

Tide to Town Plan



SAVANNAH



TIDE
TO TOWN

Dear Reader,

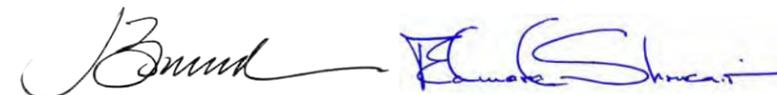
It is with honor and humility that we and our colleagues at Transport Studio present to you the Savannah Tide to Town Plan. From start to finish we have given this project our very best. We have done so because it is what we do in all our work. At the same time, we also understand how very important this project is to the residents of Savannah, especially those individuals and families living in the economically low-wealth communities along the trail.

On a basic level, the plan is meant to provide a framework for moving forward. One that allows for adjustments based on new information and community discussion over time. Above that is laid a fairly detailed blueprint, backed up by examples from other communities, for how to make the vision for the trail and its related positive community growth, a reality.

In preparing the plan, we have drawn on decades of experience as planners and designers of trail systems, along with our urban planning work which has served to preserve and strengthen other communities, towns, and cities.

As we reflect on our experience working on this project, we are keenly aware that it has always been our intention to come to know as many of you and your extraordinary fellow residents, businesses owners, members of organizations, and clubs, and the city's many special places as possible. We wish we could have sat down and talked with even more of you. That said, we submit to you this plan we trust is "of" Savannah. One that provides you with sound thinking and footing as you consider and undertake its recommended steps over the days and years ahead.

Sincerely,



Joe Brevard and Ed Shoucair, Principals
the Collaborative

the COLLABORATIVE

change for good®

transport
STUDIO

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Timeline: Community engagement process and plan preparation: 2024.

Printed 2025

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Importance of Symbols

Symbols are important because they can communicate complex ideas and values often more effectively than words alone.

This is true for the three symbols that communicate the plan’s main themes.

The cover image of people on a trail in front of homes, buildings, and open spaces symbolizes how the trail is intended to be one for everyone, and one that serves to preserve and strengthen the communities it borders.



The second is a montage of a small child’s face superimposed on a neighborhood scene found on page 5. It was created because the child’s face exhibits both hope and concern.



A photograph of the African American Monument on Savannah’s riverfront is included on page 13 because it serves as a reminder of the centuries of contributions made by Savannah’s African American community.



Executive Summary

This is an important plan.

There are two principal reasons why. The plan first recommends revisions to the original route of the Tide to Town Trail urban trail system. The plan's second goal is to create a trail system that benefits the largest number of Savannah residents—especially residents of the city's historic and culturally rich, but economically low-wealth communities along the trail. As Atlanta, Chicago and other American cities have found, new urban trails can become catalysts for displacement without proactive policies and financial resources in place to preserve and strengthen neighboring communities.

The second goal is the harder and more complex one. It is about helping thousands of Savannah's economically low-wealth residents on the city's northwest and northeast sides to remain living where they have for generations, and where they have created uniquely strong and culturally rich communities. It's an especially important goal because most of the residents descend from families who have been displaced before and may now be displaced again. They are at risk of being displaced again because their properties are highly vulnerable to future rising property values associated with downtown Savannah's outward expansion and large nearby public projects, like the trail's and Canal District's development.

Savannah's leadership understands the importance of preserving and strengthening these unique but vulnerable communities. The City and its partners are already taking important steps toward this end and also know that more needs to be done.

This plan and its focus on equitable growth is meant to serve as a blueprint for doing more.

Toward this end, the City has directed that the plan focus on proposing ways for building wealth among those living in the economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail. The reason is that, as an individual's or family's economic circumstances improve, they are more capable of affording to remain in their community. And while true, this aim requires perspective. The barriers posed by unequal access to schools, employment, financial capital, and other basic opportunities for participating equally has, over the course of generations, resulted in profoundly unequal economic conditions and challenges faced by the thousands of residents of Savannah's low economic wealth communities.

The still present barriers to wealth-building require corrective actions that extend far beyond the mission and means of the Tide to Town Plan. At the same time, this plan can contribute to real progress. By fusing the goals of trail development with equitable growth, the plan offers a cohesive collection of actions for enabling low-wealth homeowners to keep and improve their homes, for assisting renters to purchase their first residences, for supporting local businesses and creating jobs, and other steps for building wealth and preserving vital Savannah neighborhoods.

The plan reflects the results of an energetic community engagement process. The process included community forums at locations around Savannah, a virtual community forum in which approximately 2,800 people participated, and an online survey. The process provided individuals with multiple opportunities to participate remotely or in person and express their hopes and concerns about the project, and to consider different strategies for achieving equitable growth among neighborhoods along the trail.



Major Recommendations

This section summarizes the major recommendations found in the plan's four chapters. These are considered major because of their potential to significantly contribute to creating a trail that benefits the greatest number of Savannah citizens—especially residents of historic and culturally rich, but economically low-wealth communities along the trail, and for helping to build wealth for those residents of these communities.

Chapter 1: Revised Route

- The revised trail route will result in a trail system consisting of an approximately 29-mile core route of off-road multiuse paths and bicycle lanes, with more than 80% of the core route being comprised of multiuse paths.
- To be built in four phases over 20-years, the system is designed to serve the greatest number of Savannah residents, with a special focus on serving the economically low-wealth communities along the trail.
- Create three primary off-road, multiuse trail corridors on Savannah's east, west and south sides, including:
 - An **eastside trail** along Truman Pkwy. is well on its way to being completed and is discussed further below.
 - A **westside trail** would create a major transportation and recreational asset in the center of the densest corridor of Savannah's economically low-wealth and recreationally underserved neighborhoods. It would link relatively disconnected neighborhoods, produce new safe routes to schools, connect to downtown and river-related employment centers, and support local economic and community-beneficial development goals sought by area residents.
 - A **southside trail** corridor would result in miles of rides along the area's hidden canals and offer a route that follows the wooded edge of Hunter Army Airfield connecting to Mohawk Lake. This plan also features a "tide experience" as part of the Tide to Town Trail by recommending the creation of a new "Tidal Marsh Park" and river ferry service in an area along the Little Ogeechee River known as Bell's Landing, where Chatham County already has constructed a sizeable boat dock and public parking area. A ferry service would provide an opportunity for trail users to visit such desirable river destinations as Coffee Bluff Marina, Fort McAllister State Park, and Pin Point Heritage Museum.

- Of the three trail corridors, it is worth considering the eastside trail corridor that follows Truman Pkwy. as the flagship for the Tide to Town Trail system, and steps should be taken to increase access to this section in the near future. As a transportation facility, it provides a safe route to area schools, Memorial Hospital medical area, and nearby shopping areas. The seven-mile-long off-road corridor will also serve as a major recreational asset. Travelling from one end and back, a bicyclist can soon enjoy a 14-mile loop that makes for half a day's outing for many families and individuals. The trail offers many diverse environments for walkers. The route also connects two of the area's most desirable recreation destinations, Daffin Park and the Lake Mayer recreation complex. Additionally, focus on facilitating access to the new eastside recreational amenity begins with building three new trailheads and parking areas at key trail locations. This relatively low-cost investment would enable residents from all of Savannah to drive, park, and enjoy this new major recreational facility.
- The City's bike lane network should be expanded with new lanes to the west and northeast. These new lanes would improve access to and from the Truman Trail corridor for those living in the densest part of the city, while creating links between the new trail corridor and Savannah's low economic wealth neighborhoods to the west and east.
- When creating new bicycle routes along roadways, it is recommended that bike lanes be physically separated from motor vehicle traffic, using elements like barriers, curbs, bollards, or even planters to create a buffer zone.
- Connect the trail to priority destinations whenever possible, including:
 - Schools and community centers
 - Downtown commercial and employment centers
 - Transit nodes where trail users can ride buses to and from their destinations
 - Key recreational and cultural areas
 - Other trail connections to the Savannah region
- As new segments of the Tide to Town Trail are built over time, it will be necessary to apply a system of wayfinding signs and interpretive elements.
- Creating a "Tide to Town Arts, Events, and Education Fund" will raise community awareness and use of the trail, while providing opportunities for celebrating communities along the trail and supporting local businesses.

Chapter 2: Wealth Building

The plan proposes an integrated set of actions for building wealth among those living in the economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail. Some actions build on existing efforts. Others reflect best practices underway in other communities.

The socioeconomic analysis included in the Appendix shows that the economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail, which the plan also refers to as “vulnerable neighborhoods,” are: Tatemville, Cann Park/Jackson Park/Bingville, Feiler Park/Dittmerville, Eastside, West Savannah, Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield, Carver Heights (inclusive of Historic Carver Village), and Tremont Park.

Tide to Town to Homeownership

Because economic wealth is directly related to owning assets, the plan’s number one wealth-building recommendation is for the City of Savannah and its partners to increase assistance in low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail to **help the significant percent (37%) of homeowners among, the largely African American residents to continue owning their homes.** (For comparison, African American homeownership in Atlanta is 12.8%.) A key second goal is to assist those currently renting to be able to buy their first residential property.

Specific recommendations include:

- Help current homeowners in vulnerable neighborhoods along the trail remain in the communities in which they live by creating a fund to offset property tax increases associated with the trail’s development.
- Dedicate a “Tide to Town Housing Counseling Staff” to support homeowners and renters in low-economic wealth neighborhoods.
- Create “Tide to Town Home Improvement Assistance Initiative,” with the goal of assisting 140 homeowners per year improve their homes for a total of 2,850 homes over the next 20 years. Homeowners with incomes at or below 100% of Savannah Area’s Median Income would be eligible for an average of \$15K in financing for home maintenance and improvement projects. This could include low-interest deferred payment loans, in which no interest or principal repayment would be required, providing homeowners continued to own and occupy their homes and meet other program guidelines. It is also recommended that homeowners who contract with a local minority- and women-owned business receive up to \$5K more in financial assistance, helping to realize this plan’s second wealth-building goal of job creation. Additionally, exemptions would be available for property tax increases associated with home improvements through this program for applicants meeting age, income, and disability guidelines..

- Explore passing “Cottage Court” Zoning to help elder homeowners and others downsize and live locally. The zoning supports smaller attached and detached housing that may be attractive to older homeowners who sell their properties, but who want to remain in their neighborhood in a dwelling that is more appropriate in size and with features and amenities that their current homes do not offer.
- To help renters become homeowners, it is recommended the City increase funding for its DreamMaker program that provides down payments, closing cost, and gap financing assistance to renters seeking to become first time homebuyers. At the same time, explore ways to increase DreamMaker financial resources by growing relationships with existing and new City partners that provide affordable home purchase funding. One new partner might be the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA). NACA is the largest HUD-approved nonprofit homeownership organization in the country that has \$20 billion in mortgage-backed financing in its Homebuyer Purchase Program. NACA mortgages can be used for single-family homes, condominiums, multi-family, and co-ops.
- Expand “Homebuyer Training and Education” services provided by the City to improve a prospective homeowner’s likelihood of future economic success.
- Update zoning and create an annual \$3-million “Missing Middle” Multi-Unit Housing Fund to increase the affordable housing supply in low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail.
- Pass other zoning updates to promote affordable housing, including:
 - Modifying zoning in RSF-5 and -6 zoning districts to permit ADUs for lots 3,000+ square feet
 - Modifying frontage dimensions in RSF-4 through -6 zoning districts in west side neighborhoods to more accurately reflect the prevalence of existing lots with 30-foot road frontages, thereby removing one obstacle preventing ADUs and multifamily dwelling units from being built.
 - Conduct a full zoning map and ordinance review focused on making updates that align recommended homeownership and affordable housing goals. For example, the City might want to consider zoning used in Salt Lake City that allows townhomes, duplexes, and other small multiunit housing in single-family residential districts, including exempting them from minimum lot areas, widths, and frontage requirements.

Chapter 2: Wealth Building (continued)

- Increasing the affordable housing supply. (continued)
 - Consider “Right of First Refusal” tool used by Montgomery County, MD, that places a deed restriction on existing multifamily properties to give right-of-first-refusal option to buy the property and potentially sell to an affordable housing organization.
 - Implement Housing Demolition Tax similar to a Cook County, IL, program that raises funds for affordable housing by charging a \$3-\$5 per square foot fee for any housing units demolished in the county.
 - Explore feasibility of establishing a “Power to the People” program that uses revenues from future municipal solar and other alternative energy projects to generate funds for affordable housing. Such a program would also help achieve the City’s 100% renewable energy goal by 2050.

Tide to Town to Jobs

- Undertake steps to help individuals and families in neighborhoods adjacent to the trail achieve greater employment success, including allocating Tide to Town wealth building funds to grow ongoing efforts of the City’s Economic Development Department and its other partners, such as Step Up Savannah.
- Because more than half of all U.S. workers today have family care responsibilities outside their full-time jobs, the plan recommends that the City and its partners design a special Tide to Town Trail “Pathways for Parents” program that includes investing in, and incentivizing, the development of a comprehensive package of family-support measures to relieve major barriers that limit a person’s ability to work and improve their economic circumstances. The goal would be to grow the availability of a full-range of family-support options, including comprehensive care for infants and toddlers, pre-school and school-age children and eldercare programs that serve priority wealth-building neighborhoods along the trail. For example, a recent Georgia statewide survey showed a shortfall of more than 800 childcare seats in neighborhoods along the trail.
- Pass “Local Employment Construction Job Ordinance” to help create good-paying jobs in the construction industry. For example, an ordinance passed by the City of Boston sets entry-level hiring goals for city residents, people of color, and women for all public development projects and private development projects above 50,000 square feet.
- Offer Tide to Town “Local Hiring Goal Contracts” for local women-owned and African American-owned small businesses. It is recommended that a target of 25% of Tide to Town-related design, engineering, construction, and landscape maintenance contracts be issued for prime contracts led by local women and African American businesses.

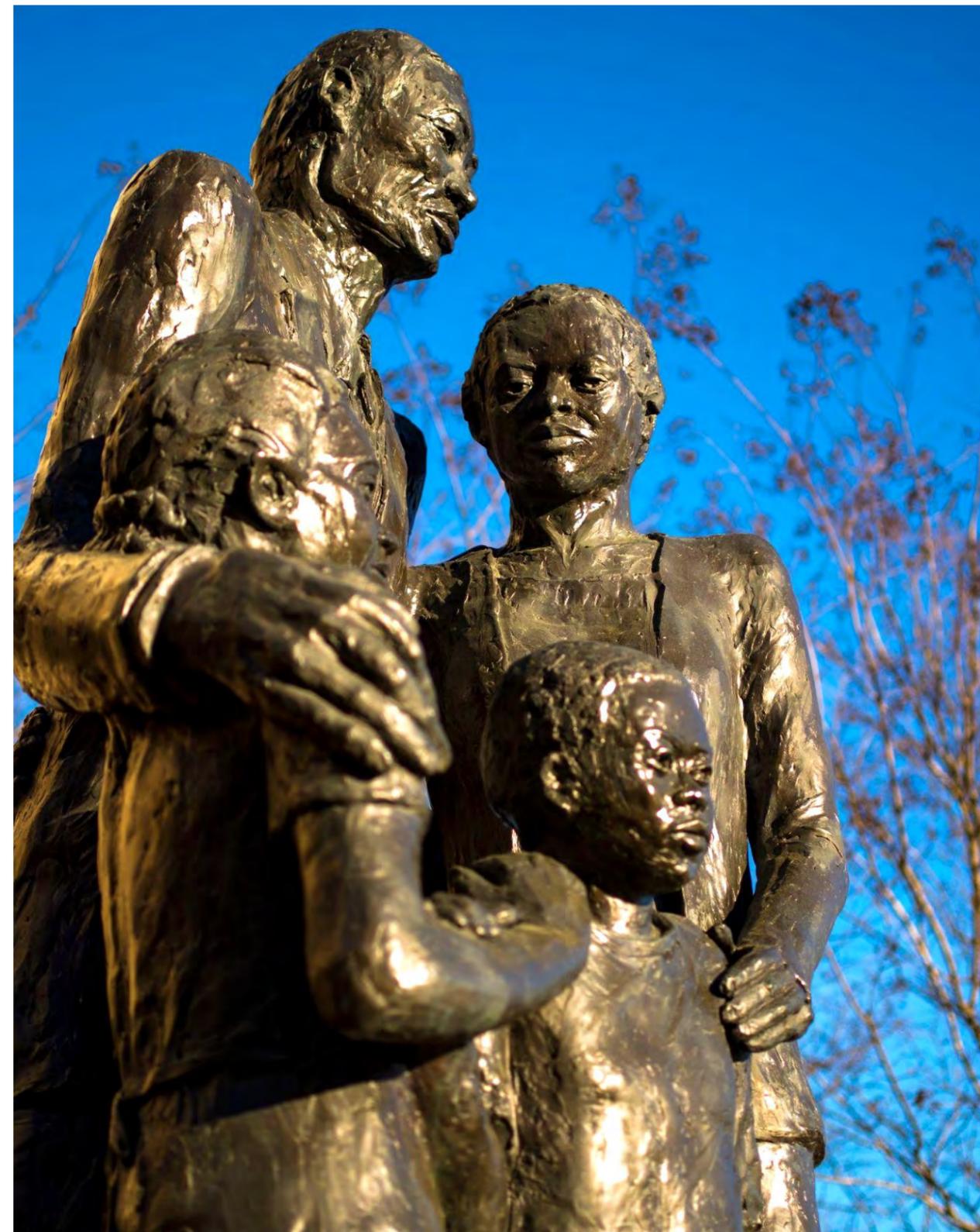
- Institute trail-related “Community-Beneficial Employment Incentives” to promote local hiring and that provide services that enable residents to succeed. This includes revising the zoning in priority development areas along the trail to award density-bonuses and parking reductions to developers that demonstrate 25% participation of local women-owned and African American-owned small businesses during the design, construction, and operation phases of a project along the trail. Bonuses should also be awarded for projects incorporating services that offer relief to family members, allowing them to go to work, e.g., childcare, eldercare and afterschool programs.
- Explore creating a “West Side Community Transit Center” in collaboration with the Chatham County Transit Authority and other community partners. The vision is to establish a facility aimed at relieving some of the basic barriers limiting people’s ability to improve their economic circumstances. This includes its role as a transit hub which provides priority shuttle service to and from the new Hyundai plant, the port, airport, JCB, Gulfstream, and other major job centers to Savannah’s west. The facility would also include childcare, eldercare, and afterschool programs enabling transit riders to have their dependents cared for while they are at work. Consideration should be given to incorporating both health and fitness resources into the new center, enabling transit riders, as well as members of the larger community, to receive regular health care and reap the benefits of improved physical health. Establish a “West Side Works” workforce development initiative in the new community transit center or in a stand-alone facility. This includes expanding and incorporating the employment training programs offered at Moses Jackson Advancement Center into an effort similar to Atlanta’s Westside Works initiative that offers comprehensive training, educational services, and access to jobs.
- Conduct further study to determine how to integrate the Tide to Town Trail with the Chatham Area Transit system. This includes ensuring the trail connects to bus routes wherever possible and examining the feasibility and benefits of incorporating e-bike and e-scooter rental stations at key locations to allow riders to use the new trail to access CAT bus stops, employment centers, and other locations.
- Support redevelopment of the Water Works building as a community market and local business and labor-force incubator.
- Launch a Tide to Town Marketplace Initiative that gives preference to local women and African American-owned businesses to operate food and retail stalls at high-traffic outdoor locations during specified days/times.
- Create future small-area Trail Plans and Community-Benefit Agreements that encompass a range of topics including wealth building, place-making, trail enhancements, trail-related park-making, and trail programming and activities.

Chapter 3: Funding the Trail and Wealth Building

- Continue initial steps to raise funds to build the trail system and for investing in the priority wealth building communities along the trail.
- Expand fundraising efforts by undertaking a comprehensive strategy of public and private funding steps for generating funds to support the trail's development and related wealth building initiatives.
- Give a high priority to raising additional funds by establishing Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) and Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) along all or portions of the trail. These can serve as critical sources of revenue for constructing the trail and for investing in affordable housing, job training, and related wealth building initiatives. In particular, TADs generate revenues by capturing future taxes generated from trail-related public and private investment and reinvesting the funds into the trails development and related community wealth building activities.
- Conduct detailed analyses of possible fundraising TAD locations, their potential for raising revenues, and what land use revisions and other measures would encourage future development.
- When establishing any future Tide to Town Trail Tax Allocation Districts, it is recommended that a partnership be formed with a reactivated Savannah Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to administer the funds raised by the tax allocation districts.

Chapter 4: Community Engagement

- Continue conducting regular Tide to Town community engagement activities to discover community interests and concerns. This includes community engagement linked to the future development of Small-Area Trail Plans and Community-Benefit Agreements.



African American Monument on Savannah's riverfront commemorates and honors the contributions of Savannah's African American community.

1 Revised Route



Revised Route

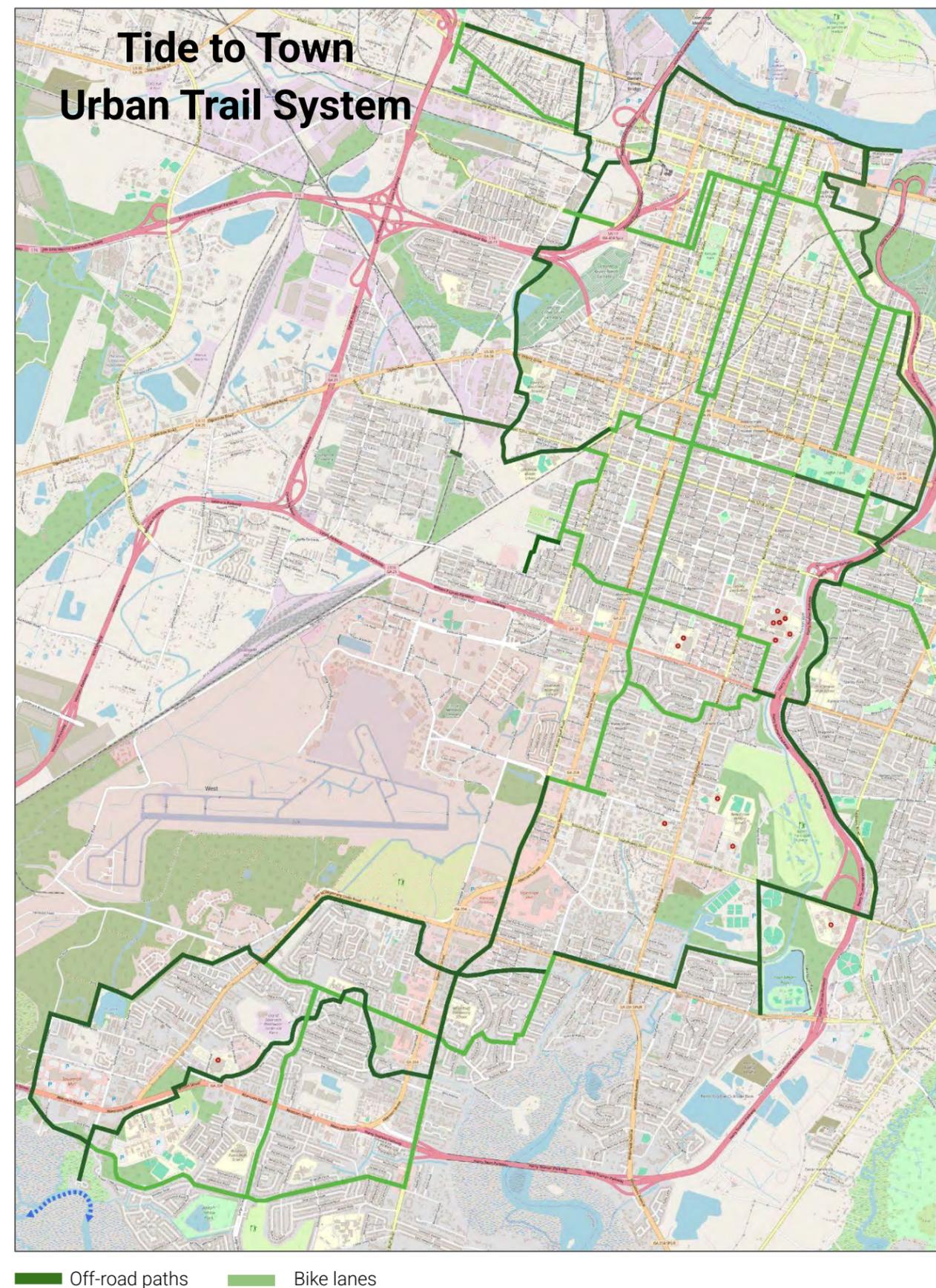
Overview

System for All

The plan presents changes to the original Tide to Town Trail concept envisioned by the founding members of the Friends of Tide to Town, Inc in 2017. The revised route will result in a trail system consisting of an approximately 29-mile core route of off-road multiuse paths and bicycle lanes, with more than 80% of the core route being comprised of multiuse paths.

