

**DOWNTOWN MCDONOUGH**  
**URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**City Hall  
135 Keys Ferry Street  
McDonough, GA 30253**

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2013**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The redevelopment of areas within the City of McDonough provides an exciting opportunity to enhance the livability, economic opportunity, and overall vitality of the city's traditional downtown and surrounding distressed neighborhoods. This document sets forth a program, or general plan of urban renewal completed by City staff, as authorized by resolution of the Mayor and City Council, adopted May, 2013, a copy of which is attached hereto as Appendix "A".

This Redevelopment Program has three primary objectives: (a) to define and establish the boundaries of an urban redevelopment district in which the City or its designated agencies may exercise powers under the Georgia Urban Redevelopment Law, O.C.G.A. Title 36, Chapter 61 and (b) to structure a comprehensive approach to successful redevelopment that is (i) consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan 2024, and (ii) that facilitates the future creation local and state incentives, and renders the urban redevelopment district eligible for attracting available grant/loan funding; and (c) to encourage and promote the voluntary redevelopment or rehabilitation of the area by private owners or private enterprise to the maximum extent possible.

## **LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND**

The Urban Redevelopment Act was adopted in 1955 and has been revised several times since its inception. By adopting a Redevelopment Plan, a community can use the statutory powers contained therein to improve public services and infrastructure, encourage private investment, and eliminate the underlying conditions that generate slum

and blight. Elected officials are the only bodies authorized to establish Urban Redevelopment Areas. The Urban Redevelopment Act defines a “slum area” as:

*an area which by reason of the presence of a substantial number of slum, deteriorated, or deteriorating structures; predominance of defective or inadequate street layout; faulty lot layout in relation to size, adequacy, accessibility, or usefulness; unsanitary or unsafe conditions; deterioration of site or other improvements; tax or special assessment delinquency exceeding the fair value of the land; the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes; by having development impaired by airport or transportation noise or by other environmental hazards; or any combination of such factors substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of a Governmental Entity, retards the provisions of housing accommodations, or constitutes an economic or social liability and is a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare in its present condition and use.*

The Urban Redevelopment Act determined that slum areas:

- *Contribute substantially and increasingly to the spread of disease and crime;*
- *Constitutes an economic and social liability;*
- *Substantially impairs or arrests the sound growth of municipalities and counties;*
- *Retards the provision of housing accommodations; or*
- *Aggravates traffic problems, and substantially impairs or arrests the elimination of traffic hazards and the improvement of traffic facilities;*
- *Are local centers of disease;*

- *Promote juvenile delinquency;*
- *Contribute little to the tax income of the state and its municipalities and counties, consume an excessive proportion of its revenues because of the extra services required for police, fire, accident, hospitalization, and other forms of public protection, services, and facilities.*

All of the above conditions are not required to utilize the powers of the Urban Redevelopment Act. Any number of combinations of these conditions is adequate to establish sufficient evidence to support creating an urban redevelopment area.

### **EXISTENCE OF THE PLAN**

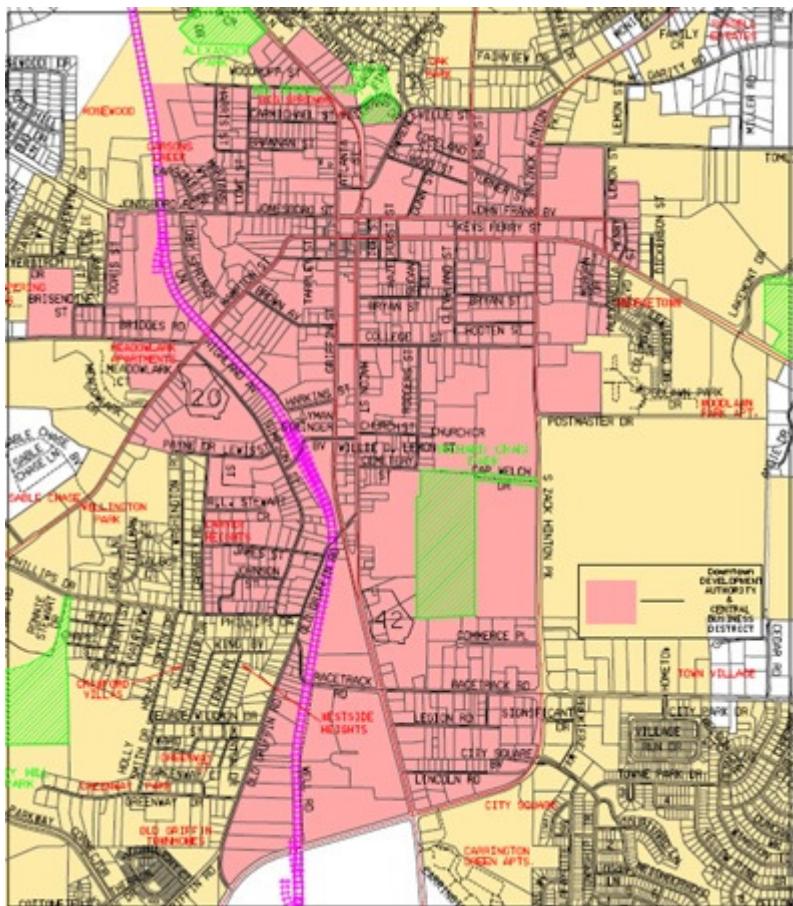
This McDonough Downtown Urban Redevelopment Plan Shall Constitute an Urban Redevelopment Plan of the City of McDonough, Georgia (the “City” or the “City of McDonough”), within the meaning of Chapter 61 Title 36 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated entitled the “Urban Redevelopment Law”, as Amended (The “Urban Redevelopment Law”).

