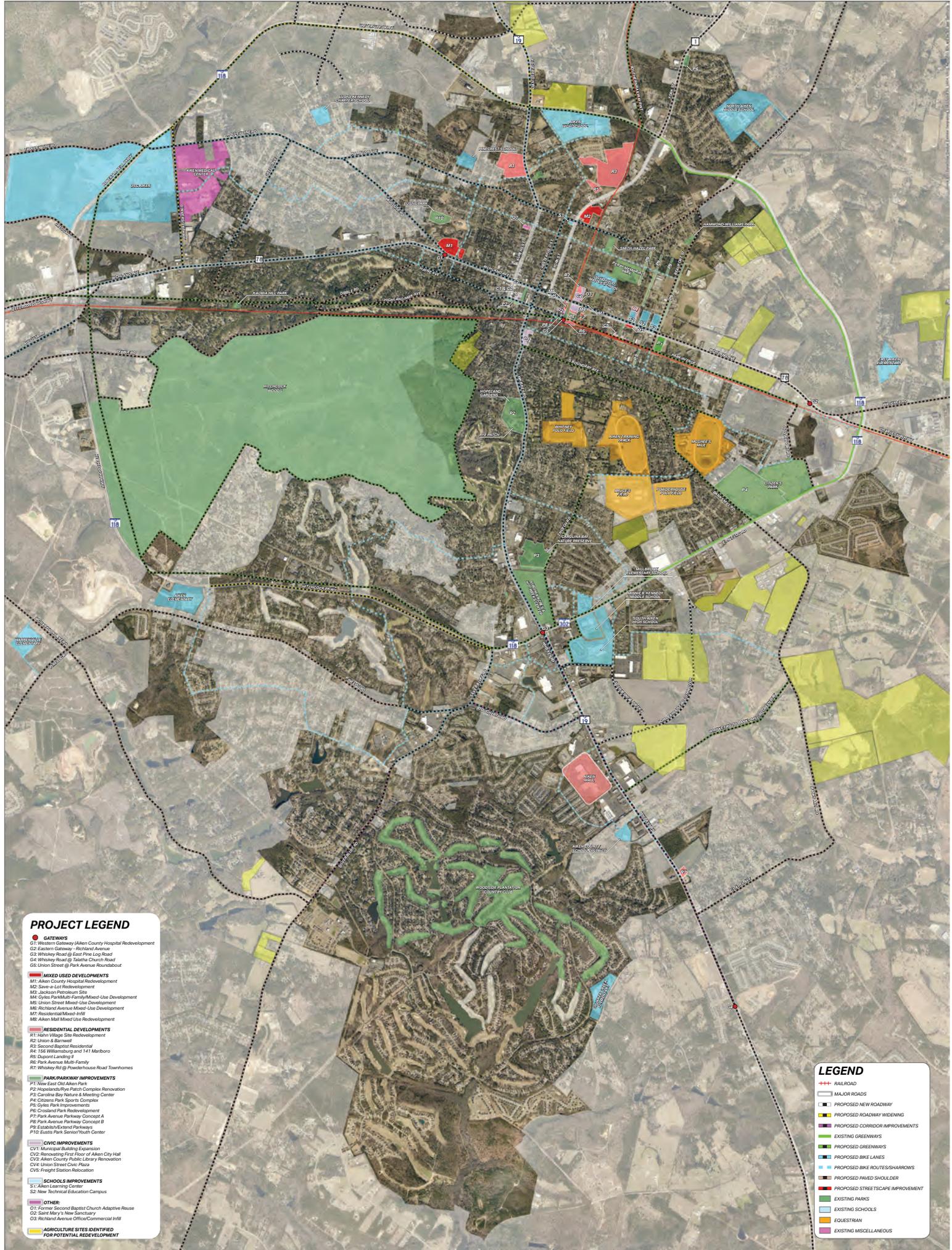
General Projects

This section is comprised of projects that are general in nature.

1. **Splash Park** – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Build a splash-park at a recreation facility as an additional recreational amenity.”
2. **Accessible Recreational Park** – Aiken’s Tomorrow (Page 8) – “Build an accessible recreational park.”
3. **Street Lighting Plan** – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “With the involvement of residents, study and, if feasible, implement a street lighting plan to increase lighting with downward-directed lighting below tree canopy. Fixture design and placement frequency should be appropriate for each neighborhoods needs.” And “Review the erection of more decorative streetlights similar to the ones downtown including conversion of existing ones beginning with Park Avenue.”
4. **Undergrounding Utilities** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 19) – “Develop a schedule for burying electrical and phone/cable lines underground beginning in the downtown area where appropriate.”
5. **Best Friend Express** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 32) - Many different recommendations including, investigating different routing, changing the appearance, providing transit shelters, increasing awareness and availability, etc.
6. **Mass Transit Line** – Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 32) – “Investigate the feasibility of a mass transit line connecting Old Aiken and the south side.”
7. **NonSpecific Downtown Businesses** – Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report (Page 14) - ... [T]here is opportunity for 3 or more restaurants, 1 co-op style or 2-3 specialty food stores, 4-5 targeted clothing stores, 1 well curated sporting goods store, and 1-2 personal care/service stores [in the downtown area].
8. **City Connect** – Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report (Page 62-63) – “Create a physical space (similar to Hartsville ‘Navigator’) to house John McMichael’s office and support space for City Connect personnel (e.g. small conference room, nearby offices, etc) with branded signage.” Touted as a one-stop shop for all design review, code compliance, and development incentives awareness so that these are all clear and consistent.
9. **District Anchors** – The Next Big Ideas (Page 11) – “Engage with district stakeholders to develop an anchor for each district. Examples of candidate areas are the old Aiken County Complex, the Union Street area, the Farmers Market, Mitchell Shopping Center, and Aiken Mall.”
10. **Dog Park in Parkway** – Compelling Place to Live (Page 13) - Mentioned as a possibility for one or two of the parkways.



11. **Makerspace** – Compelling Place to Live (Page 13) - Mentioned in the general sense as a millennial attractor.
12. **Entrepreneurial Center** –Compelling Place to Live (Page 15) - Mentioned as a potential attractor for young professionals.
13. **Limited Shuttle Locations** – Compelling Place to Live (Page 20) – “Identified locales might include connecting Downtown, USCA, Northside Park, and Aiken Mall, as well as transportation to the North Augusta Riverfront Park when it is complete.”
14. **Electric Car Infrastructure to downtown** – Compelling Place to Live (Page 13) - Mentioned as a “less hairy” [than the multi-use path around Hitchcock Woods] idea.
15. **Northside Recreation Facility** – Horizons (Page -) – “Explore opportunities for a Northside Recreation Facility.”
16. **Brick sidewalk edging** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Install sidewalks with brick edging (similar to downtown sidewalks) where appropriate.”
17. **Add & repair sidewalks** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 18) – “Add and repair sidewalks wherever practical.”
18. **Install crosswalks and review pedestrian safety measures** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 28) – “Install crosswalks at high-volume pedestrian/vehicular intersections and review pedestrian safety measures for all intersection sin downtown and make design and pavement-marking changes as need.”
19. **Side street sidewalks** - Old Aiken Master Plan (Page 28) – “Consider sidewalks on the side streets where appropriate (e.g. on the south side of Barnwell Avenue).”

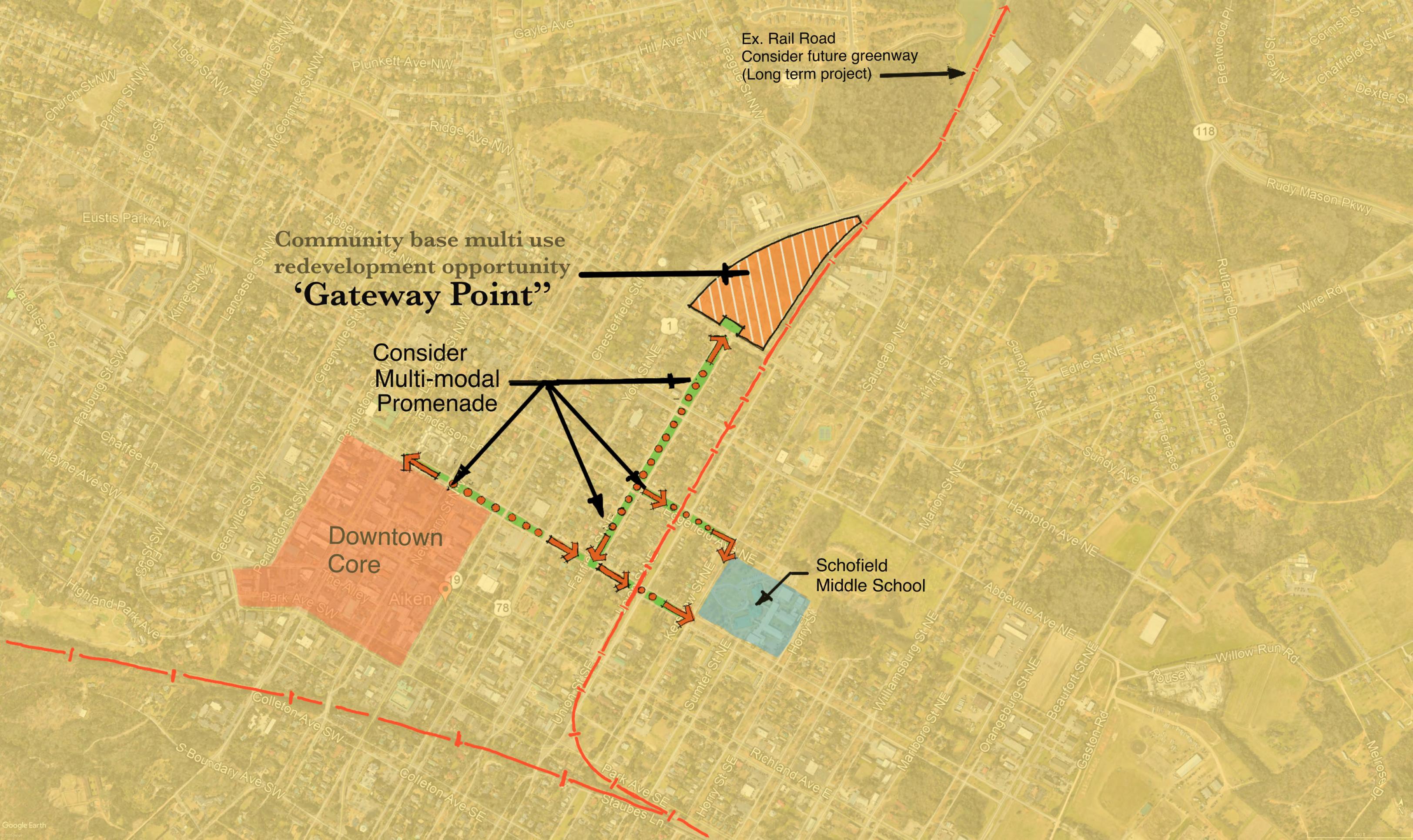


- PROJECT LEGEND**
- GATEWAYS**
 - G1: Western Gateway (Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment)
 - G2: Eastern Gateway - Richland Avenue
 - G3: Whiskey Road @ East Pine Log Road
 - G4: Whiskey Road @ Galtha Church Road
 - G5: Union Street @ Park Avenue Roundabout
 - MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS**
 - M1: Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment
 - M2: Save-a-Lot Redevelopment
 - M3: Jackson Petroleum Site
 - M4: Cycles Park Multi-Use/Mixed-Use Development
 - M5: Union Street Mixed-Use Development
 - M6: Richland Avenue Mixed-Use Development
 - M7: Residential/Mixed-Use
 - M8: Aiken Mall Mixed Use Redevelopment
 - RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS**
 - R1: Haven Village Site Redevelopment
 - R2: Union & Barnwell
 - R3: Second Baptist Residential
 - R4: 156 Williamsburg and 141 Marlboro
 - R5: DuPont Landing II
 - R6: Park Avenue Multi-Family
 - R7: Whiskey Rd @ Powderhouse Road Townhomes
 - PARK/PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS**
 - P1: New East Old Aiken Park
 - P2: Hopewoods/Rye Patch Complex Renovation
 - P3: Carolina Bay Nature & Meeting Center
 - P4: Citizens Park Sports Complex
 - P5: Cycles Park Improvements
 - P6: Crowland Park Redevelopment
 - P7: Park Avenue Parkway Concept A
 - P8: Park Avenue Parkway Concept B
 - P9: Establish/Extend Parkways
 - P10: Easton Park Senior/Youth Center
 - CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS**
 - C1: Municipal Building Expansion
 - C2: Renovating First Floor of Aiken City Hall
 - C3: Aiken County Public Library Renovation
 - C4: Union Street Civic Plaza
 - C5: Freight Station Relocation
 - SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENTS**
 - S1: Aiken Learning Center
 - S2: New Technical Education Campus
 - OTHER**
 - O1: Former Second Baptist Church Adaptive Reuse
 - O2: Saint Mary's New Sanctuary
 - O3: Richland Avenue Office/Commercial Infill
 - AGRICULTURE SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT**

- LEGEND**
- RAILROAD
 - MAJOR ROADS
 - PROPOSED NEW ROADWAY
 - PROPOSED ROADWAY WIDENING
 - PROPOSED CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
 - EXISTING GREENWAYS
 - PROPOSED GREENWAYS
 - PROPOSED BIKE LANES
 - PROPOSED BIKE ROUTES/SHARROWS
 - PROPOSED PAVED SHOULDER
 - PROPOSED STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT
 - EXISTING PARKS
 - EXISTING SCHOOLS
 - EQUESTRIAN
 - EXISTING MISCELLANEOUS

**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED PROJECTS**

Appendix D: Maps & Graphics



Ex. Rail Road
Consider future greenway
(Long term project)

Community base multi use
redevelopment opportunity
‘Gateway Point’

Consider
Multi-modal
Promenade

Downtown
Core

Schofield
Middle School



James Town Ct NE

Columbia Ave NE

Newberry St NW

19

Laurens St NW

Chesterfield St N

Hampton Ave NW



Aiken-Rescue Ln

Sundry Ave NE

Abbeville Ave NW

1

Hampton Ave NE

Newell Ln

York St NE

Abbeville Ave NE

field St NE

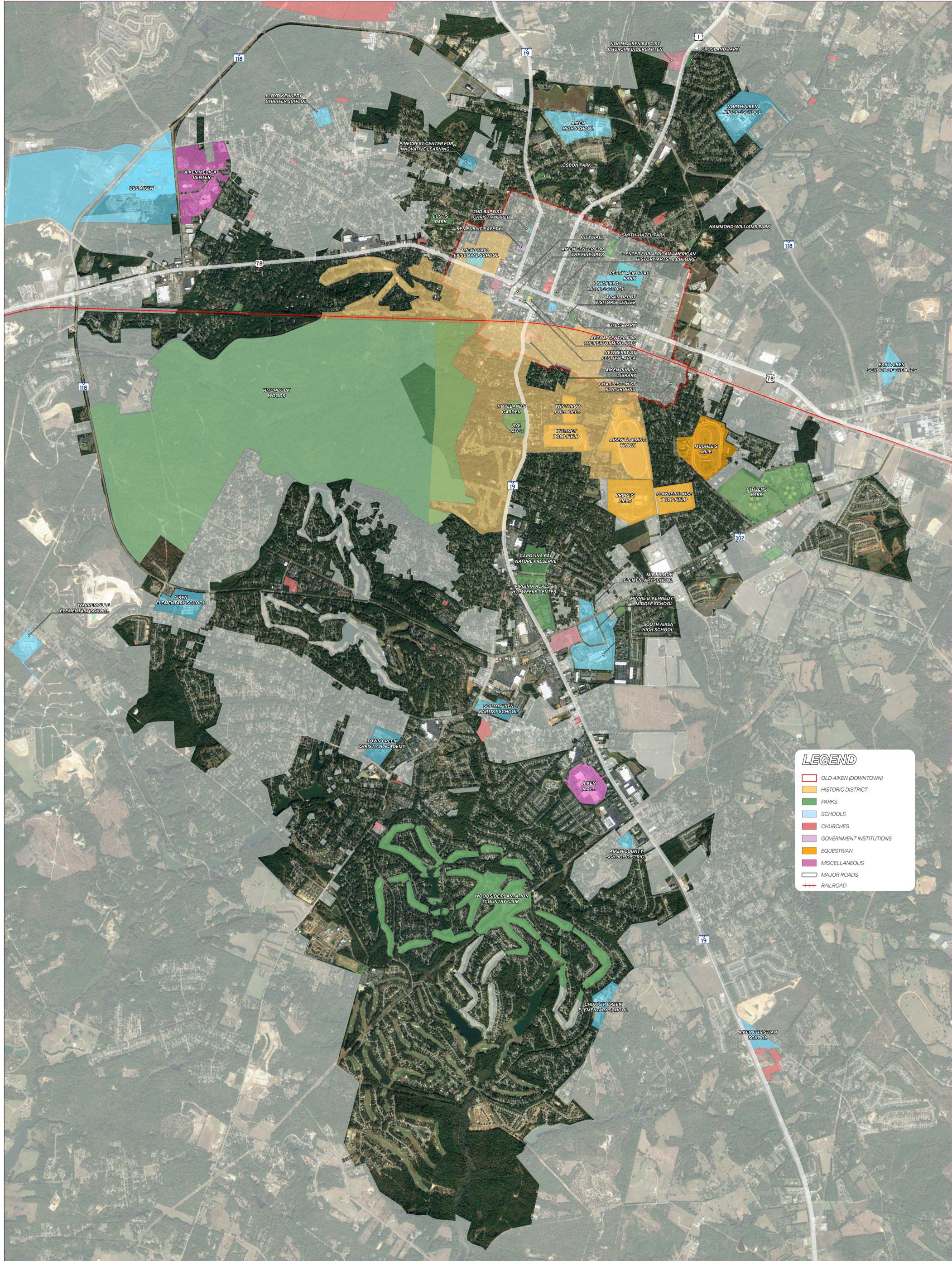
Union St NE

Kershaw St NE

Saluda Dr NE

Sumter St NE



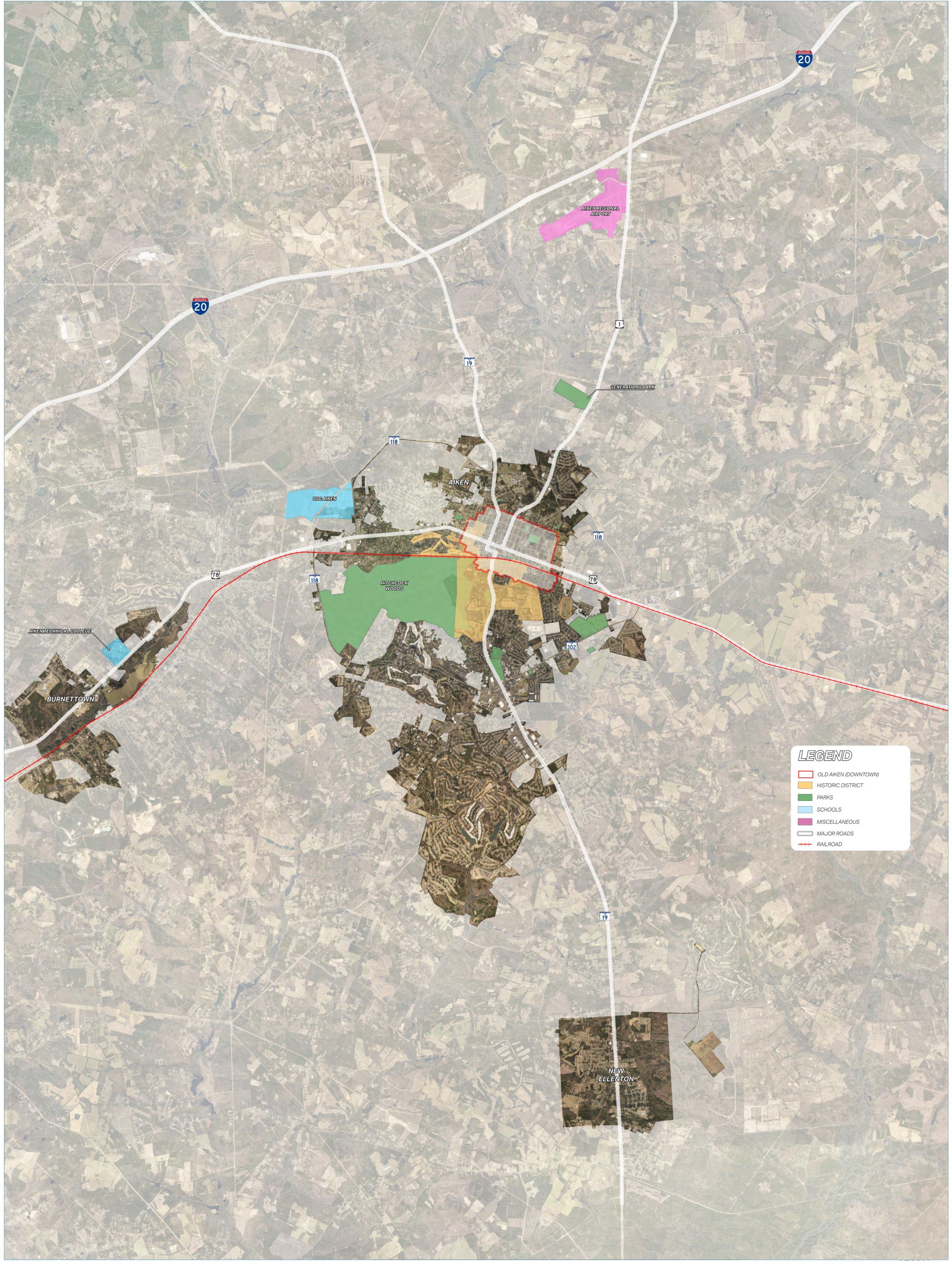


LEGEND

- OLD AIKEN (DOWNTOWN)
- HISTORIC DISTRICT
- PARKS
- SCHOOLS
- CHURCHES
- GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS
- EQUESTRIAN
- MISCELLANEOUS
- MAJOR ROADS
- RAILROAD

**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
EXISTING CONDITIONS**

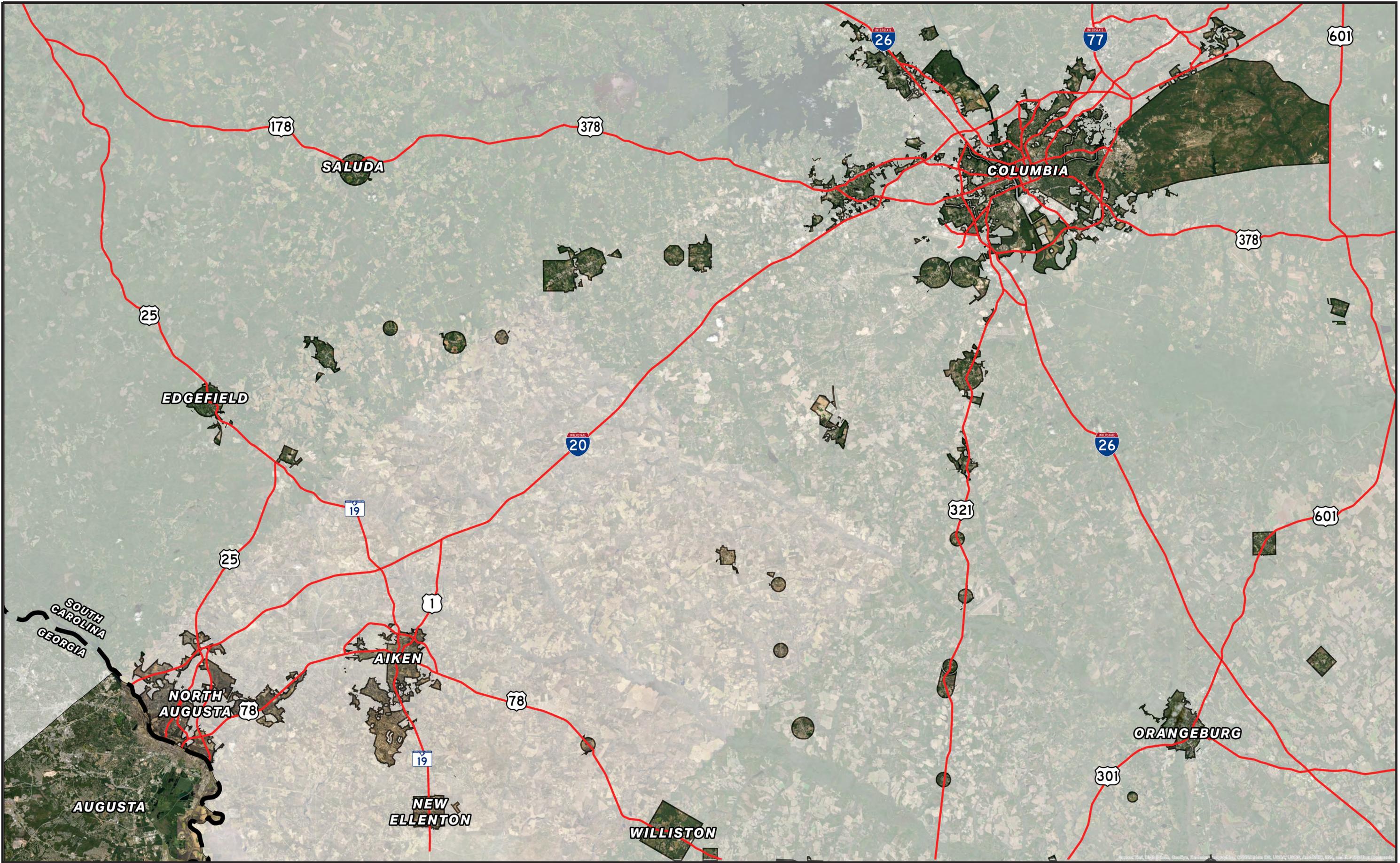




LEGEND

- OLD AIKEN (DOWNTOWN)
- HISTORIC DISTRICT
- PARKS
- SCHOOLS
- MISCELLANEOUS
- MAJOR ROADS
- RAILROAD

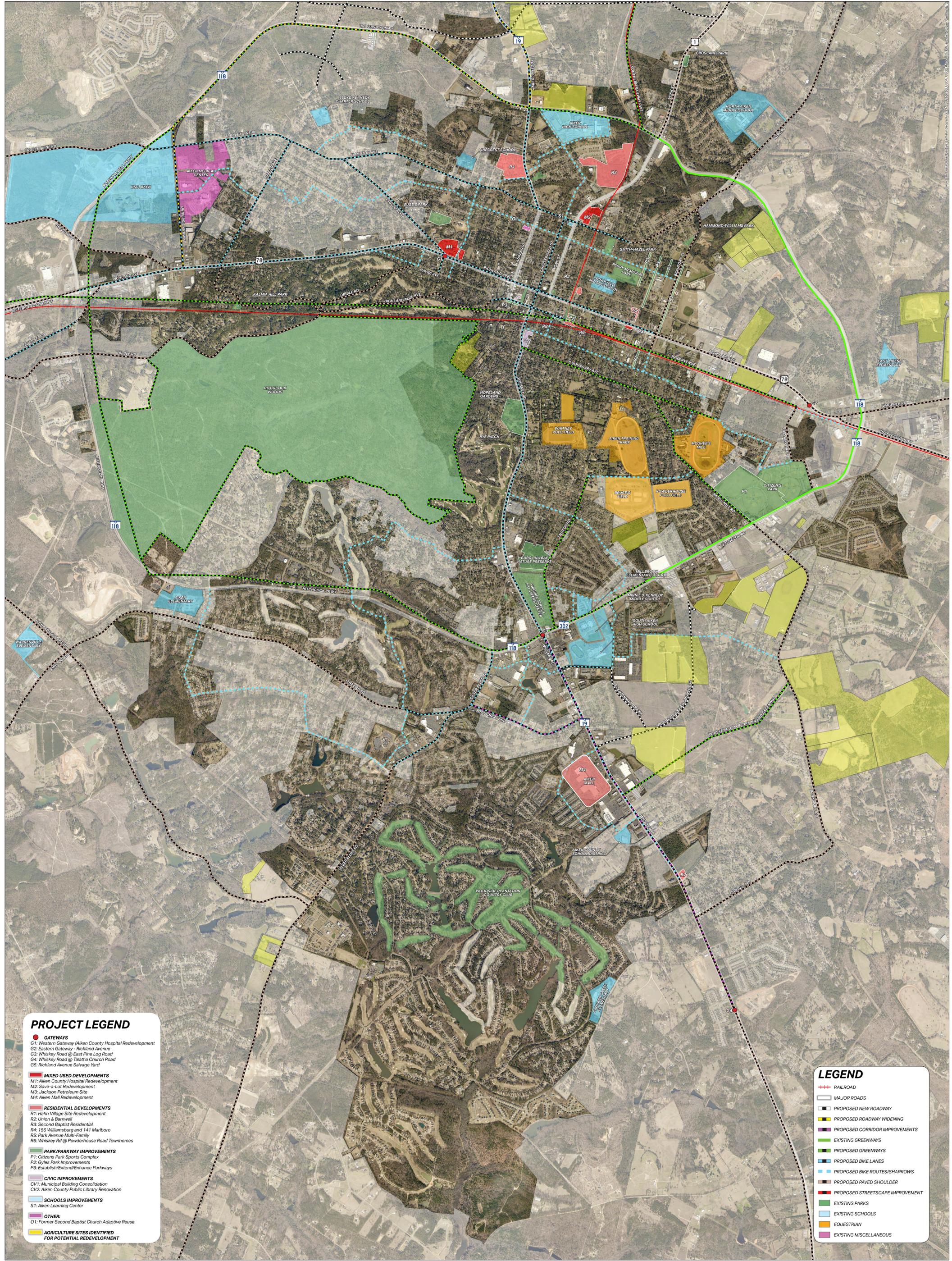
AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
EXISTING CONDITIONS - GREATER CONTEXT



AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA REGIONAL CONTEXT



AECOM



PROJECT LEGEND

- GATEWAYS**
- G1: Western Gateway (Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment)
- G2: Eastern Gateway - Richland Avenue
- G3: Whiskey Road @ East Pine Log Road
- G4: Whiskey Road @ Talatha Church Road
- G5: Richland Avenue Salvage Yard

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- M3: Jackson Petroleum Site
- M4: Aiken Mall Redevelopment

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- R3: Second Baptist Residential
- R4: 156 Williamsburg and 141 Marlboro
- R5: Park Avenue Multi-Family
- R6: Whiskey Rd @ Powderhouse Road Townhomes

- PARK/PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS**
- P1: Citizens Park Sports Complex
- P2: Gyles Park Improvements
- P3: Establish/Extend/Enhance Parkways

- CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS**
- CV1: Municipal Building Consolidation
- CV2: Aiken County Public Library Renovation

- SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENTS**
- S1: Aiken Learning Center

- OTHER**
- O1: Former Second Baptist Church Adaptive Reuse

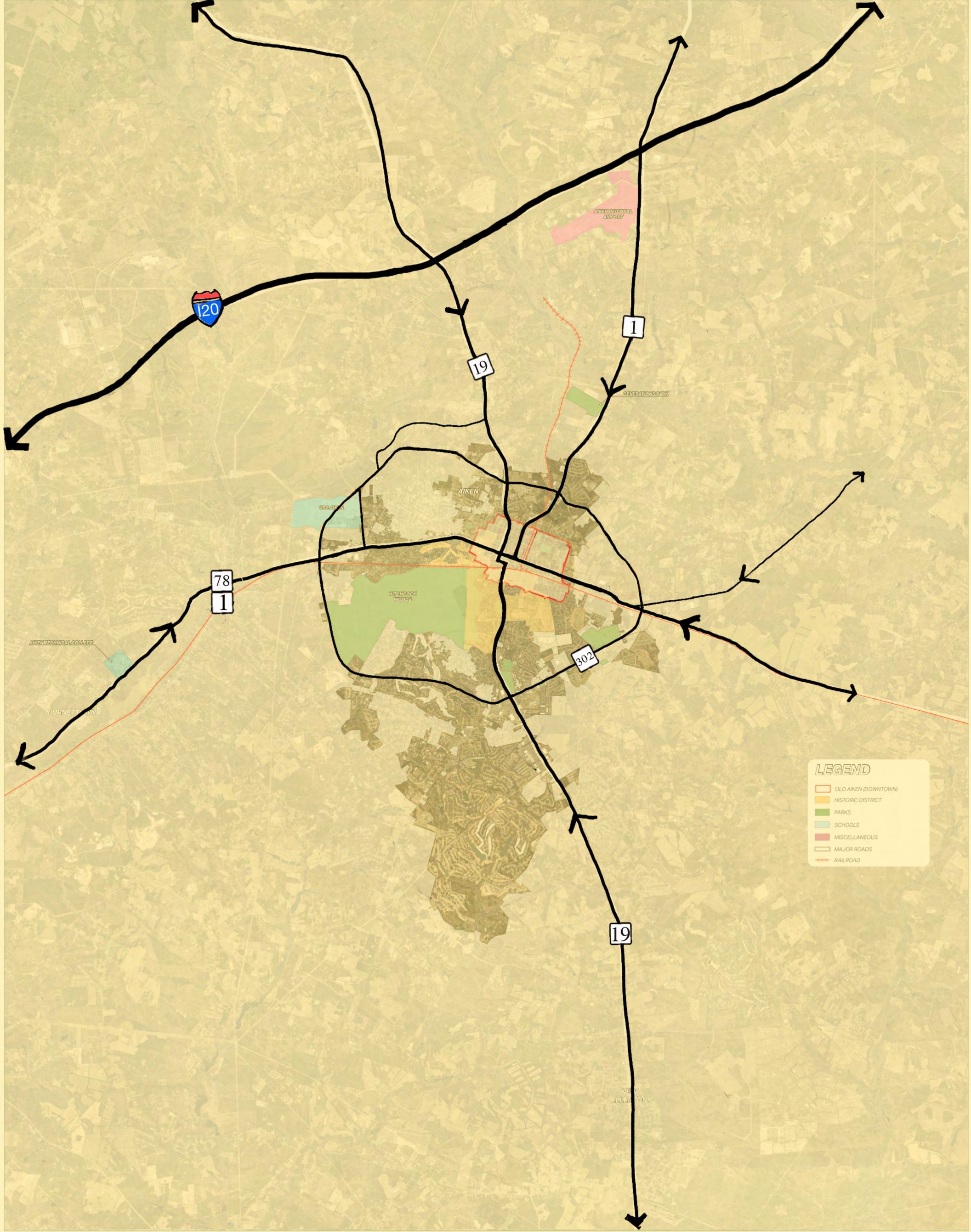
- AGRICULTURE SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT**

LEGEND

- RAILROAD
- MAJOR ROADS
- PROPOSED NEW ROADWAY
- PROPOSED ROADWAY WIDENING
- PROPOSED CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS
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- EXISTING SCHOOLS
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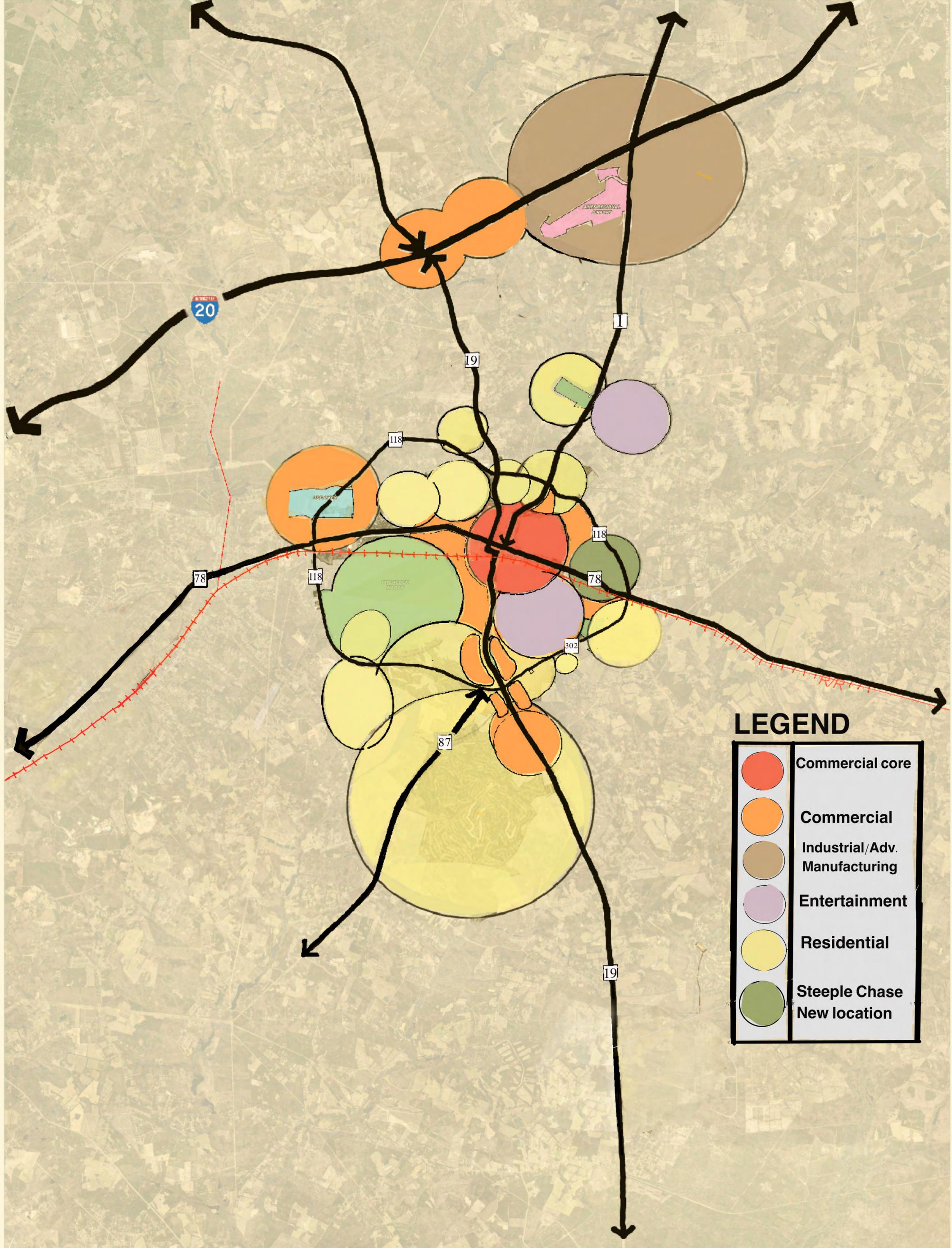
**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED PROJECTS**





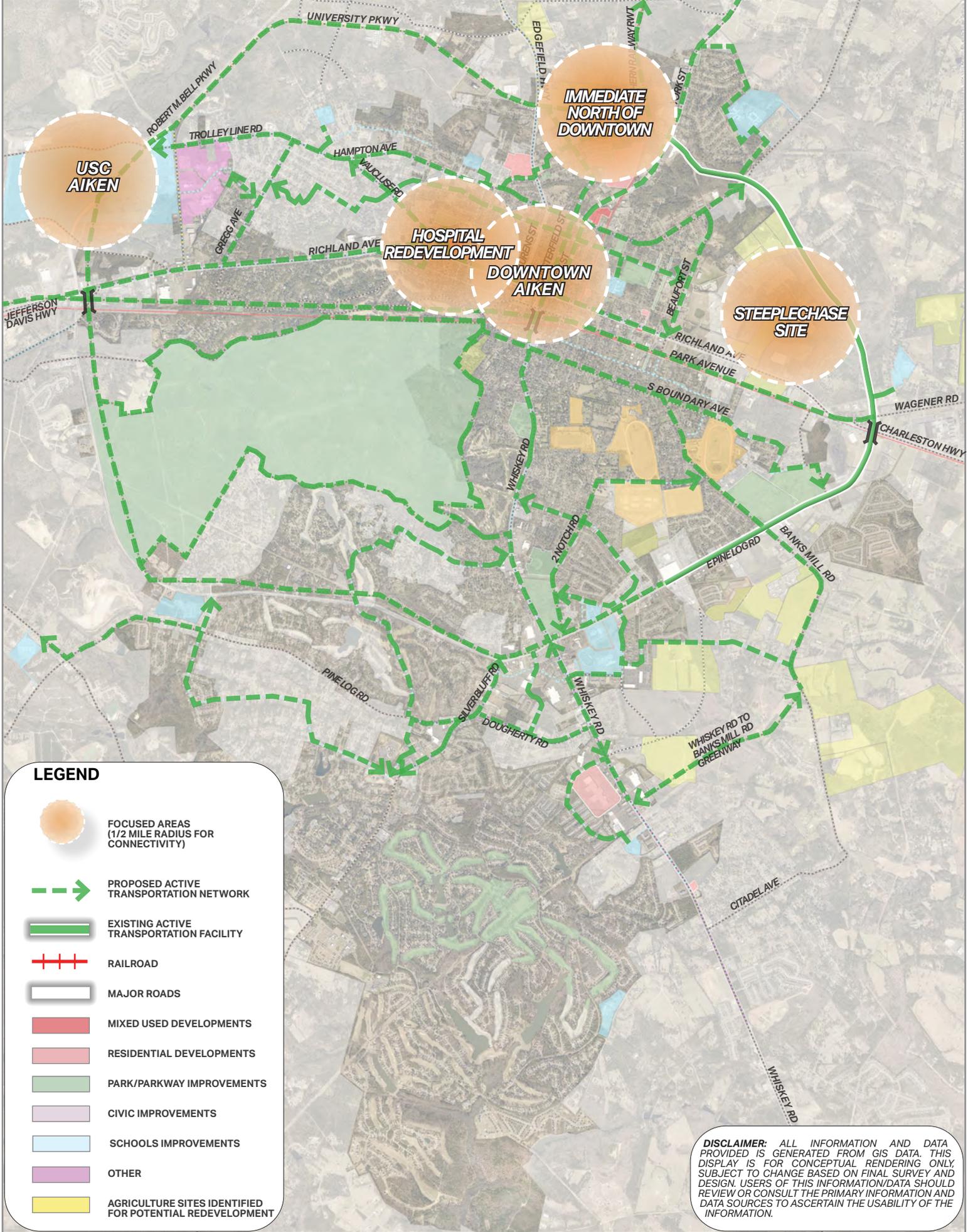
AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
EXISTING CONDITIONS - GREATER CONTEXT





LEGEND

	Commercial core
	Commercial
	Industrial/Adv. Manufacturing
	Entertainment
	Residential
	Steeple Chase New location



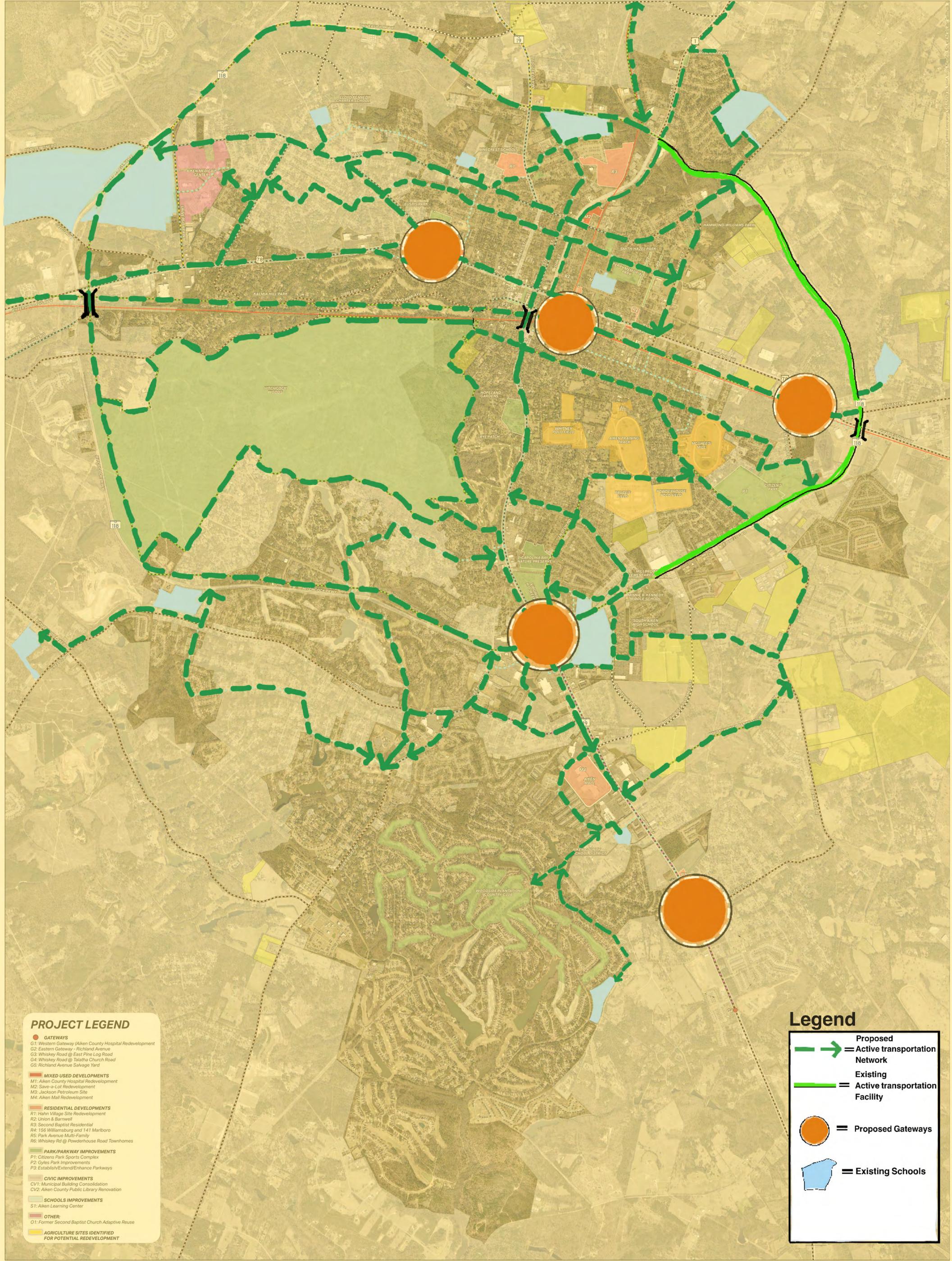
LEGEND

-  FOCUSED AREAS (1/2 MILE RADIUS FOR CONNECTIVITY)
-  PROPOSED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK
-  EXISTING ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FACILITY
-  RAILROAD
-  MAJOR ROADS
-  MIXED USED DEVELOPMENTS
-  RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS
-  PARK/PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS
-  CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS
-  SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENTS
-  OTHER
-  AGRICULTURE SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

DISCLAIMER: ALL INFORMATION AND DATA PROVIDED IS GENERATED FROM GIS DATA. THIS DISPLAY IS FOR CONCEPTUAL RENDERING ONLY. SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON FINAL SURVEY AND DESIGN. USERS OF THIS INFORMATION/DATA SHOULD REVIEW OR CONSULT THE PRIMARY INFORMATION AND DATA SOURCES TO ASCERTAIN THE USABILITY OF THE INFORMATION.

**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
PROPOSED FOCUSED AREAS**





PROJECT LEGEND

- **GATEWAYS**
 G1: Western Gateway (Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment)
 G2: Eastern Gateway - Richland Avenue
 G3: Whiskey Road @ East Pine Log Road
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 M1: Aiken County Hospital Redevelopment
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 CV2: Aiken County Public Library Renovation
- **SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENTS**
 S1: Aiken Learning Center
- **OTHER:**
 O1: Former Second Baptist Church Adaptive Reuse
- **AGRICULTURE SITES IDENTIFIED FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT**

Legend

- **Proposed Active transportation Network**
- **Existing Active transportation Facility**
- **Proposed Gateways**
- **Existing Schools**

Appendix E: Meeting Materials

Economic Development & Master Planning Services

Aiken, South Carolina

Marcia Tobin, AICP
Christine Graziano, AICP
John Hightower, PLA



Today's AGENDA

1. Introductions *(10 mins)*
2. Presentation on Proposed Services *(15 mins)*
3. Questions and Discussion *(20 mins)*



INTRODUCTIONS



Marcia Tobin, AICP

Urban Planner

Project Lead



Christine Graziano, AICP

Economic Planner

Lead for economic opportunities analysis
and case studies



John Hightower, PLA

Urban Designer

Lead for master plan / physical
opportunities analysis



AECOM Capabilities & Experience

Economic Development & Master Planning

Presentation Title

Shopping Center Characteristics

Neighborhood Shopping Center



Rite Aid Shopping Center at corner of Rt. 2 and West St.

Community Shopping Center



Kohl's and Shoppers Food Warehouse on Solomon's Island Rd.

Power Center



Gateway Village (Staples, Safeway, Burlington Coat Factory, Best Buy)

Lifestyle Center



Annapolis Towne Centre

Regional Mall



Westfield Annapolis Mall

Convenience
More frequent visits, lower \$/visit
Smaller trade area
Often smaller in square feet

Comparison
Less frequent visits, more \$/visit
Wider trade area
Often larger in square feet

Retailer Characteristics



Drug Stores
Convenience Stores
Liquor Stores
Fast food restaurants
Service businesses (Dry Cleaners, etc)



Larger Supermarkets
Fast casual restaurants



Large General Retailers (Walmart/Target)
Office Supply Stores
Pet Stores



Book Stores
Some clothing stores
Some specialty shops



Department Stores
Sporting Goods Stores
Toy Stores
Home Furnishings
Small Specialty Shops
Fine dining restaurants

Convenience
More frequent visits, lower \$/visit
Smaller trade area
Often smaller in square feet

Comparison
Less frequent visits, more \$/visit
Wider trade area
Often larger in square feet

Current Upper West Street Retail Profile



Drug Stores
Convenience Stores
Liquor Stores
Fast food restaurants
Service businesses (Dry Cleaners, etc)



Larger Supermarkets
Fast casual restaurants



Large General Retailers (Walmart/Target)
Office Supply Stores
Pet Stores



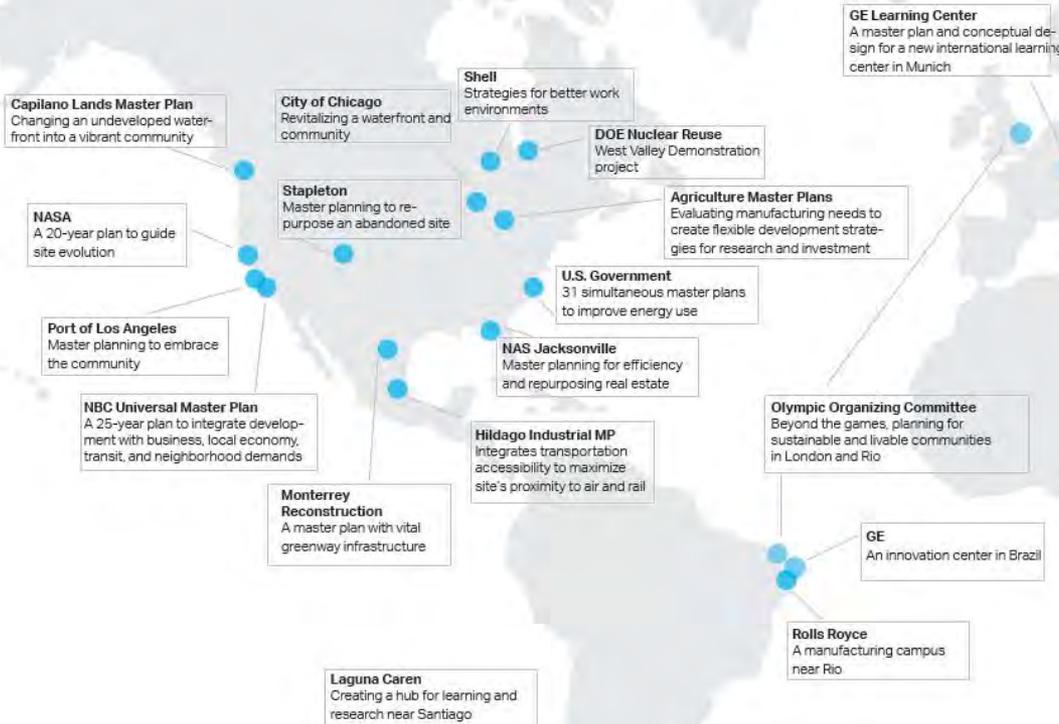
Department Stores
Sporting Goods Stores
Toy Stores
Home Furnishings
Small Specialty Stores
Fine dining restaurants

Convenience
More frequent visits, lower \$/visit
Smaller trade area
Often smaller in square feet

Comparison
Less frequent visits, more \$/visit
Wider trade area
Often larger in square feet

Economic Development

- Market Analysis for master planning
- Financial feasibility assessment
- Economic impact studies
- Economic development strategies and implementation plans

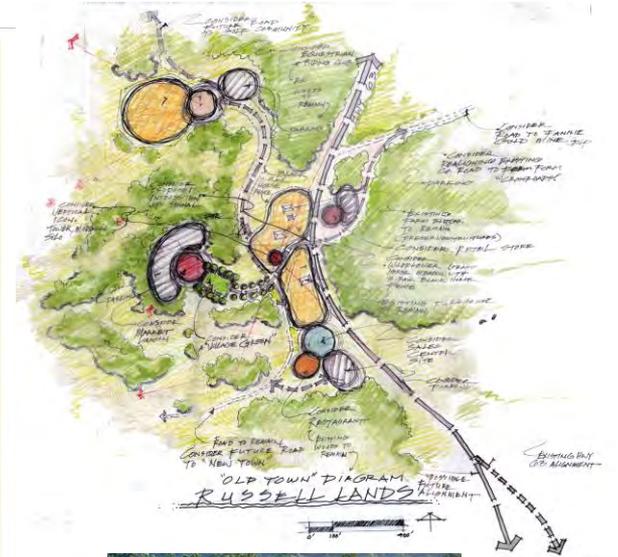
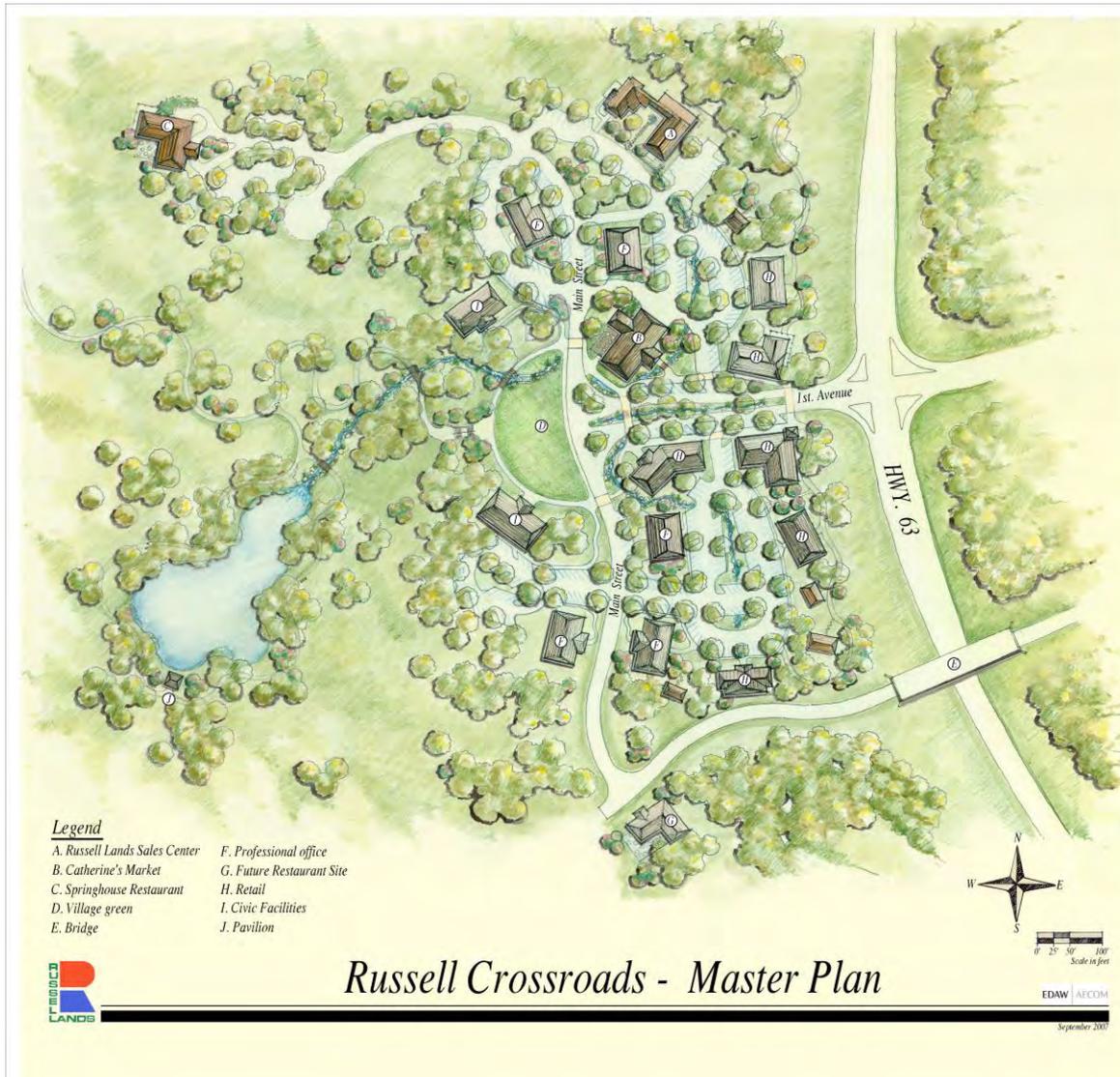


Masterplanning

- Community Master Planning
- Site Master Planning
- Gateway Design
- Streetscape Design
- Park Design
- Trail Planning & Design



Community Master Planning - Russell Crossroads



Community Master Planning – Ave Maria



1 AUGUST 2003



ILLUSTRATIVE MASTER PLAN
AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY - AVE MARIA TOWNE
COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA



Hoggett & Associates • Pink & Associates • Wilson Miller

Site Master Planning - Magnolia Crossing



Site Master Planning – Central Square



MAP LEGEND:

-  SINGLE FAMILY TOWNHOMES
-  MIXED-USE (COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL)
-  OFFICE
-  HOTEL / CONVENTION CENTER
-  PARKING DECK
-  PROPOSED TRAFFIC LIGHT

Site Master Planning – One Ivy Walk



Gateway Design – I-77 Underpass



WEST TRADE / I-77 UNDERPASS ENHANCEMENTS

WTRF CNIP



Gateway Design – I-20 @ Riverside Dr. Interchange



Streetscape Design - East Point Downtown Corridors



Streetscape Design – Buford Highway



Streetscape Design - Milton Avenue



Streetscape Design - N. McDonough St.