The clear desire for a trail system of primarily off-road paths emerged from the project's community engagement process. The community expressed their preference for the creation of multiuse paths separated from vehicular traffic to serve pedestrians, runners, bicyclists, and people using wheelchairs for exercise and leisure. Another important desire was for the multiuse paths and bike lanes to enable users to make trips to local schools and community facilities, shopping and employment centers, the CAT system, and other destinations.

The above statement of preferences aligns with national urban trail use findings that indicate a public interest in multiuse paths for exercise and recreation primarily on weekends, mid-day, and the evenings. While mornings, specifically 7-10 AM, and afternoons, 4-6 PM, are when bicyclists are more likely to use paths and bike lanes for commuting and for making other trips. In Savannah, those using segments of the trail's multiuse path for transportation purposes will increase in the future as development along the trail system takes place and new connections are made to employment centers and other major destinations. Additionally, it should be noted that those who commute by bicycle or e-bike often prefer bike lanes over shared off-road paths because they provide dedicated travel lanes and avoid potential conflicts with a mix of users.



— Off-road paths — Bike lanes

System for All (continued)

With respect to speed, experience around the country has also shown that a fundamental tension exists between pedestrians and others travelling at leisurely speeds along multiuse paths and those wishing to travel at higher speeds for commuting purposes and those looking for high-speed exercise workouts.

The plan accommodates these different desires by proposing a network that includes both multiuse paths and bike lanes. The multiuse paths are primarily intended to fulfill the recreational and fitness interests of pedestrians and others, along with those using the paths for transportation who are comfortable traveling at moderate speeds. Moderate speeds along multiuse paths are considered to be around 12-15 mph, with speeds allowed up to 20 mph in low-congestion areas. For high-congestion areas, the plan recommends posting signs limiting travel speeds to no more than 15 mph and for bicyclists to prioritize pedestrian safety.

The trail's bike lane network is designed to serve those wishing to travel at higher speeds. The bike lanes also serve other important purposes. The lanes connect users to the trail's core route. An expansion of lanes proposed in this plan will also enhance the trail system's role as a transportation facility. The lanes will provide more direct routes for bicyclists and e-bike users travelling to downtown, employment centers along the Savannah River, and other central Savannah destinations. In addition, they will serve the densest area of the city bounded by DeRenne Ave., the Savannah River, Truman Pkwy. and I-516.



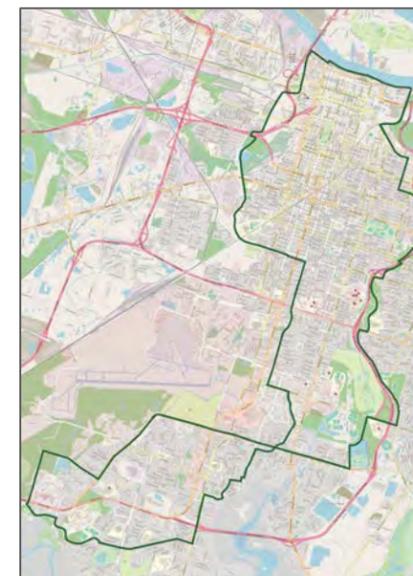
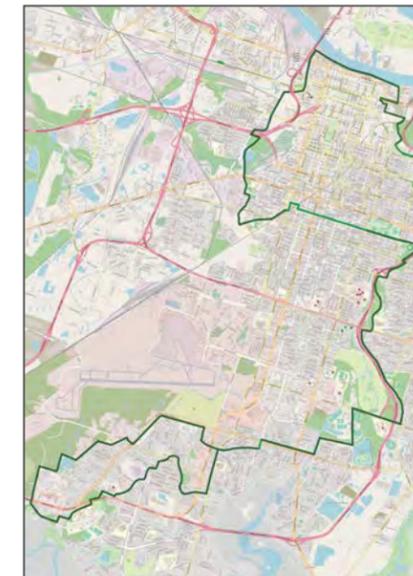
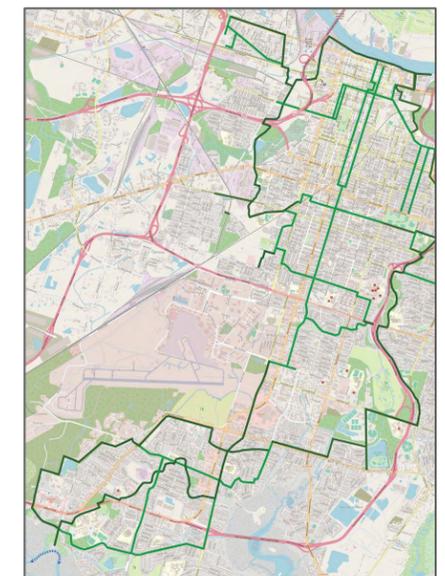
Sunday on Atlanta Beltline multiuse path



Bi-directional bike lane

Other key objectives taken into consideration when identifying route revisions, include:

- Serving the greatest number of Savannah residents.
- Giving priority to economically low-wealth communities along the trail.
- Creating and connecting core “off-road” trail corridors on Savannah’s east, west and south sides.
- Developing off-road multiuse paths in aesthetically attractive locations whenever possible. This was a high priority expressed by the community.
- Increasing access to high-interest destinations, e.g.:
 - Schools and community centers
 - Downtown and commercial and employment centers
 - Transit nodes where trail users can ride buses to and from their destinations
 - Key recreational and cultural areas
 - Other trail connections to the Savannah region
- Locating routes on public properties and by making mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations, e.g., Georgia Southern University, Hunter Army Airfield, and Housing Authority of Savannah, to save money by not having to purchase rights-of-way.

**Original Concept****Revised Core Route**
Approximately 80% off-road paths and 20% bike lanes**Urban Trail System**
Core Route and bike lanes

Core Off-Road Route

The core route will be comprised of three major off-road, multiuse path corridors. These corridors will consist of both multiuse paths and “complete streets” which typically include a sidewalk and bike lane (often bi-directional) alongside, but physically separated from the roadway by a curb, planting bed, or planters as shown below.

East

When completed, an eastern section of the Tide to Town Trail would run along Truman Pkwy. As a transportation facility, it provides a safe route to area schools, Memorial Hospital medical area, and nearby shopping areas. The multiuse path route also will allow users to travel to Daffin Park, Lake Mayer recreation complex, and the riverfront.

West

A multiuse path on the city’s northwest side would create a major transit and recreational asset in the center of the densest corridor of Savannah’s economically low-wealth and recreationally underserved neighborhoods. Largely following the Springfield Canal, it would link relatively disconnected neighborhoods, produce new safe routes to schools, connect to downtown and river-related employment centers, and support local economic and community-beneficial development goals sought by area residents.

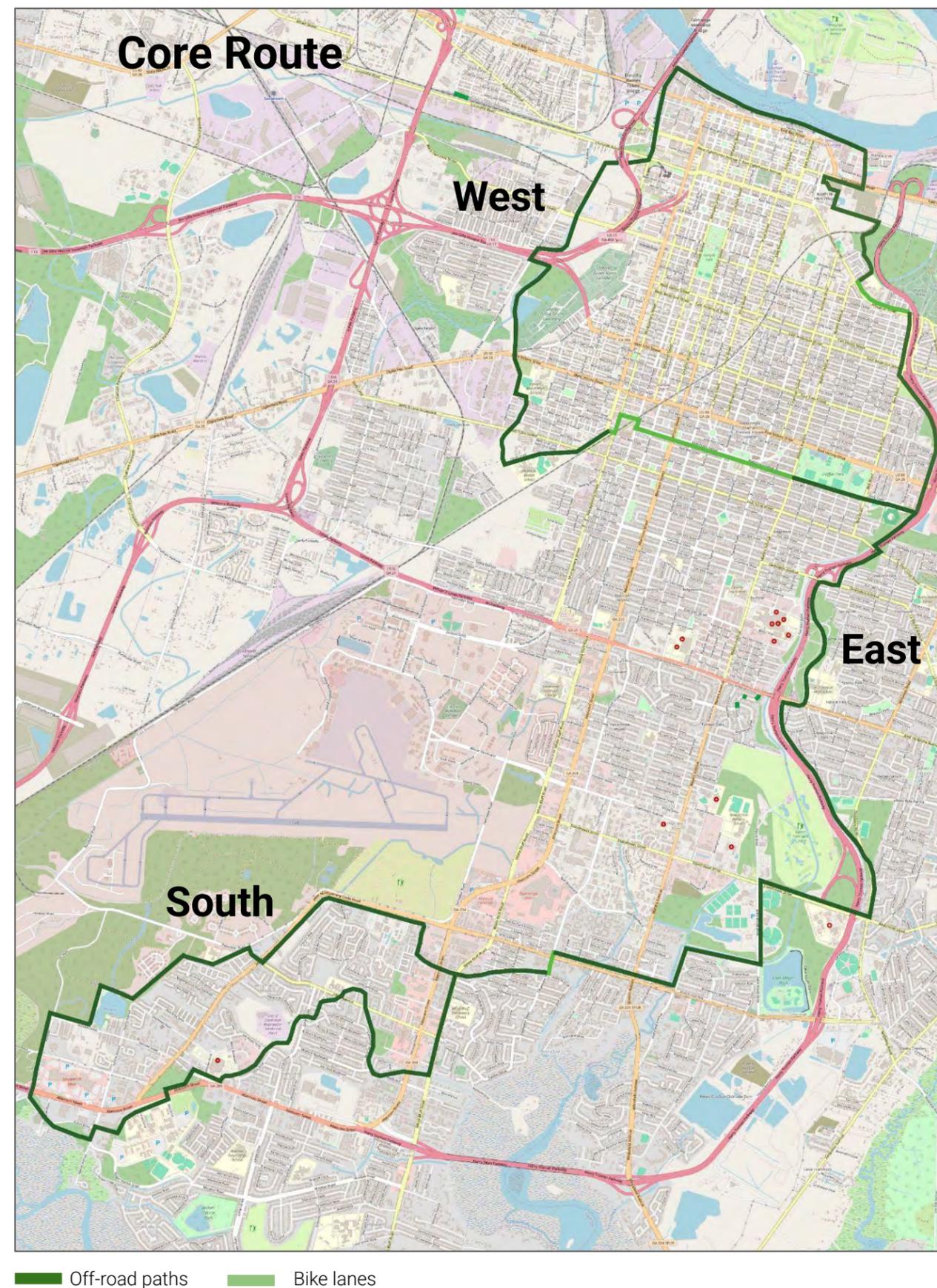
South

The City is in the process of designing bike paths along portions of Middleground and Montgomery Cross Roads based on an initial trail concept plan. This plan recommends reconsidering several sections of those paths in favor of off-road paths that would follow sections of the Casey and Wilshire Canals and Vernon River—provided essential stormwater infrastructure remains uncompromised. Other suggested path connections would provide access to Georgia Southern University’s campus. Additionally, the main off-road path along Middleground Rd. would run along Hunter Army Airfield edge and connect to Mohawk Lake. Potential other future connections are discussed in the Congress of New Urbanism Southside Retrofit Plan produced in 2018.



Off-road multiuse path

Two “Complete Street” off-road path examples



Off-road paths Bike lanes

Bike Lanes

Bike lanes serve bicyclists and e-bike/e-scooter riders connecting to off-road paths and those who might be travelling to where no off-road paths exist.

Whenever possible, bike lanes should be separated from motor vehicle traffic using elements like barriers, curbs, bollards, or planters. Studies have found that protected bicycle lanes attract more users than streets without such infrastructure. In some instances, narrowing of vehicular lanes may be required to create sufficient room for lanes.

During the early phases of the trail development process, bike lanes serve as interim routes until the full complement of off-road paths are built.

Lane Selection Criteria:

- Provide key links between the system’s multi-use paths and other priority destinations
- Select routes that are visually welcoming.
- Add bike lanes to lower vehicle volume roads.

Safety Improvements in Order of Priority:

1. Design “parking protected” lanes with lanes inside parked cars, shielding riders from moving traffic
2. Install “flex posts” to mark lanes whenever possible, especially at roadway intersections
3. Paint bike lanes and install signs to guide people to other trail segments and destinations

Intersection Safety: Give special attention to intersections, e.g., adding raised pedestrian and bikeway crossings and other measures to lower vehicle speeds, adding pedestrian and bicyclist light traffic signal phases, and applying other intersection safety guidelines outlined in “Don’t Give Up the Intersection” published by National Association of City Transportation Officials.



Parking Protected



Flex Posts



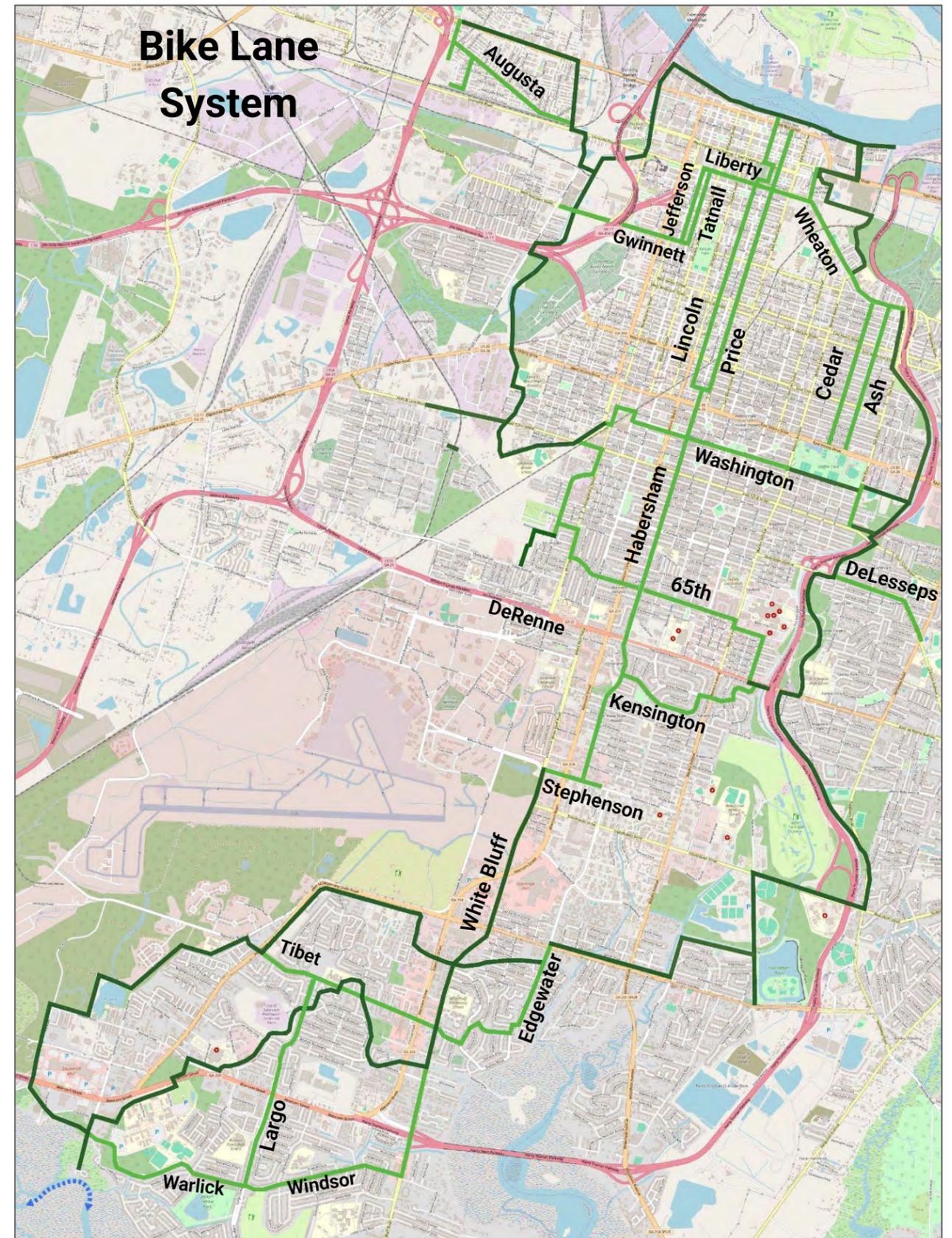
Painted Lanes



Wayfinding Signs



Intersection Speed Table

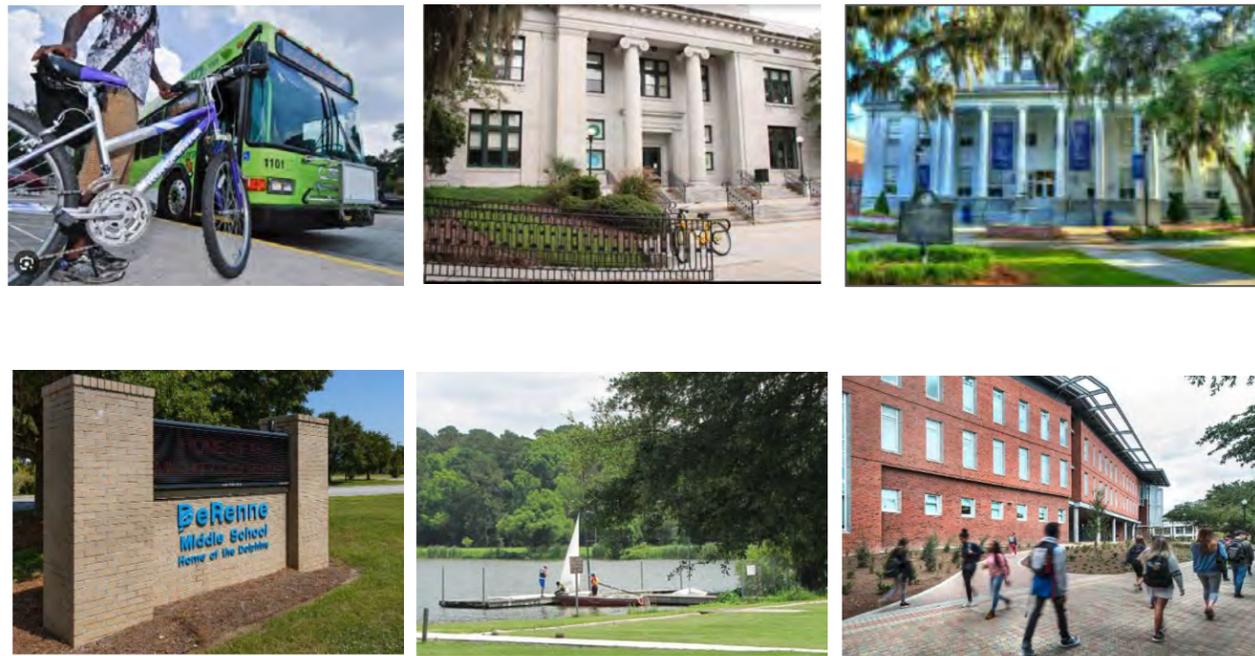


Off-road paths Bike lanes

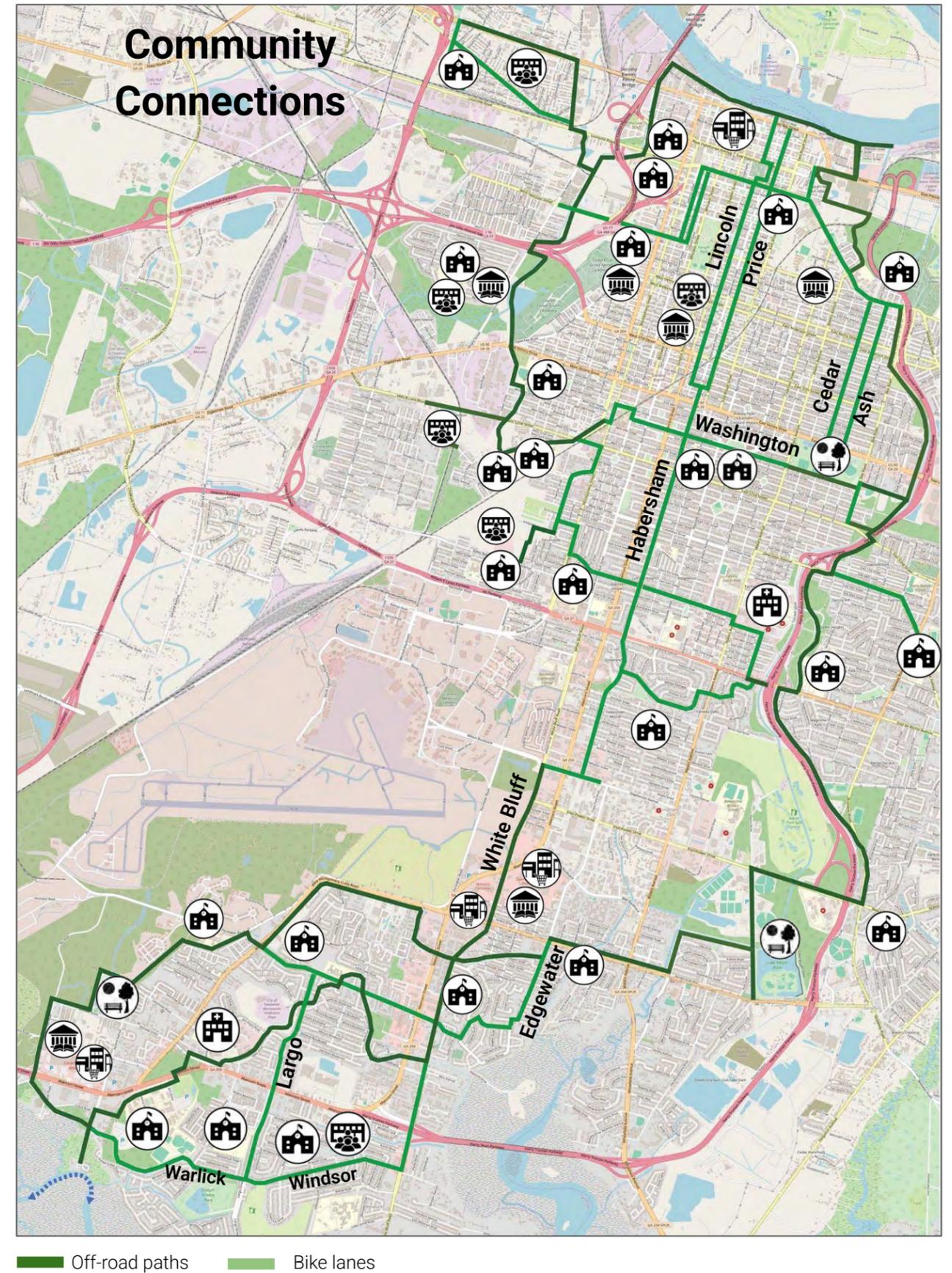
Community Connections

Where possible, the trail route and lanes were selected to connect with local schools, community centers, libraries, hospitals, bus stops, commercial centers, and parks and open spaces. The map on the corresponding page provides a *representative* sample of these locations within approximately a half mile of the trail and lanes. It is incomplete and provided only to demonstrate the trail system's value as a transportation connector.

In the years ahead and based on future community conversations, the trail system will grow to include even more connections.



- | | |
|---|---|
|  School |  Medical Center |
|  Commercial Center |  Library |
|  Community Center |  Park & Open Space |



Off-road paths Bike lanes

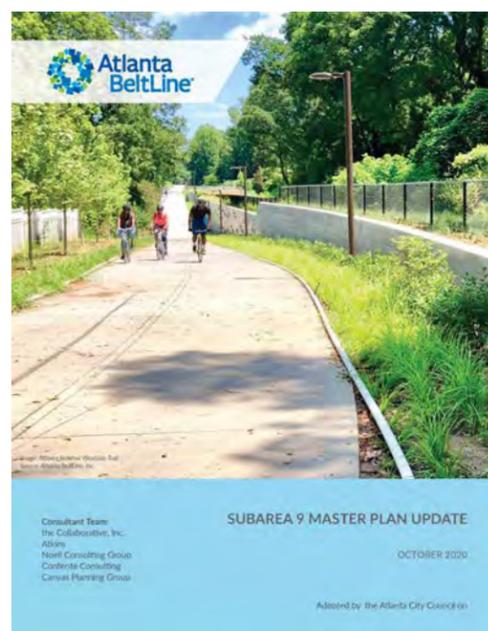
Phased Approach

The plan proposes a phased approach for developing the Tide to Town Trail urban trail system. The initial phase is intended to meet the needs of the largest number of Savannah residents and especially residents of the economically low-wealth communities along the trail. From a municipal financing perspective, it makes prudent sense to first focus on serving the greatest number of people. It means that the early development cost per resident is less than it will be during later stages that will take place in less populated areas of the city. With that said, the plan also recommends that early phases of the trail's development include investing in cornerstone projects in less populated areas to form a foundation upon which to build when these areas become the focus of future trail development.