### **PLAN CONSISTENCY**

This Downtown McDonough Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the general plan for the City as a whole, known as the “Henry County/Cities Joint 2030 Comprehensive Plan.”

## **DISTRICT DESIGNATION**

In order to approve an Urban Redevelopment Plan, the governing body, by resolution, must first determine the boundaries of such district to constitute a “slum area”, as defined by O.C.G.A. §36-61-2 (18), and designate such area as appropriate for an urban development project or projects (the “district”). The boundaries are set to include boundary for the McDonough Downtown Development Authority as illustrated in the following map:



The boundary of the McDonough Downtown Development Authority shown above is a logical choice for the city's first redevelopment area. Years of disinvestment has left Downtown McDonough a shell of its former self. After diligent study of this area by

qualified urban planners, economic development specialists, and city staff, and building upon the findings and conclusions of related studies, such as the Livable Centers Initiative conducted on behalf of the Atlanta Regional Commission (including studies of the existing residential, retail and office market, and related parking inventory) the Commission finds the area designated meets the criteria of a “slum area”, as defined by statute.

## **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### *BUILDING OCCUPANCY*

A good portion of downtown buildings are occupied. Along many streets, however, there are significant or high-profile buildings that are vacant or underutilized. Many uses close to the Square in areas with good pedestrian access – and thus good for retail shopping – are automobile centric uses taken up by services supporting courthouse functions, such as probation and legal services. There are few true mixed-use buildings due to the predominance of building types without useable extra floors. But those buildings that do feature second and third floors do not include residential space or complimentary uses that would make the buildings much more valuable. It should be noted that just because a significant amount of downtown structures are occupied does not mean that the uses within such structures automatically contribute positively to the health and vitality of Downtown McDonough.

## *TRANSPORTATION*

McDonough's downtown is a historic square surrounded by four major highways, with Atlanta Street/SR 42 to the north and Highway 81/SR 155/SR 20 on the east, Griffin Street/Macon Street/SR 42 to the south, and Jonesboro Street/ Highway 81/SR 20 on the west. Most travel in McDonough must pass through the square for residents, workers, commuters, and visitors to reach homes, jobs, schools, shopping, or the interstate. This creates major traffic congestion in the downtown area, particularly during peak hours.

## *BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES*

The redevelopment area consists of older commercial structures, public facilities such as the courthouse and other government buildings, churches, and single-family and multi-family homes. The government and institutional uses in the redevelopment area, while drivers of activity that bring people to the Square, occupy large tracts of land that do not contribute to the local tax base. Many of the commercial structures, especially those around the Square, are in good repair but there are several prominent buildings in need of renovation or that have deferred maintenance.

## *CURRENT LAND USE*

The current land use is a mix of downtown commercial, highway commercial, public institutional, medium density residential (primarily single-family), and park space.

## *ZONING*

The prominent zoning classification on the Square is C-2 Central Commercial District, “intended to protect and promote suitable areas for business and commercial uses which benefit from proximity to each other, to encourage the eventual elimination of uses inappropriate to a central business area, and to encourage the intensive development of a central business center for the City.” The City’s current zoning ordinance is old and in need of updating. A draft form-based code was created in 2012 from the last LCI update, but no update or modification has resulted. While a form-based code could be beneficial to the central business district, it is not an ideal retrofit to the more suburban development types in close proximity to the Square. The City is contemplating the move to a Unified Development Code (UDC) that would merge all development codes and standards into one document, but the underlying problem of how to update the zoning code still remains.