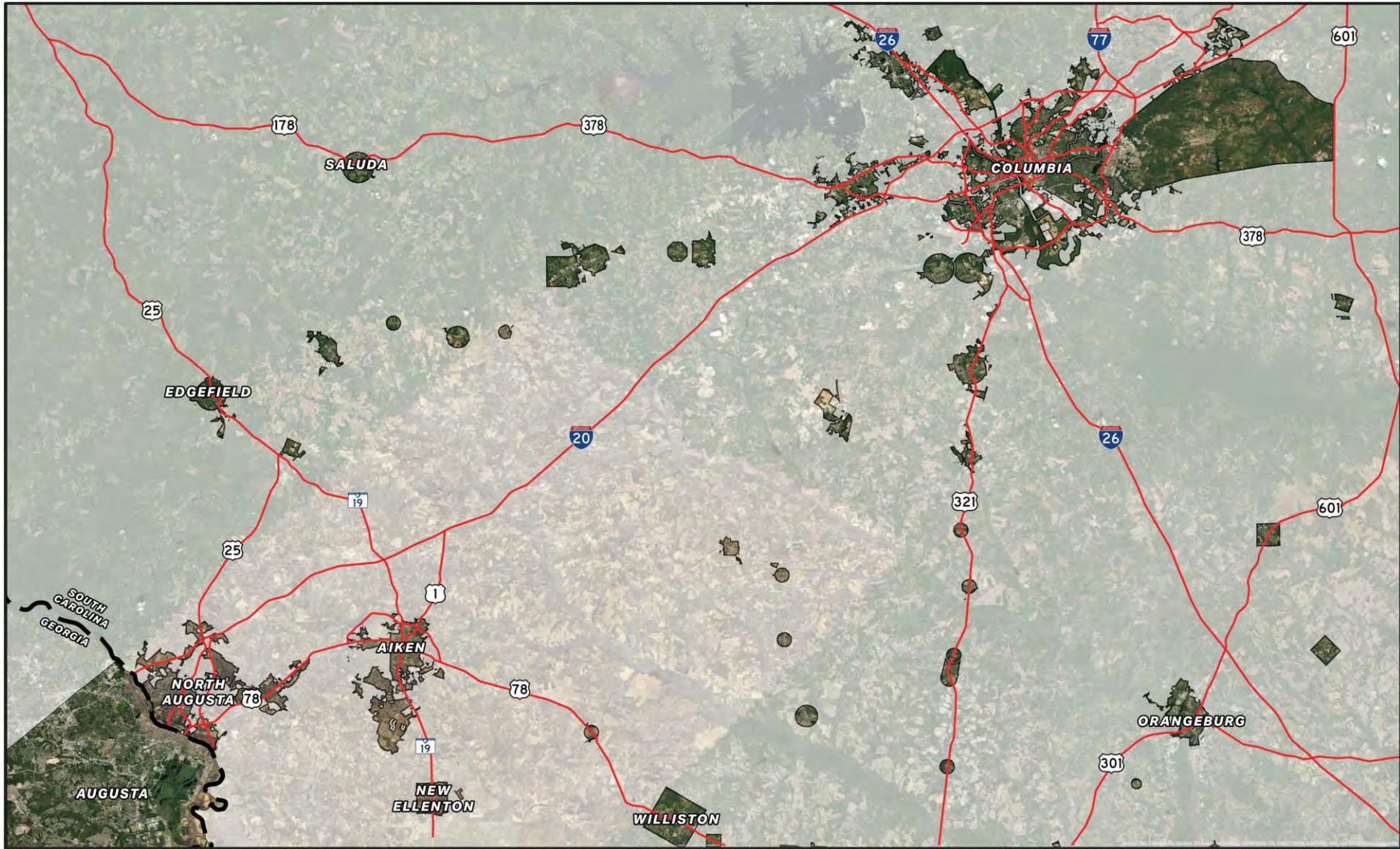
Streetscape Design – Greenville, SC



A photograph of a long, straight asphalt road lined with large, mature trees. The trees have thick, gnarled trunks and dense, green foliage that arches over the road, creating a canopy effect. The road is flanked by green grass and some flowering bushes in the foreground. The lighting is soft, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning setting. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

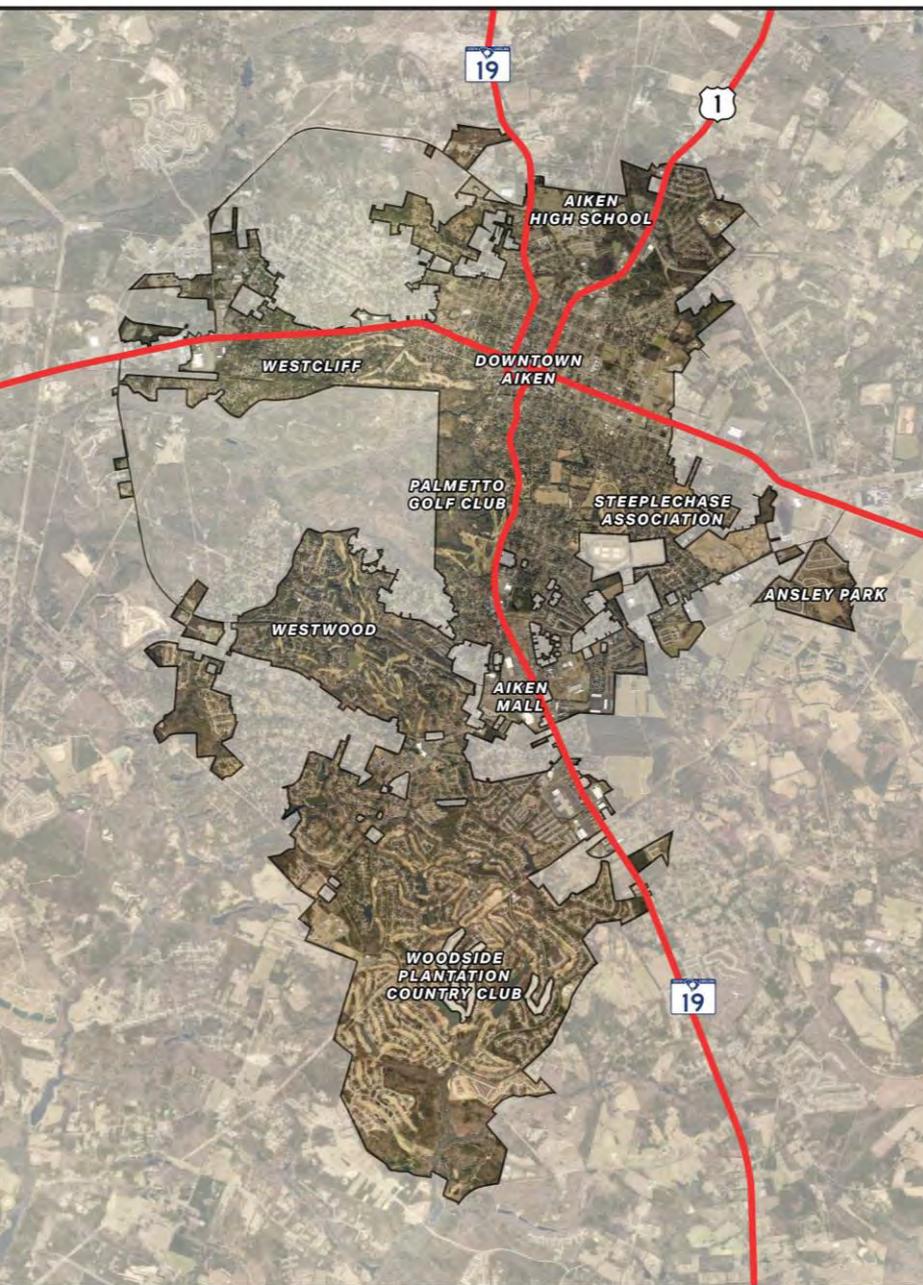
How will Aiken grow?

Presentation Title



**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
REGIONAL CONTEXT**





**AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA
LOCAL CONTEXT**

Aiken's goals for growth

1. Grow in a positive and vibrant manner
2. Attract new residents
3. Attract new visitors
4. Build on rich history and existing foundation



Actions to get there

1. Develop a road map for the future
2. Enhance the well-defined center of Aiken
3. Grow jobs and attract talent
4. Attract more residents and visitors

Recommended Approach

Task 1: Project Kickoff

Confirm project success criteria

Understand existing conditions

Assess economic and physical opportunities

Task 2: Goal-Defining Workshop

Define benchmarks to measure success and create an achievable vision for the future.

Task 3: Case Studies

Analyze 1-3 other communities with lessons for Aiken to incorporate

Task 4: Strategic Alignment and Gap Assessment

Assess Aiken's performance against benchmarks

Identify case study strengths

Identify potential challenges

Identify actions and recommendations for developing an Economic Development Strategy.



Results

1. Opportunity map or diagram showing options for improvements, development and investment.
2. Case study analysis of key lessons learned and relevant attributes for Aiken.
3. Market analysis on areas of potential job and market growth.
4. Recommended actions and next steps for Aiken to implement.



Discussion

Economic Development & Master Planning Services

Marcia Tobin, AICP
Christine Graziano, AICP
John Hightower, PLA

Presentation Title

Economic Development & Master Planning Services

Aiken SC

Kickoff Call **December 19, 2019**

1. Introductions
 - a. AECOM Team and roles
 - b. Aiken team
2. Project Purpose:
 - a. Assist Aiken in defining its path forward for growth and economic development
 - b. Create a road map
3. Scope
 - a. Steps (tasks) to get there
 - b. Schedule
 - i. Review overall schedule
 - ii. Discuss key dates
Check-in meeting – Jan 14 or 15 (1 day/night before)
Goal Workshop – Feb 12-13 (2 days)
4. Information needs
 - a. Data request from AECOM
 - b. Update on any relevant issues in Aiken (e.g., any updates on development proposals)
 - c. Key stakeholders to involve
5. Next Steps

Economic Development & Master Planning Services

Aiken SC

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 - c. Key stakeholders to involve
5. Next Steps

Workshop

Aiken SC Economic Development Action Plan

Workshop purpose

Convene Client subject matter experts and leadership to further define—and add to, if necessary—the goals identified in the Comprehensive and Strategic plans. Download knowledge held by the client from recent planning and economic development efforts as well as help to shape the course of the current economic development efforts.

Desired Outcomes

1. Refine list of projects and actions. Begin to prioritize projects, identify needed steps to achieve the projects (e.g., infrastructure improvement or development needs)
2. Define benchmarks by which Aiken may measure its success and create a realistic, achievable vision for the future.
3. Identify communities / place elements to investigate further in the Case Study analysis task
4. Formulate outline for action plan and steps for implementation

Monday February 24

AECOM staff arrive in afternoon.

Tuesday February 25

9:00 am -10:15 am - Meet with core group (including Mayor) @ Lessie B. Price Senior and Youth Center (841 Edgefield Ave SW)

10:30 am – 12:00 pm – Trolley tour of key sites Downtown, Eastside, I-20 corridor

Noon – Lunch at the Aiken Regional Airport

1:145 - 3 pm – Trolley tour of key sites to include USC Aiken, Southside, Westside, Aiken Mall, etc.

4:00 -5:00 pm – Check-in with core group on findings of the day, questions, etc.

6:00 pm – Dinner @ Betsy's Diner

Wednesday Feb 26

8:30 am -10:30am – AECOM work session; core group checks in at start and end

11:00 – 3:00 pm – Meetings with key stakeholders and AECOM staff

3:00 – 4:00 pm - Meet with core group on findings, outstanding questions, wrap-up and next steps.

Core Group - Stuart Bedenbaugh, Tim O'Briant, Ryan Bland, Sabina Craig, David Jameson, Mayor Osbon as available

Interview List

1. Planning dept
2. Economic development
3. Parks & Recreation
4. Public Works
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. City of Aiken Tourism Division
7. Business leaders/owners— Focus on larger employers as well as any key smaller businesses. Government contractors
8. University of South Carolina – Aiken (re: technology transfer, real estate, community development)
9. Community college or other educational institutions (same categories as above, plus workforce development)
10. Workforce development
11. Hospital (real estate/community development)
12. Developer
13. Commercial real estate broker/agent
14. Steeplechase representative (particularly involved w/ development of their site)
15. Representatives who can speak directly to the Dreamport and Advanced Manufacturing
16. Residential developers and multifamily rental agencies/management companies
17. Restaurant/retailer association

Aiken Goal Defining Workshop

Introduction

Task 1 Project Initiation

- 1.1 Kickoff
- 1.2 Document Review
- 1.3 Opportunities Analysis

Task 2 Goal Workshop

Task 3 Case Studies

Task 4 Strategic Alignment & Gap Assessment

January 2020



February 2020



March 2020



April 2020

Introduction

Workshop Goals / Desired Outcomes

1. Refine list of projects and actions. Begin to prioritize projects, identify needed steps to achieve the projects (e.g., infrastructure improvement or development needs)
2. Define benchmarks by which Aiken may measure its success and create a realistic, achievable vision for the future.
3. Identify communities / place elements to investigate further in the Case Study analysis task
4. Formulate outline for action plan and steps for implementation

What we want to achieve

Economic Goals and Visions

- Definition
- Prioritization
- Detail

Place-based Goals

- Which projects might aid or accompany these goals
- Where can they be located
- What other infrastructural improvements are needed to meet the goals

Existing Conditions

Demographic and Market Overview

Category	Data Point	Implication
Population Growth	2,100 residents added 2010-2019 (0.7% annually)	Modest growth rate
Commute to Work Patterns	63% of employed Aiken residents travel outside of Aiken for work Only 15% of jobs in Aiken are filled by Aiken residents	There is a reverse flow for both living and working in Aiken
Educational Attainment	43.6% with bachelor's degree or above	Highly educated workforce
Home Values	Expected to increase by 3.7 percent by 2024	This is faster than anticipated household income growth (2%)—potential affordability gaps
Age	47.5 Median Age	Successful retirement destination Challenge for workforce development and tax generation
Multifamily Real Estate	Average 94% occupancy	Potential room for new units
Office Market	Vacancy 5.5% Rent \$15 NNN	Healthy office market for smaller service office
Retail Market	Vacancy 5% Rent \$13 NNN Negative absorption (-95k)	Lower rents=lower sales Cautious new development
Current employment projections (2019-2026)	Manufacturing growth flat Increases in healthcare and social assistance & waste remediation	Savannah River Site increase Responding to aging population Intervention needed for manufacturing growth

Economic Goal Setting

Document Review Themes and Ideas

Historic Preservation

- *Aiken's Tomorrow* "Adopt updated ordinances that foster increased property values for restored properties."
- *planAiken* "Continue to implement design regulations in the historic portions of the city to ensure that the aesthetic quality of the city's historic downtown and neighborhoods are not negatively impacted by redevelopment activity."

Multigenerational Community

- *planAiken* "Encourage workforce development programs between Aiken Technical College, USC Aiken, Aiken Public Schools, SRS, and other industrial interests in the area."
- *Compelling Place to Live* "Aiken is an excellent place to live, work, and play, but to remain vibrant, it must become more attractive to new workers, families, with children, and early career professionals."

Business

- *Compelling Place to Live* "Create Entrepreneurial hubs to assist entrepreneurs of all ages to develop, launch, and grow a business idea."
- *Aiken's Tomorrow* "Compare Aiken's fee structures to other communities to see what approaches best assist these businesses."

Environment

- *planAiken* "Develop a 'green infrastructure' plan that assesses the conditions of the city's natural assets,"
- *The Next Big Ideas* "Collaborate with the City of Aiken and Aiken County as anchor institutions to attract and support the startup of Clemson University's Urban Ecology Center."



Document Review Themes and Ideas

Transportation

- *planAiken* “Prepare and implement a collector street plan to establish alternate transportation routes for vehicular traffic through the city...to improve connectivity and alleviate congestion.”
- *Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report* “Parking was the single biggest issue that merchants and the general public mentioned as an impediment to a convenient business climate in the downtown area.”
- *Compelling Place to Live* “Adopt a regional approach to transportation and consider how to bring tourists to Aiken during special events.”

Infrastructure

- *planAiken* “Consider the use of impact assessments for major development projects that utilize standardized formulas to assess the cost of mitigating development related impacts to municipal infrastructure and require developers of such projects to contribute to those costs.”

Built Environment

- *Strategic Plan Implementation Workshop Report* “The parkways are the single biggest identity-generating elements in downtown... Their original intent was to be utilized as pedestrian pathways within a park-like setting that would connect neighborhoods to downtown and vice versa. However, over the years, these parkways have become overgrown and have taken on a ‘sacred’ status that almost forbids anyone from interaction with them.... (T)hese parkways could be restored to their original intent....”

Education

- *The Next Big Ideas* “Facilitate the formation of an Education Task Force to investigate funding options for capital investment in public school facilities (one-cent sales tax option, bond referendum, etc).”
- *planAiken* “Encourage workforce development programs between Aiken Technical College, USC Aiken, Aiken Public Schools, SRS, and other industrial interests in the area.”

Land Use

- *planAiken* “Reduce regulatory / procedural barriers and implement development incentives as part of the review and revision of the zoning ordinance with the goal of encouraging and supporting a mix of housing types throughout the city...”
- *planAiken* “Jointly plan with Aiken County to define, on a periodic basis, an urban growth area for the city of Aiken, within which Aiken County would defer rezoning property to suburban or urban densities without the agreement of the city.”

City Governmental Functions

- *planAiken* “Coordinate with Aiken County to adopt and enforce development regulations that standardize key elements of the character of future development along major road corridors leading into the City of Aiken.”
- *planAiken* “Adopt and enforce utility extension policies that are firm in their requirement for annexation upon the receipt of services from the city, or upon meeting all legal requirements for qualification for annexation.”

Visions Summary

Aiken will...

Be place that maintains and celebrates its heritage, including equine history and historic architecture

Have a diversity of residents, including those of all ages and lifestyles

Be known as a very livable city with parks, a sustainable environment, and a vibrant core with retail and restaurant options

Continue to build its employment, both with small businesses/entrepreneurs, and with larger employers.

Diversify its economy, building on its strong technical and scientific professional community

Goal Setting



Goal Setting



Goal Setting

- Measurable
- Given a when, what, where, and why
- Attainable

Achieving Goals



Goals

Concrete things you want to achieve: measurable & time based. To reach a desired vision.



Actions

Steps to take to reach goals

- Policies
- Programs
- Projects



Indicators

Markers of success



Outcomes

Results of achieved goals

Achieving Goals



Goals

Concrete things you want to achieve: measurable & time based. To reach a desired vision.

Add 1,000 more jobs in cyber-related industries in 5 years



Actions

Steps to take to reach goals

- Policies
- Programs
- Projects

Create a workforce training program in Cyber Security in relationship with the University



Indicators

Markers of success

Jobs added in science, technology



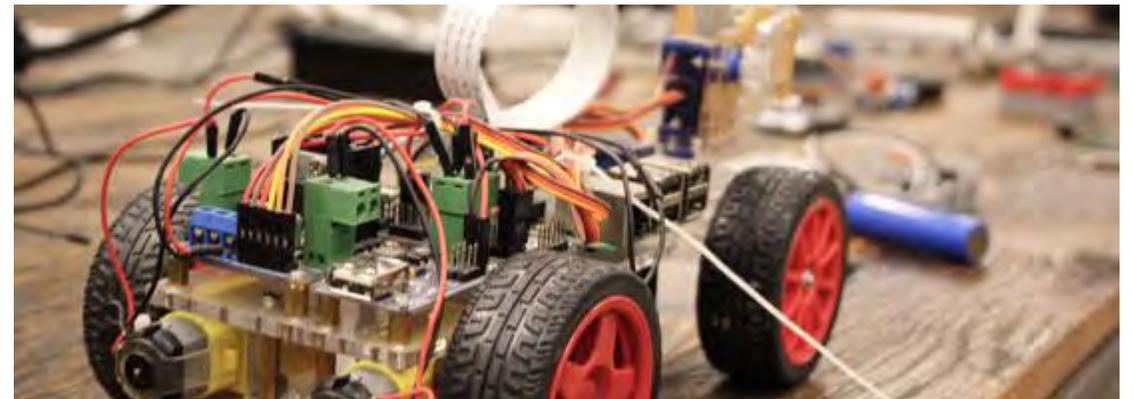
Outcomes

Results of achieved goals

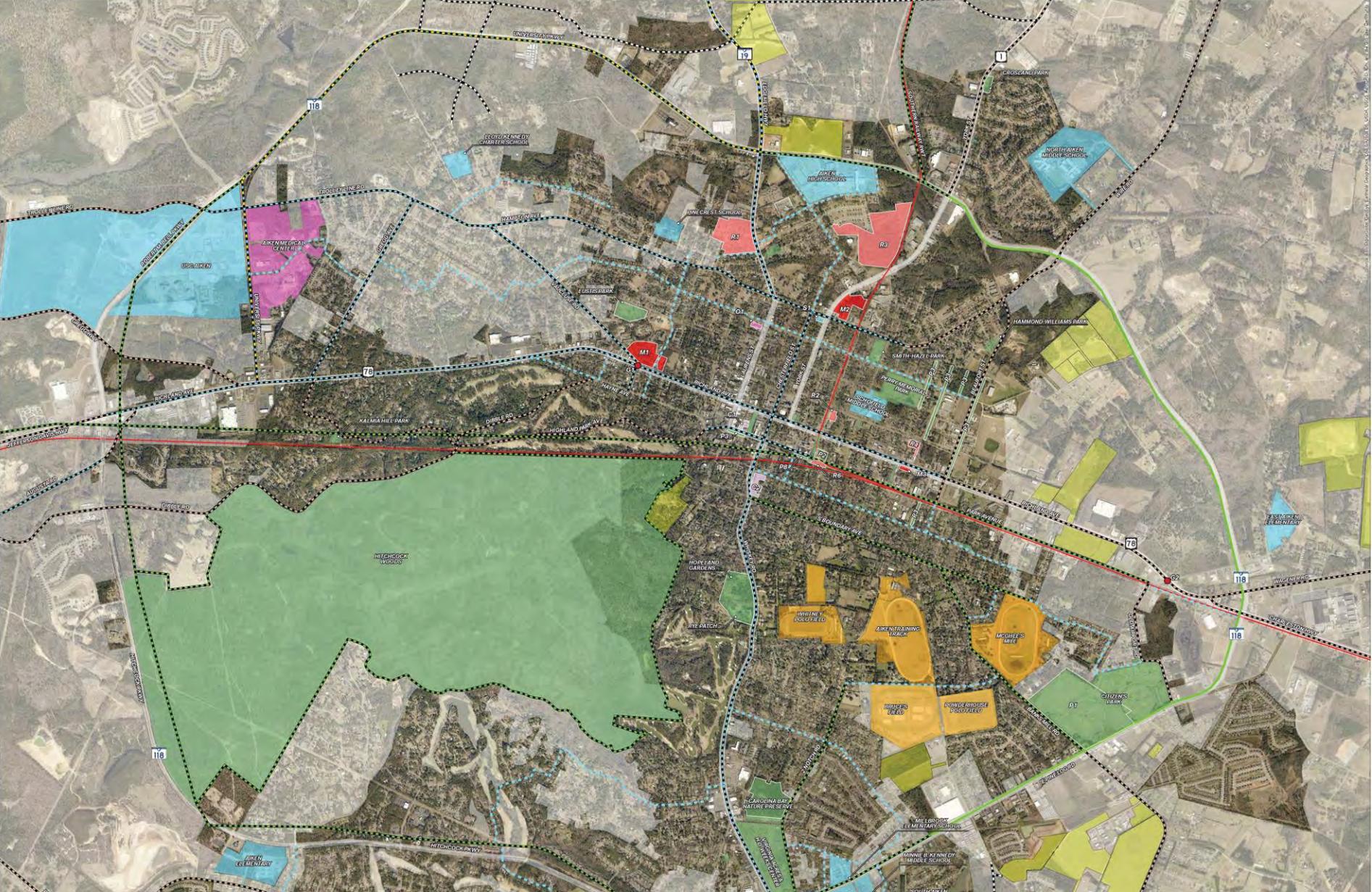
Increased cyber security employment

Identified Opportunities and Catalysts

- Advance Manufacturing Center
- Dreamport
- Steeplechase
- Ft. Gordon Cyber Command
- SRS Plutonium Production Employment Increase

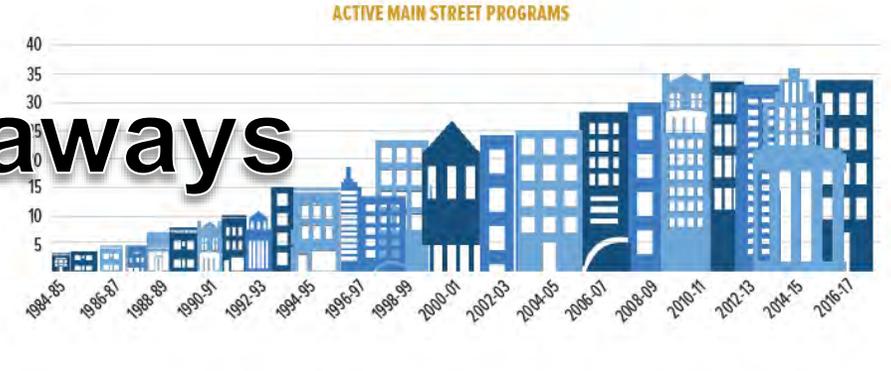


Projects Identified





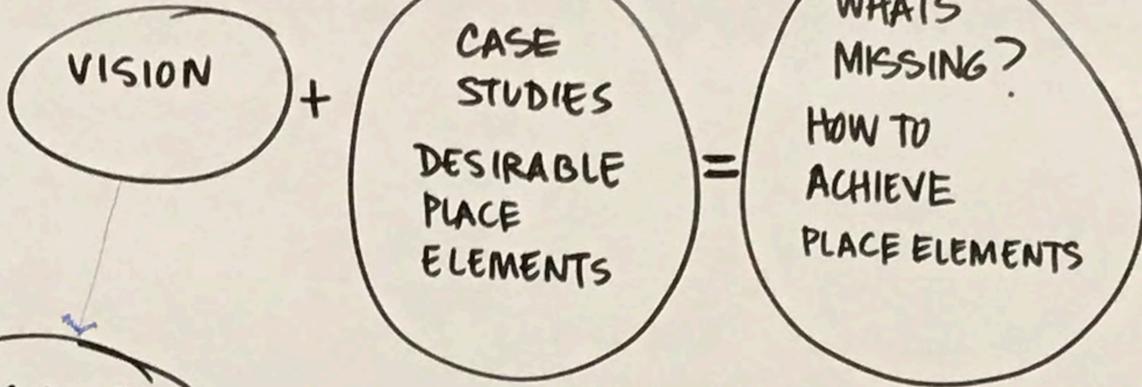
Case Study Takeaways



Types	Key Takeaways for Aiken	Examples
Cybersecurity Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together entrepreneurs, start-ups, and academic researchers to share resources and ideas • Partnerships with local educational institutions encouraged but not required • Space needs are relatively flexible; does not require a huge footprint or specialized, heavy equipment • Has the potential to encourage clustering of other cybersecurity/high-tech uses and compatible development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DreamPort, Columbia, MD • Georgia Cyber Center
Business Incubators/Workforce Development Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work best when in partnership with local schools/universities leverage existing resources and talent • Reduce "brain drain" by employing students after graduation/giving them a reason to stay local • Help to attract businesses looking to employ workers with specific skillsets • Allow local entrepreneurs/start-ups to pool resources and take advantage of technical training, business plan consultation services, etc. • Low barriers to entry (affordable spaces for lease, etc.) encourage a diversity of business types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francis Marion University Business Incubator, Florence, SC • Cortex Innovation Community, St. Louis, MO • Oyster Point Tech Center, Newport News, VA • SkySong ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center, Scottsdale, AZ
Manufacturing/Industrial Collaboratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower "barriers to entry" and start-up costs for manufacturers by allowing for equipment/space sharing • Encourage clustering/economies of agglomeration for certain types of manufacturing • Encourage open sharing of ideas and resources; collaboration for better ideas/products • Opportunity to redevelop/remediate existing underutilized space and/or land (brownfield or otherwise) • Strengthen and diversify local economic base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Center, Oakridge, TN • North Carolina A&T Engineering Research Complex (ERIC), Greensboro, NC
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION PLAN

by 2025
5.4.2025



GOALS

- ① GROW POPULATION (+ TAX BASE)
- ② MORE HOUSING
- ③ LOWER MEDIAN AGE
- ④ CHOICE PLACE TO LIVE

2.5% per year = 4000 in 5 years = 1300 Households

CAPTURE MORE RETIREES & GROW DEMOGRAPHICS

JOBS + CAREER OPPS

- SRS PIT → 5000 JOBS
- DREAMPORT / AMS
- AMC
- COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS w/ SRS SUBS



BARRIERS / WEAKNESSES

- ANNEXATION INCENTIVES
- INFRASTRUCTURE
- SW STDS
- CRIME STATS
- DEVELOPMENT PERMIT PROCESS
- ZONING UPDATE

OTHER CHALLENGES (EXTERNAL)

- SCHOOLS?
- BROADBAND

SPECIFIC PROJECTS

GENERAL TYPES

- ① POWDERHOUSE CONNECTOR
- ② COUNTY HOSPITAL [10.5 A]
- ③ HOTEL AIKEN
- ④ INTERSTATE CONNECTIONS
(ANNEX OPPORTUNITIES)
- ⑤ GATEWAYS
WESTERN
COUNTY HOSPITAL
EAST @ NEW STEEPLECHASE

- ① cybersecurity
- ② BUS. INCUBATORS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- ③ MFG/INDUSTRIAL
COLLABORATIVE
- ④ HERITAGE TOURISM
- ⑤ EQUINE-INDUSTRY-FOCUSED ED

- ⑥ STEEPLECHASE *
- ⑦ GENERATION PARK PH. 2
- ⑧ AMC *
- ⑨ DREAMPORT *
- ⑩ FORT GORDON *
- ⑪ SRS PIT PRODUCTION *

- ~~⑫ HOTEL AIKEN~~
- LIFESTYLE AMENITIES
 - MULTI-USE TRAILS
 - UPGRADED PARKS
 - PARKWAY UPGRADES

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

CATALYSTS
* ARE THEY READY?

WHAT'S NEEDED TO GET THEM DONE

- ⑫ HOUSING SITES
AIKEN MALL
POWDERHOUSE CONNECTOR
HAHN VILLAGE
- ⑬ ANNEXATIONS

15 Properties with Potential

1. Weed School
2403 Mount Auburn St.
• Built in 1936 as an elementary school for African-American children, closed in mid-2000s; named after the Rev. Edwin Weed
• Under contract for purchase; has redevelopment potential as multi-family housing



2. Old Fire Station No. 7
2153 Central Ave.
• Spanish colonial revival-style fire station operated from 1915 to 2003; a historic landmark in Summerville neighborhood
• City-owned but unoccupied; has redevelopment potential as a restaurant, office or community center



3. Gunning Grove Baptist Church
2289 Gardner St.
• Founded by African-Americans in the 1840s in the Sand Hills neighborhood, considered the oldest church in the city's Hill section
• Property is owned by the congregation but faces pressure from encroaching development



4. Lamar Elementary School
970 Baker Ave.
• Constructed in 1933 in the Art Moderne style, the school operated until the 2012 opening of the merged Lamar-Milledge Elementary; considered surplus school board property
• Building is threatened by plans for new stadium at adjacent Academy of Richmond County



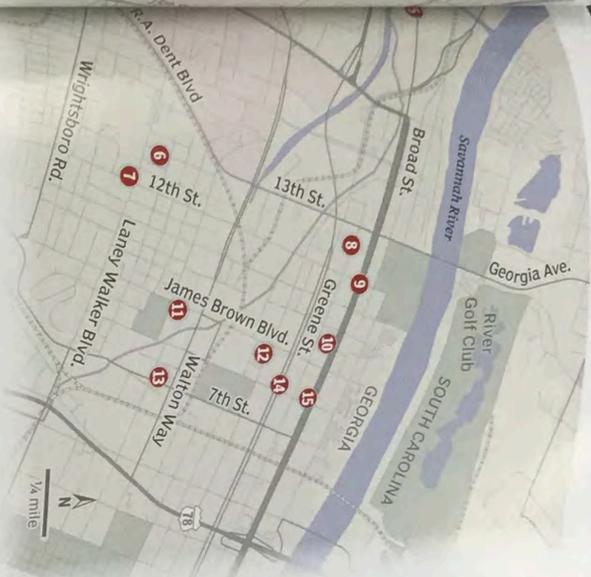
5. Martha Lester School
1688 Broad St.
• Completed in 1934 along the historic Augusta Canal, the building was one of several properties the school board sold during a 2008 auction
• Was saved from further deterioration with the addition of a new roof in 2012; is vacant and currently listed for sale



6. John Strother Old Folks Home
1243 Laney-Walker Boulevard
• Built as a dwelling in 1916, the American Foursquare-style property operated as an elderly home in the late 1970s and early 1980s; now privately owned and in dilapidated condition
• Has potential to complement Laney-Walker neighborhood revitalization as new residential, commercial or retail



7. St. Benedict Orphanage and Boarding School
1220 12th St.
• The dilapidated building was constructed as a boarding school for African-American children by the Franciscan sisters of St. Benedict Convent in 1901; is the progenitor of Immaculate Conception School
• Privately owned property has potential for renovation into market-rate housing for seniors or students



8. Greene Street Presbyterian
1235 Greene St.
• Romanesque Revival-style building was constructed in 1906 to replace the congregation's original 1879 building; closed in 2008 after years of declining church membership
• The building's current owner, the nonprofit GAP Ministries, has limited maintenance and renovation funds



9. 1100 Broad Commercial Block
1154-60 Broad St.
• Two turn-of-the-century storefronts are part of a multi-pair tract property owned by a South Carolina hotel developer
• The buildings could be demolished as part of the company's redevelopment plans; preservationists advocate incorporating the structures into any future construction



10. Southern Bell Exchange Building
937 Ellis St.
• Built in 1902 and last occupied in the 1980s, the former phone company office is in dilapidated condition and is structurally threatened by a leaky roof
• With its proximity to the J.B. Whites mixed-use building, the two-story structure could be redeveloped into office or residential space



11. Old Fire Station No. 2
902 James Brown Blvd.
• One of the first two city-built fire stations in the early 1890s; now an unused building in Dyess Park
• A recent inspection showed the building is in worse shape than previously thought; park users have for years wanted city officials to replace the structure with a modern community center



12. Ninth Street Commercial Block
500 block of James Brown Boulevard
• Row of late 19th and early 20th century buildings on the block's northwest side are vacant and in varying degrees of deterioration
• The multi-story structures north of the Darlanno building are being marketed for redevelopment as apartments with ground-floor commercial space



13. Denning House
905 7th St.
• As part of a block of historic homes along the Augusta Canal's "third level" zone, the dilapidated and privately owned property at the corner of Seventh and Taylor streets dates back to the 1850s
• Renovation could serve as an anchor for revitalization in the surrounding neighborhood



14. Old First Baptist Church
802 Greene St.
• Built in 1902 in the Beaux Arts-style on the site of the first Southern Baptist Convention, the iconic building has seen increasingly infrequent use since the church relocated to west Augusta in 1975
• Property's immense size makes routine maintenance costly; mixed-use potential exists for a well-capitalized owner



15. Woolworth Building
802 Broad St.
• Built in 1915, the former dime store expanded over the years to its present footprint in 1949; the Art Deco-style building - vacant since 1991 - was the site of a 1960 sit-in demonstration by Palme College students
• Deferred maintenance has resulted in interior and exterior damage; its current owner, a South Carolina restaurateur, intends to renovate the building



reopening 8

VISION:

COMPELLING PLACE TO LIVE

(CHOOSE AIKEN OVER OTHER PLACES)

ATTRACT &
RETAIN

WHY?