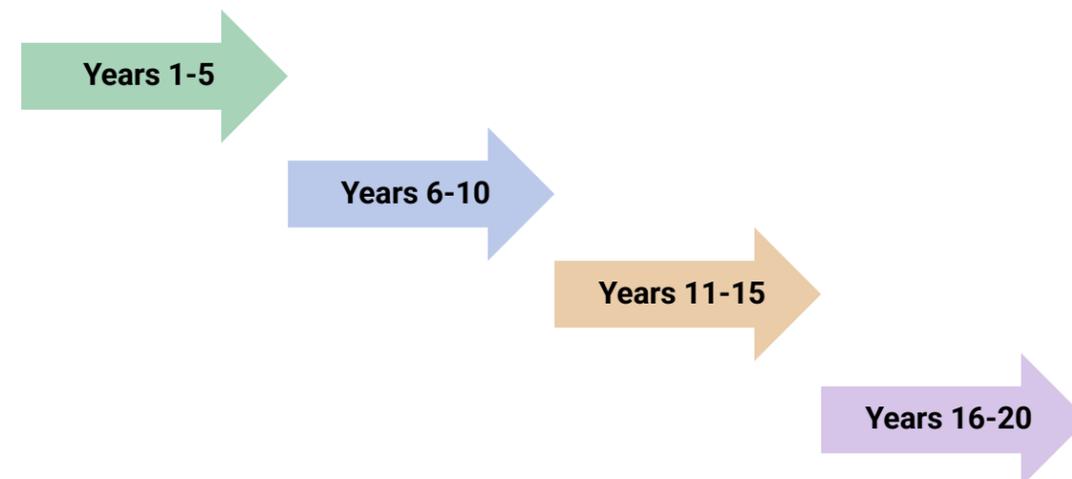
The first phase recommends undertaking three major actions. The first is to invest in projects that will enable Savannah residents to begin to fully experience the new Truman Pkwy. Trail upon its completion in the near future. The second action is to begin building the initial multiuse path segments of what will become the West Side Trail. The third action is to invest in the creation of a new riverside park along a future South Side Trail to provide the public with a unique gateway to the city's tidal marshlands and high-interest destinations along the Little Ogeechee River.

Subsequent phases focus on completing the three primary multiuse path corridors, connecting them with bike lanes, and adding other bicycle lanes that contribute to the trail system's role as a transit facility.

With respect to the proposed phased approach, it is important to note that while the plan provides sound advice to guide future trail development decisions, the most effective plans allow for a certain degree of flexibility. For example, as more focused Small-Area Trail Plans are developed, residents of neighborhoods and developers may ask for path or lane routes to be altered or added. The Atlanta BeltLine offers a good example of how trails can evolve over time; every five years, the BeltLine updates its plans to ensure earlier ones reflect the latest conditions and community interests.



BeltLine 5-year Plan Update



Recommended activities for Years 1 – 5 are as follows:

Eastside

Construct trailheads and parking areas along the soon to be completed seven-mile-long Truman Pkwy. multiuse path corridor to make new facility accessible to those wishing to drive, park, and enjoy the trail.

Expand the City's bike lane network to connect the new East Side Trail with the densest part of the city and the economically low-wealth communities along the trail.

Westside

Construct the initial segments of a future West Side multiuse path corridor, while adding two trailheads and parking areas to enable residents to drive and use the trail.

Southside

Begin constructing key elements of the South Side trail.



Step 1

Add new Trailheads and Parking to East Side Truman Trail

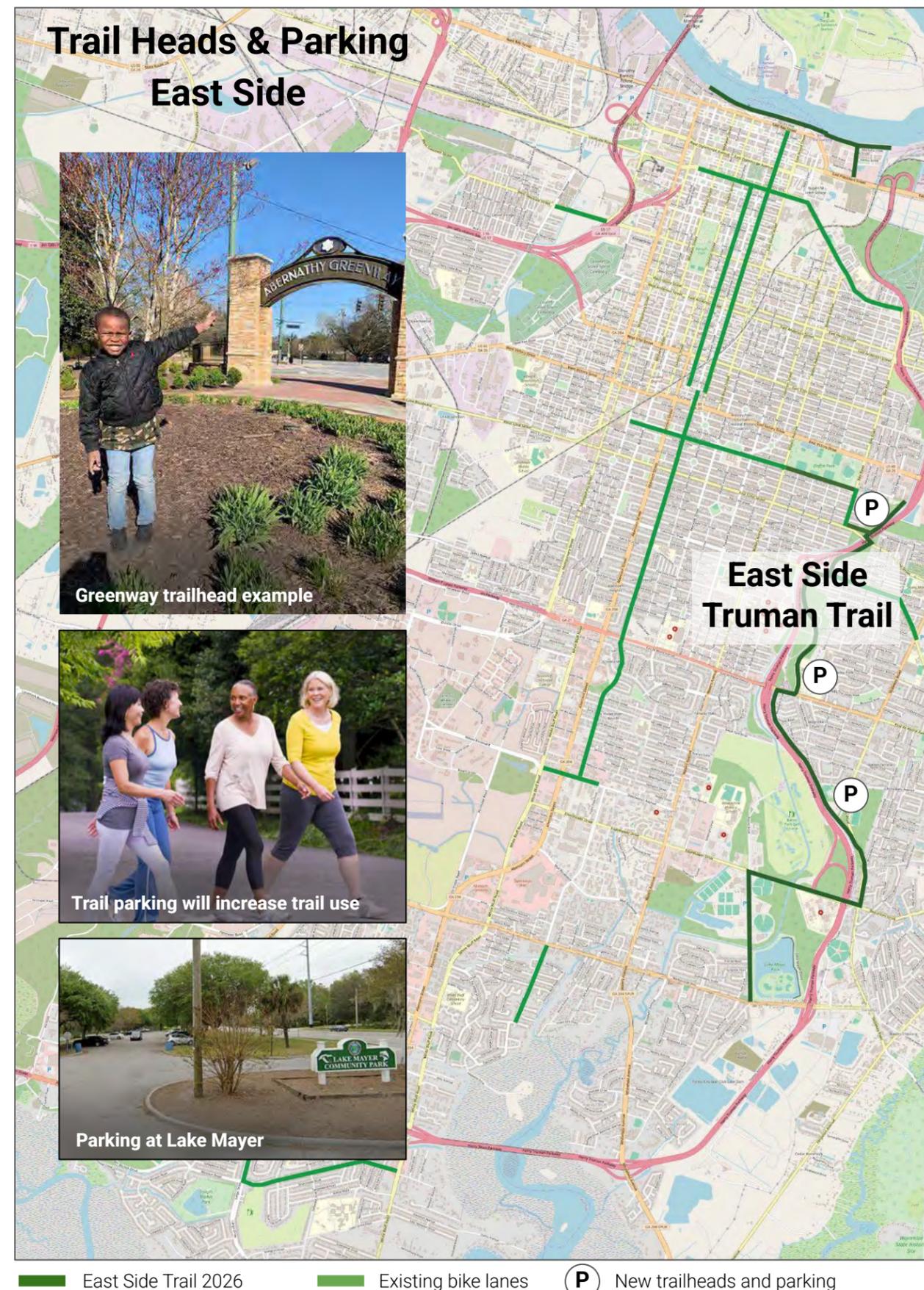
Soon the City of Savannah will complete a seven-mile continuous multiuse path along Truman Pkwy. (referred to in the plan as both the Truman Trail and East Side Trail).

It is worth considering the East Side Trail corridor as a flagship for the entire Tide to Town trail. Approximately seven-miles-long, this section will be both a transportation route and a major recreational destination. As a transportation route, the trail will connect users with schools, shopping areas, the Memorial Hospital medical area, the CAT system, bike lanes spurs, e.g., the new lane along DeLesseps Ave., and other destinations.

As a recreational facility, the trail will serve pedestrians, runners, bicyclists, and people who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices for leisure and exercise. For bicyclists, riding from one end and back, the user will be able to enjoy a 14-mile loop that makes for half a day's outing for many families and those wishing to stop along the way. And like a shopping mall with anchor department stores at the ends, this first segment of the larger trail has at its ends two of Savannah's most desirable recreation destinations—Daffin Park to the north and Lake Mayer recreation complex to south.

- P Three Trailheads and Parking:** The City's next steps should be to improve access to the new East Side Trail by first creating three trailheads and parking areas to make the trail available to those wishing to drive, park, and use the trail. One public parking area already exists on the southern end at Lake Mayer. The recommended locations for the others include Kerry St. near Daffin Park at the beginning of the Police Memorial Trail, DeRenne Ave. near Jenkins High School, and at the Scarborough Sports Complex or another location along Skidaway Rd.

Adding parking, orientation signs, and, in some instances, portable toilets, at key locations along the trail will produce many valuable benefits. It will make the trail accessible to elderly Savannah residents, families with children in strollers, and others who are less mobile. Additionally, increased use of the Truman Trail will increase the number of supporters for future phases of the trail's development.



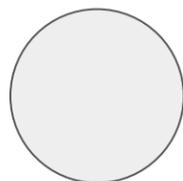


Step 2

Focus on Serving the Most People and Economically Low-Wealth Communities

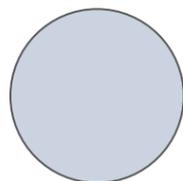
Step 2 is a complementary recommendation to Step 1. It proposes a series of actions aimed at improving access to the new East Side Trail by creating path and bike lanes that connect the trail with the city's most densely populated area and the two major economically low-wealth areas along the trail on the city's northwest and northeast sides.

Once again, investing early in improving access to where most residents live makes sense from transportation, recreation, and municipal finance perspectives. Additionally, not only will the connections provide new transportation options for those living in economically low-wealth neighborhoods, the connections will be one more opportunity to achieve a key plan focus of promoting equitable growth. This is because residents of these neighborhoods also live in recreationally underserved areas where residents enjoy less open space per person than most other residents of the city.¹ The residents are also more likely to be "transit dependent" and typically rely on buses for travel, limiting their ability to access other recreational amenities, especially ones outside of the Savannah area.



Densest area of city

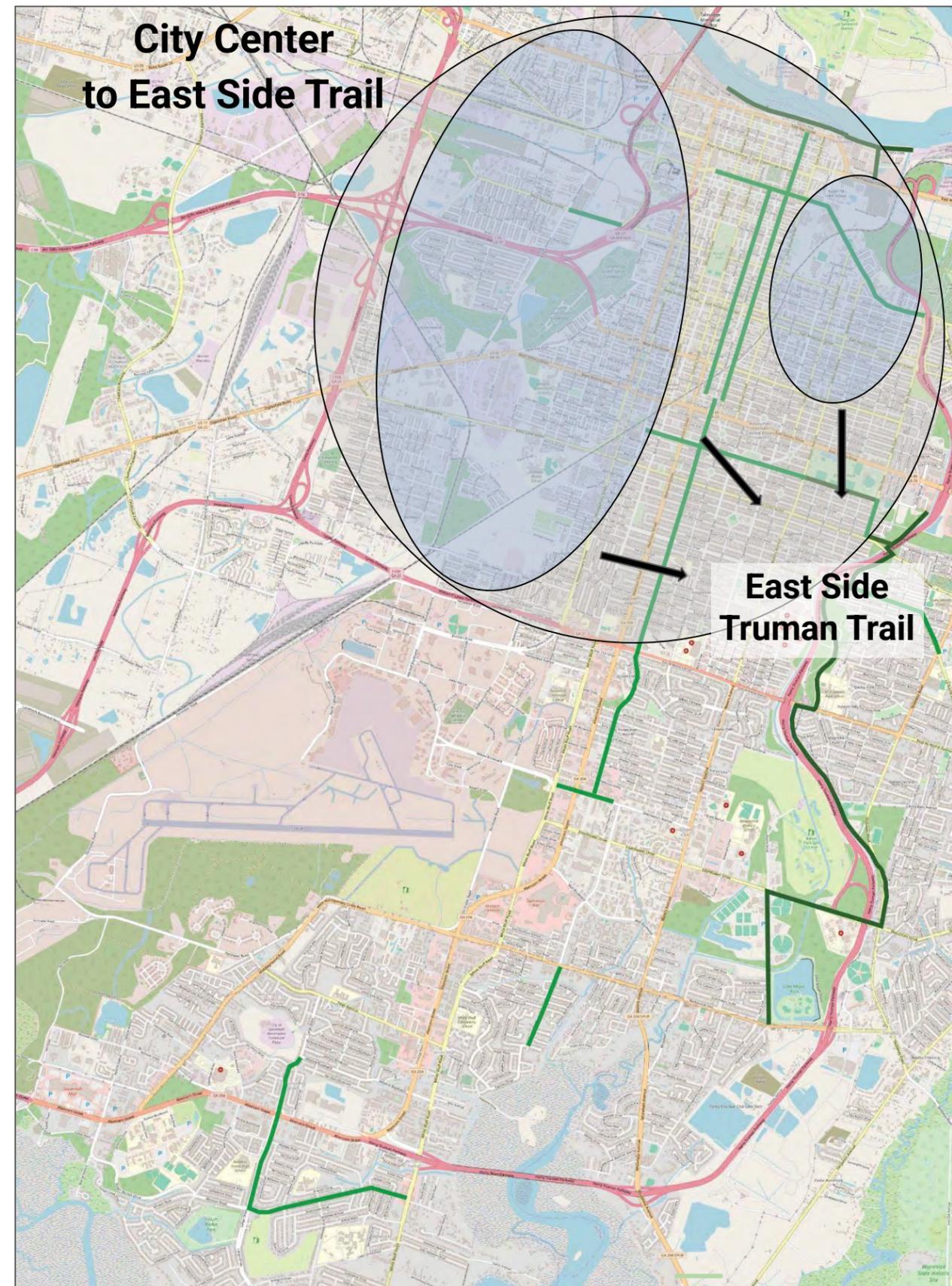
Approximately 63,000 people, or 42% of the city, live in the area bounded by DeRenne Ave., Savannah River, Truman Pkwy. and I-516.



Economically low-wealth and recreationally underserved areas

The economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail include: Tatemville, Cann Park/Jackson Park/Bingville, Feiler Park/Dittmer Ville, Eastside, West Savannah, Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield, Carver Heights, and Tremont Park. See the Appendix for more information.

¹ The amount of parkland per person in the northwest and eastern neighborhoods along the trail fall less than .25 acres per person compared to other areas in the city that range between .5 and .9 acres per person.



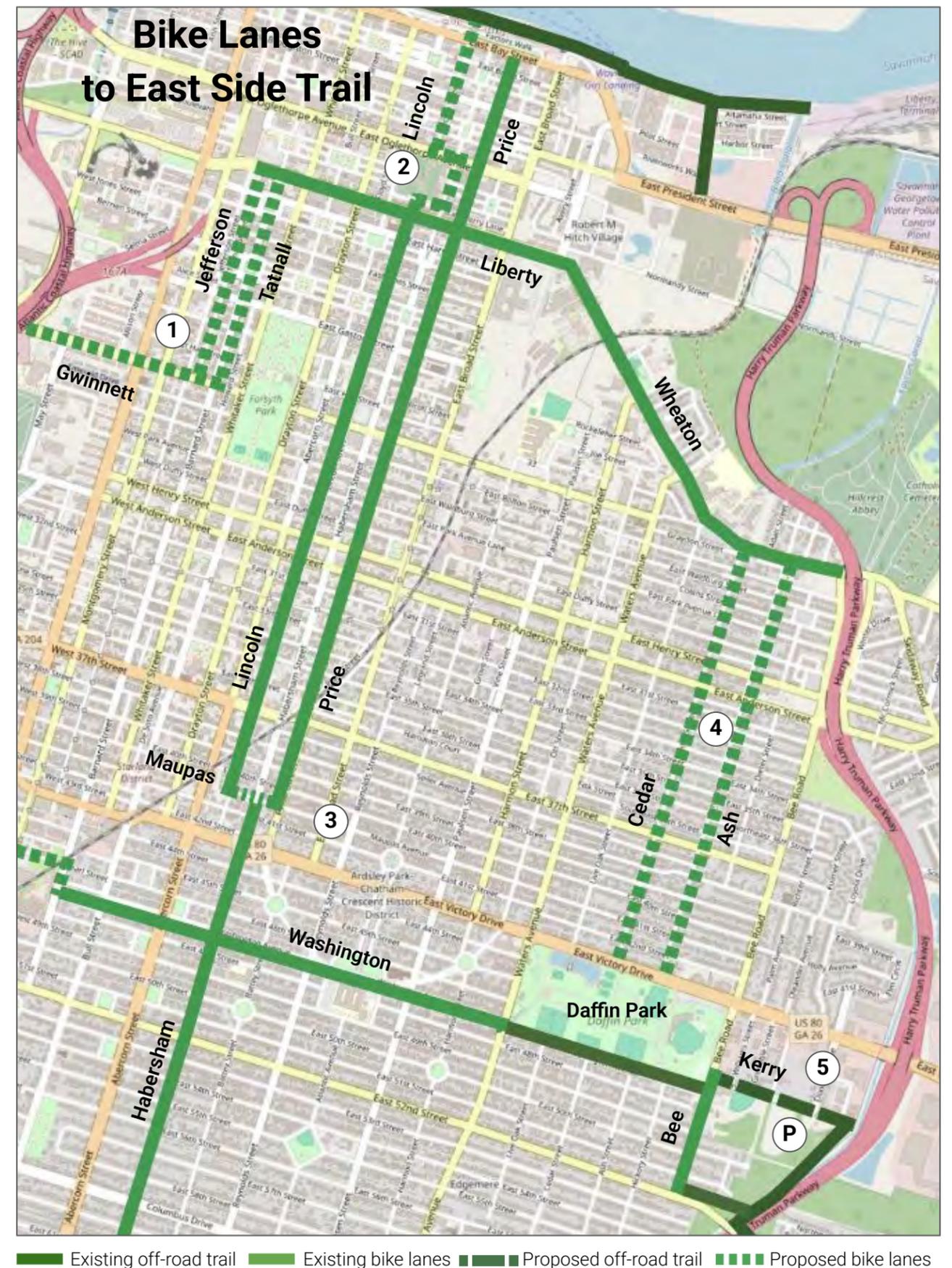
East Side Trail 2026 Existing bike lanes

Years 1-5

Step 2 (continued)**Connect Bike Lanes to East Side Trail**

The actions below and shown on the opposite page would create **a continuous network of bike lanes** connecting the new East Side trail with the densest area of the city and economically low-wealth neighborhoods on the northwest and northeast sides of the city.

- ① A pair of one-way bike lanes on Jefferson and Tatnall Streets would connect today's bike lane on Liberty St. with a proposed bike lane extension along Gwinnett St.
 - ② A new bike lane is needed to connect Lincoln St. and the Savannah Riverfront, along with a crosswalk and pedestrian activated light on Price St. at E. Bay St. These actions are necessary to create a central spine of north-south bike lanes between downtown and the existing bike lanes on Washington Ave. that will ultimately serve as a critical east-west link between the East Side and West Side Trails.
 - ③ A new bike lane on Maupas Ave. would link existing bike lanes on Lincoln, Price, and Habersham Streets. This important link will require further study and community conversations around the area's future redevelopment, including creating off-street parking to free up room for the new bike lane.
 - ④ A pair of one-way lanes on Cedar and Ash Streets would connect the City's new bike lane on Wheaton St. with Daffin Park and the trail. These lanes would provide access to those living in the city's northeast neighborhoods. It is important to note that there is already a pedestrian-activated light at Cedar and Victory Drive to accommodate those crossing to and from Daffin Park.
 - ⑤ A new complete-street path under development along Kerry St. will connect the Police Memorial Trail segment of the East Side Trail with Daffin Park and Washington Ave. bike lanes. At the same time, the existing bike lane on Bee Rd. should be repaved and defined with green lane striping.
- Ⓟ Kerry St. is also the location for a proposed new trailhead and parking.



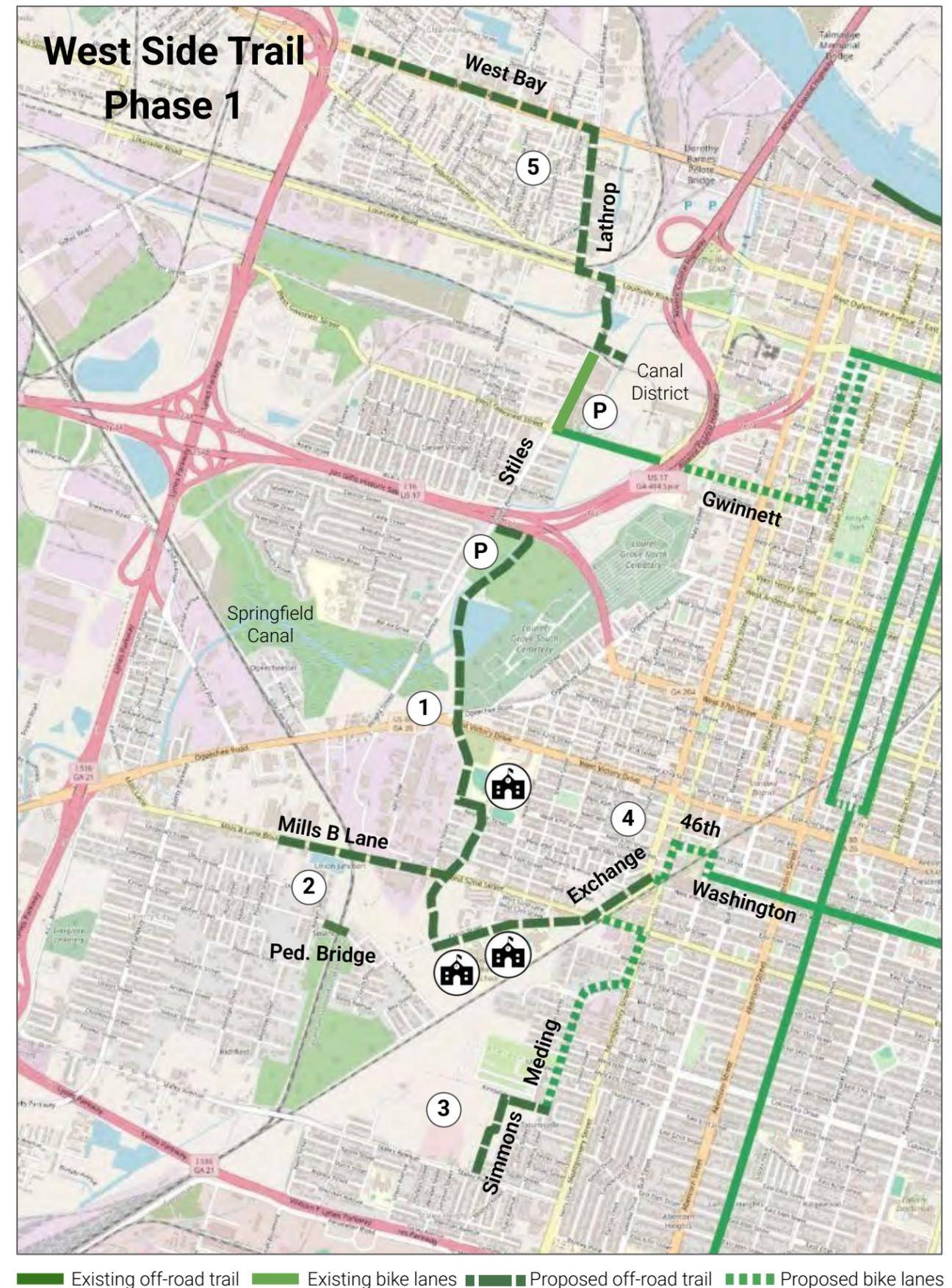
Existing off-road trail Existing bike lanes Proposed off-road trail Proposed bike lanes

Years 1-5

Step 3**Begin Phase 1 of West Side Trail**

A new West Side trail would create **a major transportation and recreational asset** in the heart of the densest corridor of Savannah's historic and tight-knit, but economically low-wealth and recreationally underserved neighborhoods. The trail will also link relatively isolated westside neighborhoods, and produce safer routes to schools. The proposed actions include the following:

- ① The core of the West Side Trail would begin with a new off-road path from Exchange St. along Clinch St., and then run north along the Springfield Canal to Stiles Ave.
 - ② A complete street on Mills B Lane Blvd., and pedestrian bridge over the CSX tracks between either Mitchell St. and Homer Ave or Stuyvesant St. and Bates Ave., would provide key safe routes to the area's elementary and middle schools for students of the isolated Liberty City neighborhood.
 - ③ A path on Simmons would create an off-road link to the Tatemville Community Center and the Fairgrounds Redevelopment that includes new housing, open space, and recreational amenities. A bike lane on Meding St. would serve as a safe route to area schools for Tatemville students.
 - ④ New bike lanes on Barnard, 46th St., Montgomery St., and Exchange St. would connect with existing bike lanes on Washington Ave. that lead to the East Side Trail.
 - ⑤ A West Savannah segment is envisioned linking the Canal District to West Bay St. and Lathrop Ave. One option would entail narrowing under the Norfolk Southern tracks to leave room for a pedestrian/bike connection. Ideally the underpass would be widened when the aging bridge is replaced. Additionally, complete street paths are imagined for at least one side of E. Lathrop and West Bay.
- P** A trailhead and parking lot is proposed along Gwinnett St. in the Canal District that would enable residents, especially individuals who prefer walking or who cannot walk far, to park and access and enjoy the future Canal District Heritage Trail.
- P** A new trailhead orientation sign is proposed for the existing Bowles C. Ford Park parking lot.