## *HISTORIC RESOURCES*

The below properties located within the proposed redevelopment area are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There have been attempts to create local historic districts including the commercial district surrounding the McDonough Square and the residential Lawrenceville Street corridor that would have applied greater restrictions on renovations and building types in these areas, but those efforts were unsuccessful. The City does have a Historic Preservation Commission that is tasked with formulating policies and standards to sustain and heighten the character of McDonough’s historic

resources. The HPC will be a critical partner in creating, promoting, and legitimatizing historic guidelines included in updated or new codes in the redevelopment area.

**McDonough Historic District** - Primarily made up of the McDonough Square and surrounding commercial buildings in the downtown core.

**Henry County Courthouse** - Finished in 1897, the Romanesque style courthouse is the dominate structure around the Square. It has been renovated and expanded to include the entire northern quadrant of the Square with adjacent supporting government uses expanding to the north and east.

**Brown House** – Located at 71 Macon Street, the Brown House in McDonough is home to the Henry County Historical Society. Built in 1826, the building was the home of Andrew McBride, a Revolutionary War veteran from South Carolina. After it was expanded in 1874, the home opened as the Brown House Hotel.

**Hooten House** – 115 Atlanta Street is a historic home currently used as an office building.

**Globe Hotel** – 20 Jonesboro Street, also known as Dunn House, was built in 1827. Today it houses the spa Scarlett's Retreat and the offices of KMA Business Solutions.

**Lawrenceville Street Corridor** – Lawrenceville Street roughly between the Henry County Courthouse and State Route 20 is a scenic neighborhood street containing older colonial revival homes.

**Polk Annex** – Corner of John Frank Ward Boulevard and Lawrenceville Street. Former post office building that houses "*Cotton Gin*," a mural created by modernist artist Louis Henri Jean Charlot as part of the recovery process after the Great Depression. The mural is one of 200,000 government commissioned works which were funded under the "*Federal Art Project*" during the Great Depression era. The mural has graced the wall of the Polk Annex since it was installed in 1942. Henry County owns the building and has paid to protect the mural even though the bulk of the structure requires significant remediation and renovation.

Some areas within or adjacent to the historic districts or buildings are open lots that provide opportunities for infill development, with some development already occurring within the study area. An attempt has been made to infill in a manner that is architecturally compatible with adjacent development; however, city codes lack specificity regarding compatible design standards for new construction within the study area. It is possible that the integrity of the area will be compromised in the long term.

#### *PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE*

Sidewalks and attractive streetscapes are in place around the Square but begin to deteriorate or become non-existent the further out from the center of town. There are

several large parks in the area but their connections to residential areas and the Square are not conducive to active use of alternative modes of transportation. The public sewer system is aged but there are upgrade efforts underway. The City is currently financing new sewer replacement in and around the downtown area. Other than the Square proper, exposed electric utility lines encroach upon the existing sidewalk network and are a visual hindrance to pedestrians and motorists. There are major state roads into downtown in various states of disrepair, some of that due to the current sewer rehabilitation project. Because these routes are under the control of GDOT, the City has limited ability to improve these roads on its own. Downtown McDonough caters to the automobile, as underscored by the prevalence of on-street parking and large, off-street lots just off the Square. A 200-car parking deck and a large surface sit one block to the north of the Square and is underutilized. The City has discussed ways to make the walk from the deck to the Square a more pleasant experience to increase its use.

### **FINDINGS OF NECESSITY**

Although the buildings within Downtown are generally in good shape, the number of vacant or partially-occupied buildings around the Square is significant. Vacant or underutilized land is significant throughout the area. Highway strip commercial, large surface parking lots and other suburban building forms have encroached on downtown over years. These developments have significantly deteriorated the overall quality of life in the area, producing an abundance of impervious paved surfaces, a significant deficiency in open space. These developments have been detrimental to encouraging alternative forms of transportation beyond the automobile, discouraging pedestrian and

bicycle mobility from harsh sidewalk conditions and excessive curb cuts. Additionally, the lack of a functioning downtown street grid, paired with the inefficient design of the existing one-way pairs, and the railroad line immediately west of downtown significantly hinders traffic in all directions. Thus, the below Findings of Necessity specifically apply to Downtown McDonough and support the need for the creation of an urban redevelopment plan. They are summarized as:

#### *VISUAL BLIGHT*

While the Square offers a charming example of development types from the historic past, time has caught up with many prominent buildings in the area. Areas off the Square are dominated by large surface parking lots and poorly developed strip commercial uses adjacent to residential structures converted to office uses, which created a disjointed and unpredictable pedestrian experience. There are deteriorated or inadequate sidewalks, excessive curb cuts, and exposed and distracting electric utility lines. Every street around the Square is a high-volume state route full of large truck traffic that often blocks pedestrian views of the architecture and charm they come to experience on the Square. Strip and highway commercial uses just to the east of the Square stand in stark contrast to the thoughtful development that created a park in the center of town.