- singles
- early career professionals
- young couples / starting families

EXTERNAL
DRIVERS

AVAILABLE JOBS TO BE FILLED

STRENGTHS → ALREADY A CHOICE PLACE TO LIVE
FOR FAMILIES W/ CHILDREN + RETIREES / empty

CHALLENGES → RENTALS [1200-1500 SF] NESTERS.

EXECUTIVE HOMES

PARCEL ASSEMBLING →

INCENTIVES TO ATTRACT DEVELOPERS

- UTILIZE PARTNERS
- CDC^{2nd} IN PLACE
 - ADC
 - MDC - Nehemiah Corp.

CATALYSTS
(PROJECTS) →

- ~~(ACTIONS)~~
GOALS
- ① Achieve \$XM in 5 years \$200M
 - ② # housing units of x type

← ID ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE

Goal w/in this:
→ Accomodate Housing Development

- 1. Mall conversion
- 2. Old County property
- 3.

VISION

Diversify economy building on
Scientific & professional community

EXTERNAL DRIVERS

- CYBERSECURITY CONCERNS
- MFG. ADVANCES
-

STRENGTHS

- Partnerships : USC Aiken
Aiken Tech College
Nat'l Guard

CATALYSTS

AMC
DreamPort
SRS Plutonium Pits

CASE Study Objectives

- Encourage improvements in property held by absentee heirs
- Best practices for planning for + encouraging annexation
- Encouraging development
 - ↳ plan - agree - as of right
 - ↳ stormwater reg. - how to deal?
- Change perceptions for neighborhood to encourage investment & protect existing residents from gentrification

Aiken SC Economic Development Action Plan

Workshop held February 25 + 26, 2020 at the Lessie B. Price Community Center, Aiken SC

PURPOSE of the Goal Workshop (Task 2)

1. Convene Client subject matter experts and leadership to further define goals for the Economic Development Action Plan.
2. Download knowledge held by the client from recent planning and economic development efforts
3. Define vision and goals for City's desired direction
4. Discuss current opportunities and challenges

OUTCOMES

1. Convened stakeholders and engaged in collaborative discussion and review of Aiken's progress and potential.
2. Toured city-wide to view and discuss layout, projects, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Developed Vision statements that articulate the City's desired direction.
4. Identified and discussed numerous opportunities, potential projects, challenges and needs.
5. Refined opportunities and potential projects and considered general timeframes for implementation
6. Defined possible benchmarks by which Aiken may measure its success
7. Identified objectives and best practices to investigate further (examples from other communities).
8. Formulated outline for action plan and steps for implementation

AIKEN VISIONS for the FUTURE

I. Compelling Place to Live

- Choose Aiken as the community in which to live and grow
- Attract more residents, especially those at the start of their careers

Strengths

- Aiken is already a choice community in which to live
- Existing and available jobs

II. Diversify Economy and Build on strong existing scientific professional community

External drivers such as cybersecurity concerns and manufacturing advances provide growth opportunities

Strengths

- Strong partnerships are in place USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, National Guard, SRS
- Catalyst projects present: Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, DreamPort, SRS Pit Production

REALIZING THIS VISION

The following were identified as priorities to focus on in short to medium timeframe (0-5 years)

- Enhance gateways to the City
- Accommodate additional residential growth
- Prepare for the AMC and Dreamport Investments and any spinoff
- Develop a short-term annexation strategy
- Encourage investment in Northside
- Protect current residents of Northside

Medium to long-term priorities were identified:

- Enhance stormwater infrastructure
- Extend urban services area
- Review zoning code and development review process (e.g., to encourage more as-of-right development)
- Investigate potential to add horse-related activities for the entire community and additional recreational opportunities
- Build on and further develop collaboration between City and County
- Develop a longer-term annexation strategy

NEXT STEPS

Task 3 : Research and Actions

1. Research top priorities for City
2. Identify best practices used by other communities (e.g., tools, policies, solutions)
3. Identify solutions and actions to utilize in Aiken

Task 4: Actions and Next Steps

1. Identify actions needed to accomplish top priorities
2. Create a road map for tackling the top actions
3. Identify next steps for longer-term priorities

Attendees

AECOM Team

Marcia Tobin, Project Director

Christine Graziano, Project Manager, Economic Development

Sarah Richards, Senior Analyst, Economic and Community Planning

Mickey O'Brien, Senior Urban Designer

John Hightower, Senior Urban Designer

Aiken Team

Tim O'Briant

Sabine Craig

Stuart Bedenbaugh

Ryan Bland

David Jameson

Mandy Collins

Joy Lester

Kim Abney

Ed Woltz

Update on
Economic Development Action Plan
to the
Municipal Development Commission

16 June 2020

Marcia Tobin, AICP



Today's Agenda

1. Scope and Timeline
2. Background Review – Findings
3. Workshop
4. Realizing the Vision
5. Next Steps



Major Tasks and Timeline



...To Be Determined

Background Review Themes and Ideas

Historic Preservation

- *Aiken's Tomorrow* "Adopt updated ordinances that **foster increased property values for restored properties.**"
- *planAiken* "Continue to implement design regulations in the historic portions of the city to ensure that the **aesthetic quality of the city's historic downtown and neighborhoods** are not negatively impacted by redevelopment activity."

Multigenerational Community

- *planAiken* "Encourage **workforce development programs** between Aiken Technical College, USC Aiken, Aiken Public Schools, SRS, and other industrial interests in the area."
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Business

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Demographic and Market Overview

Category	Data Point	Implication
Population Growth	2,100 residents added 2010-2019 (0.7% annually)	Modest growth rate
Commute to Work Patterns	63% of employed Aiken residents travel outside of Aiken for work Only 15% of jobs in Aiken are filled by Aiken residents	There is a reverse flow for both living and working in Aiken
Educational Attainment	43.6% with bachelor's degree or above	Highly educated workforce
Home Values	Expected to increase by 3.7 percent by 2024	This is faster than anticipated household income growth (2%)—potential affordability gaps
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Multifamily Real Estate	Average 94% occupancy	Potential room for new units
Office Market	Vacancy 5.5% Rent \$15 NNN	Healthy office market for smaller service office
Retail Market	Vacancy 5% Rent \$13 NNN Negative absorption (-95k)	Lower rents=lower sales Cautious new development
Current employment projections (2019-2026)	Manufacturing growth flat Increases in healthcare and social assistance & waste remediation	Savannah River Site increase Responding to aging population Intervention needed for manufacturing growth

Task 2: Goal Workshop / February 25 – 26, 2020

Purpose

1. Convene Client subject matter experts and leadership to further define goals for the Economic Development Action Plan.
2. Download knowledge held by the client from recent planning and economic development efforts
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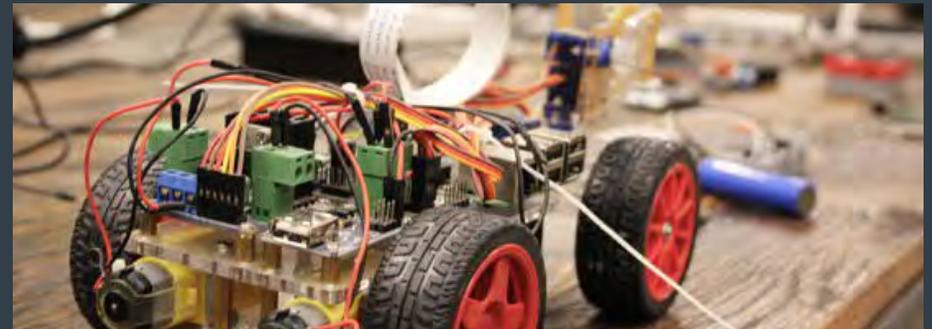
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Aiken: Visions for the Future

1. Compelling Place to Live

- Choose Aiken as the community in which to live and grow
- Attract more residents, especially those at the start of their careers

Strengths

- Aiken is already a choice community in which to live
- Existing and available jobs



2. Diversify Economy and Build on Strengths

- External drivers such as cybersecurity concerns and manufacturing advances provide growth opportunities

Strengths

- Existing scientific professional community
- Strong partnerships in place: USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, National Guard, SRS
- Catalyst projects present: Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, DreamPort, SRS Pit Production

Priorities: Short to Medium Timeframe (now – 5 years)

1. Enhance gateways to the City
2. Accommodate additional residential growth
3. Prepare for the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative and Dreamport Investments
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Priorities: Medium to Long Timeframe (5 years and on)

1. Extend urban services area
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5. Build on and further develop collaboration between City and County
6. Develop a longer-term annexation strategy

Task 3: Best Practices

1. Research top priorities for City
2. Identify best practices used by other communities (e.g., tools, policies, solutions)
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Best Practices to investigate

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DISCUSSION

Marcia Tobin, AICP

Marcia.Tobin@aecom.com

AECOM



Economic Development Action Plan



Today's Agenda



Major Tasks and Timeline

Task 1 Project Initiation

- 1.1 Kickoff
- 1.2 Document Review
- 1.3 Opportunities Analysis

Task 2 Goal Workshop

Task 3 Best Practices

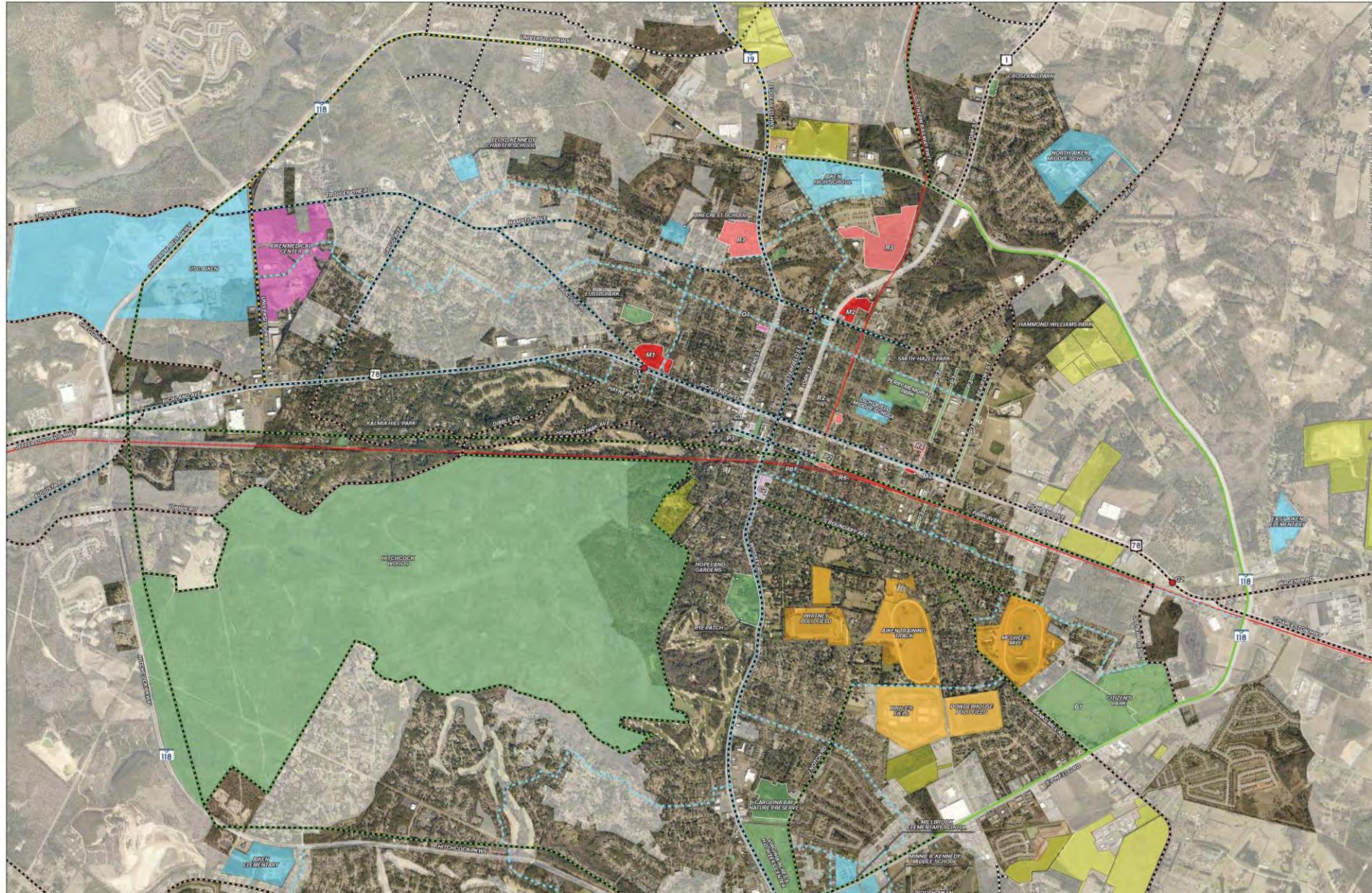
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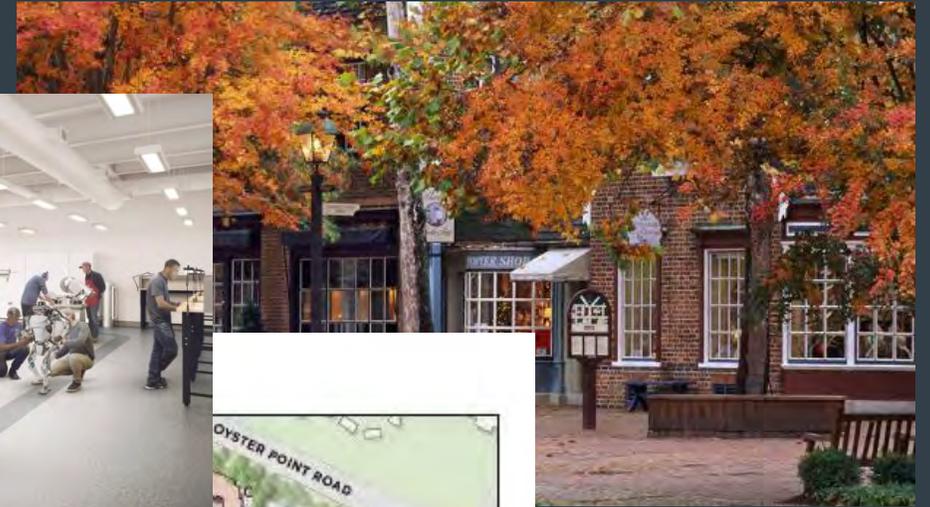


Best Practices to investigate

Types	Key Takeaways for Aiken	Examples
<p>Cybersecurity Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together entrepreneurs, start-ups, and academic researchers to share resources and ideas • Partnerships with local educational institutions encouraged but not required • Space needs are relatively flexible; does not require a huge footprint or specialized, heavy equipment • Has the potential to encourage clustering of other cybersecurity/high-tech uses and compatible development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DreamPort, Columbia, MD • Georgia Cyber Center
<p>Business Incubators/Workforce Development Initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work best when in partnership with local schools/universities leverage existing resources and talent • Reduce "brain drain" by employing students after graduation/giving them a reason to stay local • Help to attract businesses looking to employ workers with specific skillsets • Allow local entrepreneurs/start-ups to pool resources and take advantage of technical training, business plan consultation services, etc. • Low barriers to entry (affordable spaces for lease, etc.) encourage a diversity of business types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francis Marion University Business Incubator, Florence, SC • Cortex Innovation Community, St. Louis, MO • Oyster Point Tech Center, Newport News, VA • SkySong ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center, Scottsdale, AZ
<p>Manufacturing/Industrial Collaboratives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower "barriers to entry" and start-up costs for manufacturers by allowing for equipment/space sharing • Encourage clustering/economies of agglomeration for certain types of manufacturing • Encourage open sharing of ideas and resources; collaboration for better ideas/products • Opportunity to redevelop/remediate existing underutilized space and/or land (brownfield or otherwise) • Strengthen and diversify local economic base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Center, Oakridge, TN • North Carolina A&T Engineering Research Complex (ERIC), Greensboro, NC
<p>Heritage Tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage existing historic resources, local character as an economic driver • Historic attractions (museums, sites, parks, etc.) can encourage compatible use clustering (gift shops, restaurants, etc.) • Encourage cooperation and collaboration between local businesses to create a more cohesive "destination" • Regular programming, streetscape improvements, public art, etc. help enliven the streetscape and attract both residents and tourists to destination areas more frequently • Entire district can act as a "business incubator," fostering the sharing of ideas and resources among small/start-up businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program, Multiple States • Colonial Williamsburg, VA
<p>Equine-Industry-Focused Economic Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverages local equine industry heritage as an economic driver • Significant opportunity for synergies with both heritage tourism and outdoor recreation • Can create a "destination" for tourists who might not otherwise have a reason to come to Aiken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Horse Center, Lexington, VA • Kentucky Horse Park, Lexington, KY

Task 4: Actions + Next Steps

1. Identify actions needed to accomplish top priorities
2. Create a road map for tackling the top actions
3. Identify next steps for longer-term priorities



DISCUSSION

Marcia Tobin, AICP

Marcia.Tobin@aecom.com



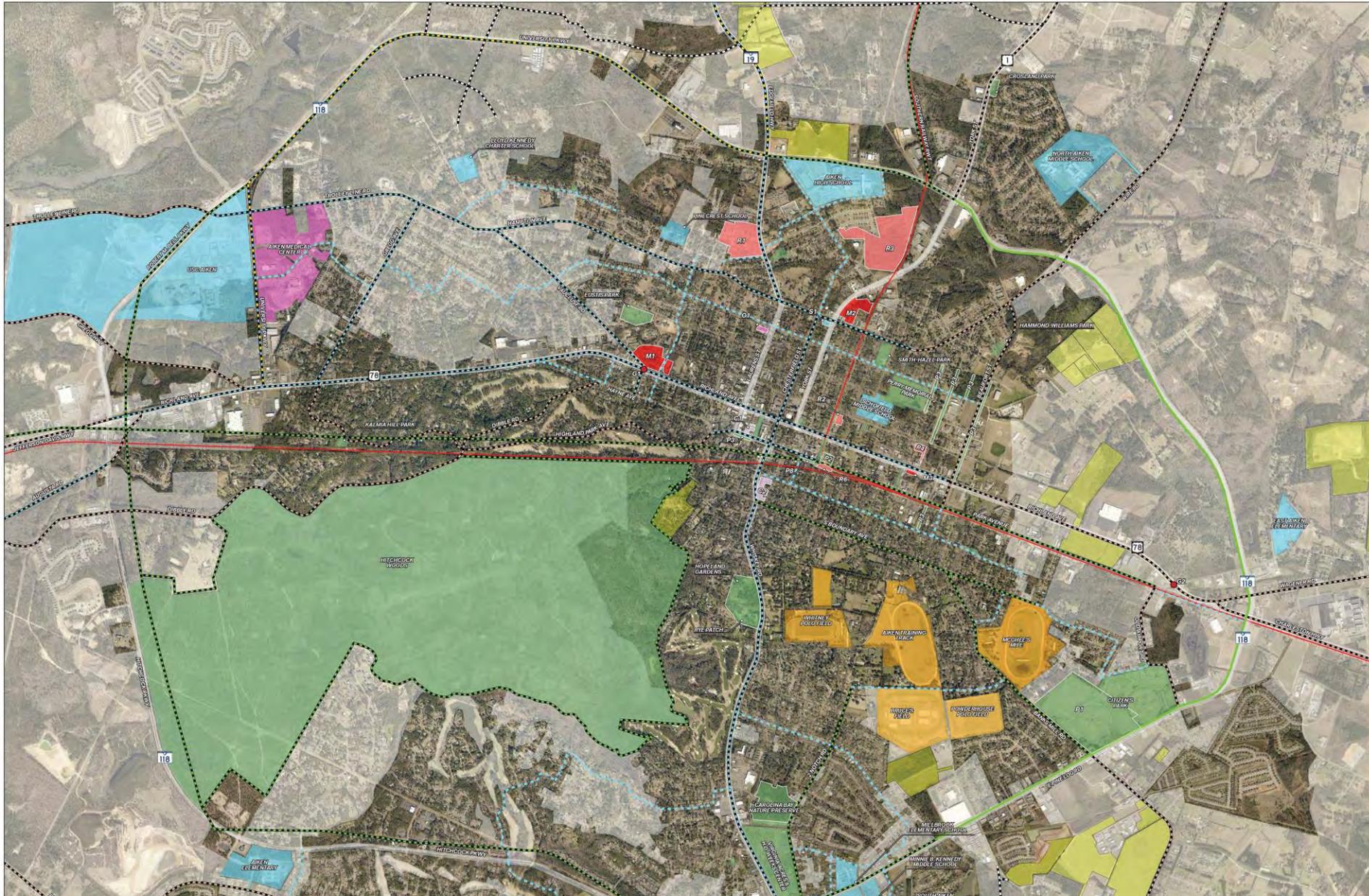
Existing Conditions

Identified Opportunities and Catalysts

- Advance Manufacturing Center
- Dreamport
- Steeplechase
- Ft. Gordon Cyber Command
- SRS Plutonium Production Employment Increase



Projects Identified



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Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

Working Meeting

October 8, 2020

AECOM



Today's Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Work to date – refresher
3. Primary Discussion: What are Aiken's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth?
 - Market analysis and demographics
 - Existing physical conditions – strengths and opportunities
 - Gateways
 - Focus areas - in/around USC Aiken, downtown, northsideDiscuss potential locations / available parcels for development

Major Tasks and Timeline

Task 1
Project Initiation

Task 2
Goal Workshop

Meeting #1

What are Aiken's strengths, challenges and opportunities for growth?

Meeting #2

What might growth look like?

Deliver final report

January & February 2020

October 8, 2020

October 27, 2020

November 12, 2020

Goal Workshop / February 25 – 26, 2020

Purpose

1. Convene Client subject matter experts and leadership to further define goals for the Economic Development Action Plan.
2. Download knowledge held by the client from recent planning and economic development efforts
3. Define vision and goals for City's desired direction
4. Discuss current opportunities and challenges



Goal Workshop / February 25 – 26, 2020

Outcomes

1. Convened stakeholders and engaged in collaborative discussion and review of Aiken's progress and potential.
2. Toured city-wide to view and discuss layout, projects, challenges, and opportunities.
3. Developed Vision statements that articulate the City's desired direction.
4. Identified and discussed numerous opportunities, potential projects, challenges and needs.
5. Refined opportunities and potential projects and considered general timeframes for implementation
6. Defined possible benchmarks by which Aiken may measure its success
7. Identified objectives and best practices to investigate further
8. Outlined action plan and steps for implementation

Aiken: Visions for the Future

1. Compelling Place to Live

- Choose Aiken as the community in which to live and grow
- Attract more residents, especially those at the start of their careers

Strengths

- Aiken is already a choice community in which to live
- Existing and available jobs



2. Diversify Economy and Build on Strengths

- External drivers such as cybersecurity concerns and manufacturing advances provide growth opportunities

Strengths

- Existing scientific professional community
- Strong partnerships in place: USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, National Guard, SRS
- Catalyst projects present: Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, DreamPort, SRS Pit Production

Short-term Priorities

1. Enhance gateways to the City
2. Accommodate additional residential growth
3. Prepare for the Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative and Dreamport Investments
4. Annexation – assess benefits and costs, consider a phased approach
5. Encourage investment in Northside – protect current residents



Longer-term Priorities

1. Extend urban services area
2. Enhance stormwater infrastructure / review standards
3. Review zoning code and development review process (e.g., to encourage more as-of-right development)
4. Investigate potential to add horse-related activities for the entire community and additional recreational opportunities
5. Build on and further develop collaboration between City and County
6. Develop a longer-term annexation strategy

Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

Market analysis / demographics

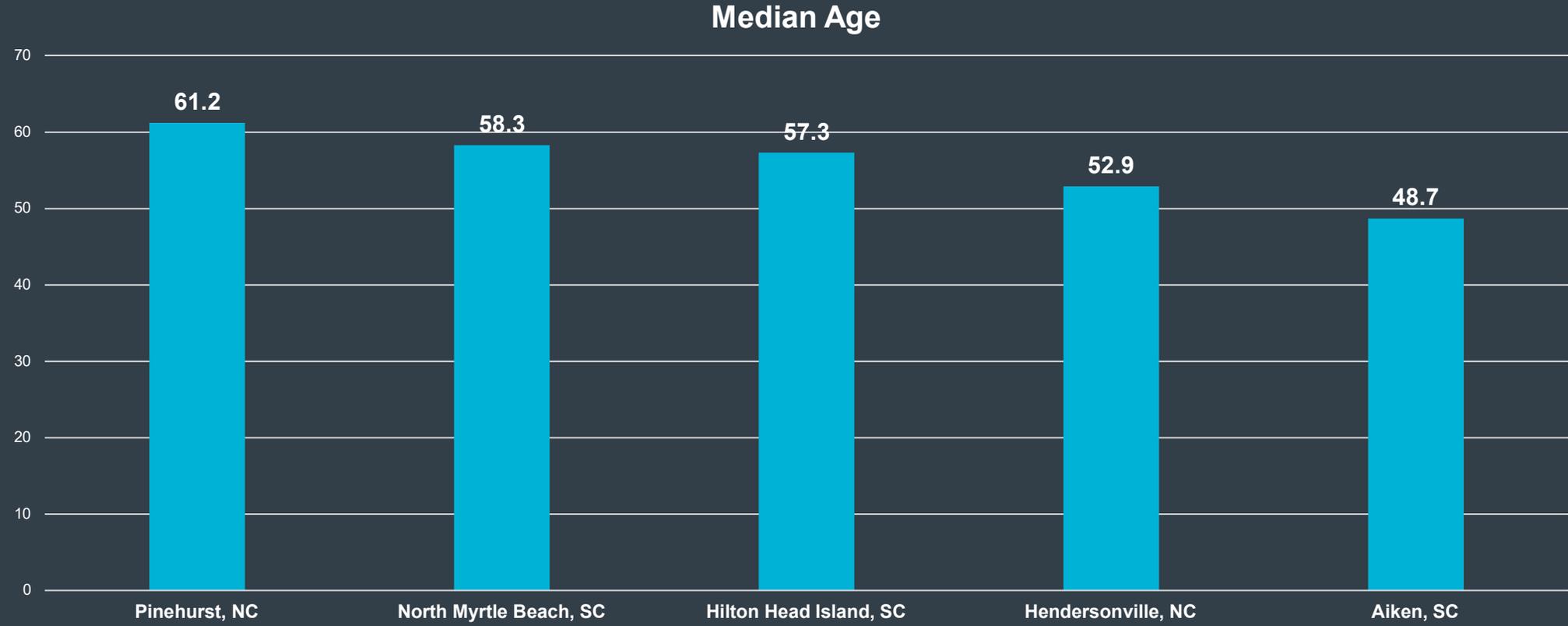
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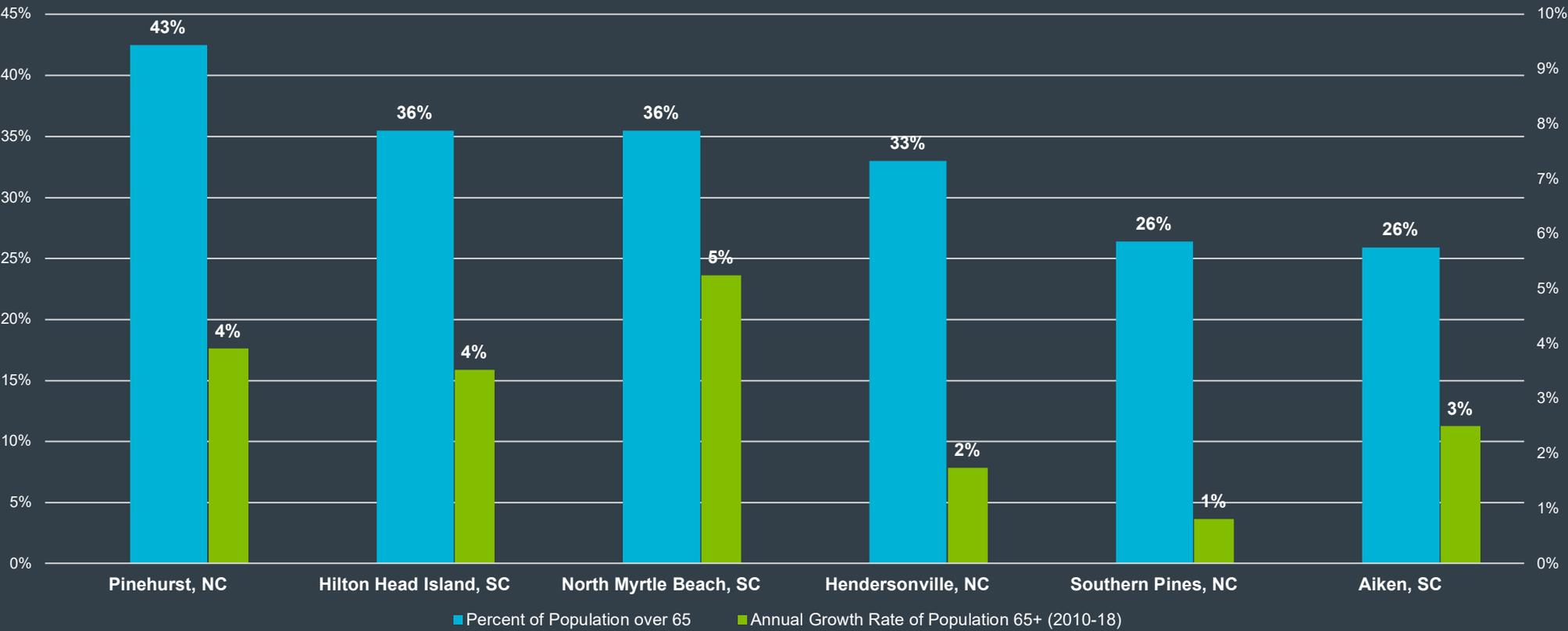
Data Driven Approach