Existing off-road trail Existing bike lanes Proposed off-road trail Proposed bike lanes

Years 1-5

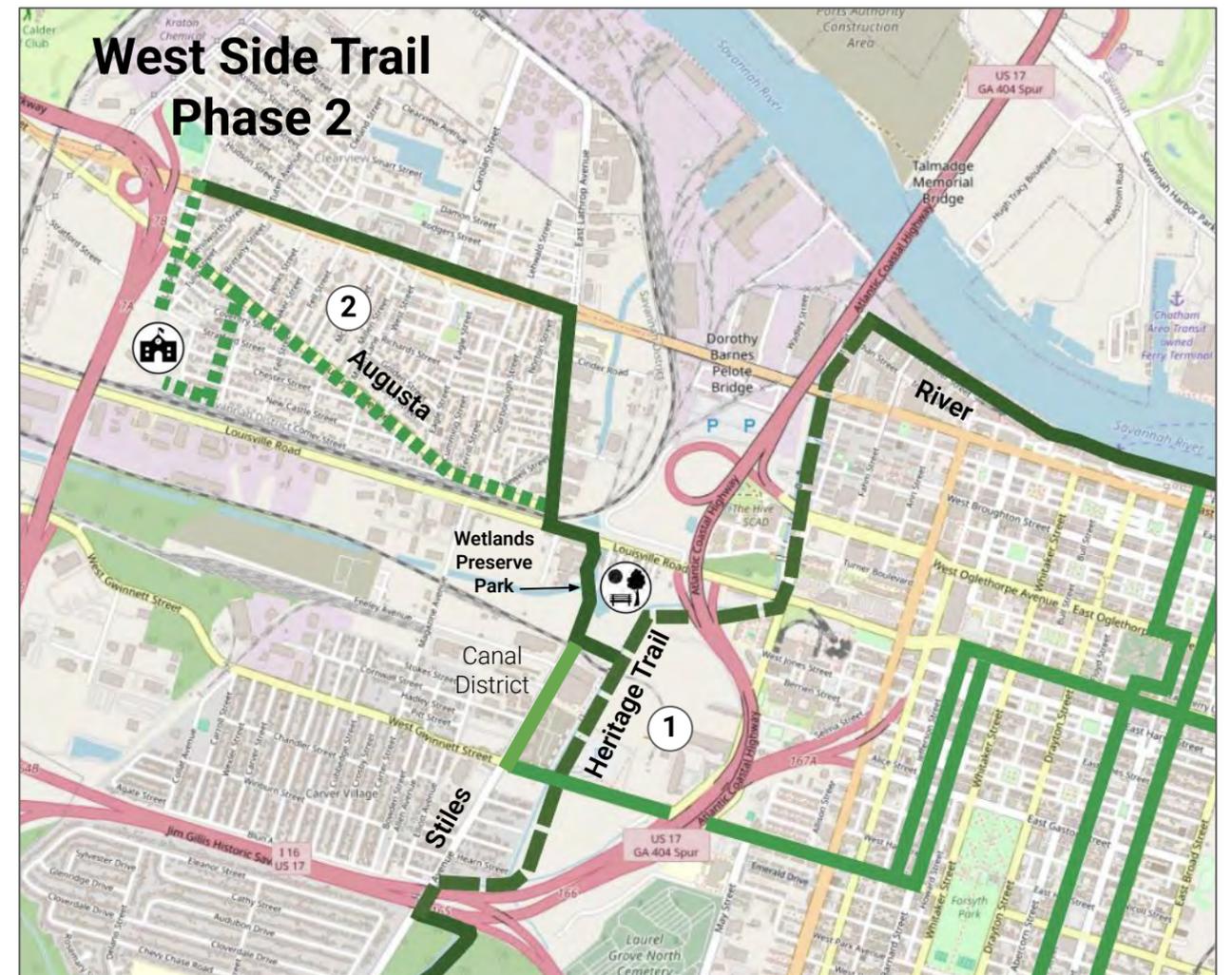
Step 4

Begin Phase 2 of West Side Trail

Phase 2 begins with building the West Side Trail as described in the Canal District Master Plan. This segment creates a **four-mile-long north-south trail from Exchange St. to River St. and the Riverfront**. For the community and culturally rich neighborhoods east and west of the path, it offers many health, transportation, and recreational benefits. For these same economically low-wealth neighborhoods, the new trail also poses challenges. The recommendations for addressing the challenges are covered in the Wealth Building chapter of the plan.

The major Phase 2 activities are as follows:

- ① Construct a new “Heritage Trail” segment of the Tide to Town Trail that would **run alongside the former Springfield Canal and through historic neighborhoods adjoining the Canal District redevelopment area and future Wetlands Preserve Park**. The Wetlands Preserve Park will be an inclusive educational/interpretive trail system with facilities for environmental education and wildlife viewing, providing public access to coastal resources within the Canal District. The new ponds that will be created in the Wetlands Preserve Park will provide important stormwater management benefits while also creating a new passive park in the Canal District. Before Louisville Rd., the trail would turn east to join with downtown and the riverfront.
- ② In West Savannah, bike lanes are recommended to run along Augusta Ave. from E. Lathrop Ave. to **connect with local streets serving students attending Brock Elementary School**.



Existing off-road trail Existing bike lanes Proposed off-road trail Proposed bike lanes



Canal District Plan “Heritage Trail” route



Trail offers safe routes to schools

Years 1-5

Step 5

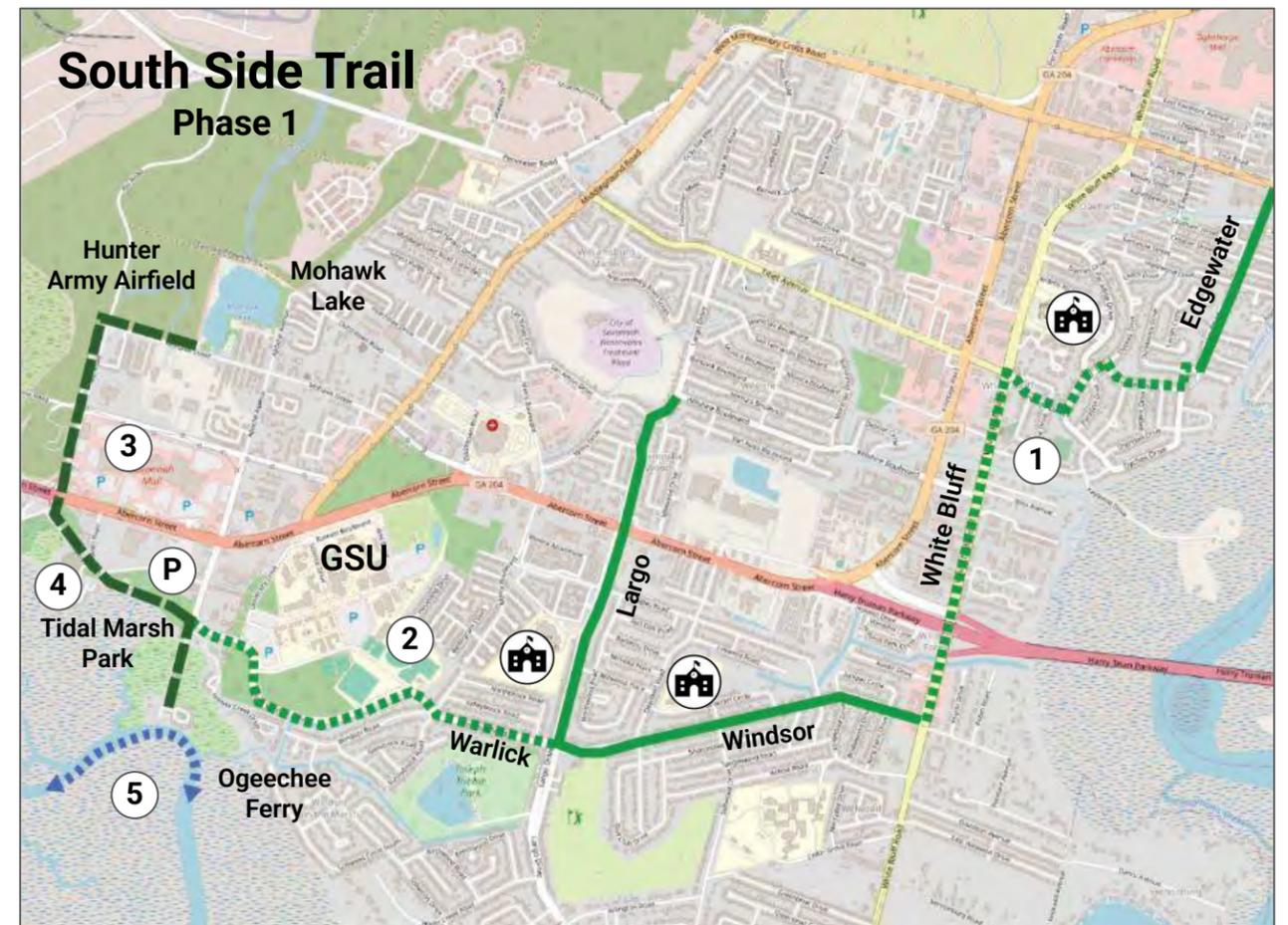
Begin Phase I of South Side Trail

A new South Side Trail is proposed between Montgomery Cross Rd. and Little Ogeechee River that would **enable residents living in Savannah's southern neighborhoods to access the larger trail system and for residents above Montgomery Cross Rd. to travel and enjoy the future paths and lanes to the south.**

The core route of the South Side Trail would follow hidden canals, wooded edges of Hunter Army Airfield, connect with Mohawk Lake Park, and provide access to Georgia Southern University's campus. Other potential connections are discussed in the Congress for New Urbanism Southside Retrofit Plan.

During Phase I, new path and lane connections are proposed, along with the creation of a new Tide to Town Trail recreational destination. The proposed "Tidal Marsh Park" would include an environmental education boardwalk that would offer a window into Savannah's marshlands and access to a ferry service leading to destinations along the Little Ogeechee River. The vision for the park is to add a "tide experience" to the Tide to Town Trail system.

- ① New bike lanes are proposed connecting existing lanes on Edgewater and Windsor Rds.
- ② A new bike lane along Warlick Dr. would link Windsor Rd. and Apache Ave.
- ③ It is recommended that the City work with the Hunter Army Airfield to construct a multiuse path along the airfield edge between Abercorn and Mohawk Lake.
- ④ Creating the proposed Tidal Marsh Park would require the City purchasing undeveloped property along Fulton Rd. and constructing a trailhead, parking area, and marshland boardwalk. The parking here would be for trail-goers and general public.
- ⑤ A unique attraction to this area would be the creation of a Little Ogeechee Ferry Service. This would entail the City collaborating with Chatham County to contract with a vendor to operate a ferry service from the County's Bell Landing boat dock. Possible ferry destinations include the Coffee Bluff Marina, Fort McAllister State Park and its overnight campgrounds, and Pin Point Heritage Museum.



Existing bike lanes ■ Proposed off-road trail ■ Proposed bike lanes ■ Ogeechee Ferry



The bike/pedestrian ferry operating on Vermont's Lake Champlain is one model.



Boardwalk at Hunting Island State Park, Beaufort, SC



Camping at Fort McAllister State Park



Existing boat dock at Bell's Landing



Phase 2

Make East Side and DeRenne Ave. connections

1 **East Side:** In Phase 2, or earlier, expand the existing sidewalk along Randolph St. into a multiuse path between Wheaton and President. **The new lane will link to an off-road path system within the Eastern Wharf mixed-use complex under development and Savannah Riverwalk.** There is already a pedestrian light and crosswalk at the entrance to Eastern Wharf. In time, the City and County may wish to extend a path along President St. to connect to points east, e.g., Fort Jackson.



2 **DeRenne Ave. Corridor:** Adding bike lanes north and south of DeRenne Ave. would **produce a key West and East Side Trail connection and give residents access to both trails.** North of DeRenne, the route would run from Meding St. along 63rd St. to Montgomery St. then turn south to Monterey Ave. and 65th St. to Waters Ave. At 66th St., lanes would connect with Ranger St. and then DeRenne Ave. South of DeRenne Ave., lanes on local streets would link existing Habersham lanes with DeRenne Ave. at Harlan Dr. Adding bi-directional protected bicycle lanes along the sidewalks on the north and south sides of DeRenne east of Ranger and Harlan Dr. would bring users to the crosswalk west of Truman Pkwy.



Phase 2

Create Casey Canal Path and Montgomery Cross Rd. complete street

1 **Casey Canal to E. Montgomery Cross Rd.:** Building a trail along Casey Canal creates a **more desirable canal path link from Lake Mayer to Montgomery Cross Rd.** than constructing a path the full length of the roadway. Adding a protected lane along Montgomery Cross Rd., which is currently being studied by the City, would connect to the bike lane on Edgewater Rd.



Existing off-road trail Existing bike lanes Proposed off-road trail Proposed bike lanes



Bicyclists on Erie Canal Trail



Phase 2

Add bike lanes to connect South Side Trail and local schools

- 1 **Tibet Ave. Lane:** New bike lanes are proposed on Tibet Ave. and Largo Dr. The lanes would extend from the existing Largo Dr. lanes now end on Wilshire Blvd to Tibet Ave. Lanes on Tibet would run from Brandon Lane to Pulaski Elementary School. The lanes on the higher volume Tibet Ave. should include flex posts to clearly mark the route.

These lanes would provide neighborhood access to the South Side Trail and **provide key safe routes to 3 schools in the area**, including the Largo-Tibet Elementary School, Pulaski Elementary School, and Windsor Forest High School.

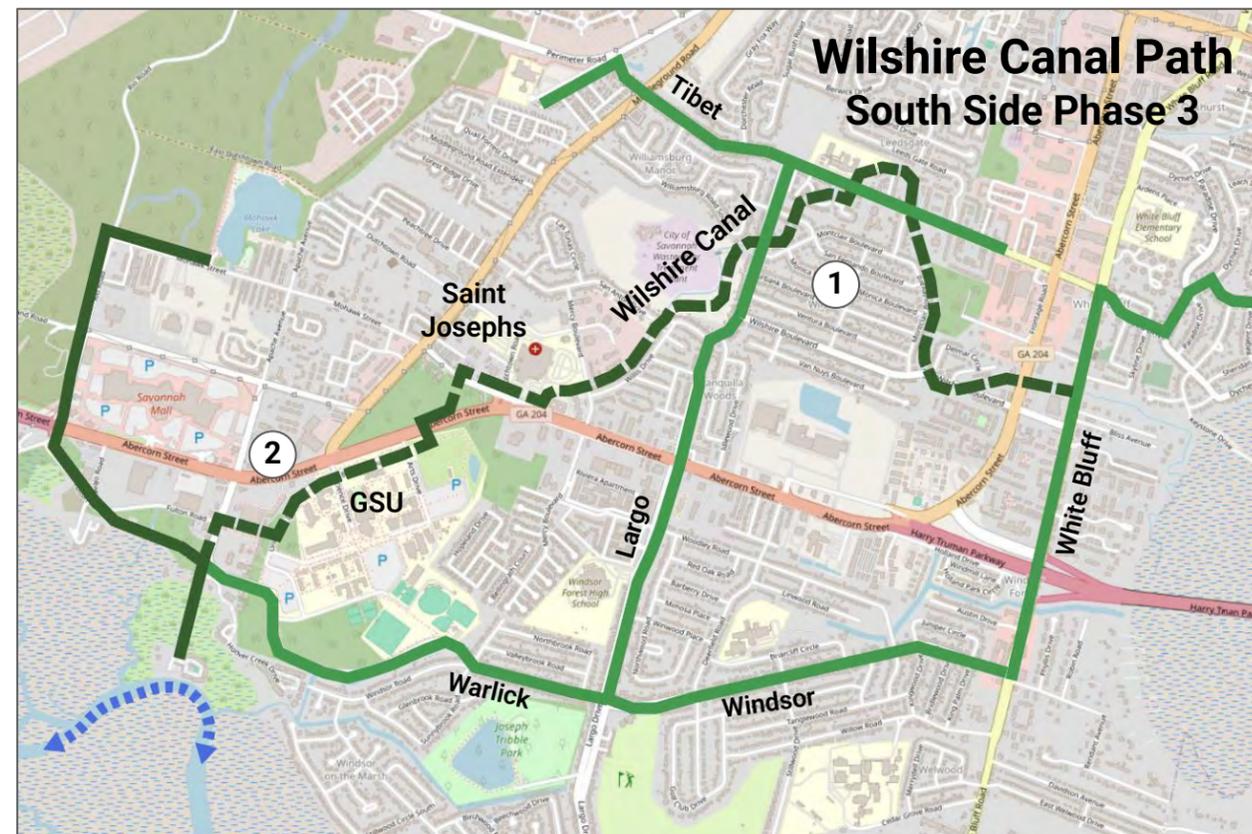


Phase 3

Construct Wilshire Canal Path

Wilshire Canal Path: is envisioned running along the canal from White Bluff Road to St. Joseph's Hospital, and the proposed Tidal Marsh Park.

- 1 The Wilshire Canal Path would follow the canal from White Bluff Rd. to the hospital.
- 2 Ideally, Georgia Southern University (GSU) and St. Joseph's Hospital would give permission to run the path along the edges of their properties. This includes making use of GSU's existing multiuse path system. On GSU's western edge, there would need to be a new path link to connect to Apache Ave. A protected bike lane along Apache would then lead trail users to the proposed Tidal Marsh Park and Bell's Landing Ferry.



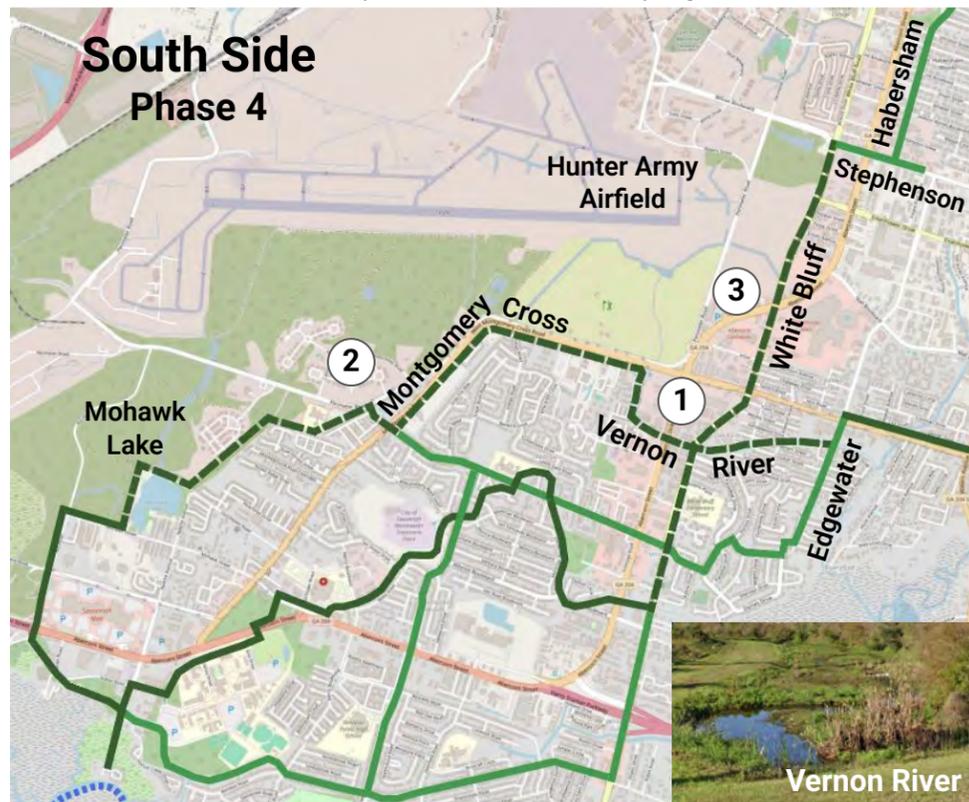
Existing off-road trail Existing bike lanes Proposed off-road trail Ogeechee Ferry



Phase 4

Complete South Side Trail and connect to Habersham

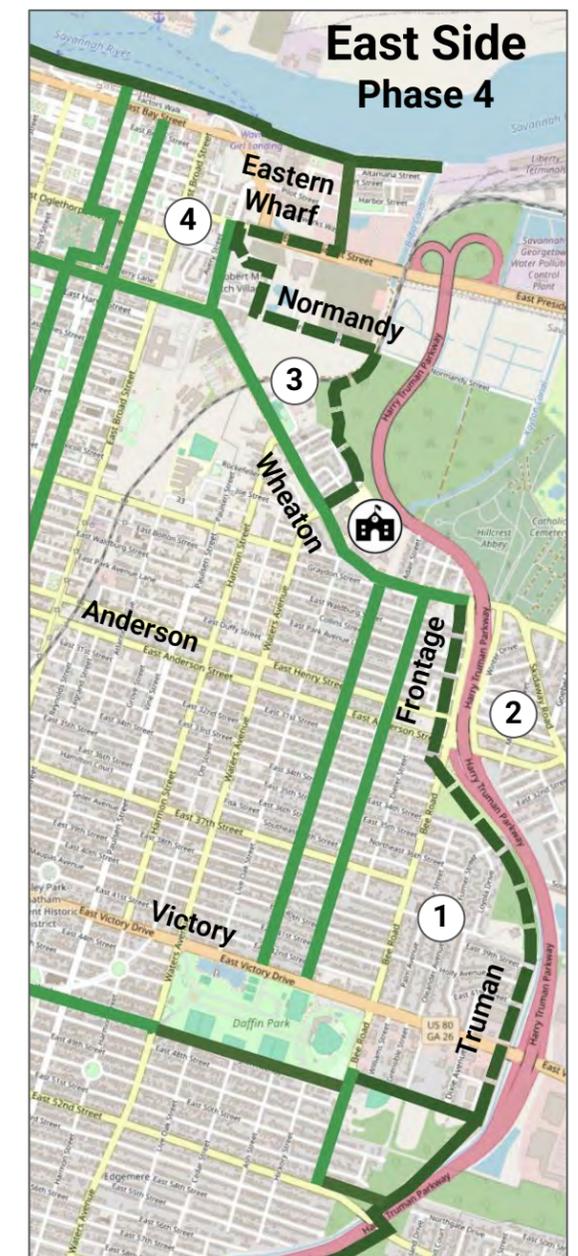
- 1 **Vernon River Path:** A multiuse path is proposed to run along the Vernon River between Edgewater Rd. and Montgomery Cross Rd. as an alternative to the segment along Montgomery Cross Rd. currently being designed by the City. Pedestrian activated lights will be required to cross Abercorn and White Bluff.
- 2 **Montgomery to Mohawk Lake:** It is recommended that multiuse path along Montgomery Cross Rd. to Tibet Ave. currently under design by the City stop at Tibet and turn west to run along the edge of Hunter Army Airfield to Mohawk Lake.
- 3 **White Bluff Improvements:** It is recommended that White Bluff Rd. be redesigned to incorporate a complete street path from Wilshire Canal to Abercorn St. From Abercorn north, work with Hunter Army Airfield to relocate its perimeter fence to allow a multiuse path to be built between Abercorn and Stephenson. Along Stephenson, existing bike lanes would benefit from flex posts and clearer striping.



Phase 4

Complete East Side Trail: Police Memorial Trail to Savannah Riverfront

- 1 **Victory Drive North:** A multiuse path is proposed for the eastern edge of Truman Pkwy. north of Victory Drive to Bee Rd. Park. Additional right-of-way may be necessary at the end of Fulmer St. to support trail connectivity.
- 2 **Anderson to Wheaton:** It is recommended that a complete street path be constructed along property owned by Savannah Housing Authority on Frontage Rd. between Anderson and Wheaton Streets.
- 3 **Wheaton to Normandy:** The route would follow the existing bike lanes on Wheaton St. At the A. Williams Elementary School, an off-road path alongside the school would cross City-owned land north to Normandy St.
- 4 **Normandy to Eastern Wharf:** From Normandy, it is envisioned that the off-road path continued to Tybee Depot, where it would run east along President St. before turning north to link to Eastern Wharf and the Riverfront.



■ Existing off-road trail
 ■ Existing bike lanes
 ■ Proposed off-road trail
 ■ Ogeechee Ferry


 Years 1 - 20

Phases: 1 - 4

Design and implement corridor wayfinding and interpretive program

As new segments of the Tide to Town Trail are built over time, it will be necessary to develop a system of signs and related graphics that will serve a range of purposes. Trail sign systems can reduce stress and improve the user experience.

Functionally, sign systems help users find their way through the use of signs, visual cues, and other design elements to help trail-users know where to access a trail, where a trail leads, how far they've gone, what types of trail activities are allowed, what the speed limit is, and where to go when crossing or travelling along roadways.

Trail interpretive signs serve to enhance a user's experience by providing educational information about the surrounding environment, history, and local points of interest. Together they serve to create a deeper connection to an area while walking or cycling and making the user experience engaging beyond just physical activity, essentially turning the bike path into a learning experience.

Generally, large urban trail sign systems include a single graphic element for identifying the entire trail with secondary graphics for identifying unique segments of the trail. Additionally, it is recommended the City partner with the Friends of Tide to Town to develop the sign system.