#### *LOWER RENTS*

The Downtown area has exhibited lower rental rates for commercial properties than highway commercial or strip centers in other areas of the City. According to the 2012 LCI market study, Downtown McDonough properties average between \$5 and \$8 per

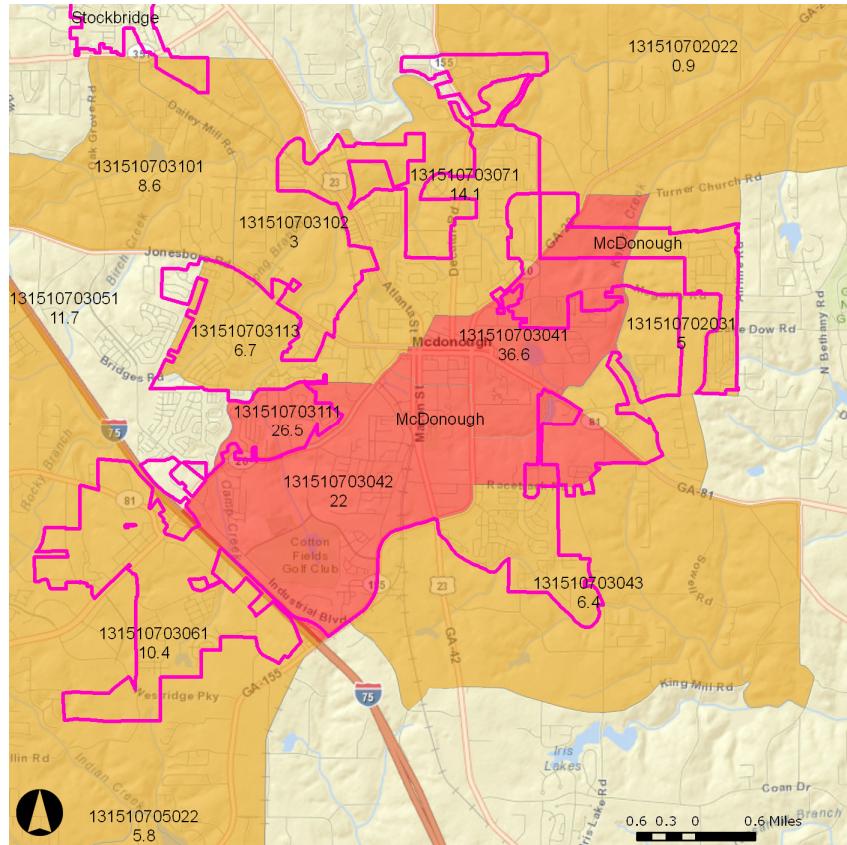
square foot while other areas average \$8 to \$13 per square foot. This means that comparable businesses Downtown have to work harder at generating sales to justify rent payments, all while dealing with greater real difficulties in attracting customers to the Square due to real or perceived issues with traffic, parking, and pedestrian access.

### *OBSOLESCENT BUILDINGS*

Several important buildings in downtown are functionally obsolete and require major physical upgrades to return them to productive use. Among the notable examples are Clay Plaza, the Polk Annex, and 32 Jonesboro Street (formerly known as the Truman House). These buildings are crucial to downtown's integrity and identity, but in their layout or condition are liabilities to private sector investment.

### *POVERTY THRESHOLD*

According to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the entire area is within an economically “less developed area” that contains two or more census block groups with 20% or greater poverty or are adjacent to census block groups with 15% or greater poverty. An illustration of this is below:



### *SUBSTANDARD INFRASTRUCTURE*

Substandard infrastructure conditions are the norm beyond the core area one block from all sides of the Square. These conditions include sidewalks in poor repair, lack of street trees, lack of pedestrian lighting, lack of crosswalks, lack of adequate public open space, and absence of directional signage.

### *GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS*

The majority of the redevelopment area is not conducive to private sector investment in major housing and retail developments, especially due to the depressed economic conditions of downtown and the widespread lack of quality-of-life enhancements. Irregular lot and block configurations, banked-owned properties, and those with unclear

title or unknown environmental issues also present too high a threshold for near-term private investment. In general, the downtown market is limping along, even though portions have been revitalized and have overcome the difficulties listed above.

## **REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### *CATALYST PROJECTS*

Many of these projects have been discussed for years and were labeled “catalyst projects” in earlier planning documents. Their delay can be contributed in part to the economic downturn of the last five years. Some projects are in-progress or have financial commitments made to them, and their completion will in all likelihood trigger additional revitalization and adjacent private sector investment. These projects are financially enhanced by the related public improvements projects discussed in the subsequent narrative. While it is intended that most, if not all, of the below projects be developed without the use of significant official urban redevelopment powers, they should nonetheless be considered as eligible official urban redevelopment projects.