- Impact of Retirement cluster growth
- Role of USC Aiken in economic development diversification
- Housing diversification
- Role of downtown Aiken in economic development diversification

Among small cities in South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, Aiken ranks 5th for highest median age

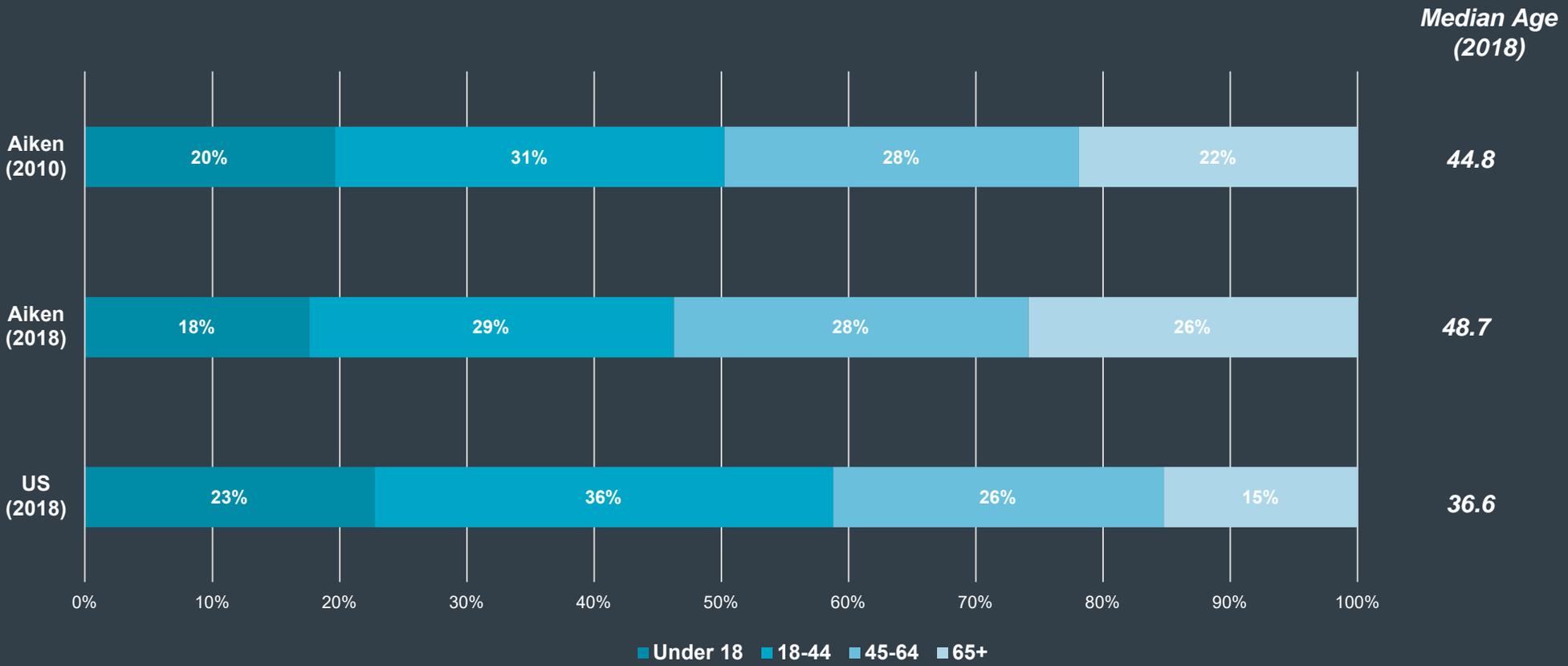


Among small cities in South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, Aiken ranks 6th for highest proportion of residents 65+



Source: ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates

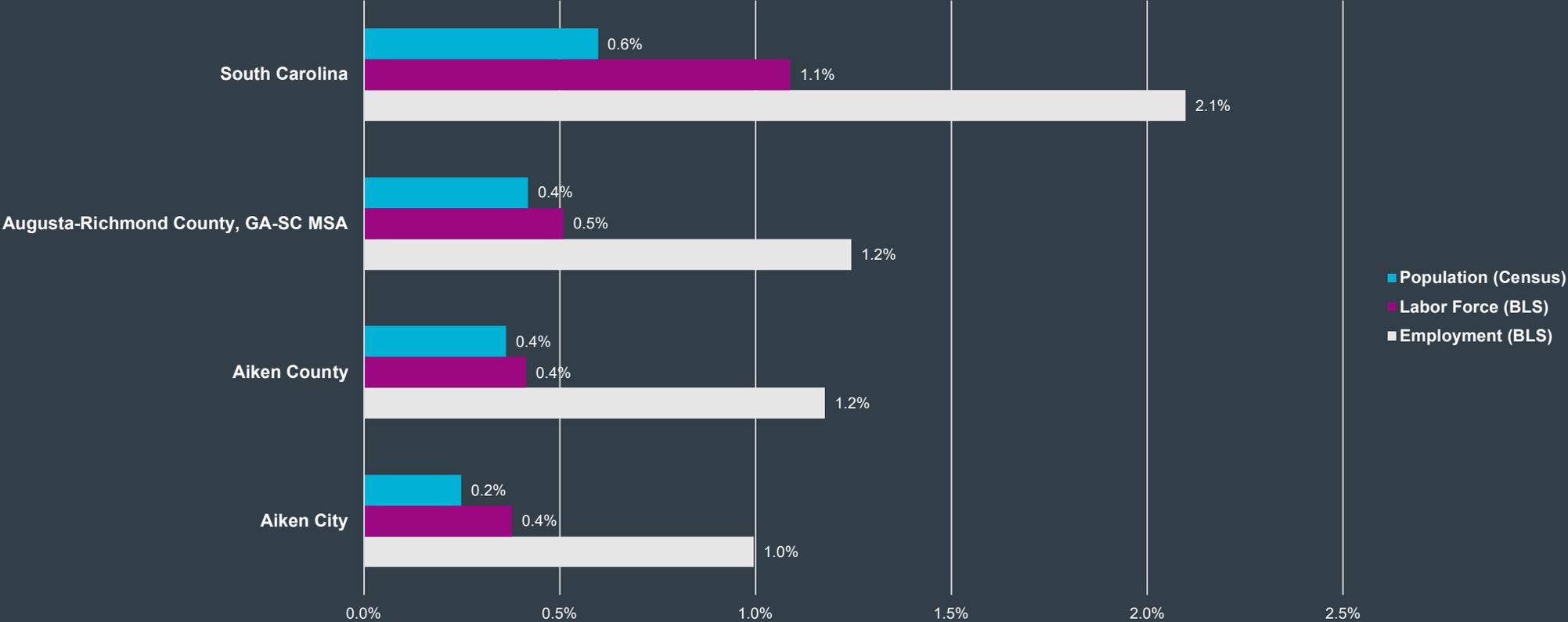
Younger population subsets are shrinking as Aiken's population ages and attracts retirees



Source: 2010 US Census, 2018 ACS 5-Year Estimates

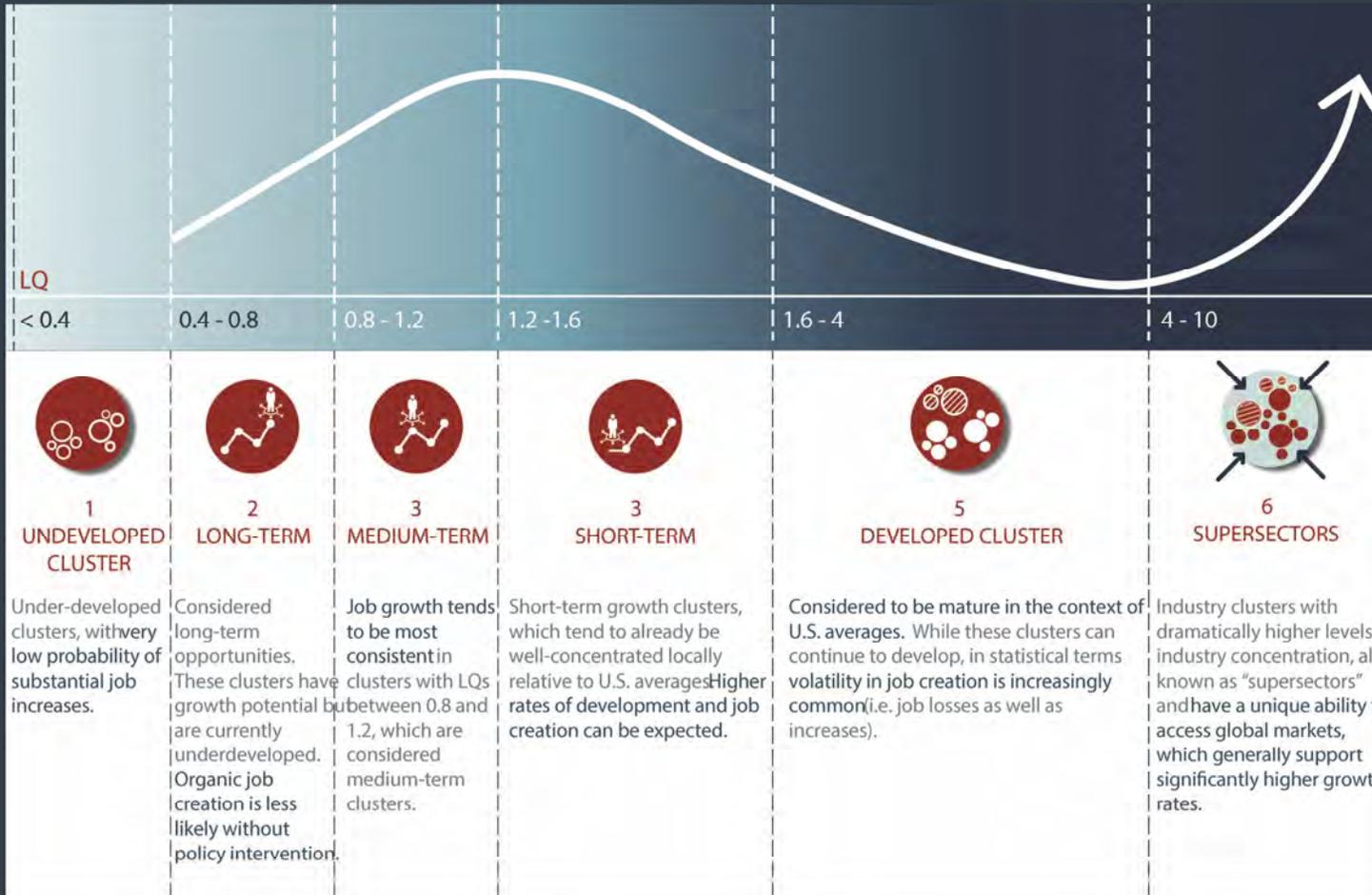
Aiken's growth is not keeping pace with County, State and MSA

Growth Rates: Population, Labor Force & Employment, 2010-19



Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Location Quotients & Industry Clusters: Economic Development Stages



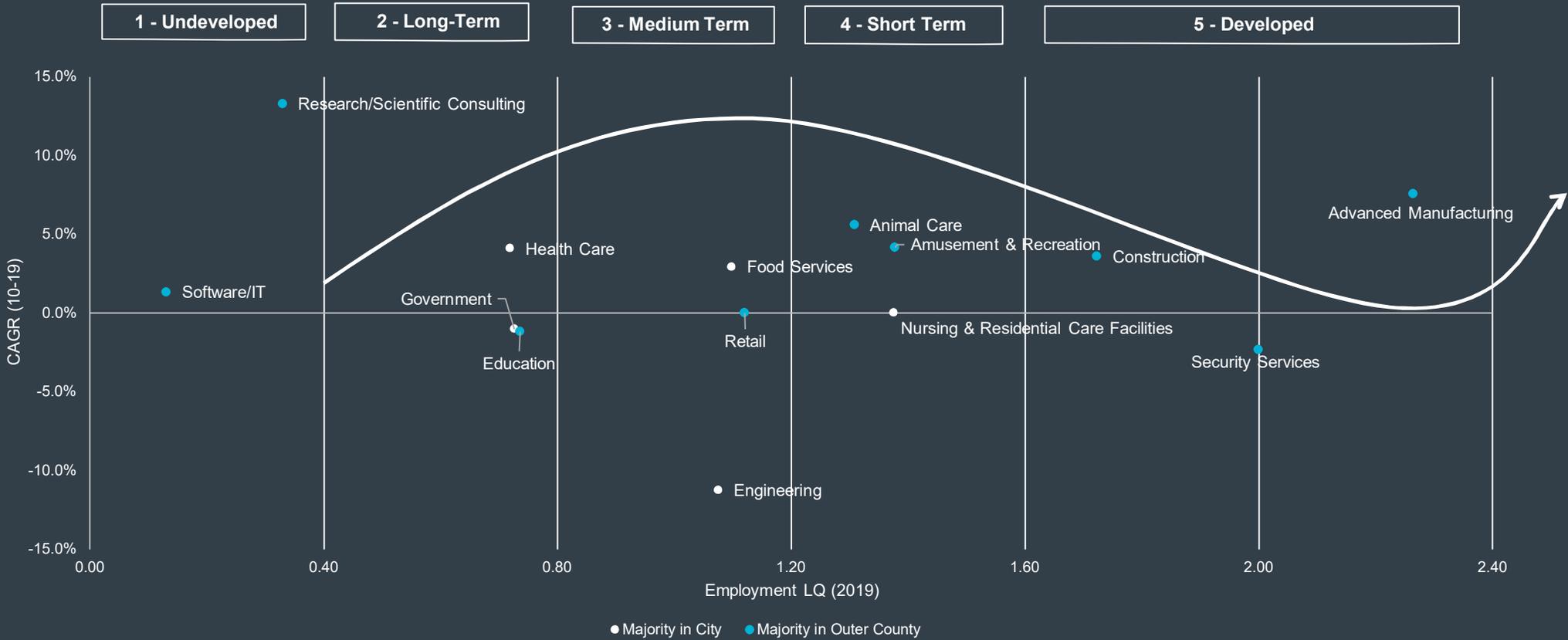
Our industry cluster analysis relies on a basic notion that all industry sectors, clusters and individual companies are not equally positioned for growth, as shown in the adjacent chart (Figure 2). We developed an industry cluster tool tied to analysis of industry growth, in terms of growth in jobs and location quotient (LQ), using data at a 6-digit NAICS code level for 30 largest USA Metropolitan Statistical Areas. The analysis shows that roughly 70 percent of all jobs are created by firms with location quotients between 0.8 and 1.6. The analysis shows that clusters with LQ less than 0.6 tend to be viewed as long-term or under-developed opportunities.

Also, unique to certain markets are supersectors with location quotients well above 4.0. Our experience shows that these supersectors have capacity for additional growth, linked with unique access to global markets. For example, our work in Corpus Christi shows that sectors such as heavy construction and Oil & Gas command location quotients approaching 10.0. For Aiken super-sectors would include waste Disposal (LQ: 237.6, CAGR: -2%), Paper Manufacturing (LQ: 8.09, CAGR: 0%), and Rubber Manufacturing (LQ: 7.99, CAGR: +7%); see following page.

Aiken County Economic Development Matrix

6 - Super Sector

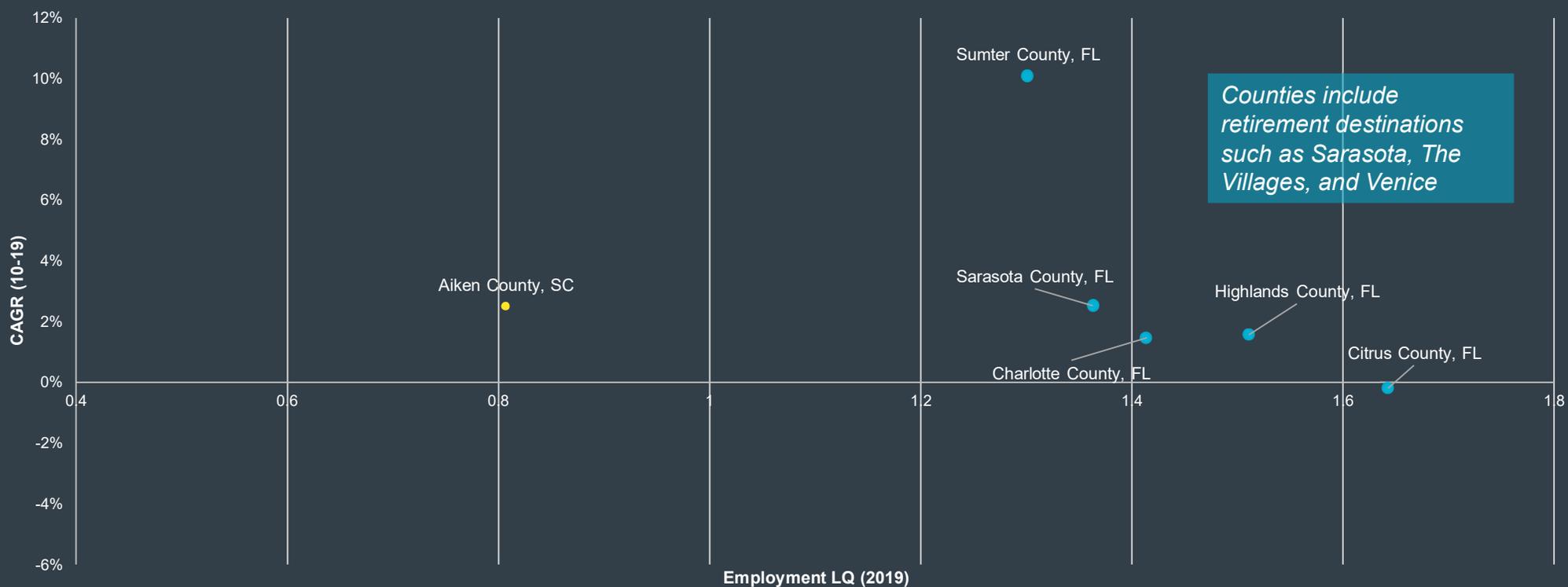
- Waste Disposal (LQ: 237.6, CAGR: -2%)
- Paper Manufacturing (LQ: 8.09, CAGR: 0%)
- Rubber Manufacturing (LQ: 7.99, CAGR: +7%)



Source: EMSI & Esri Business Analyst

Healthcare & social services jobs are less concentrated in Aiken than other top retirement destination counties

Health Care and Social Services Sector in Top Retirement Destinations – Location Quotient and Growth Rates



Source: EMSI
Comparison counties are the five with highest percent of residents 65+ with population over 100k

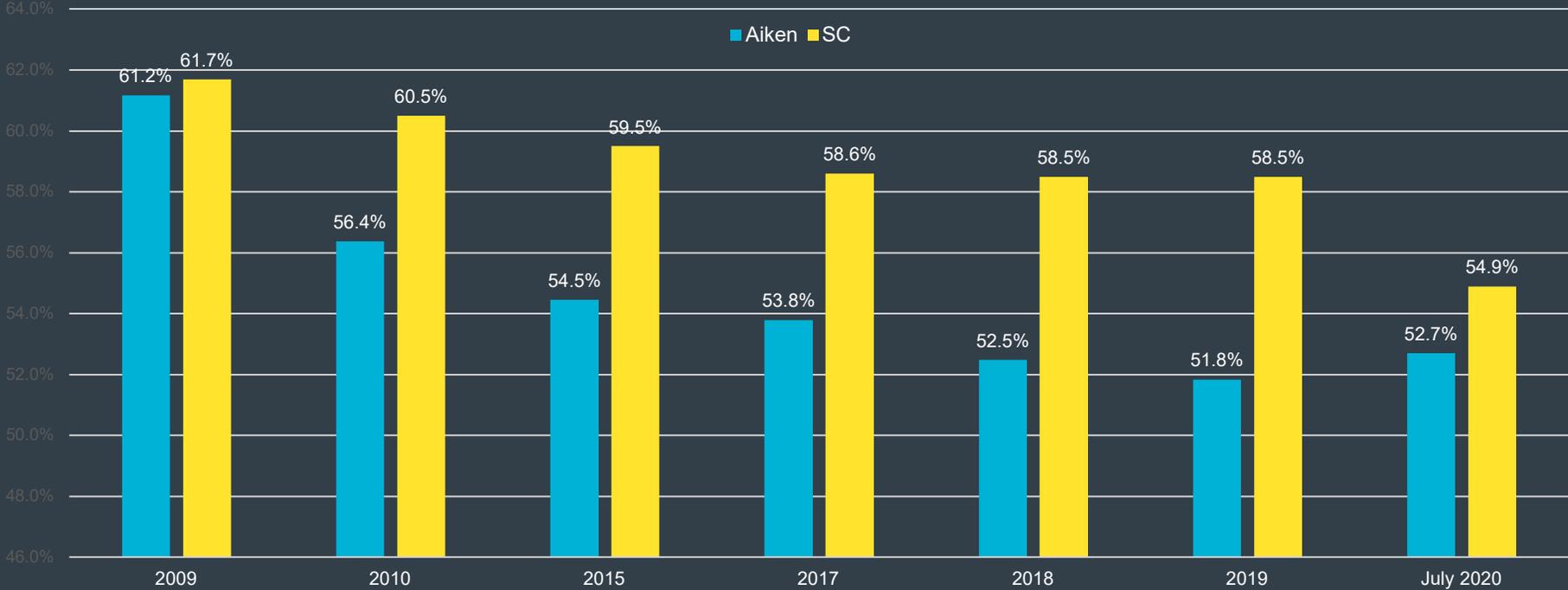
Some industries associated with retirement destinations are under developed

Industry (NAICS)	Top Retirement Counties LQ Range*	Aiken LQ
Ambulatory Health Services (621)	1.38-1.78	.84
Hospitals (622)	1.23-1.84	.53
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities (623)	1.88-2.63	1.37
Golf Courses and Country Clubs (71391)	3.37-4.79	3.76
Offices of Real Estate Agents and Brokers (5312)	1.42-3.24	.63

*Minimum and maximum location quotients among the 5 counties with highest percent of 65+ residents and population over 100k (Charlotte, Citrus, Sumter, Sarasota, Highlands counties in FL)
 Source: EMSI

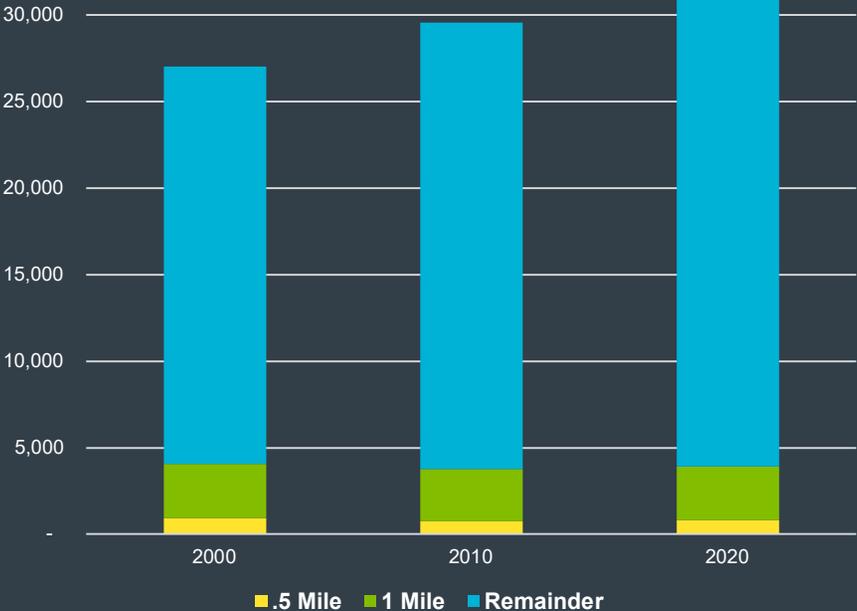
Lower unemployment rates during economic recovery in Aiken may be due to a shrinking labor force rather than growing employment

Labor Force Participation Rates



While Aiken's population has grown, little of that growth has occurred within its downtown

Aiken City Population by Downtown Proximity
(.5 mile radius, 1 mile radius)

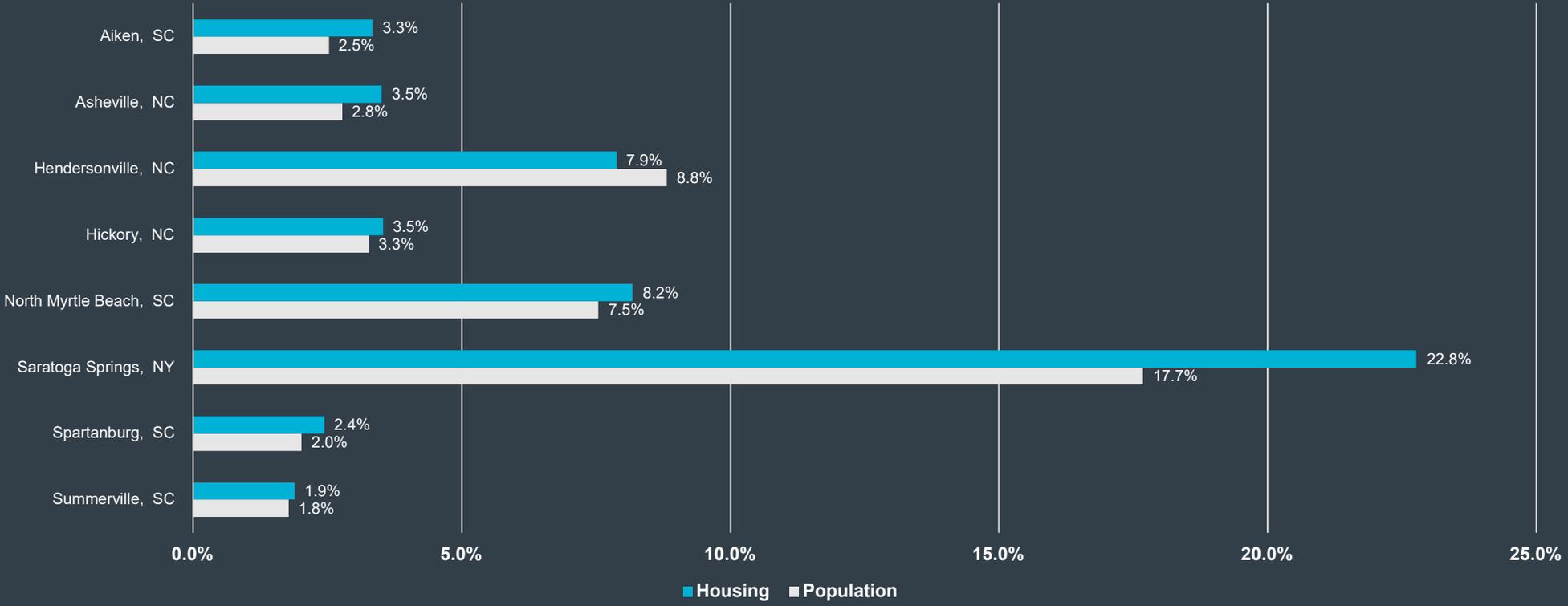


	2000-10 Growth Rate	2010-20 Growth Rate
.5 Mile Radius	-2.3%	0.8%
1 Mile Radius	-0.3%	0.3%
Remainder	1.2%	0.9%

Source: Esri Business Analyst

Population and housing proportions downtown in comparable cities

Downtown Population & Housing Units (.5 mile radius) as Percentage of City Totals



Source: Esri Business Analyst

Housing in City of Aiken reveals higher prices and more renters

	Percent Renters	Percent Homeowners	Median Rent	Median Home Value	Median Year of Construction
City of Aiken	31%	57%	\$ 875	\$ 180,300	1986
Aiken County	25%	63%	\$ 794	\$ 142,200	1985