Examples of wayfinding and interpretive elements along Neponset River Greenway Trail



Wayfinding, orientation, and interpretive elements along the Atlanta BeltLine


 Years 1 - 20

Phases: 1 - 4

Establish Education, Arts, and Events Fund to Raise Awareness and Use

Savannah's bike lanes and off-road paths are used and appreciated today by some, but unfortunately the vast majority of Savannah residents hardly use them. The reasons why are many. Certainly more needs to be done to separate motor vehicles from bicyclists on the City's existing lanes. For some, it's a matter of access because they don't live near a bike lane or path. Others might not feel safe on the lanes or paths, perhaps because they'd be around people they don't know or imagine the paths eventually leading to a place where they might not feel safe, or be welcomed. Others might prefer to get their exercise inside their home or at the gym. One common perception when walking and biking is that it becomes too hot. And then there's the issue of time. Research shows many more would use lanes and paths to get to and from work or to shop if routes easily brought them there. Others just can't imagine how they'd have enough time to go for a walk or ride after coming home from work to cook, care for a family member, or help with the kids. As for weekends, many feel so beat they'd rather not go out again until Monday. And, even if they did go outside to exercise, some don't feel they're in good enough shape to walk very far or bike and choose instead to hop in the car.

To address some of the reasons above, it is recommended that a "Tide to Town Education, Arts, and Events Fund" be created to attract residents to the trail and promote greater awareness of the trail's development and associated benefits. Such a fund would be used to fund a range of initiatives, such as hiring staff to organize year-round educational and cultural programs and events, sponsoring group trail walks and rides, scheduling bicycle and e-bike/e-scooter use and safety classes, encouraging young bicyclists by applying recommendations from the following reports: *Assessing Mobility and Child Care Commute Experiences in the District of Columbia* and *Cycling Cities for Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers*, designing trail interpretive elements, and making grants available to community organizations, artists, clubs, and others proposing trail-related, community-beneficial activities.

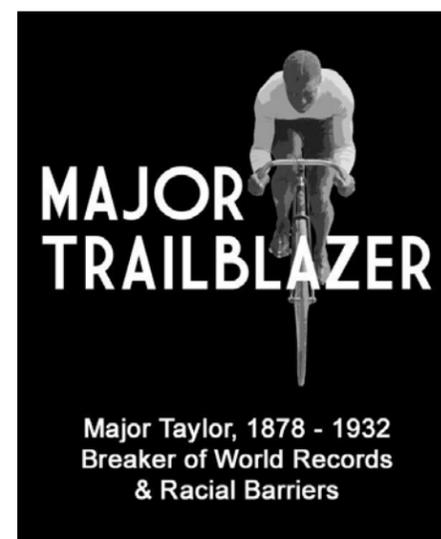
Such an initiative dovetails with the City's efforts to develop a public arts master plan and ordinance. Additionally, there are many organizations for the City to partner with when designing and carrying out such awareness-raising and educational activities. A few include the Friends of Tide to Town Trail, Bike Walk Savannah, local bike and walking clubs, and bicycle and footwear shops.



Informational materials can raise awareness and serve as a reminder of the trail's benefits



Some communities schedule introductory bicycling classes and regular family rides and walks



One Idea: school enrichment program on the life of Major Taylor, one the greatest bicyclists in history. Programs might include designing an interpretive path to celebrate of this true American Trailblazer.


 Years 1 - 20

Phases: 1 - 4

Tide to Town Arts, Events, and Education Fund

Just as the City is investing in building the Tide to Town Trail's physical structure, investing in a "Tide to Town Arts, Events, and Education Fund" will not only raise awareness of the trail, but it would serve to connect residents with their shared history through art, culture and educational programming and activities. Benefits would include engendering community pride, raising awareness, and supporting local businesses by attracting trail-goers.

One event could include organizing an annual "Trail Fest" held at various locations along the trail that transforms the trail into small-scale representations of Savannah's neighborhoods. Whether located directly on the trail or not, each neighborhood could have its own plot of land and pot of money sweetened by contributions from Savannah's business community. Neighborhoods could put on shows featuring local performers. Outdoor spaces along the trail would be set aside to showcase the work of community artists. Booths would display information about neighborhood histories and current affairs. Neighborhood restaurants could have stalls to sell their unique fare. Not only would the Trail Fest give event goers a taste of the countless cuisines found in the city, it would also offer a window into the rich tapestry of Savannah's neighborhood music, theater, art, and culture.

As for other events, perhaps there is an opportunity in the future to expand the popular annual Savannah Slithering parade so that it also takes place along one or more segments of the trail system as it is built.



Tide to Town Trail will offer multiple locations for cultural and community events.


 Years 1 - 20

Phases: 1 - 4

Tide to Town Arts, Events, and Education Fund (continued)

Another activity could perhaps be co-sponsoring the Savannah's Weeping Time Commemoration Weekend that honors the enslaved people sold at the Weeping Time, the slave auction that took place in Savannah in 1859. The event includes a memorial service near where the trail will pass on Savannah's northwest side. Attendees carry umbrellas and 436 chairs are set out to represent each of the people sold during the largest single sale of enslaved people in American history.

One idea raised during the plan's community engagement phase was to support local teachers and students wishing to research past and present neighborhood residents and to then design banners to hang along the trail in their honor. Biographical sketches the students wrote about each individual would then be posted on the Tide to Town Trail website.

The Atlanta BeltLine provides a good model. In addition to hosting seasonal and annual events, it provides funds to sculptors to place permanent and temporary installations, artists to paint murals, and musicians and dancers to stage performances.

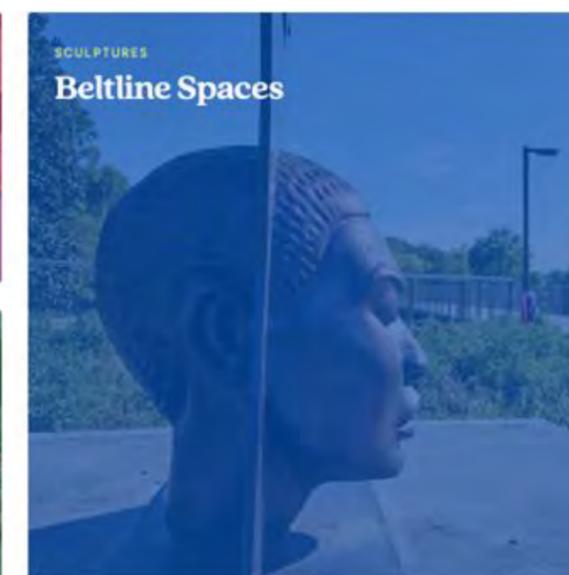
Finally, it is recommended that the City not wait for the Tide to Town Trail to be completed before initiating an arts and events fund. Funding activities along the soon to be open Truman Trail will help to attract new users to the trail, while demonstrating the many other ways expansion of the trail will benefit Savannah neighborhoods over time.



Banners allow for temporary cultural and art installations.

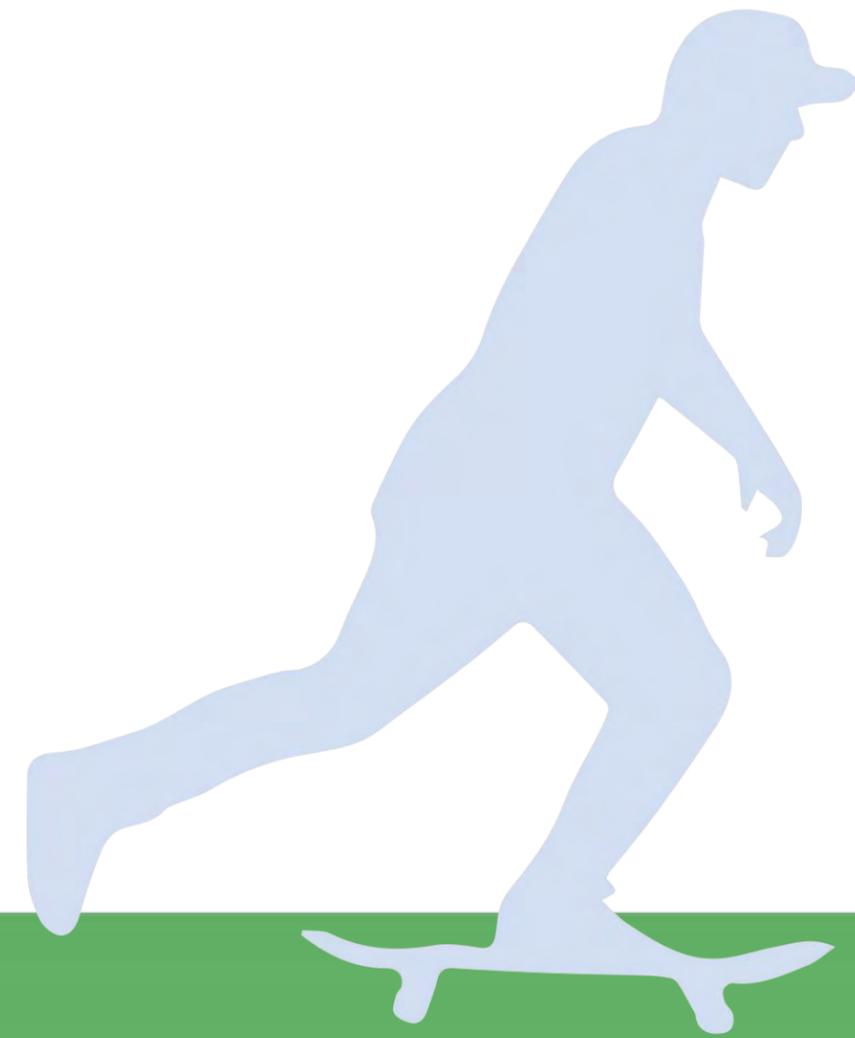


Images from Weeping Time Commemoration Weekend



Atlanta BeltLine funds a robust arts program.

2 Wealth Building



Wealth Building

Cycle of Wealth vs Cycle of Poverty

Much has been written about the many challenges that limit the ability of a person born into poverty to improve his or her economic circumstances. Together the challenges are commonly described as a "Cycle of Poverty." Typically, the cycle is characterized as an interconnected set of conditions that result in both individuals and families remaining impoverished across generations due to barriers that limit economic stability and upward mobility. These include unequal access to high-quality health care, difficulty affording basic living costs, inability to provide resources for family members' education, poorer educational outcomes, fewer job opportunities, and inability to purchase a home.

This plan proposes a set of **alternative interconnected actions** referred to here as a "**Wealth Cycle**" for building generational wealth for those living in Savannah's low-economic wealth neighborhoods along the Tide to Town Trail. The wealth building initiatives should give priority to neighborhoods approximately ½ mile on either side of the trail identified as having a high percent of households below Federal poverty guidelines and enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. These include: Tatemville, Cann Park/Jackson Park/Bingville, Feiler Park/Dittmerville, Eastside, West Savannah, Carver Heights (inclusive of Historic Carver Village), Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield, and Tremont Park.

As the accompanying "Wealth Cycle" diagram illustrates, two primary sources of wealth derive from homeownership and one's own ability to be economically successful. With respect to the first, ownership of a home, condominium, or coop for most Americans is their principal financial asset and, according to the Urban Institute, "one of the most effective ways to build wealth."

Because economic wealth is directly related to owning a residence, this chapter begins with promoting homeownership. This includes doing more to assist the relatively large number of low-income homeowners in neighborhoods along the trail to continue living in their homes and helping renters to purchase their first residential property.

After making recommendations for promoting homeownership, the plan proposes other related actions for promoting a person's economic success.



Wealth Cycle for building generational wealth.

Tide to Town to Homeownership

Highest Priority

The diagram on the opposite page identifies a few of the major recommendations included in this section of the plan for promoting homeownership.

As noted, the plan's highest priority wealth-building recommendation is to promote home ownership. The reason is homeownership plays a vital role in an individual and family's ability to accumulate wealth.

The financial benefits that come with owning a residence are many. Each mortgage payment builds equity. Homeownership serves as a forced savings mechanism. Homeowners save money on taxes, including capital gains. Owning a residence protects against inflation. And owning a residence allows the asset to be passed down through inheritance with no state estate tax to be paid and, for most homes, no Federal estate tax paid in either case.

According to the Federal Reserve Board's Survey of Consumer Finances in 2022, the primary residence remained the largest asset category on the balance sheets of American households.



Step 1: Protect Legacy Homeowners

It is recommended that the City engage potential partners to put into place a program to offsets property tax increases associated with the trail's development in vulnerable neighborhoods along the proposed route similar to the Atlanta Beltline's Legacy Resident Retention Program. The BeltLine's Program enables approved program homeowners in these neighborhoods to only pay the exact property tax dollar amount owed in 2019 annually through 2030.

The Legacy Resident Retention Program is primarily funded through philanthropic donations and grants. Specifically, it has received support from organizations such as the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, Georgia Power, the Rocket Community Fund, Delta Air Lines, Bank of America, and others.

The program helps current homeowners to stay in the communities in which they live, while supporting generational wealth-building.



Tax relief helps current homeowners afford to remain in their community.



Step 2: Assign “Tide to Town Housing Counseling Staff” to support homeowners and renters

As the Tide to Town Trail is further planned, designed, and built, the property values in neighborhoods along the trail will rise due to further downtown expansion and ongoing Canal District development. For homeowners along the trail, this has the potential for being positive news, so long as property taxes for fixed- and low-income homeowners are held flat. Rising property values will also exert increased pressure on homeowners to sell. And selling your home for more than you ever thought your property was worth may, at first, seem to be an outcome too good to be true.

Unfortunately, much is known about what happens for homeowners and communities in other places where large public improvement projects raise local property values; outcomes are not as positive as they first seem. Homeowners frequently sell when they are first approached for far below what their home is worth in the rising market or may be worth in a few short years. Often those who sell discover they cannot afford to buy or sometimes even rent another home in their community as prices escalate, resulting in their displacement from the community. For those currently renting, rising property values typically result in their rents going up to unaffordable levels and they end up having no choice but to move from their community.

To help homeowners and renters address these coming changes, it is recommended that the City dedicate staff to provide homeowner and renter assistance to residents in economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail. The staff would operate out of a physical location on the city’s northwest side where increases in property values are likely to rise faster than other communities due to future trail investment coupled with investments in the Canal District.

For homeowners, staff would provide guidance about the new Tide to Town homeowner assistance programs proposed in this plan, as well as other existing housing assistance programs, and tax abatements available to homeowners. Staff would be available to provide information regarding the local real estate market, especially to assist homeowners to understand the value of their home in the current market and in the future if they do wish to sell. Additionally, staff would provide other guidance, e.g., counseling related to heirs and development of wills to pass wealth to others.

For renters, guidance would be provided on current and future programs to help renters find affordable housing, or on how they might enter a program that leads to their being able to purchase a home.

Step 3: Expand support for homeowner retention by creating new “Tide to Town Home Improvement Assistance Initiative”

As the table on the opposite page shows, there is a significant percent (37%) of homeowners among the largely African American residents in the priority wealth-building neighborhoods along the trail. For reference, African American homeownership in Atlanta is 12.8%.

Of concern, nearly 30% the homeowners living in the priority neighborhoods along the trail are low-income elderly. Consequently, many today find it difficult to afford basic home maintenance, defer maintenance, and homes often fall into disrepair. Understandably, others consider selling their home to relieve the financial burden. However, most want to remain in their community and know, that if they sell, there are presently few options for them to find alternative affordable local housing.

To assist existing fixed- and low-income homeowners to remain in neighborhoods along the trail, it is recommended that the City and its partners provide additional financial support to enable homeowners to pay for critical home maintenance projects.

Specifically, it is recommended that Housing Savannah’s Homeowners Assistance Program create a special “Tide to Town Home Improvement Assistance Initiative” with the goal of assisting 140 homeowners per year improve their homes for a total of 2,850 homes over the next twenty years. This would require the City and the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund to provide approximately \$2.1 Million annually, with a 5% annual increase to cover inflation and other costs. It is envisioned that homeowners with incomes at or below 100% of the Savannah Area’s Median Income would be eligible for an average of \$15K in financing for home maintenance and improvement projects. Structured as low-interest deferred payment loans, no loan interest or principal repayment would be required. It is further recommended that homeowners who contract with local minority- and women-owned businesses receive up to \$5K more in assistance, helping to realize two wealth-building goals at once. It should be noted that regarding home improvements and a recipient’s property taxes, exemptions would be available for applicants meeting certain age, income, and disability criteria.

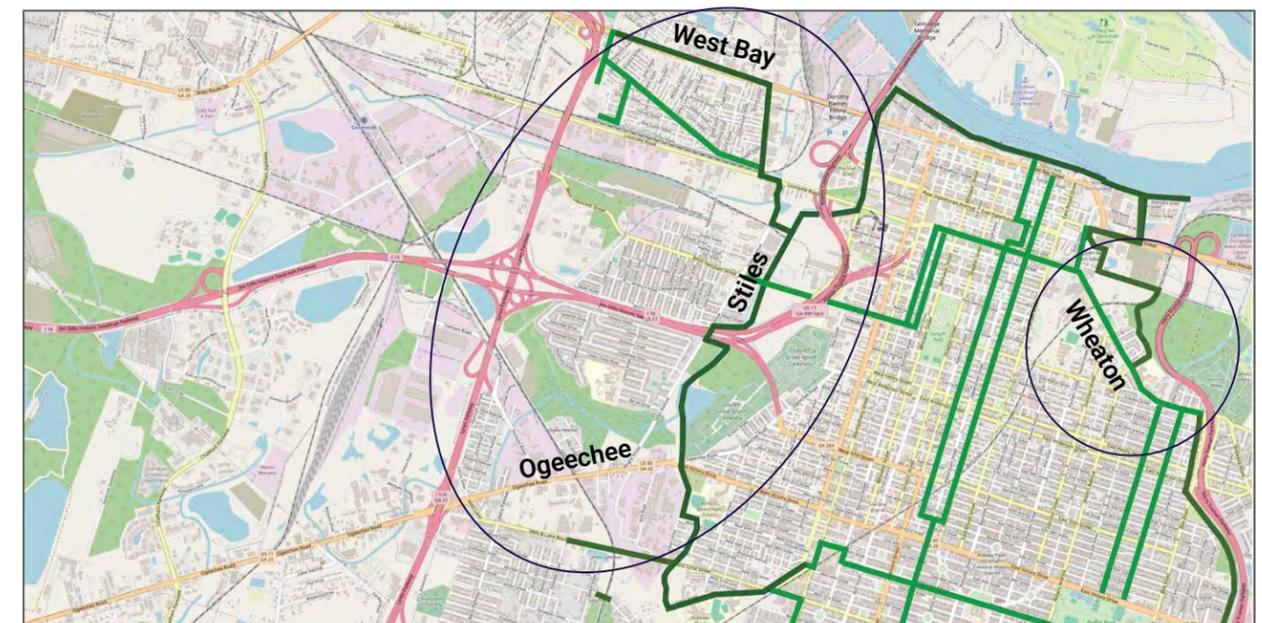


Eligible projects: improvements to building envelope and systems including roofs, exterior wall surfaces/components, structural, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, etc.

Estimated African American Homeowners in Economically Low-Wealth Neighborhoods Along Tide to Town Trail

Neighborhood	Black-Owned Households	% of Total Households
West Savannah	470	32%
Tatemville	280	34%
Liberty City / Summerside / Southover / Richfield	920	62%
Eastside	320	14%
Carver Heights	330	45%
Cann Park / Jackson Park / Bingville / Feiler Park / Dittmerville	530	50%
Total	2850	37%

Estimated from 2020 U.S. Census and 2023 American Community Survey



Two areas of low-economic wealth neighborhoods along the trail are roughly shown above (Borders are approximate). See the Appendix for more information.

Step 4: Launch a “Tide to Town Homeowners Accessory Dwelling Unit Initiative”

Building on changes made by the City in 2023 to provide greater flexibility for developing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), it is recommended that the City launch a special “Tide to Town ADU Initiative.” ADUs are an effective way for homeowners to increase their income and ability to afford to remain in their homes. They also increase the local supply of affordable housing by producing relatively small dwellings, respect and retain the character of neighborhoods zoned for single-family homes, and rent for less than larger apartments.

ADUs are typically a converted basement or attic in a person’s primary residence, a new addition to a primary residence, or a structure separate from the primary residence, such as a cottage or converted garage.

The Tide to Town ADU Initiative would provide qualified low-income homeowners with 50% financing up to \$25,000 for developing an ADU. Deferred low-interest loan financing with no loan interest or principal repayment required for homeowners who continue to reside in their homes and are in compliance with program terms.

Approximately 10 ADUs could be built per year with a joint City and Savannah Affordable Housing Fund budget of approximately \$250,000 annually, with a 5% annual increase to cover inflation and other costs.

Once again, it is recommended that those homeowners who contract with local minority- and women-owned businesses to construct the ADUs receive up to \$5K more in financial assistance.



Examples of Accessory Dwelling Units

Step 5: Explore passing “Cottage Court” Zoning to help elder homeowners and others downsize and live locally

It is common for older homeowners to reach a point in their lives when they may want to sell their homes but remain in or near the community in which they currently live. Reasons for selling may be that one no longer needs as much room; or going up and down stairs is increasingly difficult; or one wishes to pass the house along to members of the family; or by selling, one could have much needed money to enjoy their retirement years.

In Savannah, here are a relatively large number of elder homeowners who reside in the priority wealth-building neighborhoods along the trail, especially in the neighborhoods of Liberty City/Summerside/Southover/Richfield, Cloverdale, Carver Heights, and W. Savannah.

Moving and finding housing nearby poses a challenge. There is a lack of smaller, one-level and affordable housing choices in neighborhoods along the trail and across the city.

To address this challenge, the plan proposes that the City adopt “Cottage Court” or a similar zoning category that supports the construction of smaller attached and detached one-story housing that may be attractive to elder homeowners wishing to move.

Cottage Court housing typically is made up of small homes, 600-800 square feet built typically on one-level and organized around a common outdoor space or “court.” They are ideal for seniors and individuals with limited mobility. With respect to cost, because of their size they are less expensive to purchase or rent, and the smaller size results in lower taxes, energy and maintenance costs.

There is another important benefit that comes with updating residential zoning district to allow the construction of cottage courts. The new zoning will result in the creation of needed affordable homes across Savannah with limited or no public financing, saving public dollars for investing in other affordable housing initiatives.



East. 38th, Savannah

Cottage Courts were once permitted in Savannah

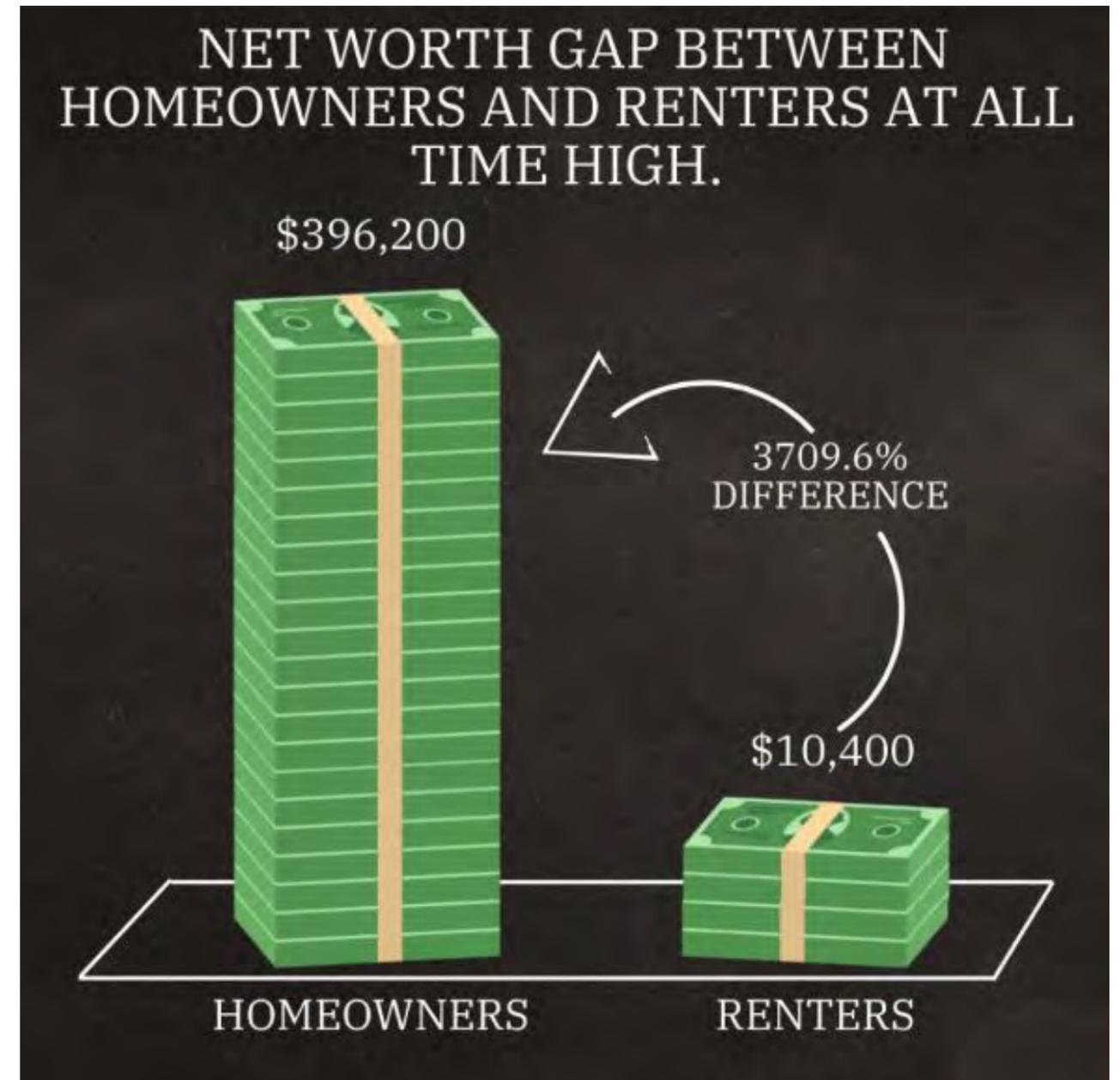


Examples of new Cottage Courts recently developed in Georgia

Step 6: Provide “First-Time Homebuyers Assistance”

Every effort should be made to help interested renters to buy a home, condo, or co-op. Owning a home is not for everyone, especially those who easily want to move to a new location. But for those seeking to live in a community indefinitely or who want to make physical changes to a residence without needing landlord approval, owning a home is an important way to pay off a mortgage, gain ownership of a property, and build wealth over time.