**Infill Housing** – The LCI and Market Study recommend pursuing strategies that increase the number of residents living close to the Square. The first new infill project is on College Street at the intersection of Cleveland Street, which will include 21 single family homes marketed to those over 55 years of age. There are other opportunities for housing outside the Square, including the possibility of

townhome or small mixed-use properties on Atlanta Street, Jonesboro Street, Keys Ferry Street, John Frank Ward Boulevard, Macon Street, and Griffin Street.

**Clay Plaza** – The old theater sits on the corner of Macon Street and John Frank Ward Boulevard and has been converted to hold various retail shops. The idea of renovating the property back to its traditional use is a high priority. However, to renovate this property in accordance with historic preservation guidelines and to make it a premier cultural facility and area draw will be very expensive. Local theater and arts groups have expressed interest in using such a facility and preliminary talks have begun with the private sector on creating a music and events venue here.

**32 Jonesboro Street** – This city-owned property was once a restaurant and is in a state of disrepair. The property should be transferred to the Downtown Development Authority for renovation and then offered for sale or lease to private enterprise.

**88 Keys Ferry Street** – This location currently houses the police department, who will vacate the premises once their renovated building is complete at 50 Lawrenceville Street. This property should be readied and leased to a private business and the proceeds earmarked to fund Downtown Development Authority programs.

**Stringer Lumber Yard** – The old lumber yard sits vacant adjacent to the railroad tracks southwest of downtown. The site is bank-owned. The site contains various industrial buildings and has potential for an artist enclave similar to the Goat Farm in Atlanta, or as a location for a film production studio.

#### *PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS*

Public projects include transportation enhancements, public utility upgrades, and critical public facility improvements that will increase the quality of life for citizens, property owners, visitors, and businesses.

**Big Springs Park** – An existing small and underutilized park space just north of downtown is in the process of being reworked. The new park will be more passive in nature and feature a naturally designed storm water retention area with a walking path.

**Alexander Park** – A large park northwest of downtown featuring ball fields, pavilions, playground, and passive space. Expansion plans have been designed and improvements funding are proposed to come from the forthcoming SPLOST vote.

**Atlanta Street Improvements** – Part of an LCI Implementation Grant, improvements on Atlanta Street from Alexander Park south to Griffin

Street/Jonesboro Street will include pedestrian and streetscape enhancements, including a multi-purpose/cycling trail.

**One-Way Pair Reconfiguration** – The existing one-way travel lane configuration around the Square is inefficient and leads to daily traffic backups. Plans to create a new transition point on the eastern and western boundaries of the central business district have been approved and GDOT has acquired right-of-way. There is an effort underway to modify those plans in the hopes of creating a smaller overall construction impact on adjacent neighborhoods while still alleviating traffic congestion.

**Police Headquarters** – The police department is currently awaiting the renovation of 50 Lawrenceville Street as their new headquarters. This moves the police department closer to the existing government facilities, including the Henry County Courthouse, Henry County Judicial Center, and supporting parking facilities. This project is being managed in conjunction with the construction of a new municipal court complex.

**New Municipal Court Complex** – This is phase two of the above referenced project and located at 40 Lawrenceville Street behind the Henry County Courthouse. The site is under the control of the City and financing for construction is still under review.

**Old Municipal Court Building** – The current municipal court operates in an old church building on Macon Street. Once the new court facility is completed the church building is planned to be repurposed into a community center possibly utilizing funds from the 2013 SPLOST campaign.

**McDonough Cemetery** – Across the street from the current municipal court facility is the City's cemetery. The peaceful setting is a historic asset for the community and has drawn recent attention from film productions. There is opportunity to improve the design and surroundings of the existing cemetery to act as a gateway into the downtown area, as well as increase the capacity of the cemetery property to include new grave sites and mausoleum space which could bring the City increased revenue.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

### *ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES*

It will take the collaboration of many partners to create and then maintain momentum if significant redevelopment is to occur. Below is a list of the most critical organizations and their likely involvement:

**City of McDonough** – The Mayor & Council shall serve as the Urban Redevelopment Agency for this Urban Redevelopment Plan. While the boundary of the redevelopment area closely resembles the downtown development authority

district, other redevelopment areas will likely be created in other parts of the City that would not be under the direction of the DDA. City departments – Administration, Community Development, Finance, Public Works, and Business Development – will be crucial partners in the implementation of the urban redevelopment plan goals.

**Downtown Development Authority** – The DDA, with coordination from the City's Business Development Department, will take the lead on all projects and proposals resulting from this plan. The DDA is currently being reconstituted and will have a new board appointed in Fall 2013.