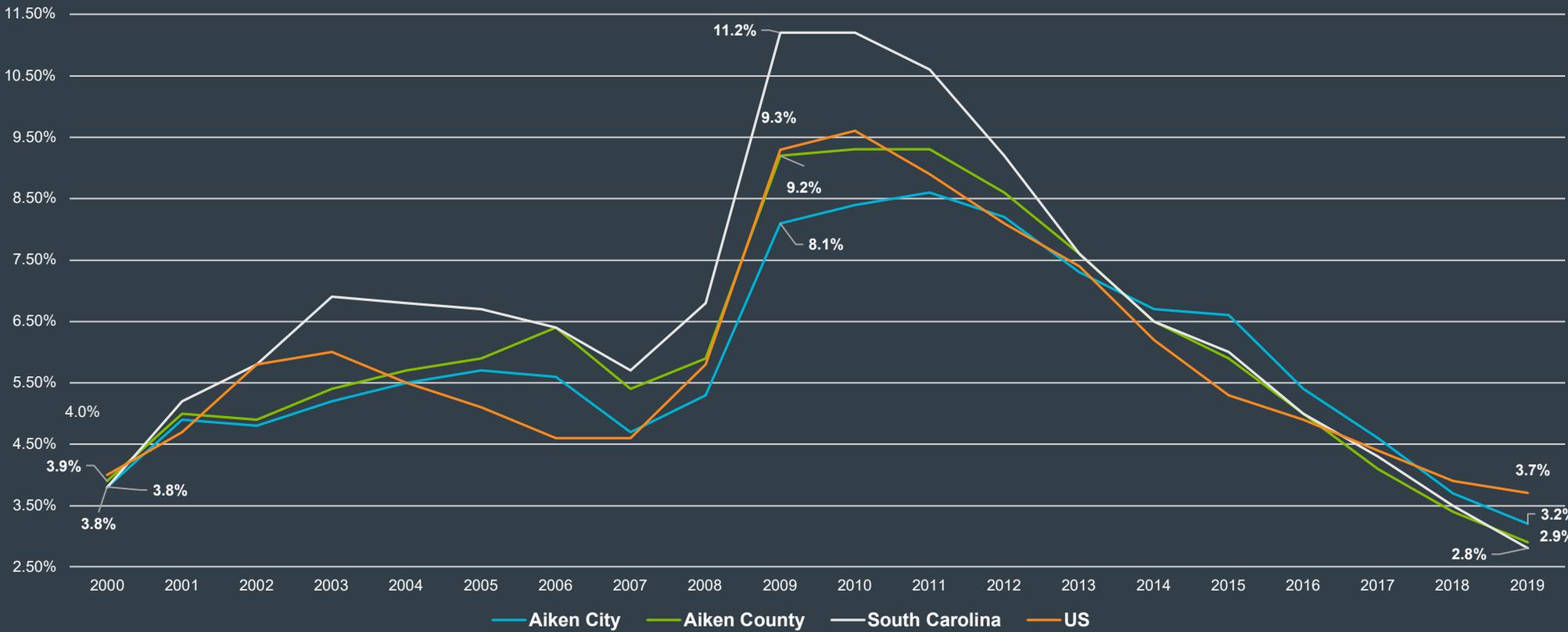
Downtown Real Estate; divergence between rent and building value

Downtown Averages	2010 + 2011	2018 + 2019	CAGR
Rents (All Retail)	\$15.36	\$12.92	-2.1%
Rents (Retail under 5,000 sf)	\$14.29	\$15.58	1.1%
Rents (Retail over 5,000 sf)	\$16.06	\$9.34	-6.5%
Building Sales (per SF)	\$68.00	\$111.83	6.4%

Source: ACS 2018 5-Year Estimates

Unemployment rates, 2000-2019

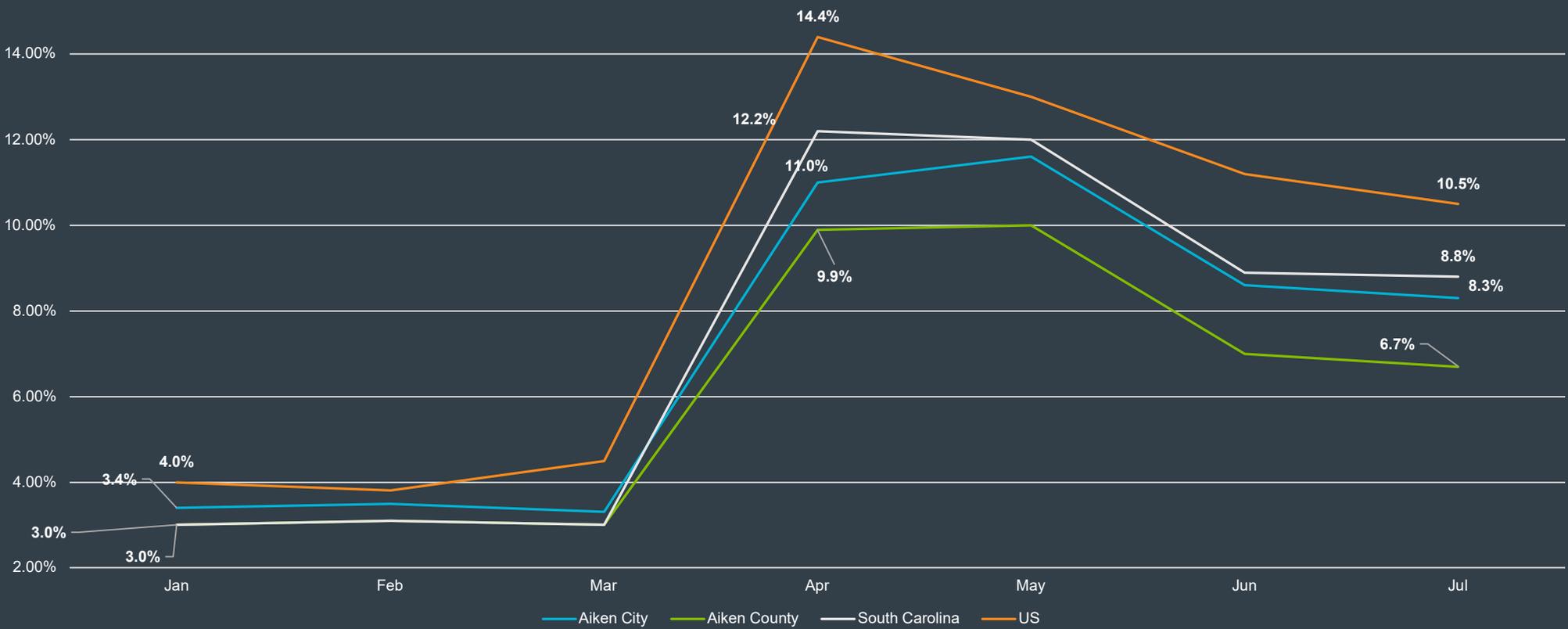
Aiken's unemployment rate was slightly higher than State and County following 2014



Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Unemployment rates, January-July 2020

Aiken County and the City's unemployment rates have trended lower than US and State trends since Covid-19 shutdowns



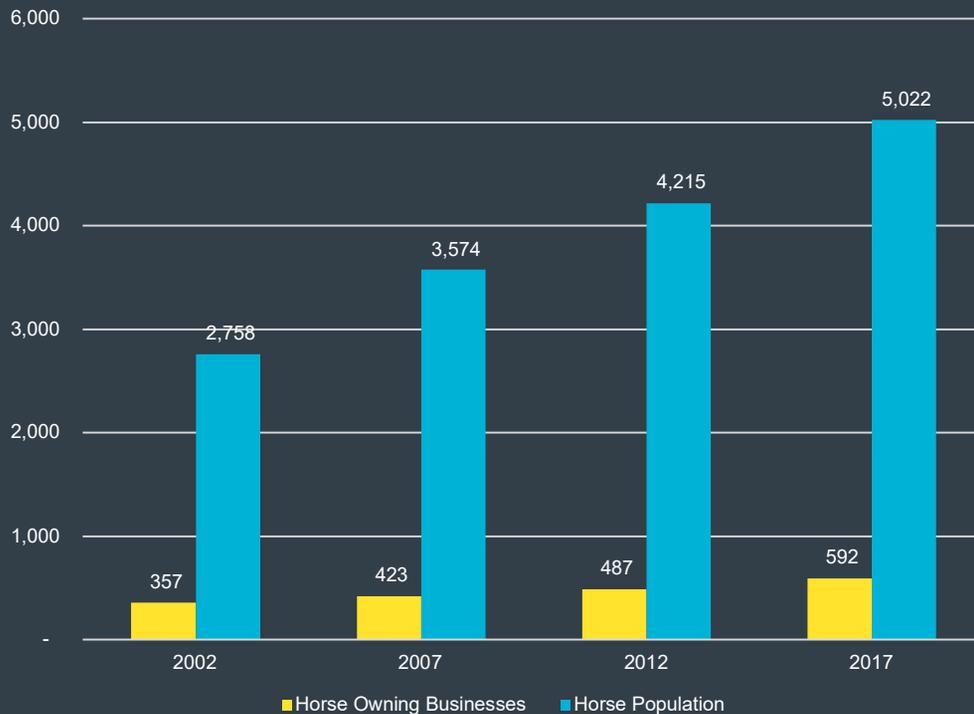
Source: BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics

Our Insights

- Equine industry
- Mega-Region alignment
- Industrial development & advanced manufacturing
- Downtown investment
- University-supported innovation-linked economic development

Our Experience

Equine Inventory and Businesses in Aiken County (2017)



Source: USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture

According to the USDA 2017 livestock census,

- Aiken County's horse inventory grew at a rate of 4% annually from 2002-2017
- The number of businesses with horse inventory grew at 3% rate
- Aiken County had the 34th highest horse inventory in the US
- Horse sales totaled \$3,485,000 in Aiken County, which was the 34th highest in the US
- There are 29 horses per 1000 County residents

For Aiken:

- Equine industry is clearly growing
- Connected to interesting county-wide strength in animal health
- Question: many equine businesses tend to be sole proprietors, and are less "visible" economically.

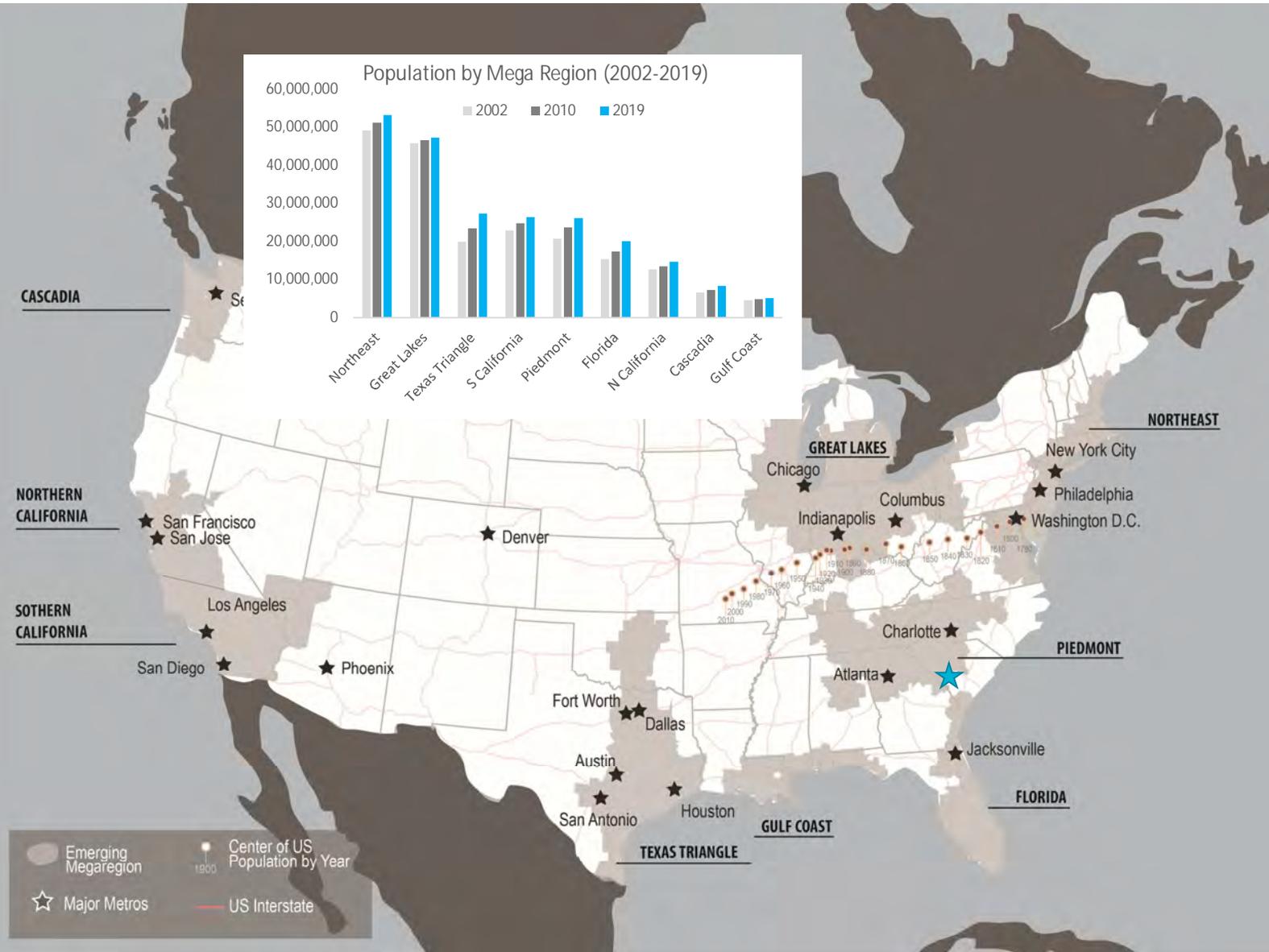
Our Experience

Mega-Region Connectivity

The "Mega Region" concept is important for Aiken. These larger constellations of activity account for roughly 70% of US population and about 69% of US employment. These generally urbanized areas have also tended to grow faster than US average.

Aiken sits astride two concentrations of US economic activity, the Piedmont and Greater Florida, which collectively represent about 20% of US population, and have demonstrated consistent growth since 2002 well above US averages.

In practical terms, Aiken falls within a consistent 2.5-hour drive time of Charlotte, NC; Atlanta, GA; and Charleston, SC.



Our Experience

Industrial Development

Particularly since 2010, as the US manufacturing economy first recovered following the “Great Recession”, it has become clear that the word “industrial” increasingly fails to properly frame the evolving diversity of activities related to modern industrial development:

- Artisanal / Craft Production: Food, beverages, and consumer goods, generally in buildings smaller than 50,000 square feet and a focus on regional markets.
- Local Production – General: Large- scale companies in food production, metalworking, and value-added machining, coatings, etc.
- Industrial Services, Recycling & Repair: Support services, employment agencies, metal recycling, remediation, printing, laundry, spare parts, etc.
- Export Oriented Manufacturing: Production: Goods for national and global markets; pharmaceuticals, automotive, aerospace, metals, packaging, etc.
- Bulk Commodity Logistics: Bulk movement of sand, gravel, asphalt, and chemicals, using truck, rail, barge, and pipeline.
- Wholesale / Distribution: Includes Third-Party logistics providers, many of whom are providing additional services to their clients, including component assembly and parts sequencing.
- E-Commerce: Order fulfillment for retail goods for delivery. With companies such as Amazon making investments to achieve same-day delivery, demand for warehouse sites closer to population centers has accelerated.
- Transportation services, covering general trucking, intermodal container drayage, and rail / intermodal operations. Modern intermodal ramps are one clear example of this activity, linking terminal operations with adjacent industrial activities.
- Heavy Industrial Production, generally focused on metals, fuels, chemicals, plastics; these activities tend to be larger in scale and more likely to develop in rural areas which are more likely to be in attainment for air quality.

Output Versus Jobs

The impact of technology increasingly influences how things are made, and as a result, fewer workers are needed to produce more output. As a result, across industrial districts the pace of job growth will not sufficiently frame the extent of demand and contribution of industrial activity to the local economy. While there are significantly fewer manufacturing jobs nationally compared to 1995, total manufacturing output (GDP) per worker has grown at a significant 4.5% annualized rate; i.e. healthy growth in output with fewer workers.

E-Commerce and Warehouse Demand

In the past decade, E-Commerce has moved beyond being a new business model to a major force impacting retail and industrial markets and consumer spending. For Amazon, as well as traditional retailers with an online presence, there is a new kind of industrial property, the fulfillment center, often covering in excess of 500,000 square feet. While plans for package delivery by drone have circulated in the media, the Journal of Commerce (JOC) noted Amazon’s decisions to register as a non-vessel-operating common carrier, lease air cargo planes and purchase semi-trailers; all strategies that relate to controlling logistics costs and ensuring timely delivery of goods. Analysis suggests that for every \$1,000 in retail sales which shifts from brick and mortar to e-commerce, an additional 2.4 square feet of warehouse space is occupied at the expense of retail space. Over time, these shifts will impact local property taxes as fewer new retail stores are built and alter the mix of jobs in retail versus trucking, warehousing, and order fulfillment.

Our Experience

Advanced Manufacturing

Our experience with inland ports reinforces that while their initial growth is linked with distribution and warehouse activities, as the scale of warehouse activity grows, manufacturing and final assembly activities tend to follow; with jobs that tend to command higher wages compared to warehouse work. With the nature of US manufacturing changing, it is important to consider how an on-going pivot toward “advanced manufacturing” will impact land use and employment. In general, Advanced Manufacturing has been generally defined as a family of manufacturing activities that:

- Depend on the use and coordination of information, automation, computation, software, sensing, and networking;
- Utilize cutting-edge materials, advanced processes, and emerging capabilities in the physical and biological sciences (nanotechnology, chemistry, and biology).
- Advanced manufacturing production is also Additive; products move through several assembly stages using third party logistics providers, linked by nimble supply chains.
- Are highly aligned with research and development and closely associated with workforces that are strong in STEM fields, including science, technology, engineering, and math.

While the technological enhancements that drive advanced manufacturing are recent, what has not changed is the important reality of end market competitive pressures, where customers are constantly asking suppliers to fabricate or redesign a part faster, cheaper, or lighter. This constant pressure drives manufacturers to pursue capital investments to sustain incremental process improvements (i.e. efforts to make something slightly faster, cheaper, or lighter). It also leads to an infrequent number of far more profound and radical new product innovations, otherwise known as “industrial revolutions”:

- 1.0 Mechanization of production using water and steam power.
- 2.0 Evolution of mass production using electrical power.
- 3.0 Digitization and use of electronics and information technology to automate production.
- 4.0 Collective embrace of big data, logistics, advanced materials, lean manufacturing techniques, and the “Internet of Things” to create mass customization of production, albeit in shop floor settings that do not look like traditional manufacturing (smaller buildings for example).

These radical changes are reflected in new power sources (the steam engine in the 1700’s), new communications technologies (the telegraph in the 1800’s, and the internet in the 1980’s), and new industrial processes (Haber-Bosch; extraction of ammonia from atmospheric nitrogen around 1910). While these innovations all eventually disrupted existing markets and created new opportunities, it still took many years to move from proof of concept to commercial marketability, a reality which remains true today, for example with 3D or additive printing.

Our research shows that there are several distinctions about the now unfolding 4th Industrial Revolution related to “Advanced Manufacturing” that are critical:

- Manufacturers are evaluating new enabling technologies (3D / Additive Printing) and advanced materials (powdered metals, composites, nanotubes, adhesives) in their manufacturing processes as they pivot toward new and evolving end-market opportunities.
- The unfolding revolution in energy costs is impacting sectors that rely on natural gas as a feedstock for production processes, but also sparking innovation in energy storage and renewables, as manufacturers seek to gain a measure of control over their utility bills.
- As quality expectations are already consistently high, companies are compelled to compete on price and contemplate purchase of capital equipment to increase capacity. This reality has implications for state incentives for manufacturing, which remain linked to job creation.

For Aiken:

- USC Aiken Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative aligned with Savannah River National Laboratory and county positioning across advanced manufacturing sectors.

Key Insights – Downtown

Our ability to assess downtown environments (small and large; urban and rural) is a logical outgrowth of extensive experience in evaluating downtowns from real estate and demographic perspectives, with studies completed from Estes Park, CO; to Chicago, IL; as well as De Pere, WI; Indianapolis, Ann Arbor, MI; Flagstaff, AZ; Flint, MI; Baton Rouge, LA; Traverse City, MI; Dubuque, IA; and Durham, NC. We have also worked in college towns, including State College, PA. This experience reinforces key unique factors about downtowns that need to be kept in perspective:

- Downtowns offer a unique mix of public and private activity.
- Downtowns are complicated places physically (fragmented property ownership, old public infrastructure, and buildings which are can be both historic and obsolete). For this reason, downtowns benefit from organizational capacity (e.g. Main Street Programs), to offset otherwise fragmented relationships between property owners, tenants, and the public sector.
- Downtowns host complex overlapping markets, including day-time employees, residents, visitors, and students. In this context, the scale / seasonality of special events is important.
- In many cities key downtown arterials tend to be designated as state highways and are designed with an intentional bias toward cars rather than pedestrians.
- Downtowns are being influenced by national trends regarding shifts in retail spending and demand for experiential retail and residential development. In many communities, regional mall challenges may create new opportunities (and difficulties) for downtown locations.
- The economics of downtown link with the inventory of occupied retail and office space, the mix of stores, and relationships between rents, store sales, and building values. Building height and parking requirements have direct bearing on these factors.
- How downtowns work has a lot to do with psychology, related to choices about parking, safety and other factors, including the extent to which street-level space is in retail versus office use.
- Downtowns are typically the one WALKABLE place in a majority of US cities, so they figure into wellness conversations.
- New infill development gradually reduces the supply of off-street surface parking lots, forcing a conversation about structured parking and transit.
- Strength and capacity of entertainment, performing arts and fine arts clusters, in context with office demand can create opportunities for shared parking

In downtown Traverse City, which is anchored by about 570,000 square feet of retail space and 860,000 square feet of office space, the current parking situation is an outcome of more than 30 years of highly successful downtown revitalization, which resulted in new mixed-use development, with higher rents and premium real estate values. As infill development has removed off-street surface parking spaces, the net result has been a downtown parking shortage, which is gradually forcing conversations about transit service into downtown.

Our experience in downtown Flint, MI focused on completion of an inventory of downtown space, considering street level retail and office use, as well as upper-floor activity (office, residential, hotel, or vacant). The goal was to estimate block-level occupancy such that demand for parking could be understood. The analysis factored in the number of buildings where owners were securing renovation permits. the resulting inventory of space defined as being "in-play" was used to reinforce how perceptions of the downtown were in fact rapidly changing, for the better.

Our experience in Downtown Estes Park, Colorado reinforces the need to understand conflicting signals between parking supply and pricing in context with the impact of one-way versus two-way streets; the mix of downtown retail stores and the presence or lack of supporting residential and hotel activity. While downtown Estes Park offers about 425,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, aligned with about 1,388 parking spaces, the downtown has a very limited amount of office space and few residential units or hotel rooms within walking distance of downtown. During peak weekends, downtown parking facilities tend to reach capacity by 11am. While resulting traffic congestion becomes a major concern, the number of seasonal visitors drives impressive retail sales which support retail rents in excess of \$30 per square foot.

For Aiken:

- Many downtowns are structurally under-parked
- With limited vacant land remaining, real estate in downtown Aiken is becoming expensive, and over time, this trend will drive interest in higher density development

Key Insights – University Linked Economic Development

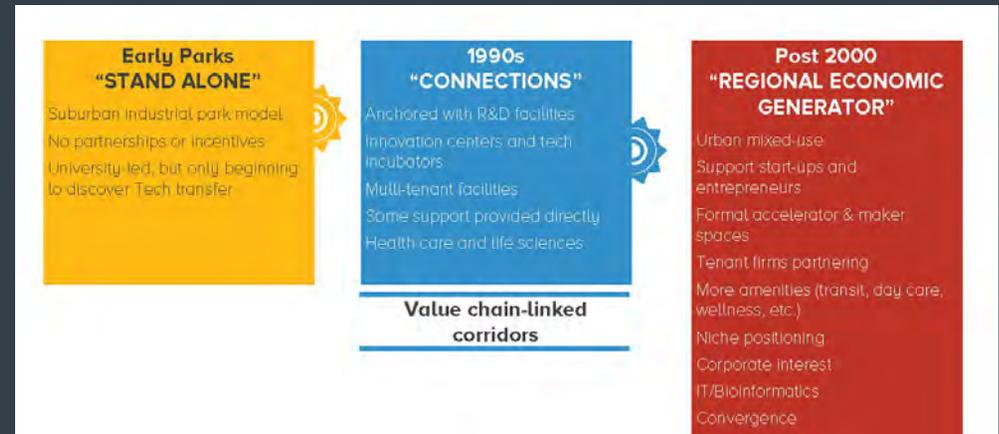
Our experience shows that university-linked research and development (R&D) has been a recurring economic development driver. Over the last 30 years, attraction of R&D has been consistently seen as a route to expand local economic activity, create new businesses that foster productivity improvement and innovation, and drive job creation.

Since the 1980's, the pursuit of research and development (R&D) as drivers for innovation and economic development has been a recurring theme, with regions focused on the goal of attracting higher wage employment, spin-off development, and related economic value added. Attraction of R&D activity has been consistently seen as a key route to expand an area's economic base, creating industries that foster productivity improvement and constant innovation, creating new spin-off businesses opportunities. Universities have been crucial anchors of this activity, initially sponsoring the development of research parks all over the world, and more recently, providing a platform to leverage public and private research grants into new spin-off companies.

Universities have always been at the forefront of research and innovation, particularly since the 1980's when an initial wave of university-led research parks opened. Universities have always been crucial anchors, initially sponsoring the global development of research parks to create locations where public and private research grants can be leveraged to create new spin-off companies.

While the research park model has been around for more than 30 years, recent evolution in the model is important, linked with two explicit transitions that have emerged in the past 15 years:

- From traditional university-led research development to explicit tech transfer and partnership with the private sector
- From isolated suburban corridor and campus locations to more compact locations, connected by transit and anchored by a more diverse mix of uses
- Innovation Districts are increasingly seen as essential locations where federal funding for research is leveraged to spin off ideas into private sector opportunities. These place-based environments become key ingredients in innovation, as immediate proximity creates opportunities for "accidental collisions" or "deliberate serendipity" between people. Ultimately, successful innovation centers are able to leverage greater density & interest in mixed use to create place-based outcomes that private-sector companies increasingly seek out to access and cultivate talent.



For Aiken:

- Role of USC Aiken in accelerating place-based innovation-linked economic development
- Leverage DreamPort Cybersecurity Collaborative to expand software & IT

Economic Development Action Plan

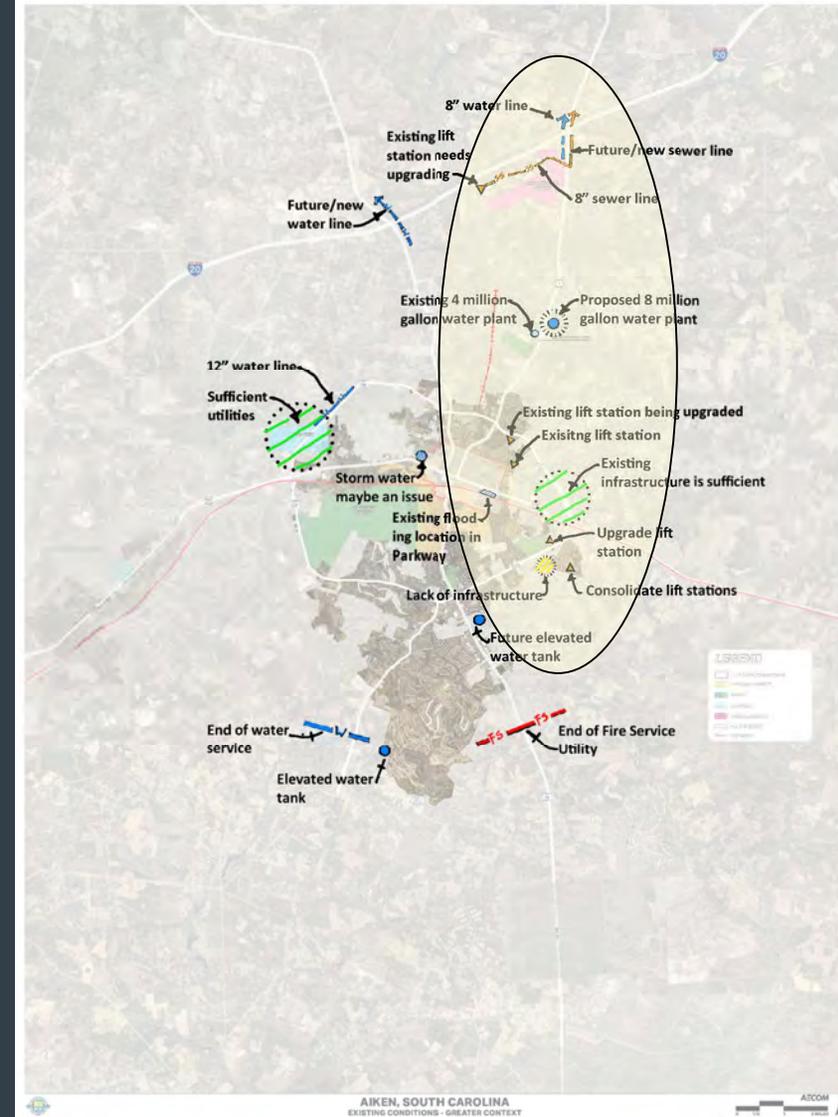
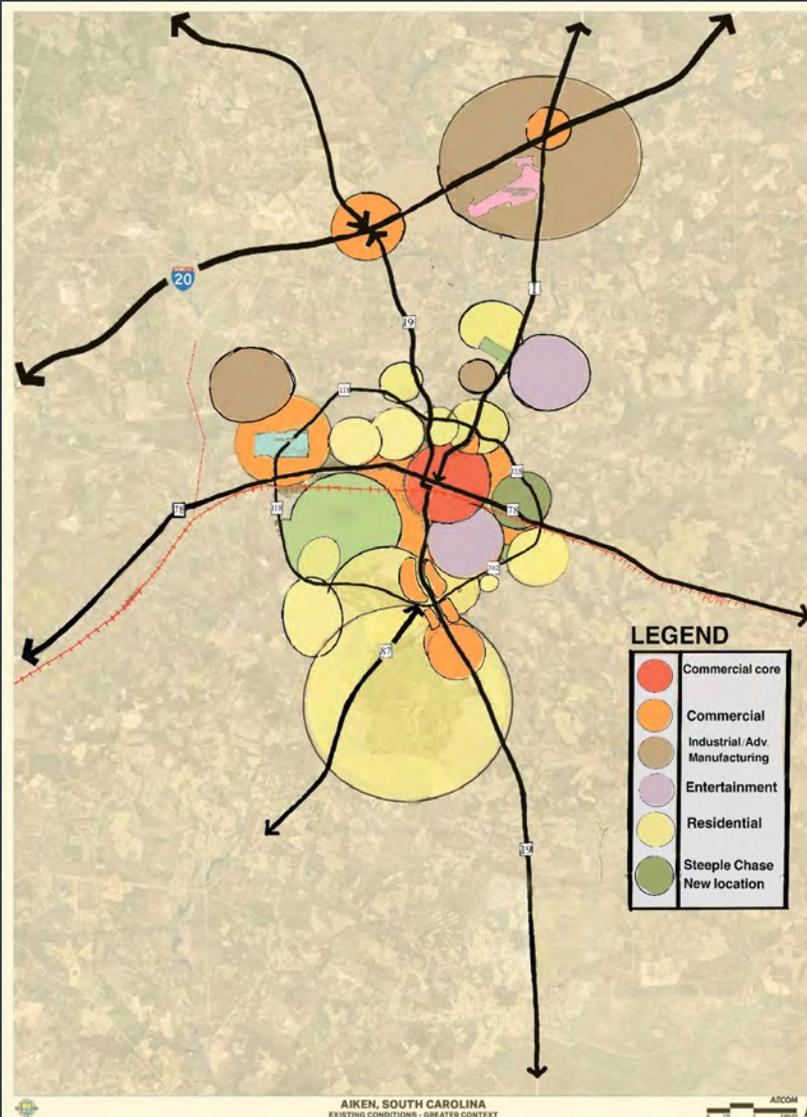
Aiken, South Carolina

Land and Place

AECOM



The Land and Place



Lifelong Communities

What is a Lifelong Community?