As the accompanying diagram shows, homeowners have a much higher net worth than renters. An average American homeowner has a net worth of around \$396,200 compared to \$10,400 for renters according to a 2022 Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances. The nearly approximately 3700% difference underscores the wealth building benefits of owning over renting.



Data: Federal Reserve Board Survey of Consumer Finances

Step 7: Expand First-Time Homebuyers Assistance

One specific step would be for the City and the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund to allocate at least \$300,000 annually through the City's DreamMaker Program to assist renters to become homeowners in the priority wealth-building neighborhoods along the trail. The funds would provide up to \$30,000 to approximately ten first-time home buyers to cover mortgage down payments, closing costs, and gap financing.

The City's DreamMaker program partners with organizations providing affordable housing and affordable home purchase financing including:

- Housing Authority of Savannah Housing Choice Voucher Home Purchase Assistance
- Department of Community Affairs Georgia Dream
- Federal Home Loan Bank
- Various mortgage companies with first time buyer programs

Additionally, it is recommended that the City explore ways to further assist renters interested in homeownership through potential collaborations with the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America (NACA). NACA is the largest HUD-approved non-profit homeownership organization in the country. They have helped more than 75,000 renters obtain new home mortgages over the past 30 years. The foreclosure rate of 0.000012% of those who receive mortgages is notably low. They also have access to approximately \$20-Billion in committed funds to provide mortgages to first-time homebuyers. Mortgages can be used for single-family homes, condominiums, multi-family, and co-ops.



Supporting first-time homebuyers is key.

Step 8: Offer "Homebuyer Training and Education"

Because the educational attainment level and work experience of some first-time home buyers prevent them from qualifying for a mortgage or limit their ability to obtain a job that qualifies them for a mortgage, it is recommended that the City and its partners provide educational and workforce training programs to interested first-time homebuyer applicants.

Homebuyer education courses usually prepare participants for buying a home. Topics generally address questions like: How much money is needed for a down payment? How much home can interested buyers afford? How much to budget for utility and maintenance costs? And how much time does the process typically take? Answering these and related questions tend to help people decide when they are ready to buy.

To increase the likelihood of first-time home-buyers receiving a mortgage and being able to afford a home over time, it is recommended that interested home buyers receive the necessary education assistance to obtain a high school equivalency degree if they do not have one. Also, those whose incomes fall below qualifying mortgage requirements could be provided skills and workforce training assistance to increase their chances of raising their annual incomes to a level that makes them eligible for a mortgage.

One training and education partner is Operation HOPE, a national nonprofit focused on financial literacy and economic inclusion. It offers residents financial education, credit and money management, as well as pathways toward homeownership and starting a business.



Consider linking education and training with homebuying

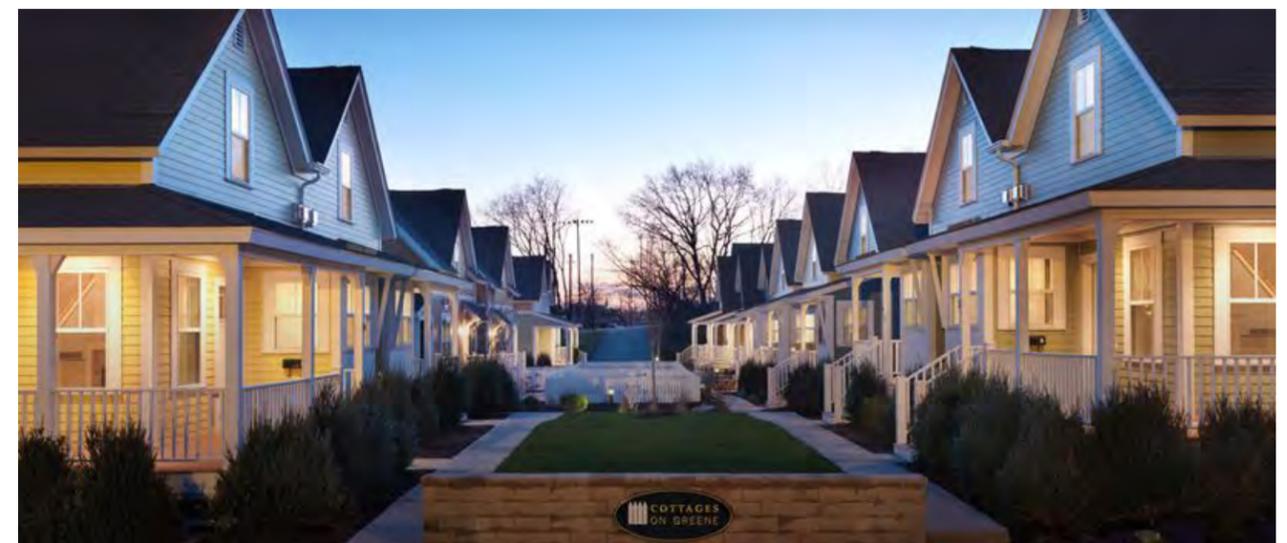
Step 9: Establish “Missing Middle” Multi-Unit Affordable Housing Fund

As land values rise across Savannah and in economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the Tide to Town Trail, it is recommended that the City update zoning within single-family residential districts to allow for the construction and conversion of two-, three- and four-unit residences and cottage court developments if the developments meet affordability and other community goals.

Along with making zoning changes, it is recommended that the City budget \$3 Million annually for acquiring properties, or Right-of-First Refusal options to some properties in priority wealth-building trail neighborhoods, for the purpose of developing affordable multi-unit housing. Toward this end, the City should partner with the Chatham County/Savannah Land Bank and Savannah Community Land Trust to acquire and develop multi-unit properties. These nonprofit partners have the ability to use deed restrictions to ensure future units remain affordable.

When nonprofit land trusts develop and sell a unit at an affordable rate, the unit owner enjoys most of the benefits of traditional home ownership. The differences are:

- The nonprofit would own the land under the homes and then sell or rent units for usually about 20-50% below the market rate.
- For unit-owners, a future resale price would be set by a formula written into their ground lease. For example, a deed restriction would state that the unit can appreciate at a modest rate, e.g., 2.5% per year. This allows the unit-owner to sell and realize any financial equity from having owned their unit. At the same time, the fixed modest resale price ensures that the unit will remain affordable for the next buyer.
- In a similar way, nonprofits are able to keep rental unit prices affordable.



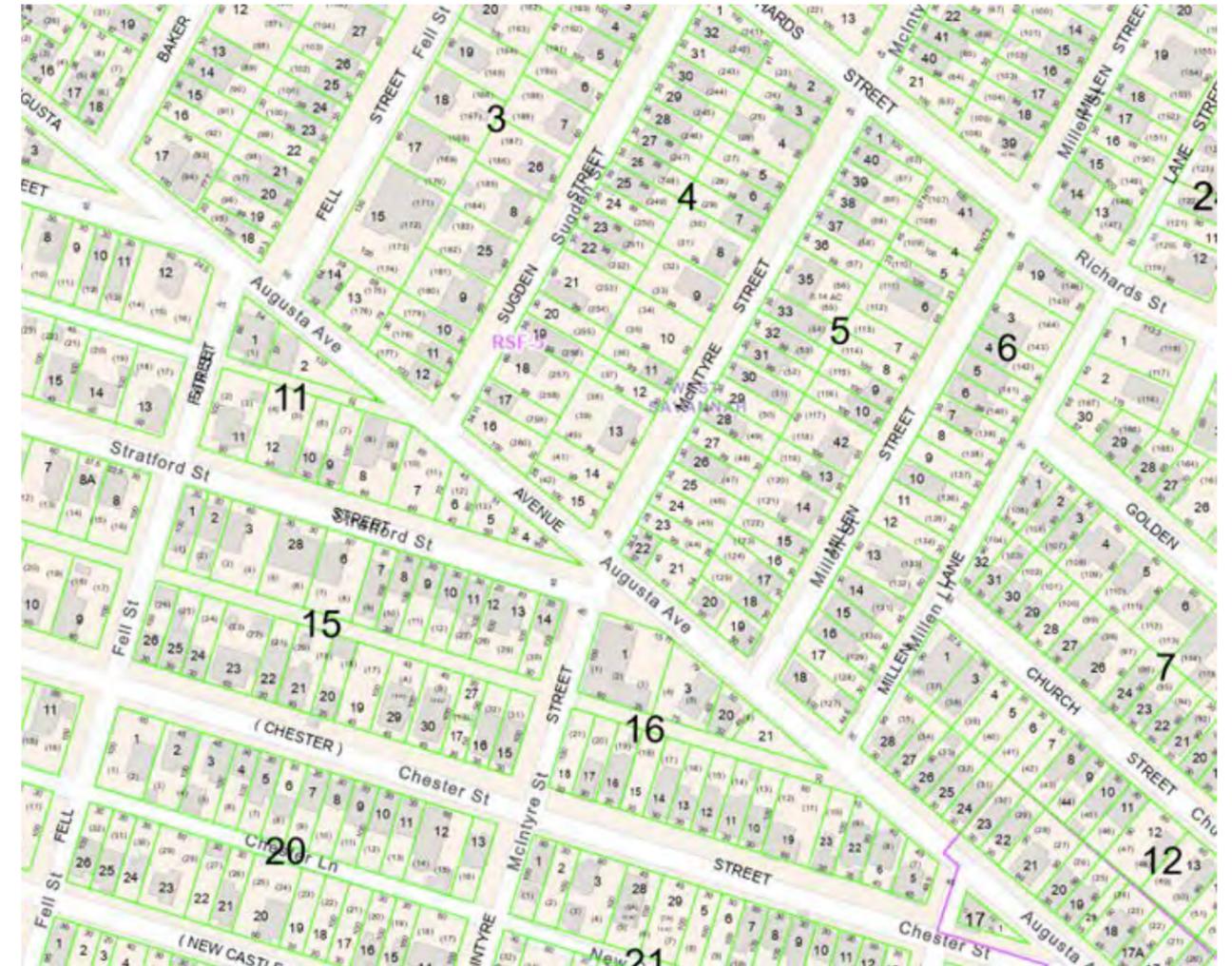
“Missing Middle” housing Includes two- to four-unit residences and cottage courts.

Step 10: Update Zoning to Promote Affordable Housing

Zoning revisions are required to help implement some of this plan's homeownership and affordable housing recommendations. For example, one recommendation is to update the current zoning for Residential Single-Family -5 and -6 zoning districts to permit homeowners to build ADUs on properties 3,000 square feet and above. The revision is needed because many of the single-family homes in several economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail are built on lots between 3,000 and 5,000 square feet. This means current zoning would deem these homeowners ineligible for ADUs. In fact, because zoning currently states that a lot needs to be at least 125% of the minimum lot area in a particular district, ADUs today would only be permitted if a home is on a lot 6,250 square feet in RSF-5 and 7,500 square feet in RSF-6. In reality, many of the currently conforming lots in these districts would not be large enough to meet the 125% lot size ADU eligibility requirement.

Similarly, frontage requirements do not reflect reality and zoning updates are required. For example, RSF-4, -5 and -6 districts require minimum frontages of 40-, 50-, and 60-feet respectively. While many existing homes are built on lots with 30-foot frontages. This is especially true for the West Savannah where the zoning is largely RSF-5 and the frontage for many of the homes is 30 feet.

It should be noted that the City should conduct a full zoning review focused on making updates that align recommended homeownership and affordable housing goals. For reference, the City might want to consider the following three zoning initiatives. In Salt Lake City, zoning was updated to allow townhomes, duplexes and other small multiunit housing in single-family residential districts, including exempting them from minimum lot areas, widths, and frontage requirements. In Minneapolis, new zoning allows two to four residential unit housing to be built in single-family zoning districts that includes a reduction in parking requirements. And in Massachusetts, the state allows developers to apply for a comprehensive permit to build affordable housing in areas where zoning regulations would normally prohibit it. This law is known as the Comprehensive Permit Law.



Much of West Savannah, Carver Heights, Cloverdale, and Liberty City neighborhoods are located in Residential Single-Family -5 and -6 zoning districts requiring minimum lot sizes of 5,000 square feet and 6,000 square feet respectively. However, many homes in these neighborhoods do not meet these thresholds.

Step 11: Explore Others Measures

Municipalities and other organizations across the country are working to grow their supply of affordable housing. It is important to regularly assess these efforts to determine their potential applicability in Savannah.

For example, it is recommended that the City explore a “Right of First Refusal” tool, such as that used by Montgomery County, MD, that places a deed restriction on existing multifamily properties to give right-of-first-refusal option to buy the property and potentially sell to an affordable housing organization.

In an additional example, one land use tool worth exploring is another used by Montgomery County, MD. There the County has placed a deed restriction on all existing multifamily housing properties. The deed restriction requires that owners of multifamily properties notify the County when a property is up for sale to give the County the right-of-first-refusal option to buy the property at an agreed upon price. When the County exercises the option, they buy the property and then typically resell the units to an affordable housing organization, such as a land trust. More often than not, the County chooses not to purchase a property. But the tool gives the municipality the ability to acquire high-priority properties for affordable housing.

Another measure worth considering is implementing a Savannah Housing Demolition Tax similar to a Cook County, IL, program that raises funds for affordable housing by charging a \$3-\$5 per square foot fee for any housing units demolished in the county. Since 1998, the Cook County demolition tax has generated an estimated \$60,000 annually. If such an amount were raised in Savannah and used to underwrite a 10-year bond, the amount would equate to approximately \$5.5 Million in value to support affordable housing programs.

The City may wish to explore the feasibility of establishing a “Power to the People” program that uses revenues from future municipal solar and other alternative energy projects to generate funds for affordable housing. Georgia has 52 municipally-owned electric systems, and a solar/wind program would help the City’s achieve its 100% renewable energy goal by 2050.

Finally, it is recommended that Housing Savannah make its upcoming Housing Summit an annual event. The Summit will bring together housing practitioners, planning staff, and elected officials from across Chatham County and the region to address the housing challenges. Making the Summit an annual event would provide a forum for discussing progress toward goals and possible new approaches that might be appropriate for Savannah.

Affordable Housing Demolition Tax

Evanston, Cook County

Evanston, IL, raises funds for affordable housing by taxing housing demolition



An aerial view of the 52-megawatt solar farm by Silicon Ranch in Hazlehurst, Ga.

Tide to Town to Jobs

Promoting Economic Success

It would be shortsighted to think of the Tide to Town Trail solely as a pathway for people to travel to and from work or to walk or ride along for recreation. The trail's development presents a pathway for supporting the economic success of individuals and families living in the economically low-wealth communities along the trail.

Because one thing is certain: with the trail's development will come jobs. A good number will come with the design, construction, and maintenance of the trail itself. Others will be generated by efforts to organize seasonal events and programs along the trail. Others will be associated with new restaurants, ice cream parlors, bike shops, and other businesses operating along the trail. And as a transportation facility, once completed, the trail system possesses the potential for making it easier for residents to get to and from employment centers.

The recommendations build on the ongoing efforts of the City's Economic Development Department, including the Department's:

- Workforce Development and Employment Services
- Savannah Business Opportunity Program
- Savannah Entrepreneurial Center
- Access to Capital
- Business Incentives
- Tax Abatement Job Creation Incentives

The recommendations also complement the work of other City partners, such as Step Up Savannah.



Tide to Town to Jobs (Continued)

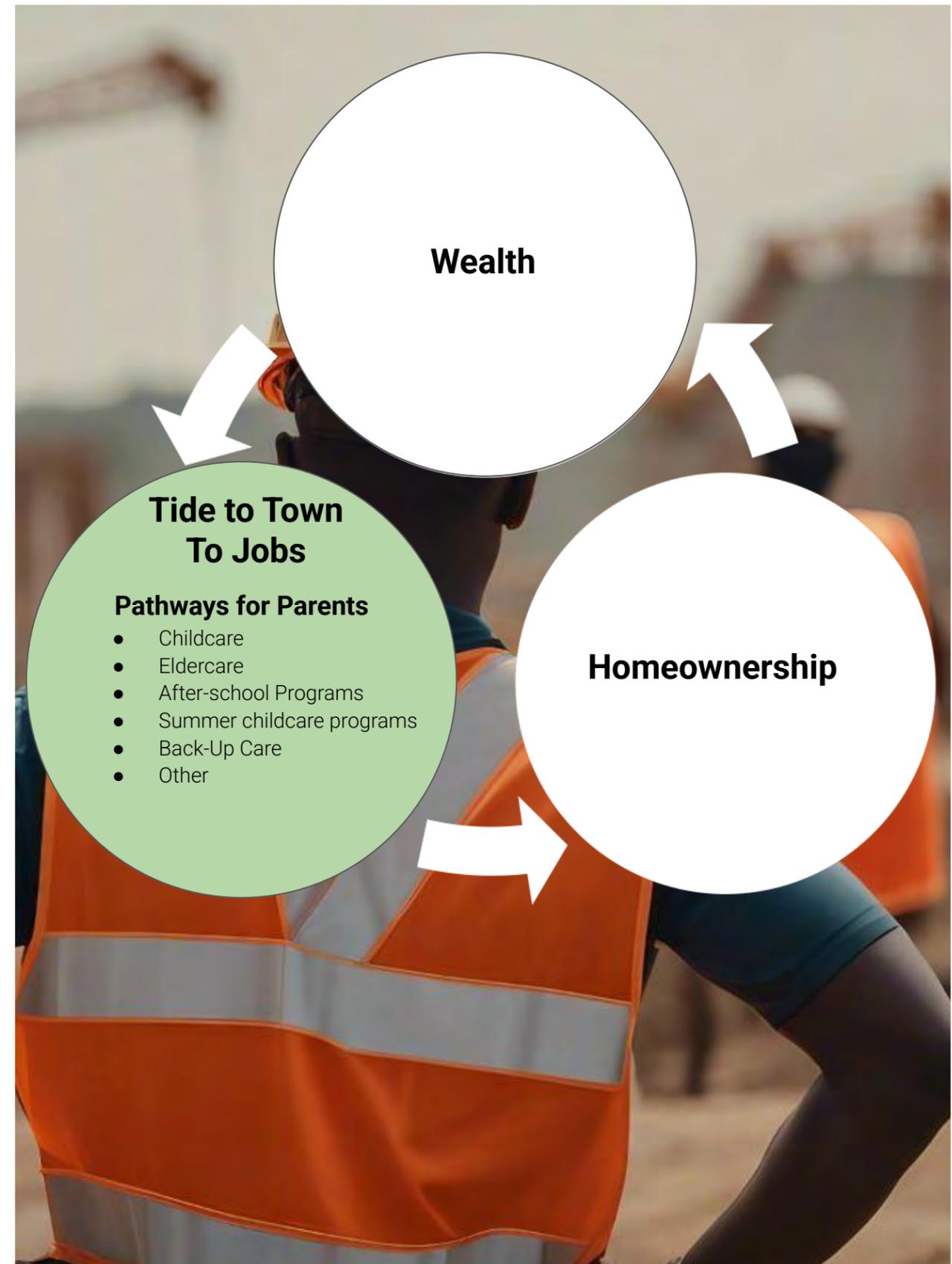
Pathways for Parents

More than half of all workers in the country today have family care responsibilities outside their full-time jobs.¹ This includes adults who are taking care of both kids and a parent at the same time. These responsibilities often prevent these earners from acquiring and maintaining good jobs, and for those who are employed, studies suggest that large percentages of them struggle at work, taking time off, foregoing promotions, reducing hours or even leaving the workforce altogether.

To address these challenges, it is recommended that the City and its partners design a special Tide to Town Trail “Pathways for Parents” program that includes investing in, and incentivizing, the development of a comprehensive package of family-support measures to relieve major barriers that limit a person’s ability to work and improve their economic circumstances. The goal would be to grow the availability of a full-range of family-support options, including comprehensive care for infants and toddlers, pre-school and school-age children and eldercare programs that serve priority wealth-building neighborhoods along the trail. For example, a recent Georgia statewide survey showed a shortfall of more than 800 childcare seats in neighborhoods along the trail.

It is further recommended that City organize a “Pathways for Parents Summit” to bring together community members, leaders of the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, and representatives of social service agencies and organizations, to discuss ways to build a more effective year-round family-support program. For example, according to a paper published by the Center for American Progress, many families find that “summer childcare arrangements are expensive, difficult to find and out of line with parents’ work schedules.” Other research has found that providing financial support to families is another effective way to provide in-home childcare and eldercare when local facilities are not available. Additionally, investing in the provision of “backup care” for both children and elders is critical for addressing the inevitable emergent life challenges that inevitably arise for families.

¹2022 Boston Consulting Group report



Step 1: Pass “Local Employment Construction Job Ordinance”

It is recommended that the City pass a local employment ordinance to help create good-paying jobs in the construction industry. According to the National Association of Home Builders, the top 25% of most construction trades professions earn at least \$60,000 annually, and these are careers that do not require a college degree.

The intent of the ordinance is to ensure that a significant number of the trail-related construction jobs benefit residents of Savannah’s economically low-wealth neighborhoods.

Boston Massachusetts’s Local Employment Ordinance is an innovative model to consider. The ordinance requires that any public development project and private development project over 50,000 square feet meet the following targets:

- At least 51% of total work hours of journey people and 51% of the total work hours of apprentices in each trade must go to city residents.
- At least 40% of total work hours of journey people and 40% of total work hours of apprentices in each trade must go to African Americans.
- At least 12% of total work hours of journey people and 12% total work hours of apprentices in each trade must go to women.



Trail-related construction projects present an excellent opportunity to employ local residents.

Step 2: Offer Tide to Town Trail “Local Hiring Goal Contracts” for Local Women-Owned and African American-Owned Small Businesses

It is recommended that the City work toward the goal of procuring 25% of Tide to Town Trail-related design, engineering, construction, and landscape maintenance contracts for companies, or teams of companies, in which prime contractors are local women-owned and African American-owned small businesses. Such an initiative complements and strengthens the City of Savannah’s existing Local Small Biz Enterprise Program that works at increasing the utilization of local small businesses in all areas of City procurement.

One model to consider is the U.S. Small Business Administration’s 8(a) Program. The decades-old initiative helps provide a level playing field for small businesses by limiting competition for certain contracts to small and disadvantaged businesses provided the field of competition is large enough. The 8(a) program also provides training and technical assistance to strengthen the ability of companies to compete.

In Georgia, the City of Atlanta issues a certain number of contracts specifically for firms led by women and African American-owned businesses.



Set-aside contracts are an effective way to support local businesses.

Step 3: Institute “Community-Beneficial Employment Incentives” to promote local hiring and Pathways for Parents services, e.g., incorporating into developments: daycare, eldercare and after-school programs

It is recommended that the City revise the zoning in priority development areas along the trail to award density-bonuses and/or parking reductions to developers that demonstrate 25% participation of local women-owned and African American-owned small businesses during the design, construction, and operations phases of a project along the trail.

The City should also consider awarding density bonuses and other incentives for commercial projects, or mixed-use developments, that underwrite local businesses and services that support local workers. Examples include bonuses for: setting aside 10% of a project’s commercial space for below market rental rates to local women-owned and African American-owned small businesses; for setting aside space for local women and African American retailers who operate stalls or food trucks on their properties in the vicinity of the trail; and for underwriting services that support the local workers, e.g., daycare, eldercare, and after-school programs.



Common trail-related businesses include bicycle shops, fitness centers, cafes, ice-cream shops, and breweries.



Provide bonuses for developments that include daycare, eldercare, after-school activities, and other Pathways for Parents programs.