**McDonough Main Street Program** – The Main Street Program is also run under the Business Development Department and will have important input on how this plan is related to the public and business and property owners.

**McDonough Hospitality and Tourism Board** – The MH&T Board is a separate entity created to promote McDonough as a tourism destination. The Board is under contract with the City to use Hotel/Motel tax revenue on a variety of events and advertisements to increase visits from travelers.

**Greater McDonough Merchant Association** – Usually known simply as the Merchants Association, this organization is comprised of business owners in the Downtown McDonough area. The Merchants have an enormous stake in the

future success of Downtown and this plan. Their support and input has been extremely important through years of studies and their ingenuity and resilience is the main reason why Downtown McDonough continues as a hub of activity despite the forces aligned against them.

**McDonough Arts Council** – The MAC is a non-profit corporation whose mission is “to create and sustain an artistic ambience in historic McDonough, providing a dynamic showcase for the arts and multi-cultural expressions of the people, enhancing the economic base and livability of the community.” McDonough Arts hosts events throughout the year, including the Art in the Park series, juried art shows and more. Many of the initiatives to bring customers and visitors to the Square center on the arts, and the creative ideas from this group will be important in gaining support for projects.

**Henry County Chamber of Commerce** – The Chamber works to enhance the business community in the region and collaboration with this group will heighten the awareness of initiatives and help with community buy-in on catalyst projects.

#### *IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS*

Timely implementation depends on a variety of tools strategically applied as needed to address different project circumstances. *Redevelopment Powers* can provide the basis for aggressive public efforts for code enforcement, policing, and acquisition efforts, if necessary. They can also provide the ability to pursue financing mechanisms, such as tax-

exempt bonds. *Land Control* is one of the most valuable tools for redevelopment. Public control of property can be the stimulus that gets a stubborn project started that otherwise would be ignored by the private sector. *Federal and State Funding* can provide the final margin on projects that are close to a financial break-even point, or can justify the expenditure of local government funds on expensive public projects. LCI implementation funds have been won on transportation projects that should provide a boost to adjacent catalyst projects. *Financial Incentives* include a variety of local and state assistance, tax breaks and other economic credits, including for historic preservation, that can be targeted to projects. The creation of a Tax Allocation District (TAD) that would create local funds for feasible public/private projects is also an option, but would require further planning efforts. The following tools that fit in the above categories will be used in the Downtown McDonough Urban Redevelopment Plan:

**The Revitalization Area Strategies (RAS)** - A designation that provides incentives to communities who implement comprehensive redevelopment activities for targeted areas in their city or county. A local government with a RAS designation may receive bonus points on its annual CDBG application and the ability to apply annually for CDBG funds for three years, provided that all DCA timeliness criteria are met.

### **Code Enforcement/Inspections/Planning**

To eliminate existing deteriorated and dilapidated buildings and structures intended for human occupancy, including substandard housing within the proposed district, and to prevent the development and spread of new slum areas,

staff recommends identification and classification of structures within the redevelopment area. Such a program will allow the City to better enforce minimum construction codes, health and life safety codes, zoning and housing ordinances, and the unfit buildings and structures abatement ordinance. The goal of this program is to provide incentive to private property owners to repair, renovate, rehabilitate and maintain properties within the district.

**Downtown Development Authority** - DDAs can act like a private developer. They can issue bonds that do not count against the City's bond ceiling. The City can transfer non-essential property to the DDA to use as leverage for development, to lease, or to sell.

**Site and Building Location Assistance** - The DDA and Main Street will maintain a complete inventory of all properties and owners in the downtown district. It is often difficult to determine the disposition of a space just by an empty storefront or building, and many times buildings are sold or leased without being available to the open market. Maintaining a list of potential tenants, purchasers, as well as unavailable buildings is helpful in locating a suitable property for a new or expanding business.

**Design Assistance Program** – Through a partnership with the University of Georgia's School of Design and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, downtown property or business owners may request design assistance through the Main Street Program. A detailed rendering will be produced at a low cost (typically under \$150) and will include suggestions for materials and colors.

**Facade Grant Program** – Grants are available from the Main Street Program for the renovation of exterior facades. Funds can be used for renovations performed on either the front or rear exterior façade. The Main Street Board is in the process of simplifying the application process and reworking the amounts available per property.

**Revenue Bonds** - Financing instruments issued through downtown development authorities. Both taxable and tax-exempt revenue bond financing is available at competitive, below-prime interest rates and provide financing for land, building and equipment acquisition for new and expanding industry.

**Loan Assistance** – The McDonough Downtown Development Authority can provide assistance in accessing loan programs through the Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Downtown Association, and other entities.

