

IMAGINE SOCIAL CIRCLE- VISION 2040
DOWNTOWN FOCUS
PUBLIC-DDA-MAIN STREET-DOWNTOWN BUSINESS& PROPERTY OWNERS
FEBRUARY 9, 2017 11 AM
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Vision for the future of downtown Social Circle:

- Everything accessible
- Well-lit parking
- Vibrant
- Friendly
- Historic
- Full buildings
- Quaint and charming
- Walkable
- Safe
- Welcoming
- Trees and shade
- Family friendly
- Historic preservation
- Destination
- Tasteful
- Bustling around the clock
- Connected
- Colorful and pretty
- Environmentally friendly
- Gathering place
- Community
- Diverse
- Restaurants
- Shopping retail
- Self sufficient
- Entertainment
- Live, work, play
- Festival/events
- Activity

Downtown strengths:

- Business promotion
- Beautiful
- There is not another Social Circle, we are the only one that pops up when you search
- New business momentum
- Gateway to Monroe and Athens
- City owns the streets which makes it easier to make improvements
- Authentic, real downtown
- Not too congested
- Housing close to downtown
- Have done a good job with family activities and getting people downtown

- Volunteers
- Historic preservation
 - Homes and buildings
- School system
 - Brings people to community
- Police and fire, public safety
- Location
 - I-20
 - State park
 - Colleges
 - Golf courses
- City Hall
- Churches
- Transportation
- Ace hardware
- Climate for outdoor activities
- Blue Willow
- Visitors center
- Corporate and industry partners
- Historic cemetery
- Social Circle theater nearby
- Great businesses and restaurant downtown

Downtown weaknesses:

- Empty store fronts
- Absentee owners
- Building maintenance and upkeep
- Old infrastructure
- Backing out in traffic is sometimes hard
- Big trucks
- No central green or square for activities
- Buildings are too large for smaller businesses
- Make sure we get right mix of business that are a good fit for climate we want
- Lack of event space
- No sign or marquee to advertise and promote downtown and events
 - The banners currently used have some positives and generate excitement
- Lack of restaurant ready buildings
 - Kitchens
 - Or for other business
- No lofts or downtown lodging
 - Existing buildings do not have much space
- No lodging
 - Inn, hotel, B&B
- Outdated ordinances
 - Which ones?
- Lack of things for young professionals
 - It's a balance

Opportunities downtown:

- The mill
- Utilize access to local colleges
 - See Dahlonega
- Outlet for artists in community
- We have buildings to put business in
- College and downtown transit
- Local history in museum with revolving collections
 - Currently being worked on
- Art, history or business promotion in vacant store fronts
- Need entertainment options
- Making it easier to open business permission
- Bootlegging, craft beer, etc
- Use the back of stores for additional business locations
- Wi-Fi
- Historic buildings around depot
- Cotton mill
- Grow amenities – like it was in its prime
- Film/video, promote previous filming
- Train depot
 - Train cars as lodging
- Tiny houses and tiny business village
- Farmers market
 - Farm to table
- Better connection to housing
- Town square / gathering place
- Small towns are cool again

Threats or obstacles in downtown

- Some people fear or don't want change
 - Uncontrolled change
- Incomplete projects, things not finished
- Highway 11 bridge reconstruction, South Cherokee street
 - Don't lose traffic
- Conflicting ordinances
- Cost of improvements
- Change in leadership could change direction
- Absentee owners have no interest in improvement
- Lack of parking
 - Too few spaces
 - People don't know where it is

Where do we start?

- Is rent at market rates?
- Address empty buildings and how to fix
- Review and amend permitting and ordinances
- Continue to improve visitors' center
 - Place to start for home or business

- City strategic plan must include the outcome of the downtown planning effort
- Grants
- Engage more of the community
- Infrastructure update plan, Sewer, water, road, and sidewalks
- Design standards
- Festival and event space
- More City Council involvement, others need to get involved
- Engage public for input
- Systems updated
 - Buildings and sewer
- Address the negative, tell the story
 - Suggestion box
- Develop the people to open businesses
 - Support and promote local entrepreneurs
 - Find them
- Empty store fronts
 - Incentives
- Grow events, big or small
 - Monthly to draw people downtown
- Local loan pool or evolving loan fund
 - Work with community banks

What other communities should Social Circle look at for ideas

- Madison
- Monroe
- Covington and Porterdale
- Rutledge
- Suwanee