Step 4: Improve access to larger CAT system and fund an e-Bike and e-Scooter Equity Initiative

The proposed revised trail route intersects with Chatham Area Transit bus stops in a number of locations. However, further study is needed to determine how to more effectively integrate the Tide to Town Trail with the CAT system. This includes collaborating with CAT to explore coordinating bus route and trail connections, locating trail parking near bus stops, and designing trail parking areas to include bike racks, and possibly, future bike rentals.

For individuals who do not own a car, e-bikes and e-scooters offer an important transportation option, and it is recommended that the City, Chatham Area Transit, and Friends of Tide to Town collaborate to launch an e-bike and e-scooter equity initiative. A first step would be to fund a program that provides free e-bikes and e-scooters to individuals who need reliable transportation to access employment. This will help to set the framework for the City to amend its ordinances to permit e-bike and e-scooter rental stations. Steps to promote equity could include offering lower e-bike/scooter rental rates, rebates, and giveaways to low-income workers along the lines of similar initiatives around the country.

With respect to allowing e-bikes and e-scooters on buses, some U.S. transit operators allow them to go on bus bike racks which traditionally hold two bikes. And to keep e-scooters, especially, from being abandoned around the city, one approach being considered entails charging parked scooters for the time spent stopped at the curbside.

Establishing an e-bike and e-scooter rental program would complement the bicycle-sharing program begun by CAT and the City in 2014.



More work is needed to integrate trail and lanes with CAT buses and to explore implementing an e-bike and e-scooter equity initiative.



West Side Community Transit Center

Step 5: Explore creating “West Side Community Transit Center” with CAT

Whether the existing Joe Murray Rivers Transit Center is expanded or a new facility is created, it is recommended that the City approach Chatham Area Transit to discuss the possibility of creating a new “community transit” center along the trail on the city’s west side. The objective would be to **streamline access to major regional employment centers** on Savannah’s west side while **bundling Pathways for Parents activities to help alleviate common barriers to economic success**.

It is envisioned that the new center operate a shuttle service to and from the new Hyundai plant, port, airport, JCB, Gulfstream, and other job centers. This aligns with CAT’s 2023 Master Plan that states: “There is a strong need expressed by multiple stakeholders and demonstrated in the market analysis to find opportunities to connect workers with jobs.” It is further envisioned that incorporated into the center would be childcare, eldercare, and after-school programs to enable transit riders to have their dependents cared-for while at work. A healthcare facility and fitness center would provide access to preventative health care, support personalized fitness plans, and contribute to overall improved community health. Additionally, the community transit center may be an appropriate location to house the Tide to Town Housing Counseling Staff.

It is recommended the new facility be located somewhere within the Springfield Canal Corridor between Mills B. Lane Boulevard and West Bay Street.



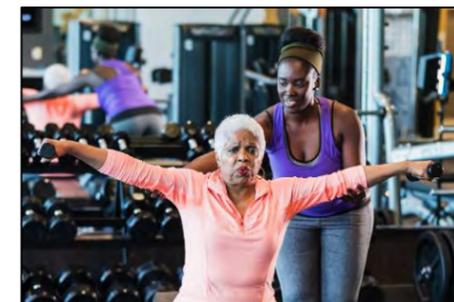
Eldercare



Childcare



After-School



Health & Fitness



Housing Assistance

Step 6: Invest in “Water Works Market and Business Center”

As per the 2022 Feasibility Study and Canal District Master Plan, support the redevelopment of the Water Works building for one or more of the following: community market and local business and labor-force incubator.

The Boston Public Market is one example worth considering. The facility exists as an indoor year-round marketplace. The public can purchase fresh foods, prepared meals, crafts, and specialty items. Most foods are seasonal and locally-sourced, with everything sold either produced or originating in the New England region. The facility includes areas for farmers, fishermen and women, food entrepreneurs, and those who make local arts and crafts.

The market provides a facility for small businesses to thrive and grow, with the support of year-round programs, workshops, classes, and other activities.



Images from Boston Public Market



Water Works Building



Boston Public Market main entrance

Step 7: Launch Tide to Town “Marketplace Initiative”

Launch a Tide to Town Marketplace Initiative that gives preference to local women and African American-owned businesses to operate food and retail stalls at high-traffic outdoor locations along the trail during specified days/times.

The initiative is based on the Atlanta Beltline Marketplace model. The BeltLine Marketplace serves as a small business incubator that offers affordable commercial spaces directly on the Atlanta Beltline to participating businesses.

In the near-term, a Tide-to-Town Marketplace should explore identifying high-traffic locations where the trail will pass along the edge of Daffin Park, Lake Mayer Park Parking Lot (in collaboration with Chatham County), and outside the former Water Works Building before and after Enmarket Arena events.

When future segments of the trail are completed, other locations could include Mohawk Lake Park and a future Tidal Marsh Park.

A Tide to Town Marketplace might also want to permit the participation of food trucks owned by women and African American-owned businesses at these and other locations along the trail.



MarketPlace stalls line the Atlanta BeltLine



Vendors benefit from high volume trail traffic along the Atlanta BeltLine.



With a stall along the Atlanta BeltLine, Cococakes tested their business model and is now moving to a brick-and-mortar facility.

Step 8: Establish a “West Side Works” workforce development initiative

The City and its partners, e.g., WorkSource Coastal, should initiate a new trail-focused “West Side Works” workforce development program comparable to Atlanta’s Westside Works initiative. This includes expanding and incorporating the employment training programs offered at Moses Jackson Advancement Center and related programs into the future Water Works Market and Business Center, a possible Community Transit Center, or in another facility on the west side.

The Atlanta initiative is funded in part by the Atlanta BeltLine and managed by local nonprofit that offers comprehensive training, educational services, and access to jobs. Thus far as a result, 68 BeltLine residents have undergone training and 85% have found jobs.

While a workforce development center along the trail on Savannah’s west side would focus on providing skills to help participants obtain trail-related jobs, it is recommended that additional training programs be offered focused on other growing industries, e.g., health care and information technology, that offer well-paid jobs to people without bachelor’s degrees.

Atlanta’s Westside Works has found that providing program participants with stipends to use to pay for childcare and eldercare has been critical to helping draw and retain participants and a Savannah program should consider doing the same.



The Westside Works workforce development initiative in Atlanta offers an excellent model.

Step 9: Create future Small-Area Trail Plans & Community-Benefit Agreements

While this plan sets a framework for the Tide to Town Trail's development, it will be important for the City to work with residents, businesses, and organizations in both the priority wealth-building neighborhoods, and all the neighborhoods along the trail, to develop Small-Area Trail Plans and Community-Benefit Agreements that cover a range of topics. These include:

- **Wealth Building:** Create Community Benefits Agreements between communities and developers that define, and legally-bind developers to provide, wealth building and other community benefits, e.g., affordable housing, job training and creation, commercial affordability, open space and community facility development, community leadership training, and other agreed upon benefits.
- **Place-Making:** Ensure the trail and future trail connections help communities achieve local place-making goals, e.g., incorporating the trail and possible spur connections into existing neighborhoods and potential new commercial and mixed-use developments.
- **Trail Enhancements.** Explore ways for the trail to connect to key neighborhood locations, e.g., local open spaces, community centers, commercial centers, schools, and libraries.
- **Related Park-Making:** Prepare trail designs for trail-related open spaces, gathering areas, and other venues desired by neighborhoods.
- **Programs and Activities:** Ensure residents regularly are invited to share their thoughts on possible arts, events, and educational programming that might enhance the trail-users experience.



Atlanta BeltLine Trail alongside new housing and retail



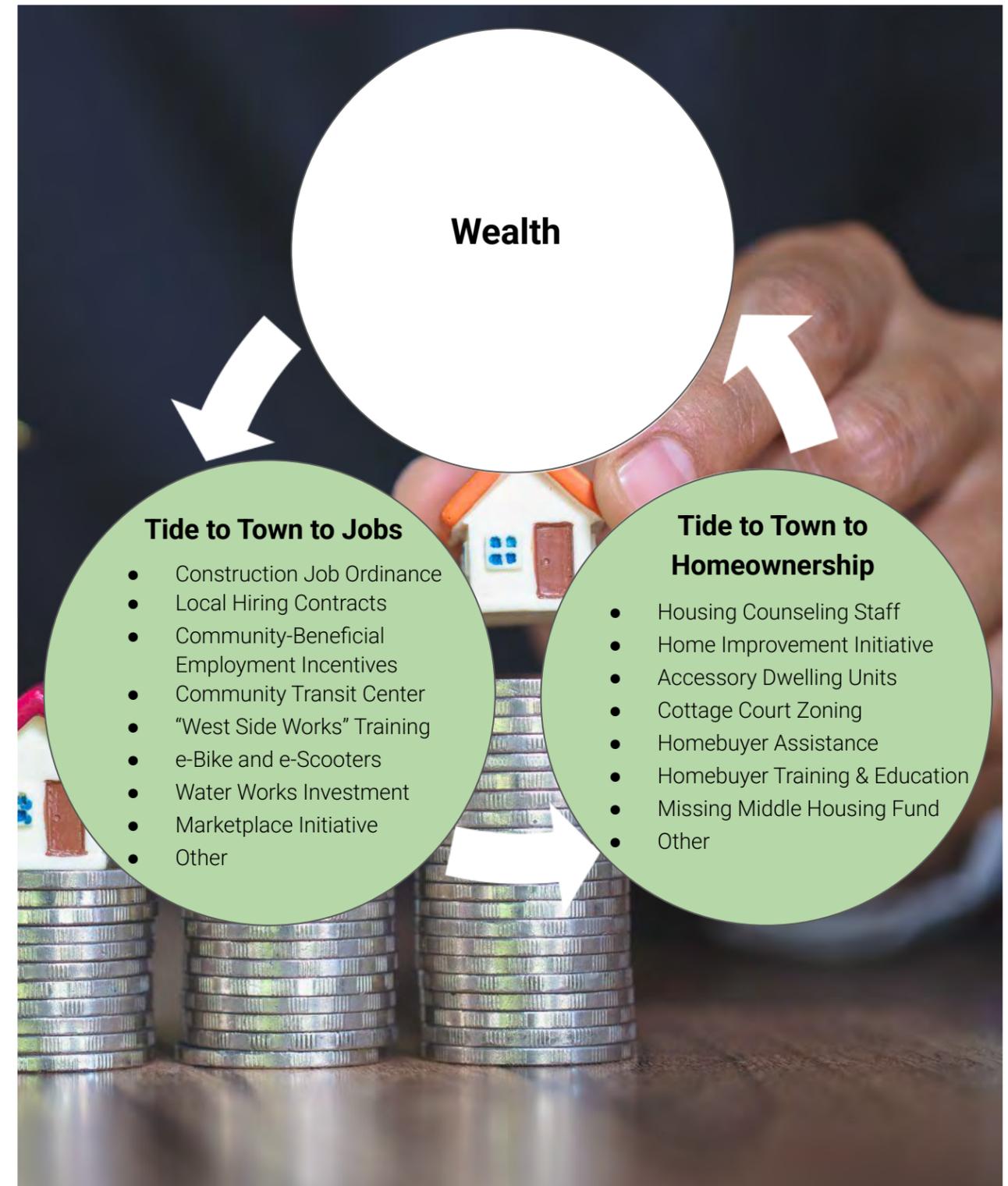
Ongoing community engagement is vital for shaping Small-Area Trail Plans along the trail and future community-benefit agreements.

Summary

Wealth Building Toolkit

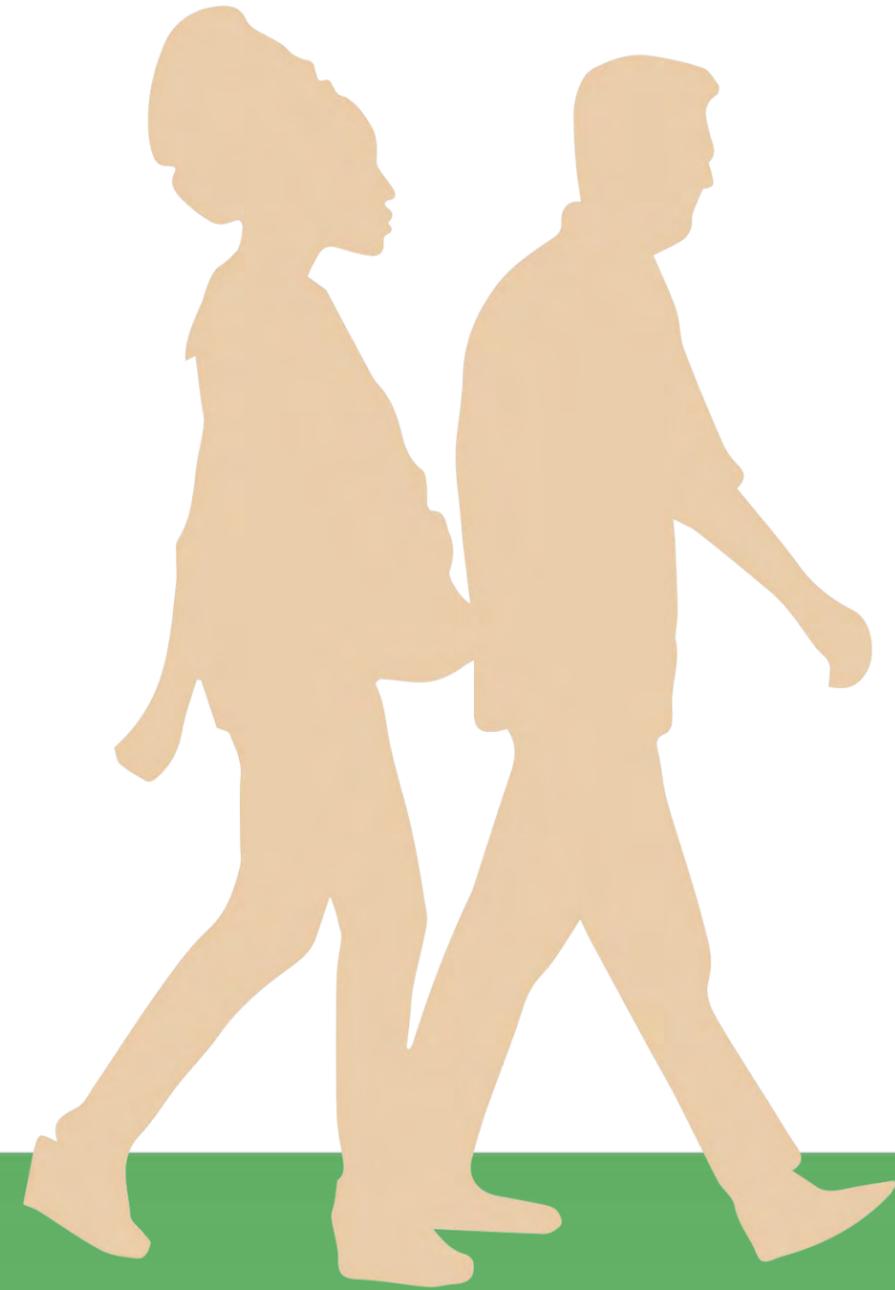
The two green circles on the opposite page serve as a summary of the integrated set of actions recommend in the plan for building wealth among those living in the economically low-wealth neighborhoods along the trail. Together they serve as a “toolkit” for wealth building.

It should be noted that the recommendations in the plan are far from an exhaustive set of actions. Rather they should be seen as providing a general direction for making progress toward the goal of promoting wealth building along the Tide to Town Trail in the years ahead.



Wealth Building requires investing in a cohesive collection of actions that start with enabling low-wealth homeowners to keep and improve their homes, assisting renters to purchase their first residences, and supporting local worker and business success.

3 Funding the Trail & Wealth Building



Funding the Trail and Wealth Building

A Collaborative Effort

Major urban projects as proposed by the Tide to Town Plan requires equitable, sustainable funding activities based on a comprehensive strategy involving government funding, grants, partnerships, and creative user-based solutions. A comprehensive approach should consider the entire trail lifecycle, from planning and construction to maintenance, ensuring long-term usability and upkeep. Already, the City, County, and its partners have invested, and will continue to invest, in the trail's development. For example, the City's 2024 Capital Improvement Budget has included money for the trail. An estimated \$10 Million will come from the recently passed Savannah Hotel Motel Tax increase to 8%. Local funding includes revenue generated from current and potential future Special Purpose Local Options Sales Taxes (SPLOST) and General Obligation Bonds for streetscape improvements.

Wealth building activities in neighborhoods along the trail will come from a variety of sources, e.g., the Savannah Affordable Housing Fund, Savannah's Economic Development Department, and other sources. Additionally, zoning bonuses and other incentives from the City will result in private developers along the trail investing in affordable housing, local hiring, retail space underwriting, and other community benefits. And there is certainly more that can be done to help Savannah area employers to broaden their local job training programs.

The following pages of the plan summarize a range of public and private funding sources, along with the potential benefits of creating Tax Allocation Districts, Community Improvement Districts, and a Downtown Development Authority for generating and investing funds to support the trail's development and related wealth building initiatives.



A comprehensive funding strategy is needed to build the trail system and for investing in the priority wealth building communities along the trail.

Potential Sources of Funding: State of Georgia Programs

Effective trail financing depends on a balanced, inclusive, and long-term strategy. Successful funding approaches leverage diverse sources including government grants, public-private partnerships, and user-driven solutions to support every phase of a trail's lifecycle, from planning and construction to ongoing maintenance.

In Georgia, several state-administered programs play a vital role in advancing trail development and long-term stewardship across urban, suburban, and rural communities. These programs invest in infrastructure while also supporting public health, economic opportunity, and environmental preservation.

Key funding sources can be leveraged to ensure trails are developed equitably and deliver lasting value and meaningful benefits for all residents, including those in underserved and historically excluded communities.

Specific recommendations include:

- The *Georgia Recreational Trails Program* is a federal grant program funded by the Federal Highway Administration and administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The program provides funding for trail construction, trail maintenance, and trail education. Eligible applicants include qualified local governments (as determined by the Department of Community Affairs), authorized commissions, and state and federal agencies. Nongovernmental entities with IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status may apply for education funds only.
- The *Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program* is the state's first dedicated funding mechanism to support parks and trails as well as protect and acquire lands critical to wildlife, clean water, and outdoor recreation across the state of Georgia. Since the program's establishment in 2019, it has allocated over \$117 million of funding to 62 conservation and outdoor recreation projects across Georgia. Grantees have committed more than \$201 million to match these grant funds, for a total investment of more than \$318 million.
- The *Transportation Alternatives Program* is a partnership between Georgia Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration to provide the opportunity for local governments to improve the quality of life for citizens in communities across the state by pursuing projects that might not otherwise be possible. Through the program, local governments pursue projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, pedestrian streetscape improvements, and other non-traditional transportation related activities.

- The *Georgia Department of Transportation Transit Trust Fund Program* provides state funding to public transit agencies to replace, rehabilitate, and purchase buses and related equipment, and to construct bus-related facilities. The program is administered by GDOT and is a potential funding source for initiatives outlined in Chapter 2 – Wealth Building, including improving access to the larger CAT system and funding an e-Bike and e-Scooter Equity Initiative, and exploring the creation of a “West Side Community Transit Center” with CAT.
- The *Improving Neighborhood Outcomes in Disproportionately Impacted Communities Program* is a Governor's Office of Planning and Budget grant program that supports community improvements in underserved areas. The funds help local governments invest in projects like trails, parks, sidewalks, and affordable housing that promote healthier, more connected, and equitable neighborhoods. This program funds investments in neighborhood features, including parks, recreation facilities, sidewalks, and healthy food access, can work to improve physical and mental health outcomes. Examples of funded projects include:
 - Chattooga River Greenway Trail \$2.2M
 - Atlanta Westside BeltLine Connector Sidewalk Link \$2.1M
- The *Georgia Investments in Housing Grant Program* supports nonprofits that provide affordable housing and aid individuals experiencing homelessness. One example is the Atlanta Beltline Partnership/Atlanta Land Trust which was awarded \$3.3 million to create 15 permanently affordable townhomes along the Beltline for low income residents.

Other Georgia Trails and Their Funding

Understanding how trails are funded across Georgia provides insights for developing sustainable, community-supported projects. The examples on the next page highlight a range of financing strategies used by local governments and partners to support trail planning, construction and long-term maintenance.

Most rely on TSPLOST, SPLOST, federal and state grants, donations, sponsorships, Adopt-a-Trail volunteer programs, and fundraisers. None appear to use powerful tools recommended for funding the Tide to Town Plan, e.g., Tax Allocation Districts (TADs) or Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) for trail or trail-adjacent development. But some have established TADs that encourage connectivity with commercial corridors and improve accessibility to the trails. Most have set up private, non-profit organizations that raise money independent of local governments and spend it under a mutually agreed upon plan of action.

Other Georgia Trails and Their Funding (continued)

Georgia trail examples include:

- The *Carrollton GreenBelt* is an 18-mile multi-use trail encircling the city of Carrollton, connecting neighborhoods, schools, parks, and shopping areas. The GreenBelt has received funding from various sources, including federal stimulus dollars, SPLOST, the Georgia Department of Transportation, and PATH. The University of West Georgia (UWG) is a key partner in the Carrollton GreenBelt project, contributing to its funding and overall success. UWG, along with Tanner Health System and Southwire Company, sponsors a community bike share program that supports the GreenBelt, providing bikes for faculty, staff, and students to use for recreation and transportation along the trail.

When it is complete, the trail will be the largest paved loop trail system in the state and will connect the Carrollton City School campus, the University of West Georgia, city parks, and commercial areas.

- The City of Columbus's *Dragonfly Trails* are a collaborative effort between the City of Columbus and Dragonfly Trails, Inc. The Dragonfly Trails Master Plan provides a framework for 29 miles of multi-use trails, which are a vital part of Columbus's transportation and recreation infrastructure, connecting neighborhoods, parks, and the Chattahoochee River.

Columbus's Partner, Dragonfly Trails, Inc. (formerly Friends of the Dragonfly Trails), is committed to securing diverse funding sources to support the continued expansion and improvement of the trail system. The organization funded an Executive Director to focus efforts on marketing, education and expansion of the Dragonfly Trails. Money for trail projects comes from a combination of city, state and federal funds. The privately funded Dragonfly Trail Network has paid for engineering, design and planning work. Construction funding sources include the Columbus Consolidated Government (T-SPLOST, land acquisition funds), Columbus Waterworks, DNR Recreational Trails Program grants, and the Housing Authority of Columbus.

Additional partnerships are important to the success of the trails. Dragonfly Trails, Inc. works closely with the PATH Foundation, which provides guidance on trail design and assists with trail construction. Trees Columbus plays a major role with landscaping, and Georgia Power assists with moving utilities around and securing easements. Columbus 2025, a diverse group of public, private, and nonprofit leaders, the Chamber of Commerce, the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley, Inc., and Columbus State University have assisted in securing public art and other improvements along the trails.

- Three Northeast Georgia Counties are collaborating to develop the 39-mile *Firefly Trail* that will pass through Clarke County, Oglethorpe County, and Greene County. It will be constructed along the historic rail line, known as the Athens branch of Georgia Railroad.

Funding for the multi-use Firefly Trail in Athens-Clarke County is structured through Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (TSPLOST), Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes (SPLOST), federal and state grants, private donations, gifts and grants from private businesses, industries, and foundations, and public fundraisers, such as the annual "Ticket to Ride" event. Federal and state grants have come from the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation Alternatives Program, the Georgia Department of Transportation's Transit Trust Fund, and the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) "Conserve Georgia" grants. Firefly Trail, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established to promote the trail's creation and use, has worked for over a decade advocating, fundraising, partnering with local governments and building a network of supporters.

- The *Silver Comet Trail* is a 61.5-mile paved pedestrian and bicycle trail in Georgia, following the former route of the Silver Comet passenger train. It stretches from Smyrna, Georgia, to the Georgia/Alabama state line, where it connects with the Chief Ladiga Trail in Alabama, creating a continuous 94-mile paved trail. The funding comes from a mix of public and private sources, including the PATH Foundation, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia State Parks, Cobb County, and private donations, e.g. Cox Enterprises that has contributed funds to connect Atlanta trails with the Silver Comet. The PATH Foundation has played a key role in coordinating development and construction, while the State Parks administer public funds. Additionally, the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides grants for trail development and improvements.

Potential Private Partnerships

As noted in these examples, private partners can help make trail and related wealth building projects happen by providing funding, resources, and support. This includes local businesses, companies, nonprofits, and foundations. Working with private groups can also add new ideas and money to help build, maintain, and promote trails. For example, in support of the Tide to Town Plan, a representative group of potential private partners could include: Friends of Tide to Town; area universities, including, Savannah State University, Georgia Southern University, Savannah Tech, and Savannah College of Art and Design; Georgia Power; area businesses, foundations and non-profit organizations, e.g., bicycle shops and tour operators, Savannah Tree Foundation; Coastal Georgia Greenway; East Coast Greenway; Georgia Trails Alliance; and many more.