- **Provides housing and transportation options** that are affordable, accessible, located close to services, and available within existing communities to ensure all ages and abilities can access services and remain independent.
- **Encourages healthy lifestyles** by designing safe and walkable communities that promote physical activity and social interaction and enable easy access to food and healthcare.
- **Expands access to necessary services and information.**

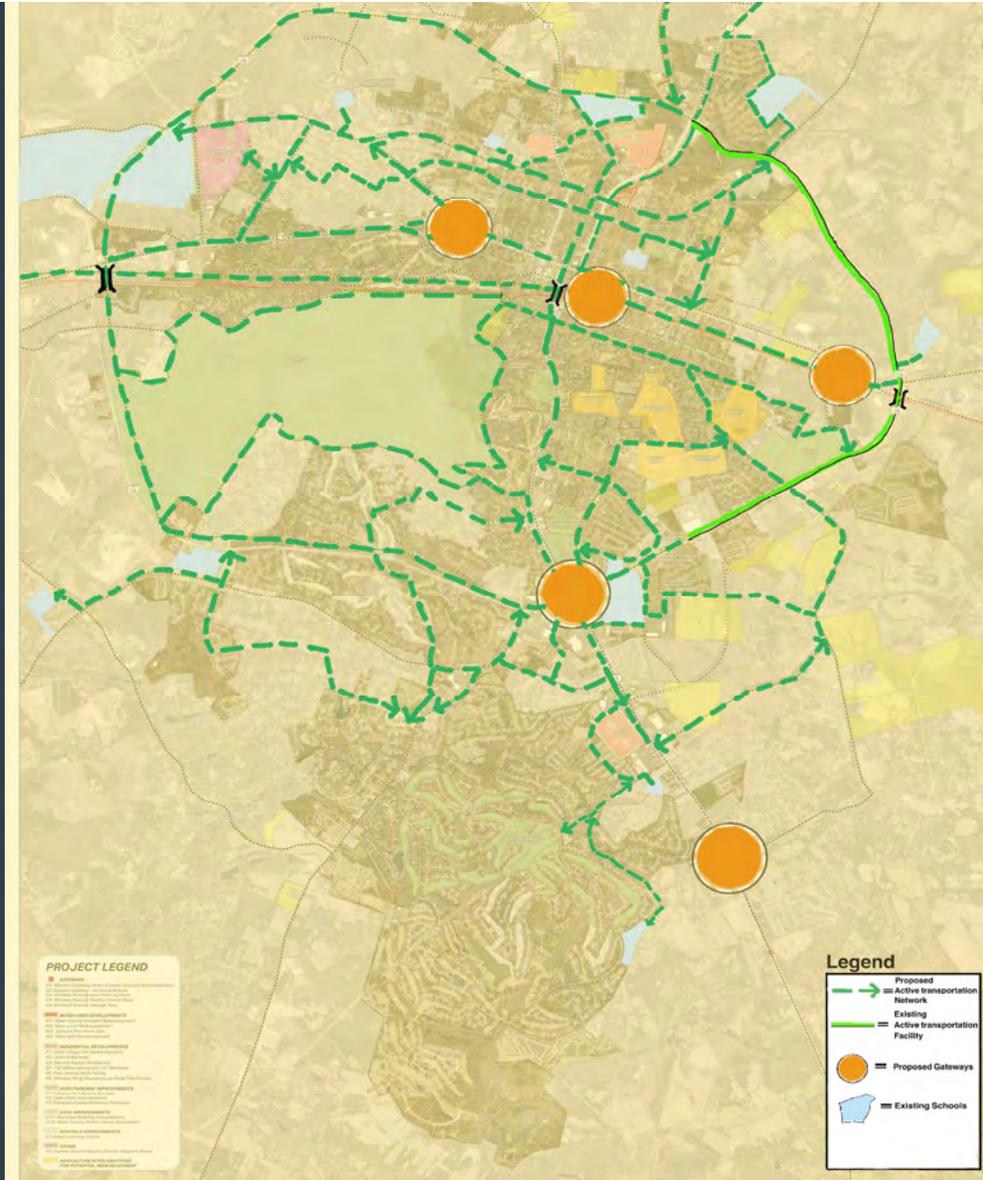
In Atlanta

The Atlanta Regional Commission's Lifelong Communities Partnership is composed of governments, civic organizations, nonprofits, and individuals. The partners meet quarterly to share ideas and learn about ways to transform our communities into places that work for every age and stage of life.

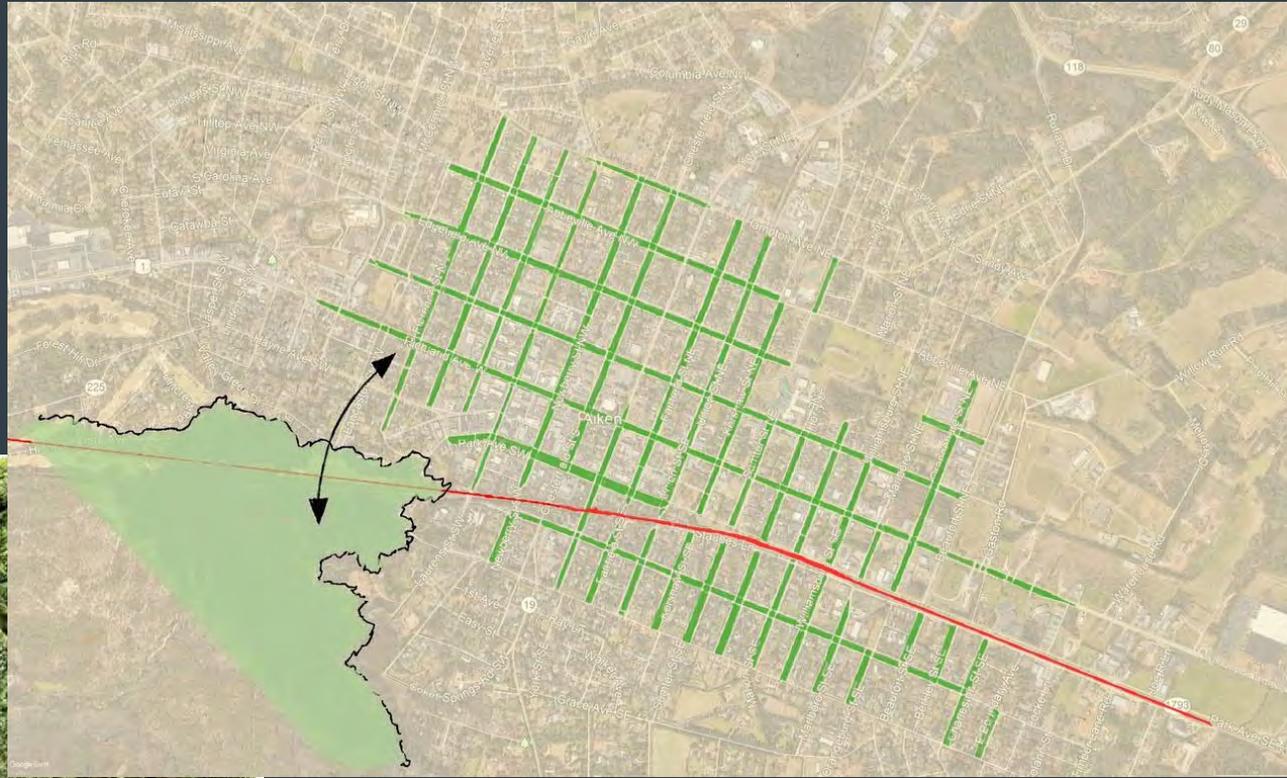
<https://atlantaregional.org/aging-health/lifelong-communities/advocating-for-lifelong-community-options/>

Aiken is a lifelong community

- Connectivity ↔ Strong street network
- Pedestrian Access ↔ Vibrant streets
- Neighborhoods ↔ Diverse housing choices
Great schools
Food access
- Social Interaction ↔ Usable greenspace for all
- Healthy Living ↔ Healthcare
Trails
- Healthy Growth ↔ Inclusive and Equitable



Aiken's Parkways



106 acres +/- of Open Space in Downtown!



Aiken's Parkways



Aiken's Parkways



Aiken's Parkways



AFTER-NIGHT

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AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA PROPOSED GATEWAY

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Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

Thank you

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Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

Working Meeting
October 27, 2020



Today's Agenda

1. **Introductions**
2. **Work Plan**
3. **Primary Discussion: What might growth look like ?**

Focus Areas:

- Downtown
- North of Downtown
- USC Aiken – Medical Center

Workplan

Task 1

Project Initiation

Task 2

Goal Workshop

January & February 2020

Meeting #1

What are Aiken's strengths, challenges and opportunities for growth?

October 8, 2020

Meeting #2

What might growth look like ?

October 27, 2020

Deliver final report

Recommendations & Next Steps

November 2020

April to July 2020

On hold at request of City while Covid action and response took precedence



Aiken: Visions for the Future

1. Compelling Place to Live

- Choose Aiken as the community in which to live and grow
- Attract more residents, especially those at the start of their careers

Strengths

- Aiken is already a choice community in which to live
- Existing and available jobs



2. Diversify Economy and Build on Strengths

- External drivers such as cybersecurity concerns and manufacturing advances provide growth opportunities

Strengths

- Existing scientific professional community
- Strong partnerships in place: USC Aiken, Aiken Technical College, National Guard, SRS
- Catalyst projects present: Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative, DreamPort, SRS Pit Production

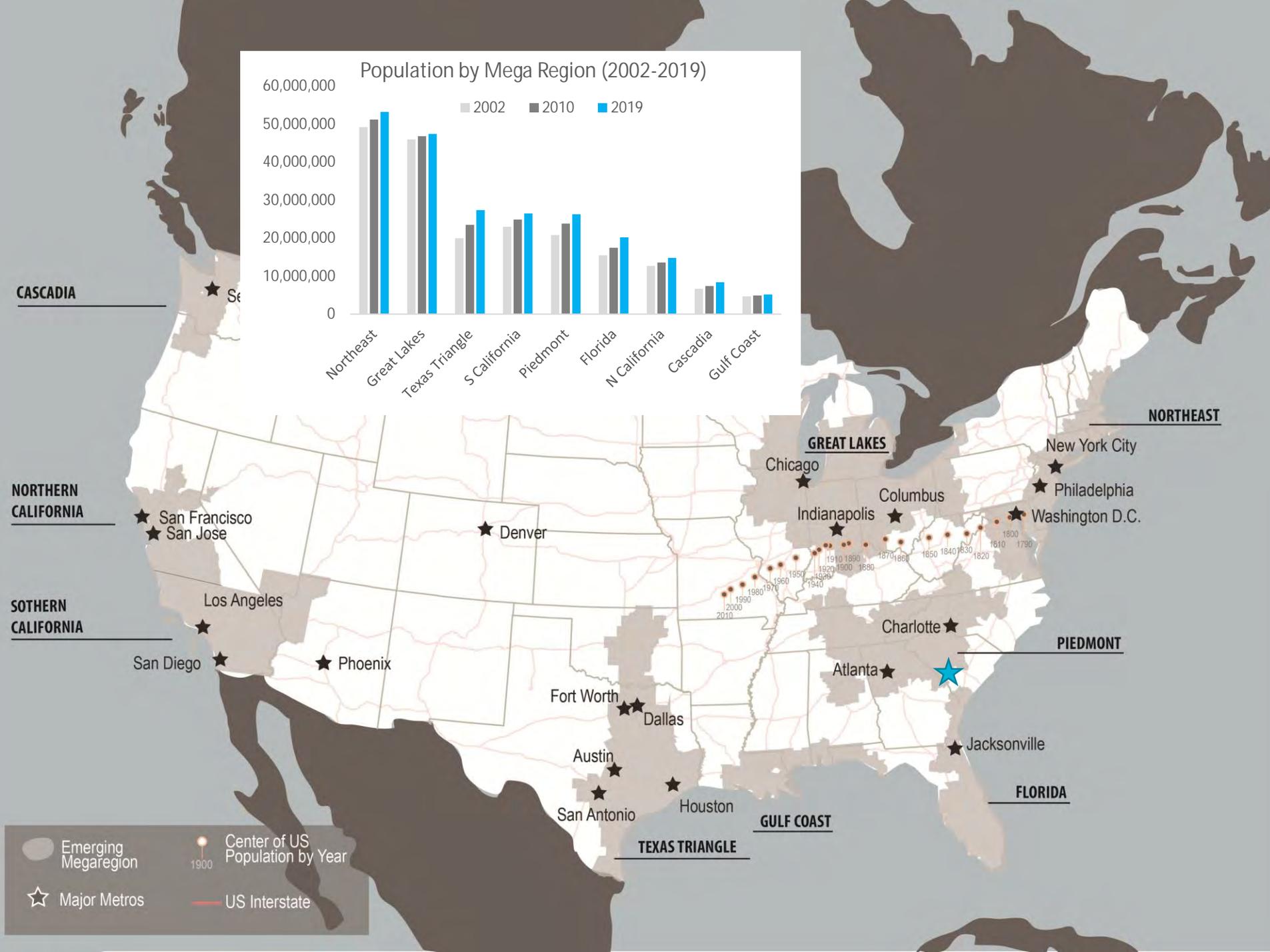
Connectivity

Mega-Region Connectivity

The “Mega Region” concept is important for Aiken. These larger constellations of activity account for roughly 70% of US population and about 69% of US employment. These generally urbanized areas have also tended to grow faster than US average.

Aiken sits astride two concentrations of US economic activity, the Piedmont and Greater Florida, which collectively represent about 20% of US population, and have demonstrated consistent growth since 2002 well above US averages.

In practical terms, Aiken falls within a consistent 2.5-hour drive time of Charlotte, NC; Atlanta, GA; and Charleston, SC.



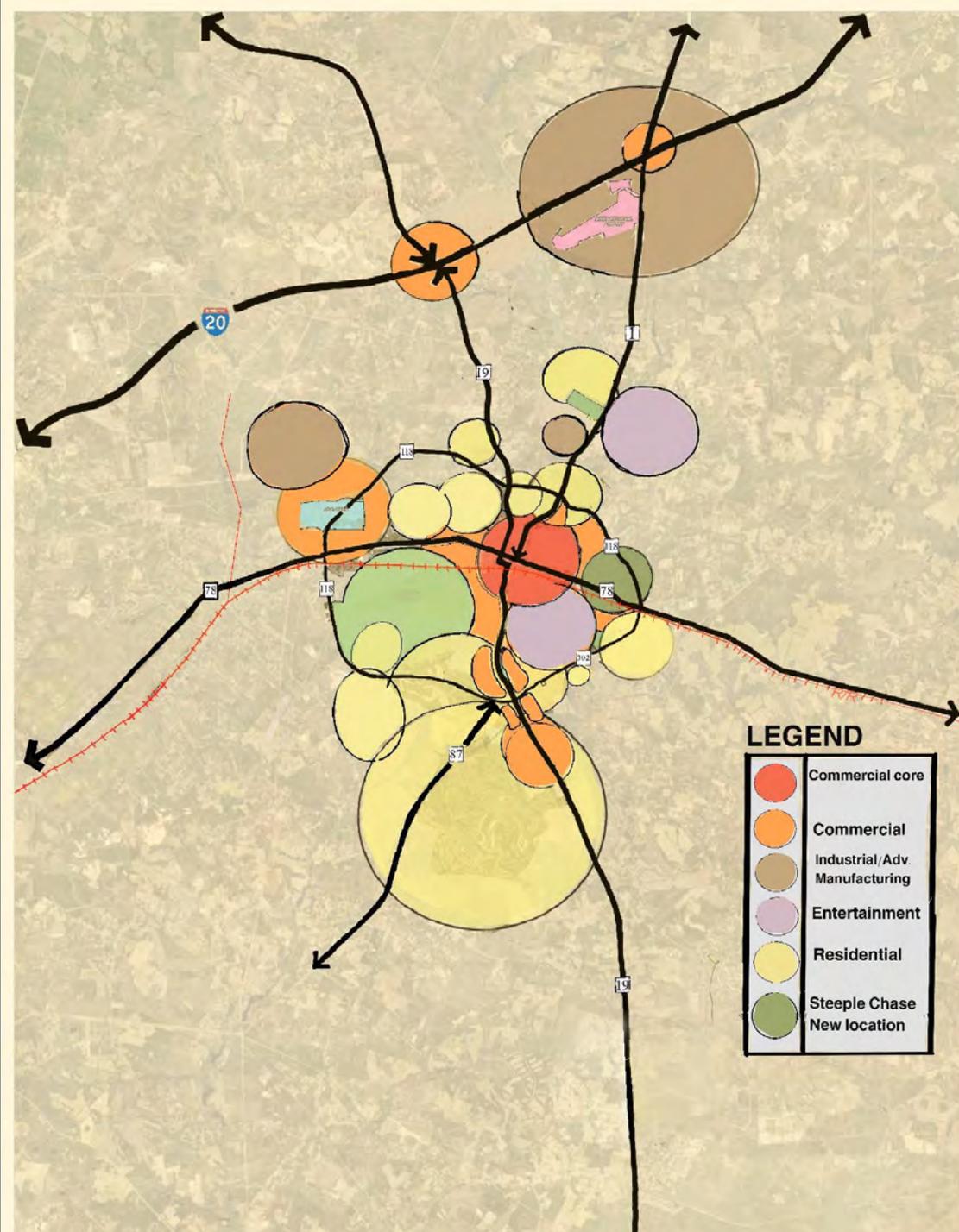
Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

What might growth look like ?

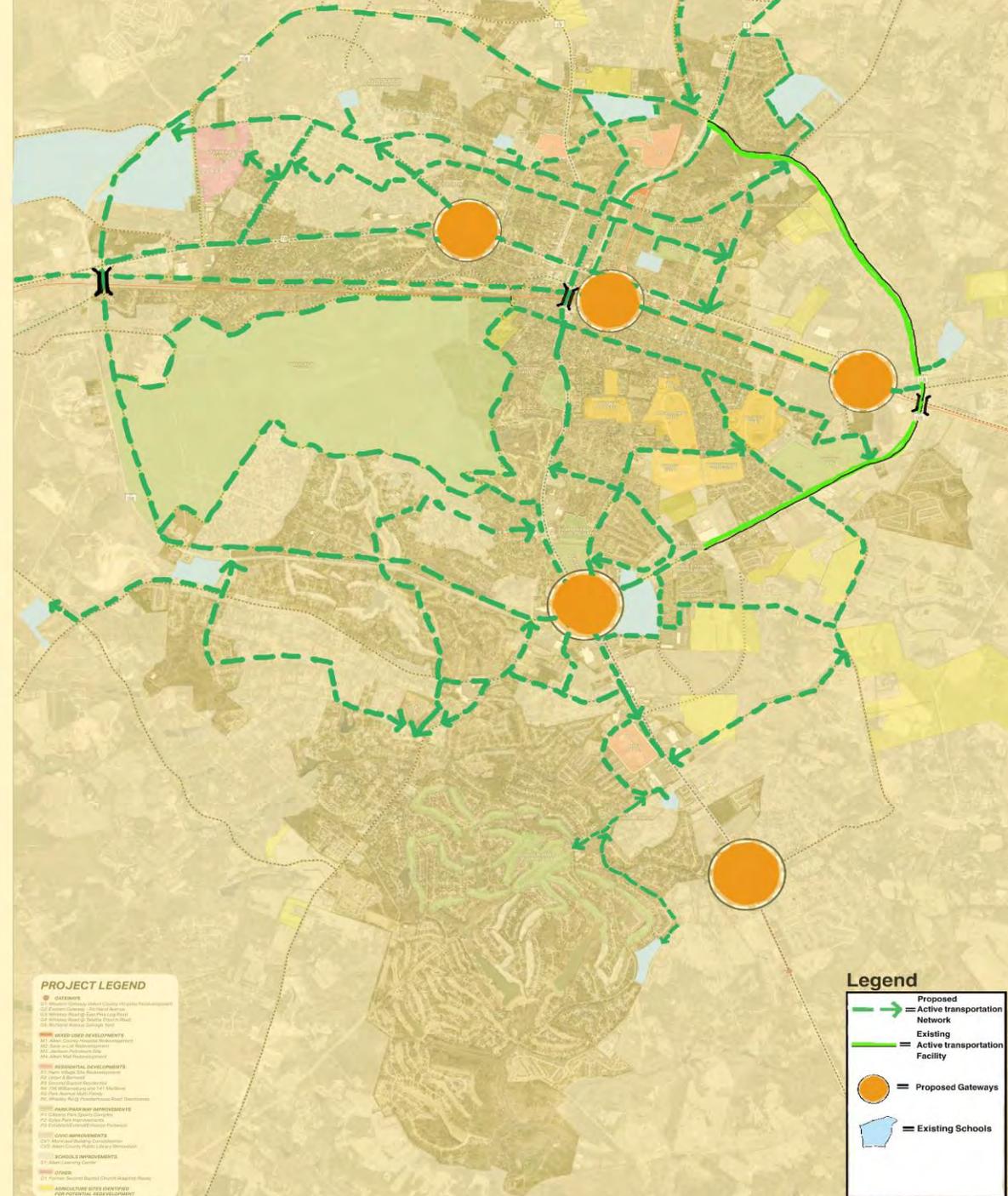


The Land and Place



Aiken is a lifelong community

- Connectivity ↔ Strong street network
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Great schools
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Trails
- Healthy Growth ↔ Inclusive and Equitable



Focus Areas

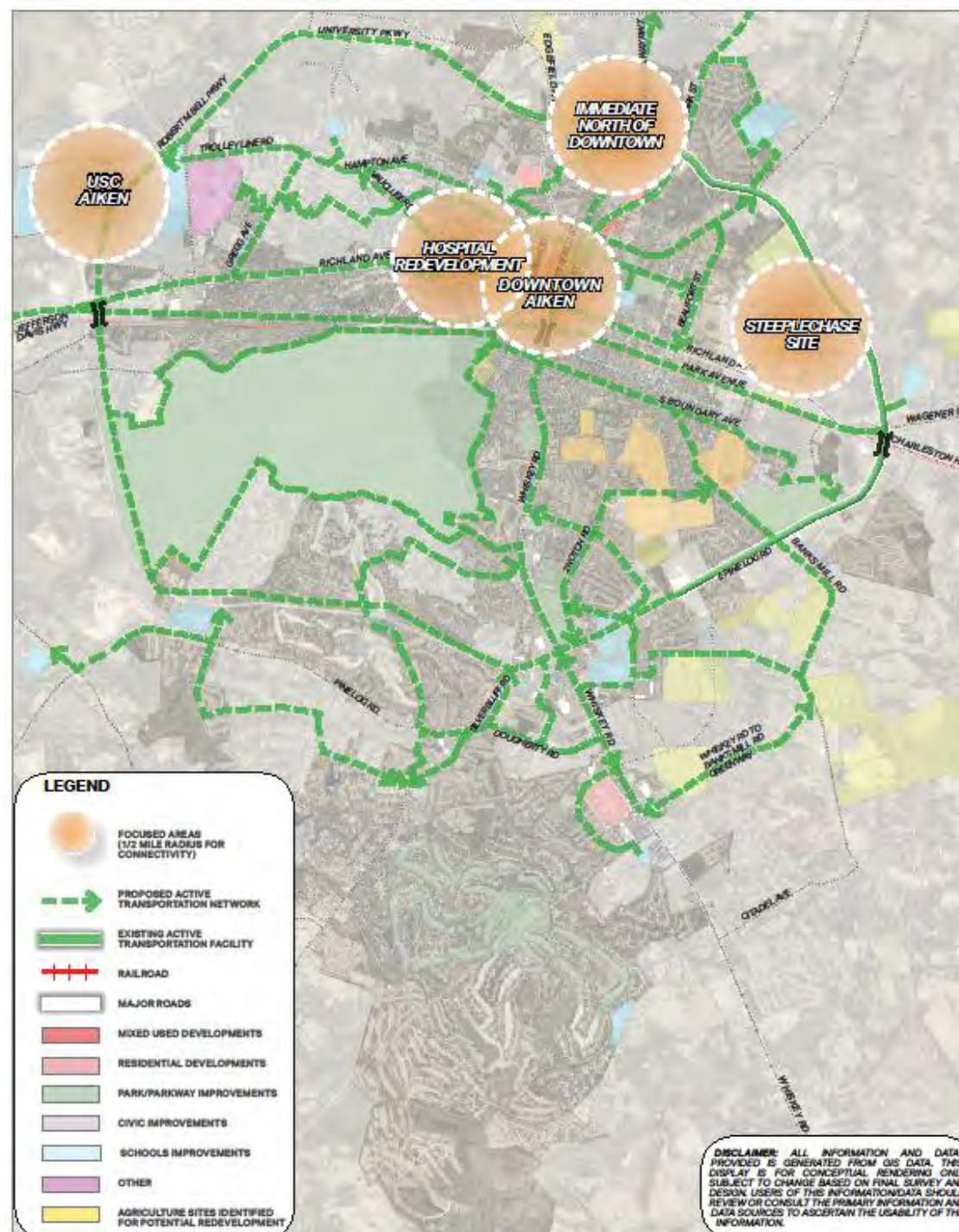
1. Downtown Aiken

- Infill Development
- Redevelopment Opportunities

2. Immediate North of Downtown

3. Steeplechase – new site

4. USC Aiken – Hospital



Long-Standing Challenges: Infill Development

- Pivot from greenfield to infill
- Limited vacant land and smaller parcel sizes
- Fragmented property ownership
- Old buildings and older public infrastructure
- Entitlement and development review policies make infill development more complex, and therefore more “risky”



Post 2010 Challenges: Infill Development

- Impact of ride-share on suburban parking
- Covid and retreat of restaurants and bars
- E-Commerce and reduced demand for brick and mortar retail
- Growing demand for warehouse / order fulfillment
- Housing since 2010: demand for apartments / missing middle debate



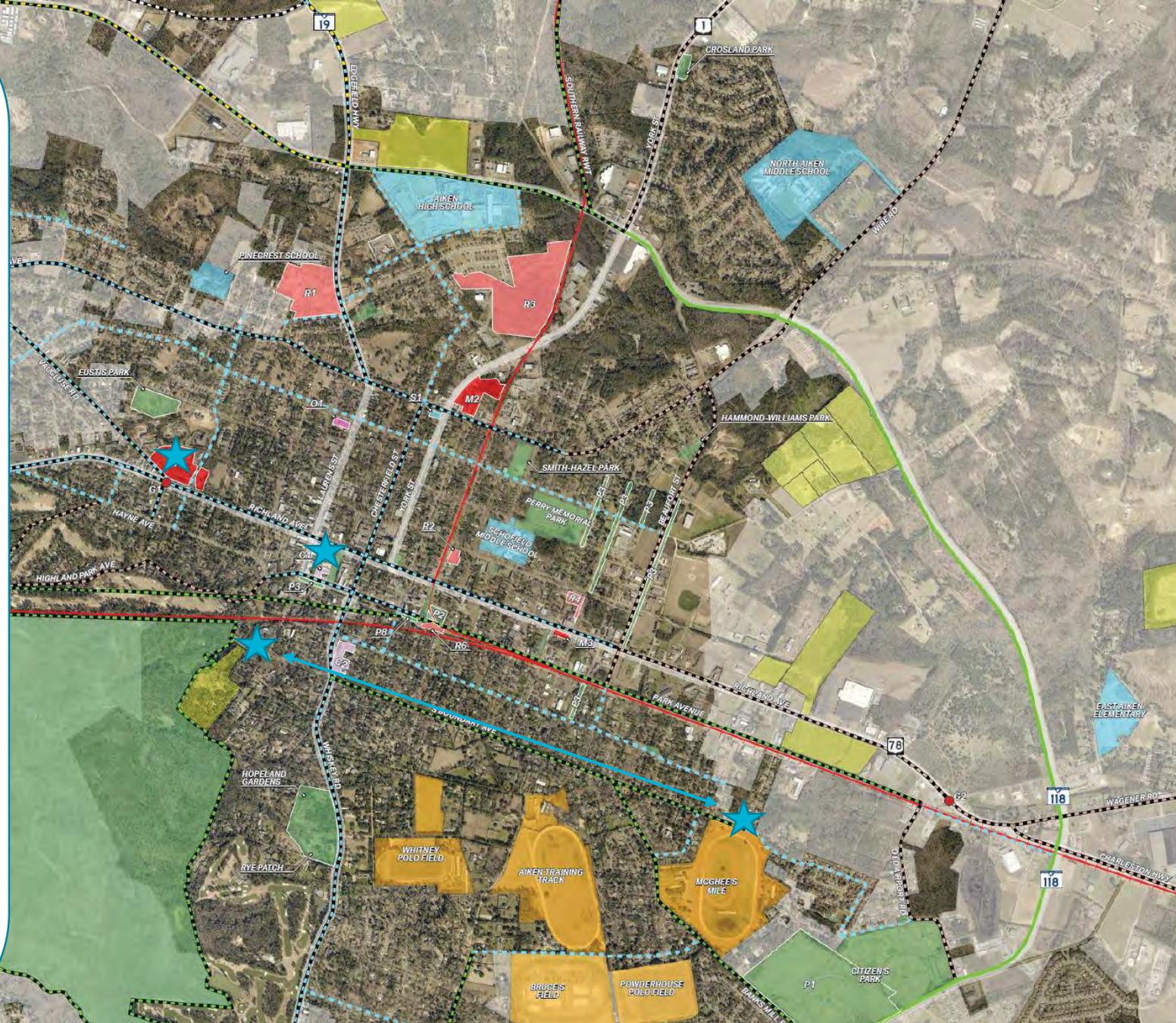
Policy Responses

- Build public consensus for reuse options, before developer interest
- Engage with owners of vacant / under-utilized properties
- Target public infrastructure to leverage private development
- Consider selective site acquisition
- Leverage transit improvements



Downtown Aiken

1. Identify available infill parcels
2. Review housing mix – what is needed downtown?
3. Redevelop Aiken Hotel site
 - consolidate larger site
 - consider min. 5 stories behind existing hotel site with parking
4. Redevelop County Hospital site
 - Complete financial analysis for what will work
 - Is there a public benefit?
 - Parking?
 - Open space and connection to Community Center
5. Public ROW
 - Improve pedestrian access and safety
 - Spotlight South Boundary as gateway corridor to Hitchcock Woods and downtown
6. Activate Municipal Development Commission role