**SPLOST Funds** – Several projects impacting the downtown area are on the ballot for the upcoming Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum, including an arts/community facility, transportation projects, and park improvements. If approved, these projects will have a

**Hotel/Motel Tax Revenues** – The Hotel/Motel Tax rate was just increased from 5% to 8%. The extra 3% is split between the City and the McDonough Hospitality and Tourism Board. The City can use its split to fund “tourism product development efforts,” some of which could align nicely with downtown catalyst projects.

**Regulatory Assistance** – The requirements for starting a new business, rehabilitating a building, or just installing a sign can often be overwhelming. Business Development staff will lead prospects through new business certification, historic preservation requirements, alcohol permits, zoning approvals, building permits, health department permits, etc. Directions, scheduling, negotiating, and research for alternate materials and methods are also examples of services that can be offered.

**Tax Allocation Districts.** To authorize TAD financing, the City would be required to perform more planning tasks under O.C.G.A. 36-44. Several jurisdictions in Georgia have created TADs to fund infrastructure projects that facilitate private investment, however the efficacy of using this vehicle in an environment of volatile land values is undetermined. With some property values on the rise, there may be less “increment” to tap and thus less margin available to pay off long-term debt.

**Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)** – A program where a developer pays a fee to the DDA or city instead of taxes. A DDA would own a project, which the developer developed as a fee developer and leases back from the DDA to operate. This may be a lower priority incentive in the short term, but could be used in a large project in the future.

**Opportunity Zones** – A state program that requires “slum & blight” finding in this URP to activate, but that can be lucrative for attracting business. The benefit

to businesses is a greater break on state employee taxes and a lower hiring threshold to achieve those tax credits.

**Enterprise Zones** – A local program that allows for selective property tax abatement for certain types of development. The tax abatement would begin at 100% and then decline over a period of years, restoring full taxation once a project is fully rooted in the marketplace.

**CID/BID** – A community or business improvement district uses extra property tax assessed in a given geographic area to fund public improvements and initiatives. The taxing authority would be granted through the DDA but only after a majority of property owners agree to its creation.

## **ACTION PLAN**

### ***PHASING PLAN***

Plan phasing is not prescribed here because of the uncertainty of the market and because many tasks were already prioritized in the LCI 5-year implementation plan. This document will defer to previous schedules, although the approval or denial of the next SPLOST program could alter certain public catalyst projects. Even with flexible phasing, it is essential that at least some redevelopment and public space projects be completed in the near term to build momentum. Ideally, projects that are predicated on publicly-controlled land (32 Jonesboro Street, 88 Keys Ferry Street, municipal court, cemetery) be

given the highest implementation priority, to take full advantage of their transformative effect.

### *PROPERTY ACQUISITION PLAN*

By virtue of the State of Georgia enabling urban redevelopment legislation, this Urban Redevelopment Plan serves as a formal instrument for mobilizing proactive urban redevelopment processes, among them the important power of public acquisition of real property to effectuate plan initiatives. However, the use of direct public property acquisition is intended to be minimal, targeted toward public space projects that are essential to realizing the complete vision for downtown. It is fully expected that necessary property acquisition for the majority of redevelopment will be initiated and conducted by private-sector interests and possibly supported by future public resources where justified. Recommended policies and procedures for the responsible use of this power are listed below. The location of possible acquisition sites corresponds to the Redevelopment Opportunities section earlier in this plan.

### *ACQUISITION CRITERIA*

The following conditions represent criteria under which property may be eligible for public acquisition.

- Sites occupied by abandoned, dilapidated structures, which are unsafe and detrimental to the surrounding environment.
- Vacant or underutilized sites that reflect patterns of impaired development, economic disinvestment and/or detrimental site uses. Sites classified as vacant or

underutilized include those with vacant structures; sites without permanent building improvements; sites used for open storage; or sites with other non-intensive uses such as surface parking lots.

- Properties required for implementing critically-needed public buildings; parks and plazas; and traffic/pedestrian circulation and infrastructure improvements.
- Obsolete or underutilized commercial or industrial sites which contribute to traffic, land use, and environmental impacts on surrounding areas and which offer opportunities for more appropriate uses.
- Sites exhibiting severe and persistent tax delinquencies, overdue utility bills or excessive property liens.
- Sites and structures of significant historical, cultural, or architectural distinction which reflect conditions of physical deterioration, vacancy or underutilization, or inappropriate uses (i.e., conditions which can be remedied through high-priority preservation and adaptive reuse programs).
- Substandard or deteriorated structures that are candidates for cost-effective rehabilitation through acquisition and reinvestment by alternative owners.
- Sites that fail to comply with the Future Land Use Plan or represent a significant physical deterrent to developing a larger, critical-mass project.

#### *GUIDELINES FOR ACQUISITION*

As a matter of policy, this Urban Redevelopment Plan calls for careful control of local government costs and risks associated with front-end property acquisition and initiation of project development. A key strategy will be to involve the sharing of front-end land

assembly and project initiation responsibilities with pre-qualified private redevelopment teams approved by the City and/or the primary URP implementing entity. Increased participation by current property owners, community organizations, private investors, and business operators during the initial stages of redevelopment can provide a greater stake for the community and improve social responsibility for redevelopment outcomes. At the same time, publicly-financed redevelopment front-end costs will be reduced along with fewer short-term losses of tax revenues during acquisition, relocation, and site preparation phases.

The policy of shared responsibility for acquisition and project initiation grants the City the authority to control future site reuses and design qualities within targeted redevelopment sites as outlined in this Urban Redevelopment Plan. The City retains the power to coordinate the provision of appropriate economic incentives for redevelopers and tenants, regardless of how the property is assembled. This policy also calls for the City to act as the land acquisition and disposition agency of last resort, where essential property redevelopment cannot occur through other parties. All property acquisition activities conducted by the City should directly correspond to community priorities and be reviewed by appropriate community organizations at all times.

#### *PROPERTY DISPOSITION PLAN*

Like the Acquisition Plan, the concept of official urban redevelopment disposition is intended to be minimal, though all projects referenced within this plan shall be eligible for public acquisition and disposition as enabled by authority of the State of Georgia urban redevelopment legislation. The disposition of publicly-acquired property and the

provision of redevelopment rights are subject to requirements of Georgia's redevelopment statutes under which this plan is enabled; policy and procedural guidelines for the conduct of property disposition and controls will be formulated and administered by the City and/or the designated implementation entity. Such policies and procedures must be directed toward protecting the interests of the general public and the Downtown McDonough community as well as encouraging and promoting high-quality private development through a variety of coordinated incentives. The goals of the property disposition process are to influence desirable land use and development changes; preserve and adaptively reuse historic structures; provide open space and other public amenities; deliver economic opportunity and housing benefits for the community; capture fiscal benefits for taxpayers; and assure design excellence in all rehabilitation and construction activity.

#### *RELOCATION*

The boundaries of this redevelopment area were chosen to avoid existing residential areas wherever possible, and therefore residential relocation is anticipated to be minimal, if at all. However, redevelopment projects may arise that could require the relocation of existing commercial uses to achieve the goals of the plan in terms of development density and land use. As discussed above in the acquisition and disposition plans, it is desired that all necessary property acquisition or assemblage to implement the plan can be accomplished through private market forces with official urban redevelopment powers used only as a supplemental effort. Any publicly-assisted property acquisition of an occupied structure will require the obligation to provide all necessary and due relocation

assistance. In this regard, the City of McDonough certifies it will follow a residential anti-displacement and relocation assistance plan in accordance with the Georgia Relocation Act and the Federal Uniform Relocation Act of 1973. Any resident displaced during the construction/reconstruction process of the redevelopment plan will be properly and reasonably assisted with financial needs in order to be housed in appropriate apartment or rental house space. Costs concerning moving and storage will be reasonably accommodated. While residents are free to re-locate to areas of their choosing, the City of McDonough will endeavor to assist them in locating housing that is convenient to current needs, such as health care, jobs and grocery stores. Ultimately, new housing will be constructed within the district to accommodate those persons who may be displaced or inconvenienced during redevelopment. The City of McDonough intends to encourage the voluntary redevelopment or rehabilitation of residential structures in the area by private owners or private enterprise as much as possible.

#### ***REGULATORY FRAMEWORK***

The regulatory changes recommended by the LCI and other studies referenced herein are likewise advocated by this plan, and consists of adopting a new Downtown Code and Complete Streets policy; adopting new Form-Based Code and a related sign code; creating Unified Development Code incorporating zoning, signage, development standards; and establishing downtown design standards either by overlay or text amendment. An additional regulatory change is the establishment of a local historic district which could unite with the provisions of future design standards and coordinate with the Historic Preservation Commission. Both the design guidelines and the historic

district have had preliminary work performed and a previous attempt to create a local historic district was not successful; however, gaining public support through collaboration with the DDA, HPC, and downtown business and property owners is worth another attempt. Given the valuable historic resources on which the URP depends, a historic district with strong preservation-based regulatory language could be carved out of the larger redevelopment area, with design guidelines tailored to the nuances of the building inventory. While not regulatory, deed restrictions also provide a way to control the shape of redevelopment in the future. Deed restrictions are voluntary, so their best chance of early application lies in property owned by the city.

## **APPENDIX A**