AROUND Downtown

1. Assess development needs and opportunities at the old Steeplechase site, and for the new New Steeplechase site.
2. Fulfill needed services for neighborhood north of downtown



North of Downtown Core

1. Gateway from North
2. Neighborhood services and amenities

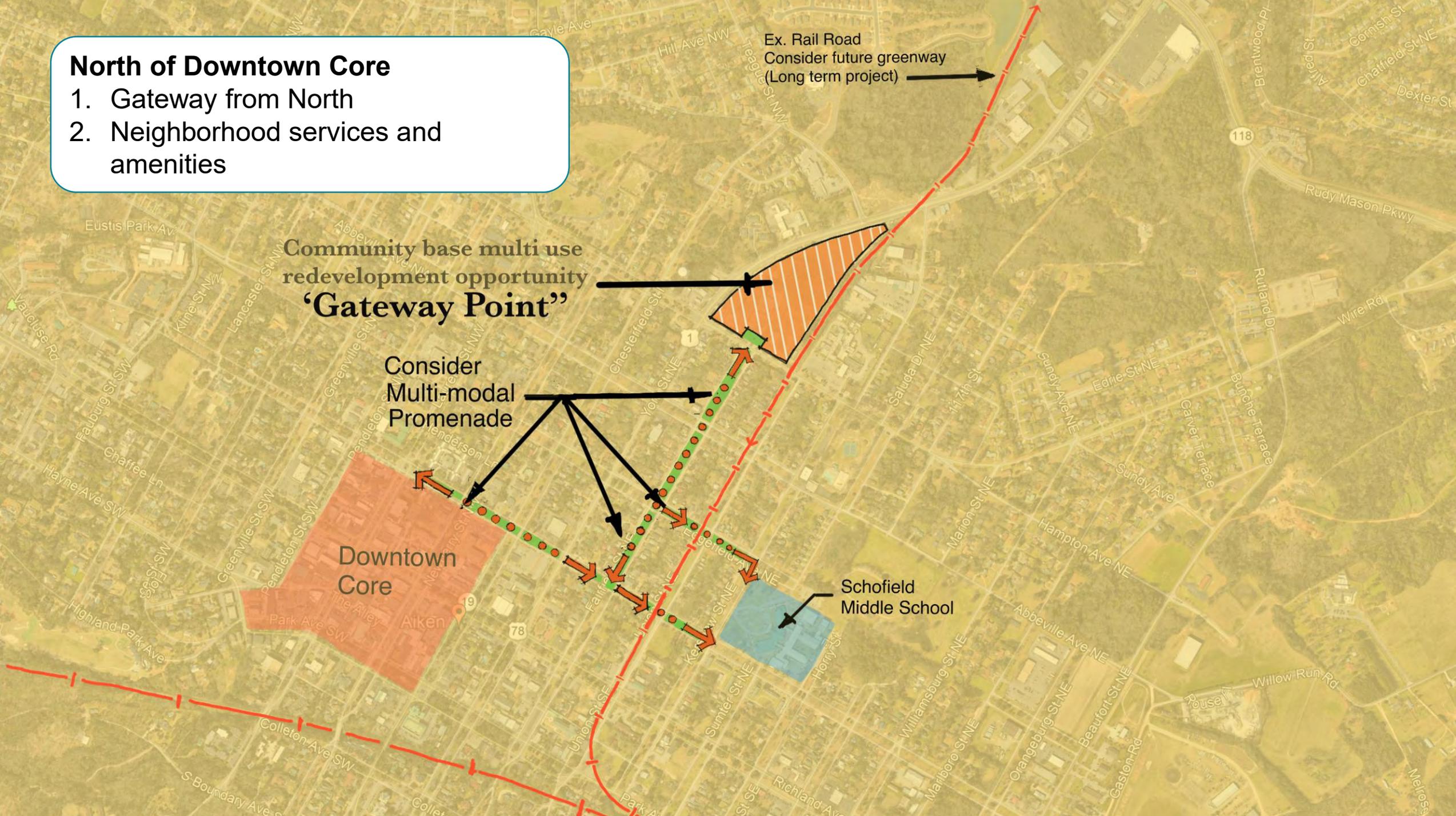
Community base multi use redevelopment opportunity
'Gateway Point'

Consider Multi-modal Promenade

Downtown Core

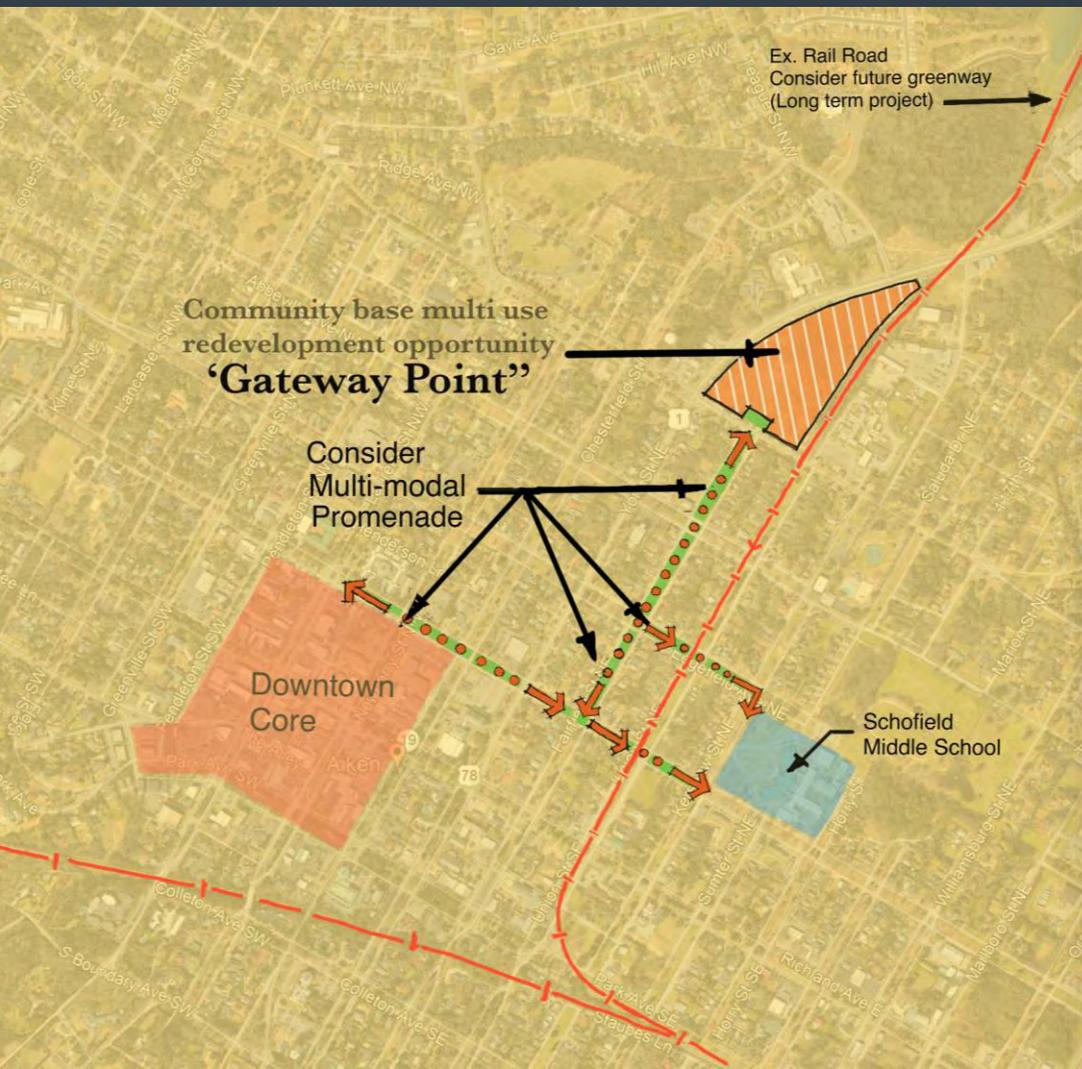
Schofield Middle School

Ex. Rail Road
Consider future greenway
(Long term project)



North of Downtown Core

1. Gateway from North
2. Neighborhood services and amenities



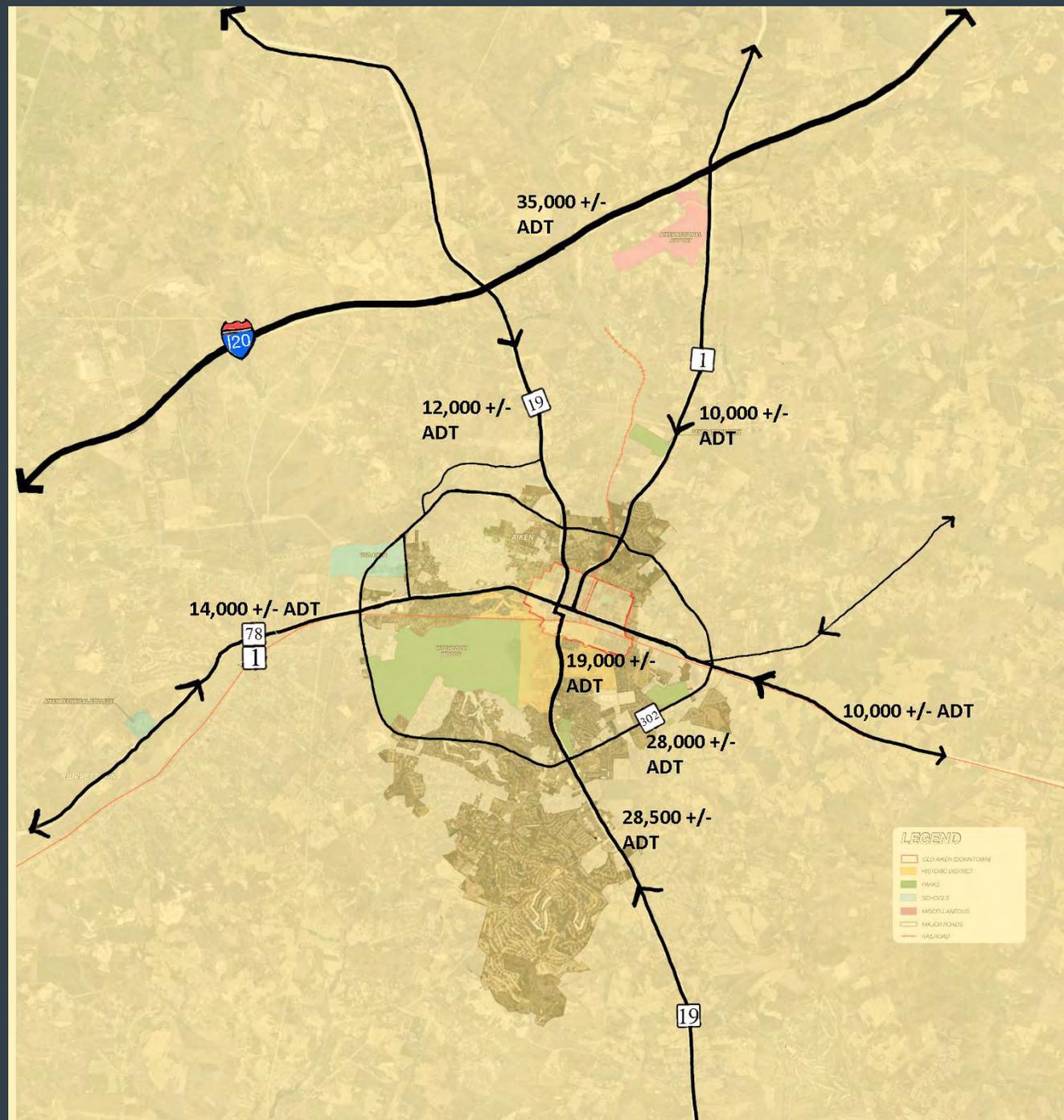
Mixed-Use Development

- Grocery Store
- Apartments / Townhomes



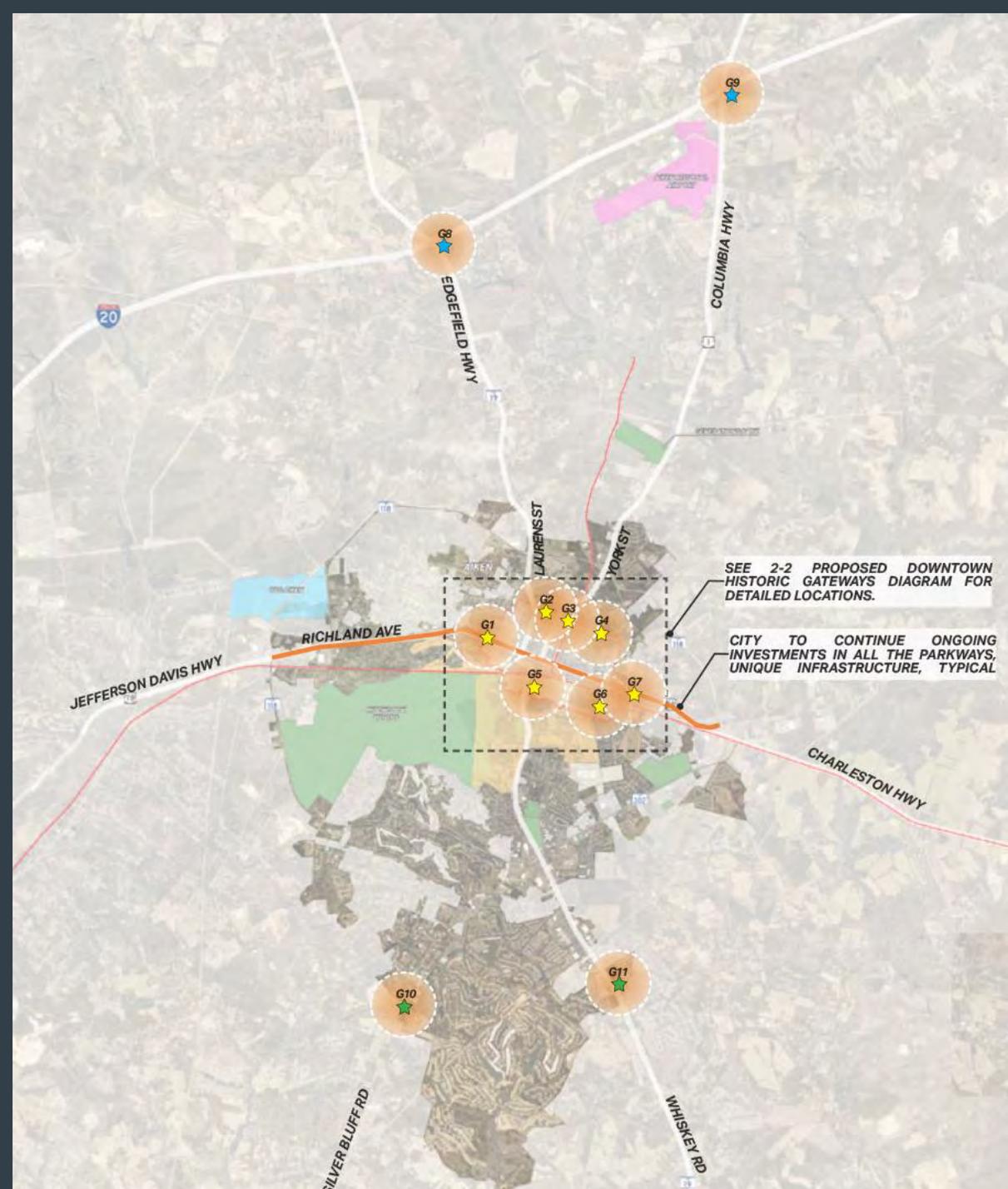
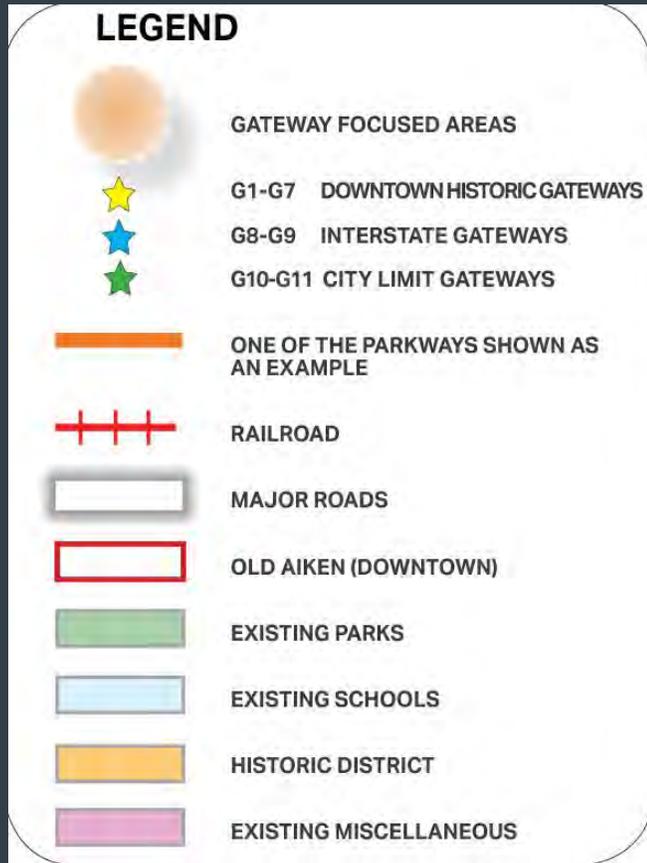
The Land and Place

Transportation Network



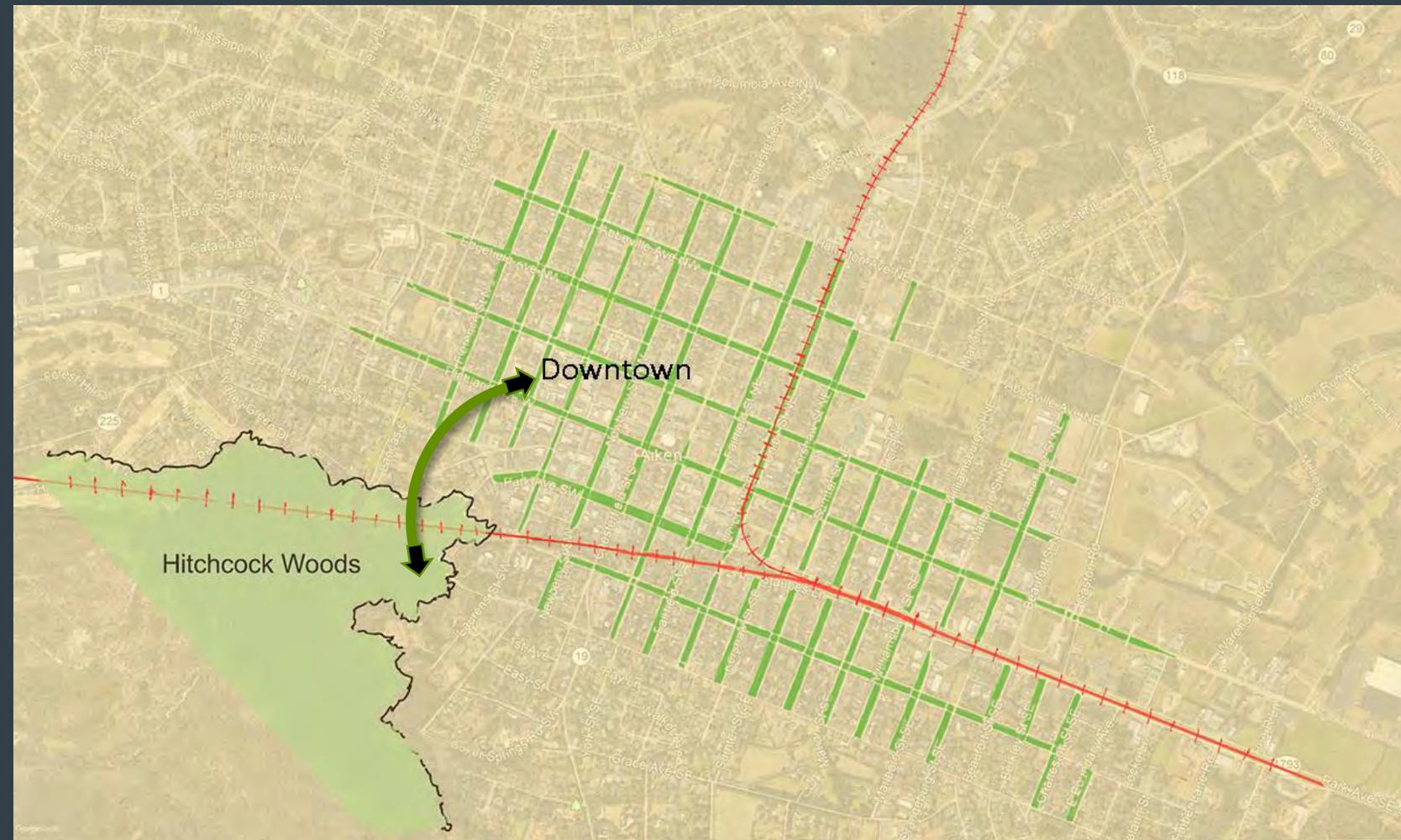
The Land and Place

Gateways

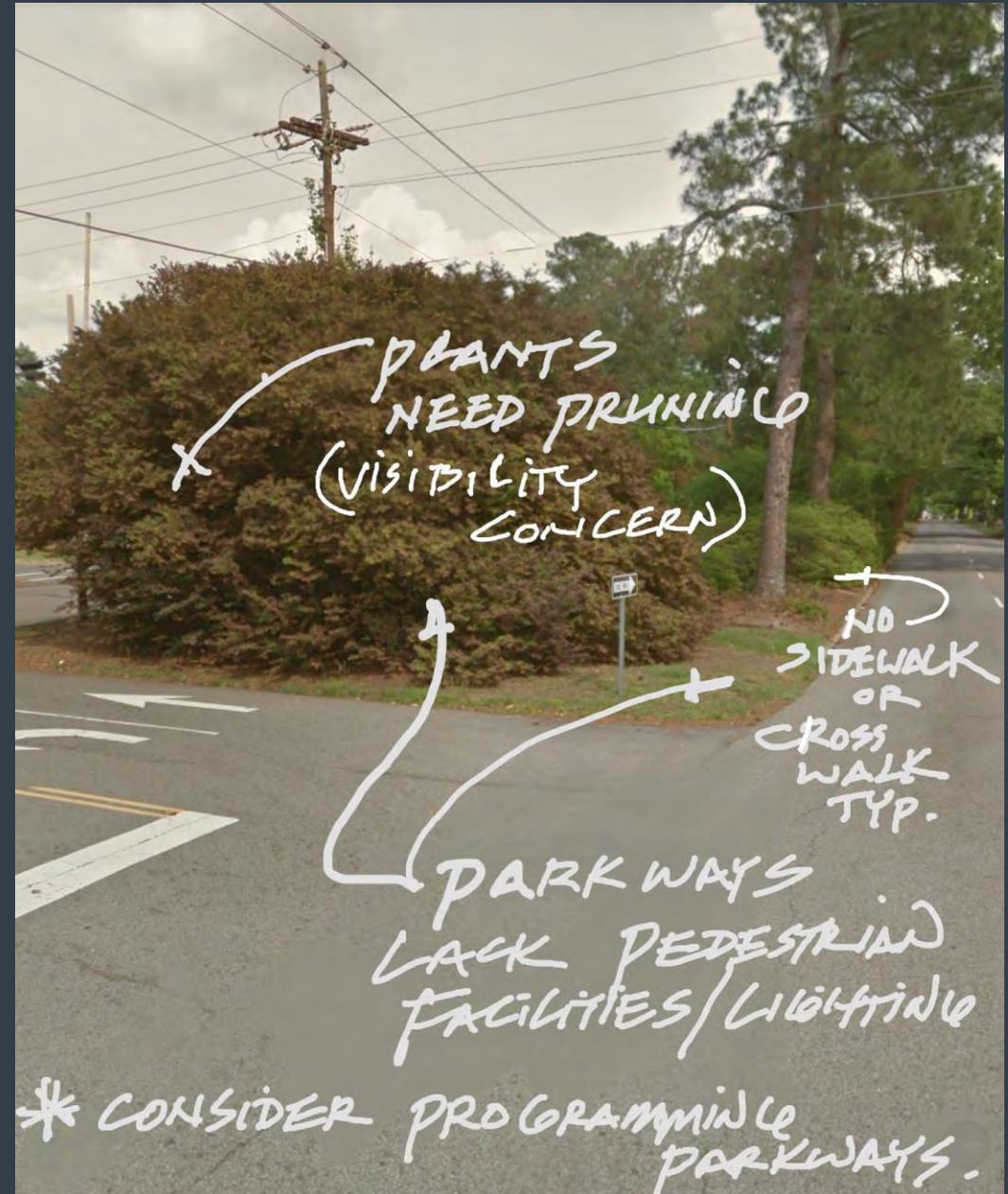
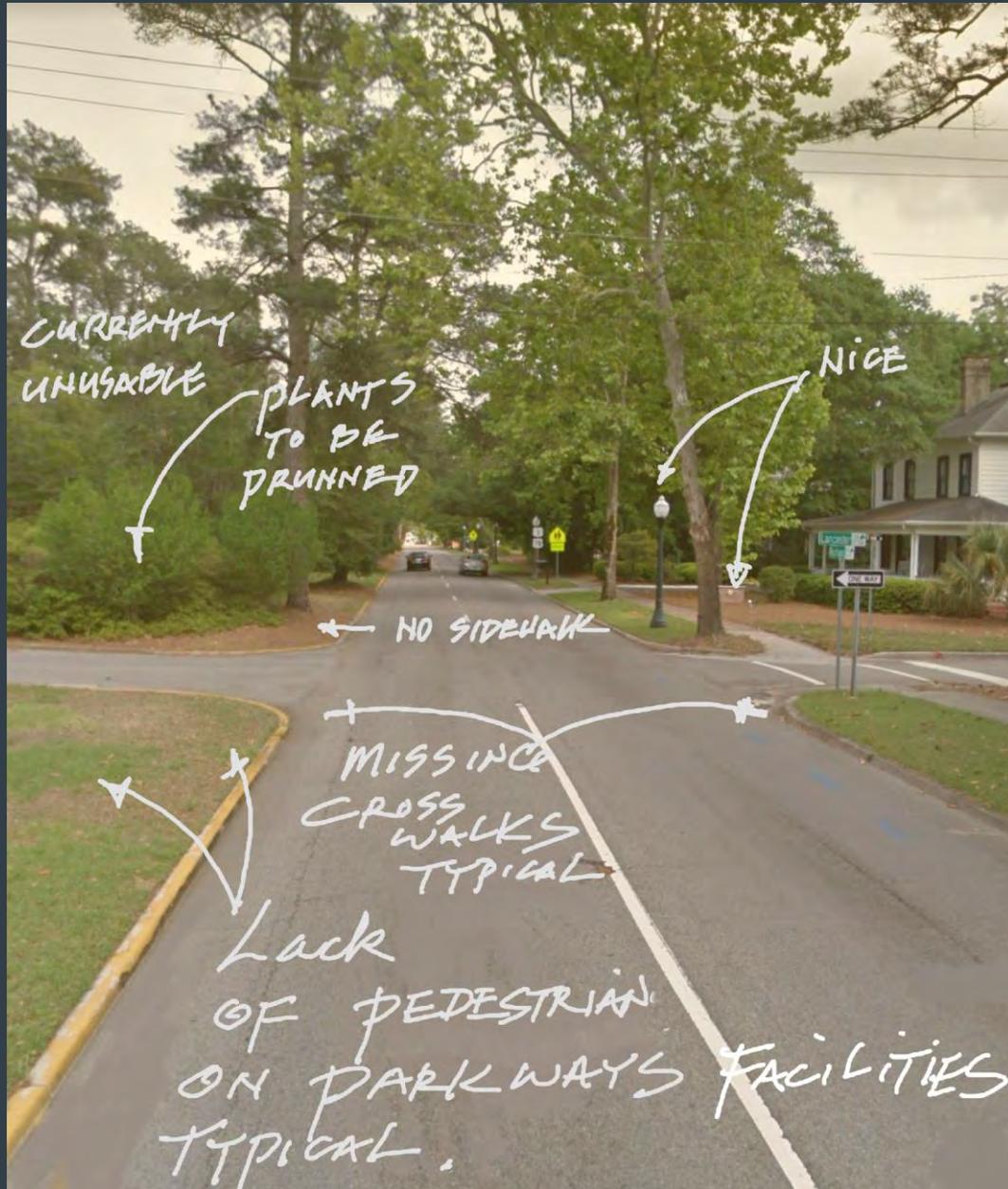


Aiken's Parkways and Natural Areas

- 106 acres +/- of Open Space in Downtown
- 11,000+/- trees in the parkways
- 2,100 acre natural area close to downtown core



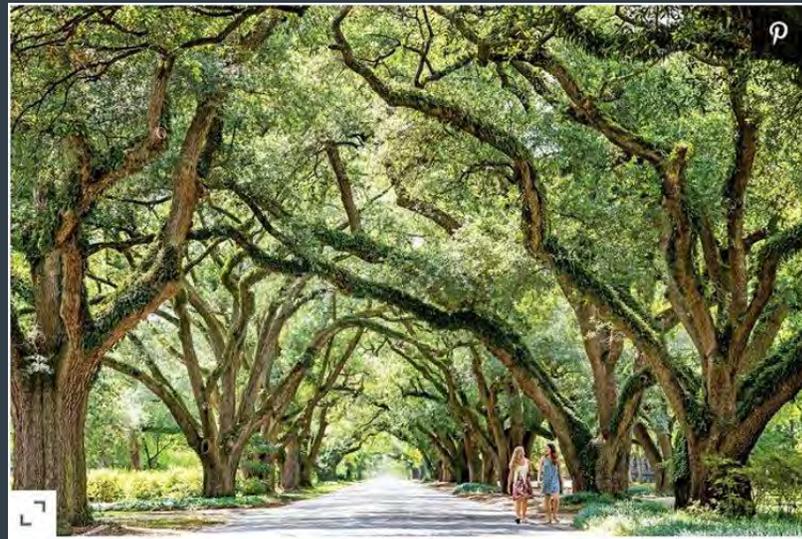
Aiken's Parkways - Improvements



Aiken's Safe and Active Transportation Facilities



Aiken's Parkways



Aiken's Parkways



AFTER-NIGHT

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Next Steps

1. Deliver Final report with Recommendations and Next Steps
2. Summary of planning process, major findings and observations
3. Case studies / examples of successful tactics and strategies
4. Review by City Economic Development



Economic Development Action Plan

Aiken, South Carolina

Thank you

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