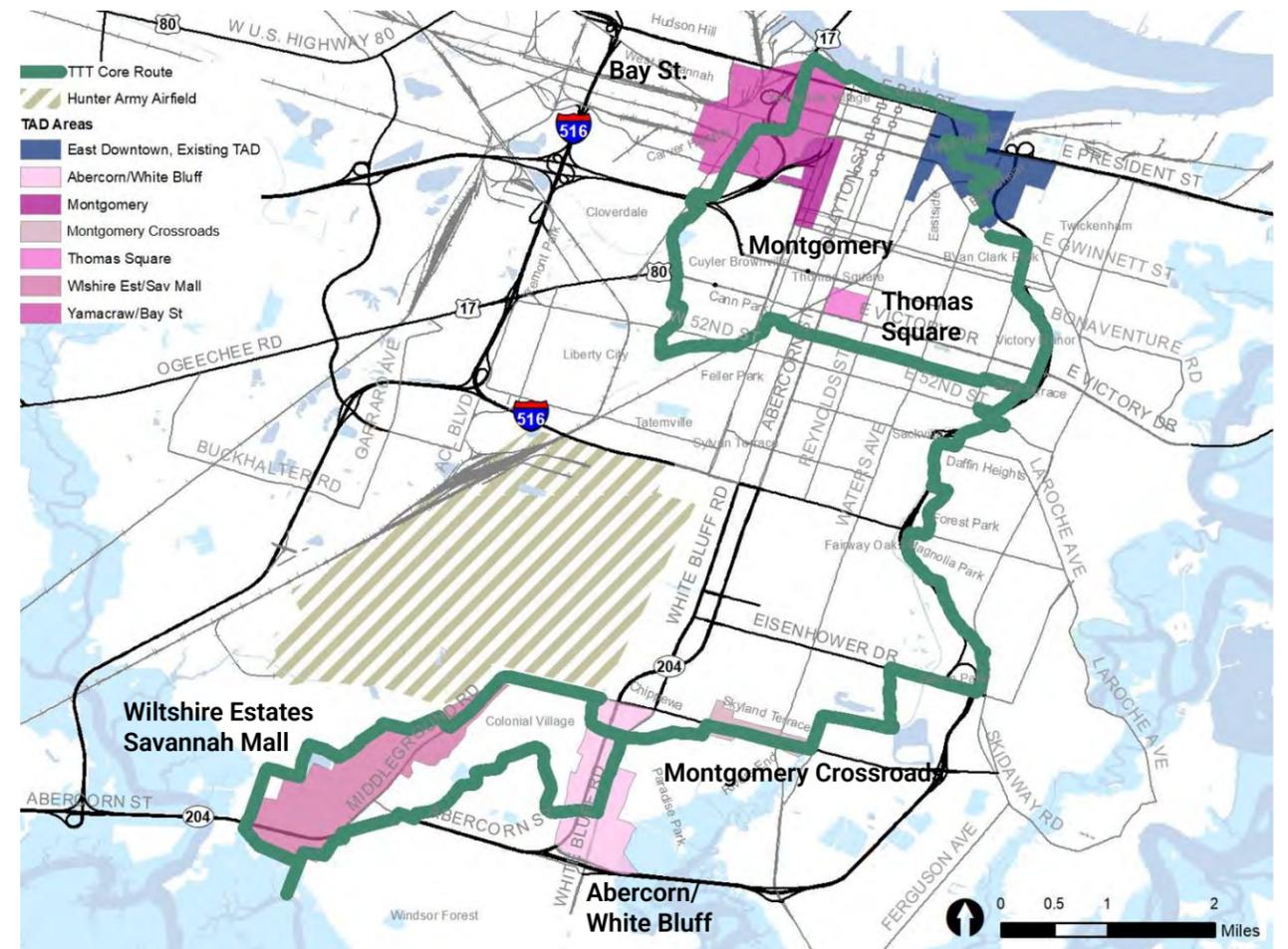
A Key Source of Funding: Tax Allocation Districts

When the Tide to Town Trail was first imagined, the idea was to create an urban trail system around Savannah. And while millions of dollars have thus far been invested in creating portions of the Tide to Town Trail, it is missing one key component to both build the trail and invest hundreds of millions of dollars in equitable growth projects that benefit low economic wealth communities along the trail. That component is the enormously effective public financing tool called “Tax Allocation Districts” (TADs), of which there is one existing today: the East Downtown TAD. A TAD is a redevelopment tool that uses the increased property taxes generated by new development in a designated redevelopment area to finance costs related to development including, but not limited to, public infrastructure, demolition, utilities, and planning costs.

Tide to Town Trail-related TADs would mean that the majority of future taxes generated in these TAD areas would be available for funding the trail’s construction, affordable housing, support for local women and minority-owned businesses, and other trail-related equitable growth and community improvement investments. TAD revenues can also be used for parks and open spaces, sewer and drainage systems, roadway connectivity and enhancements, streetscapes, land assemblages and site preparation for private development, assistance for public/private mixed-use developments, and construction and operation of public facilities, including education and family-support activities.

Six potential TADs were identified along the proposed Tide to Town Trail core route. These potential areas would build upon the success of the East Downtown TAD adopted in 2007. The planning team considered the ratio of building value to land value, access to services and amenities, trail connectivity, transit access, and proximity to regional activity centers and other growth drivers. Overall, the six TAD areas along trail could generate between \$297 and \$398 million over twenty years, with the potential for even greater growth in the future.

The figure on the corresponding page shows the six potential TAD areas, along with existing, committed, and proposed bicycle and shared use transportation networks. The TADs are summarized on the following pages. However, it should be noted that this TAD analysis is preliminary. **Further study and community engagement** with property owners and the community is needed to determine appropriate redevelopment areas, to more thoroughly understand their revenue generation potential, and to make clear that TADs do not increase property tax rates. Rather, TAD revenue is generated from increases in property value that occur as the area redevelops and improvements are made.



Potential Tide to Town TAD districts.  Core Tide to Town Trail Route 



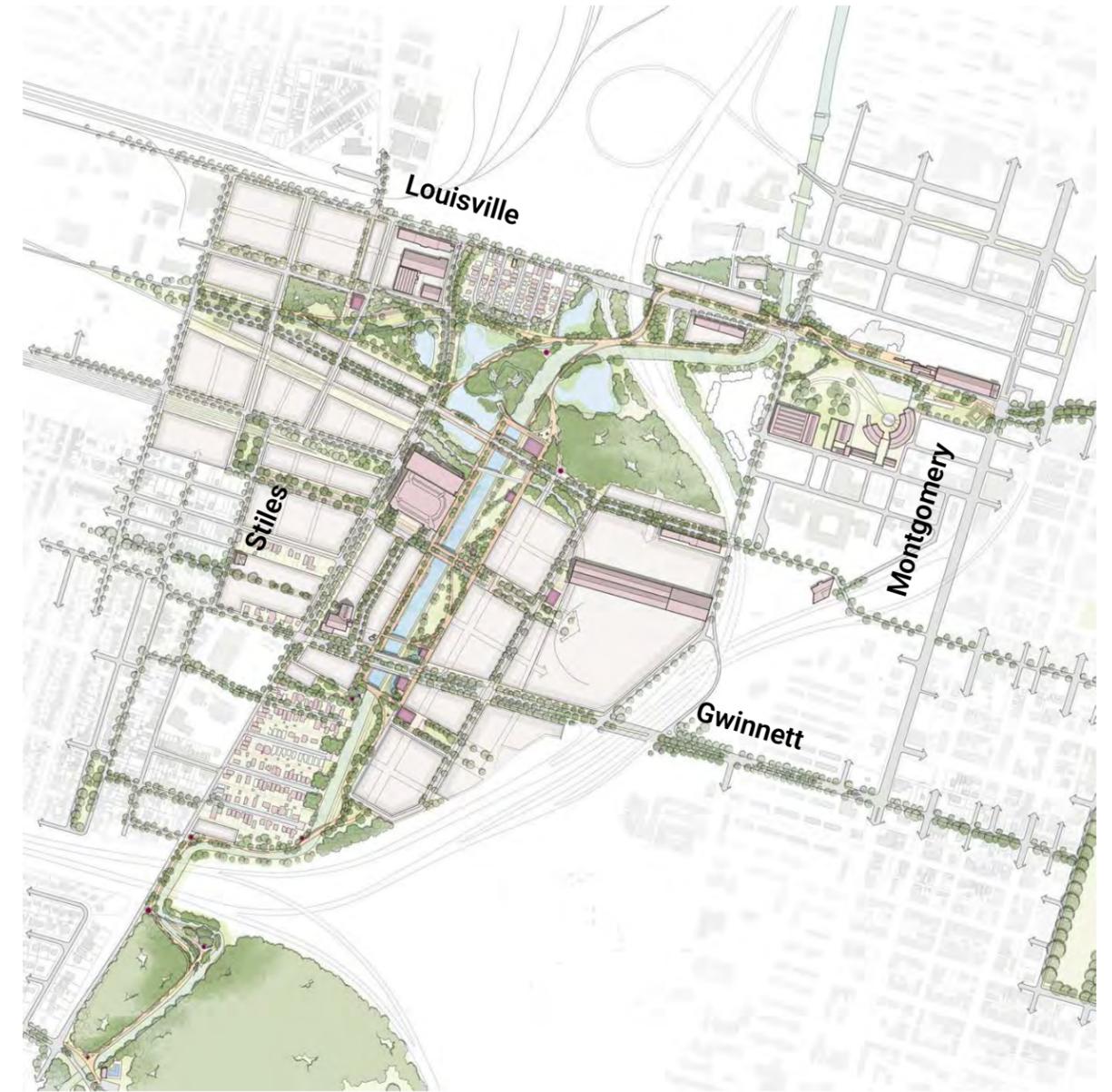
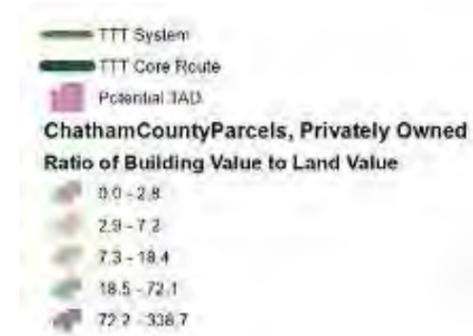
TADs are a key source of revenue for funding the trail and related community development.

Potential Montgomery TAD Area

The potential Montgomery TAD area includes north-south corridors Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Montgomery St, and Jefferson St and a well-connected road network from Liberty St south to Anderson St. Along Montgomery St, there is significant multifamily and commercial redevelopment today. Capturing ongoing increases in property values along the Tide to Town route could benefit long standing small businesses and underserved neighborhoods in the area. This area includes the I-16 Flyover, which has been proposed for removal and redevelopment since 1999. Redevelopment of the footprint of the interstate will require investments in a reconnected complete street network. It is a significant opportunity to expand downtown Savannah to the west, restoring historic connections to adjacent communities and the emerging Canal District.



The map to the left shows the ratio of building value to land value for property with a tax assessment. A low ratio, where the value of buildings or other improvements is significantly lower than the value of the land, indicates a higher potential for redevelopment. Based on the relative value of buildings to land, there is a strong market for redevelopment along the corridor, especially as the Canal District and supporting off-road trail system is built out. This area includes nearly 50 assessed acres on 619 parcels with a 2022 assessment of \$482 Million.



Canal District Master Plan

Development patterns that preserve the existing character in the area, reflect the Reclaiming Old West Broad | I-16 Ramp Removal Study, Canal District Master Plan, and other relevant plans. They include street level commercial uses with residential on upper stories, multifamily row houses and apartment buildings up to five stories in height in some areas. Greenspace should preserve wetlands and canals and provide compatible parklands. Community gardens, squares, and tree lawns are appropriate in neighborhoods. The image above shows the Canal District Master Plan which protects historic communities, rebuilds nature, elevates civic life and allows the city to grow. Infrastructure investments in this area should include stormwater management and blue-green infrastructure.

Potential Bay St. TAD Area

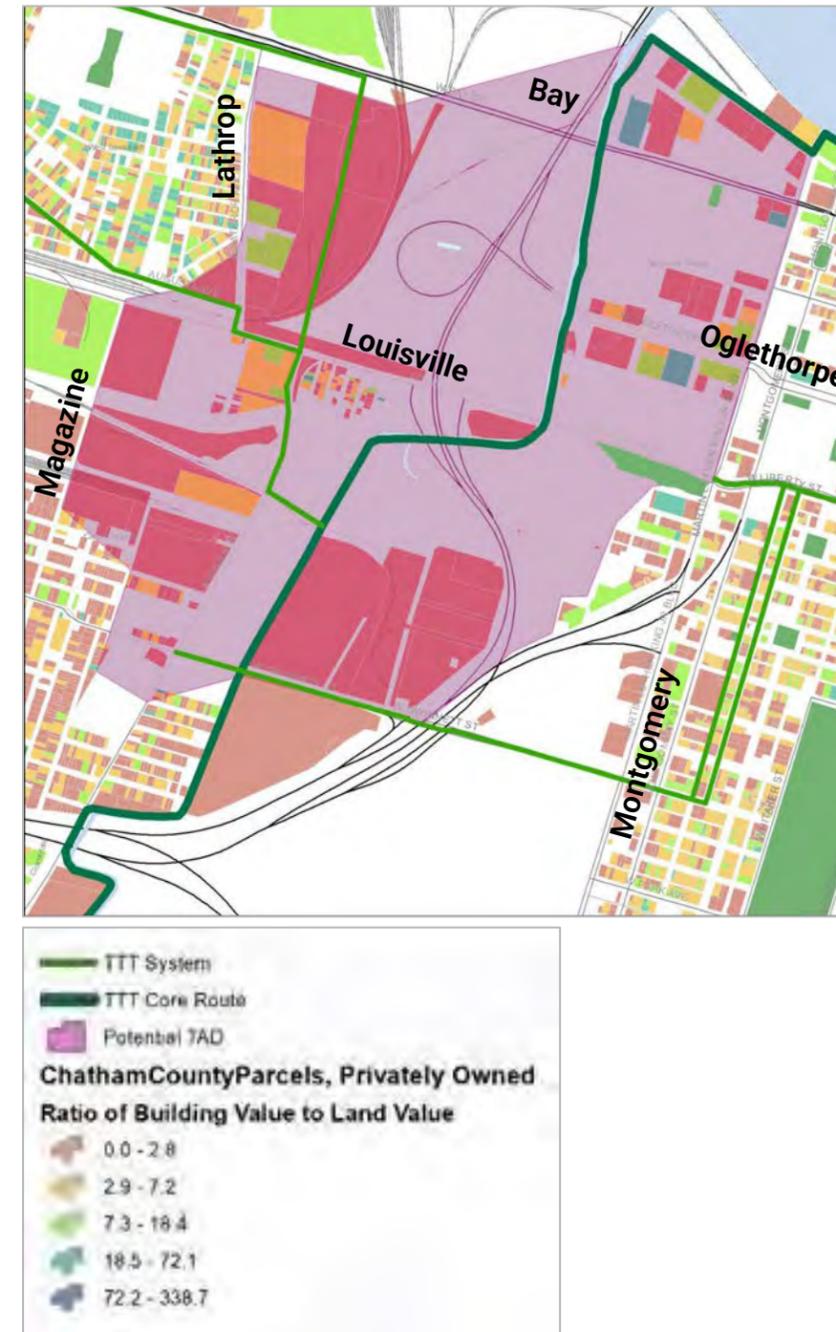
Located north and west of the Montgomery St. corridor, the potential Bay St. TAD would be located in a historic community of color in downtown Savannah that includes Yamacraw Village. Because of I-16, US 17, and railroads, infrastructure serves as a barrier to access to the Downtown area for many residents of this area. TAD revenue could improve connections between historic westside neighborhoods, downtown Savannah jobs and services, and the destinations along the proposed Tide to Town network.

It is important to note that the Housing Authority of Savannah owns and manages Yamacraw Village, the second federally funded housing project in Savannah and one of the earliest in the United States. The site spans approximately 21 acres across seven parcels and includes 42 two-story multifamily residential buildings, one single-story office building, 315 dwelling units, accessory structures, equipment, infrastructure, and community amenities. The Housing Authority will lead future redevelopment efforts for Yamacraw Village to include a comprehensive planning process that incorporates public input and active engagement with the community and its residents. The TAD funding could be used to support redevelopment of Yamacraw Village.

As the redevelopment of the nearby Canal District to the west brings significant external investors into the area, a TAD has the potential to allow existing residents and businesses to manage how increases in tax revenue can promote neighborhood stability and mitigate displacement. In order for a TAD to be effective, development in this area should balance private development with the increased expansion of non-assessed uses.

Possible “Missing Middle” residential development and appropriately-scaled multifamily in this area is likely to provide sufficient density to support small food retail stores, pharmacies, cafes, and salons should be promoted, along with business retention efforts. Ground level retail with upper story residential and heights as allowed in the Downtown Historic Overlay District is appropriate in this area.

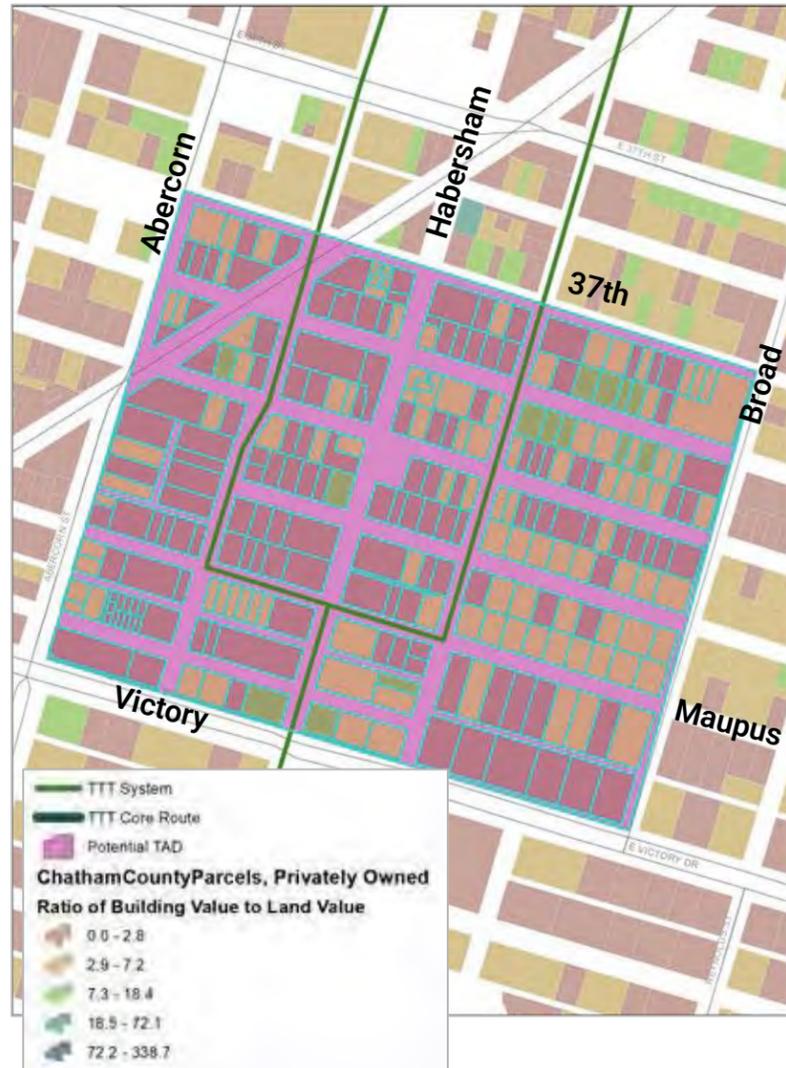
Greenspace should include wetland conservation, canals, greenways, squares, tree lawns, and pocket parks. Infrastructure investments in this area should include stormwater management and blue-green infrastructure.



The preliminary TAD area in Bay St. includes 190 assessed acres on 199 parcels valued at \$413 Million.

Potential Thomas Square TAD Area

The potential TAD area in Thomas Square includes 32 assessed acres on 270 parcels valued at \$109 Million. While many of these parcels are residential, the mixed-use redevelopment potential and likely increase in property values could make a TAD worthwhile for area property owners. The area includes commercial corridors along Abercorn St. and Habersham St. It features an emerging entertainment district including Lincoln St. and nearby Starland. Broad St. has seen recent multifamily redevelopment.



Habersham St., Lincoln St., and Price St. are existing bicycle corridors, connecting intown neighborhoods, SCAD destinations, small businesses, and downtown Savannah. CAT provides fixed route service convenient to this area, in recognition of its emergence as a destination for residents and visitors alike. A TAD in this area could support the area's cherished mixed-use walkable development patterns, while increasing a diversity of housing types. The proposed Tide to Town system in this area includes a bike lane on Maupas Ave., which would displace on-street parking. TAD revenue could be used to develop off-street parking in one or more structures.

Revising zoning to promote equitable growth consistent with the neighborhood character should include townhomes, duplexes, quadruplexes, street-level commercial with housing above, and even small-scale multi-family apartment buildings similar to recent construction on Habersham at 37th St. Heights of three to five stories, especially on north-south streets, would be consistent with existing development.

Potential Montgomery Crossroads TAD Area

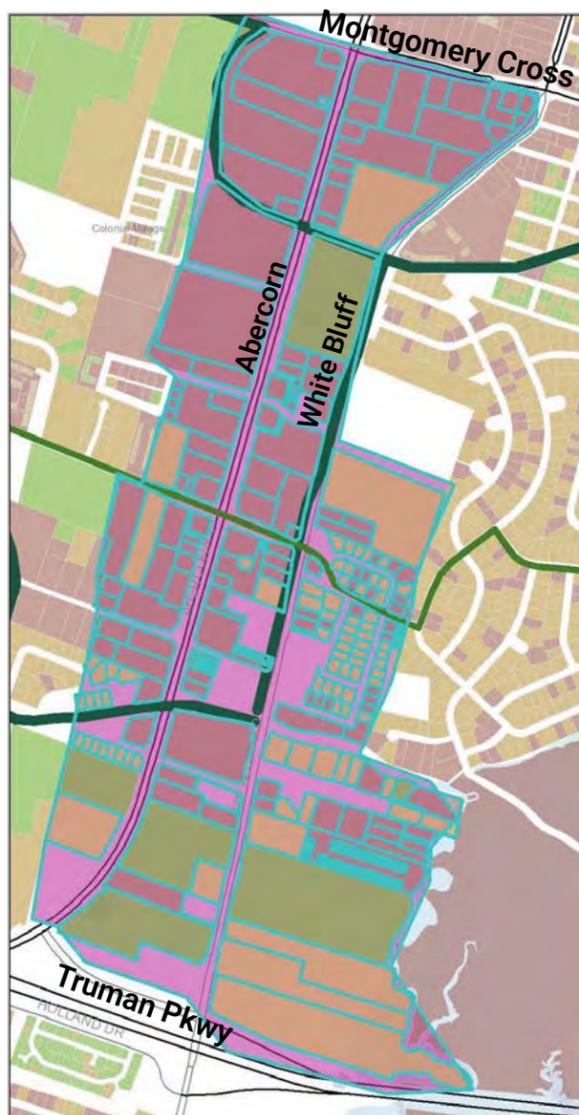
The potential Montgomery Crossroads TAD corridor includes a strip of commercial development, backed by residential subdivisions largely built in the 1950s. The northern boundary is primarily Cranman Dr., extending south to include parcels bordering Montgomery Cross Rd. It extends from Hodgson Memorial Dr. east to Waters Ave., both major north-south connectors. Lake Mayer Park, a major recreation complex, anchors the east end of the corridor and the eastern off-road portion of the Tide to Town trail. Development patterns that will promote equitable growth include retrofitting the suburban strip development with mixed-use commercial buildings up to four stories in height with most parking to the rear and not facing Montgomery Cross Rd. Inter-parcel access should be provided via a back road connecting off-street parking. Access management should be considered to promote safe use of the Tide to Town path as the area redevelops, including landscaped medians with refuge islands and shared driveway access. Based on the relative value of buildings to land, there is a strong market for redevelopment along the corridor, especially as access to the park increases. The preliminary TAD corridor includes 70 assessed acres on 233 parcels valued at \$54 Million.



Potential Abercorn/White Bluff TAD Area

Abercorn St. and White Bluff Rd. are parallel arterials that connect downtown and intown neighborhoods with suburban commercial developments, subdivisions, and outlying growth areas. This potential TAD area, on Savannah's southside, is ripe for reinvestment in connectivity and mixed use, walkable, centers with attainable housing. It extends from Montgomery Cross Rd. south to the Truman Pkwy. The road network is largely suburban, with cul-de-sacs, and minimal collector or local road connectivity. Abercorn St. continues to serve as a major trunk line in Chatham Area Transit's fixed route bus system. Walkability and bikeability in this area therefore promote access to regional destinations via public transportation.

Both Abercorn and White Bluff corridor segments feature suburban strip commercial development with little interparcel access or local road connectivity.



Based on the relative value of buildings to land, there is a strong market for redevelopment along the corridor, especially as access to the park increases through expansion of the on- and off-road trail system. A TAD could provide vital funds for investment in Tide to Town and supporting linkages via intersection improvements, on-and off-road path connections and sidewalks.

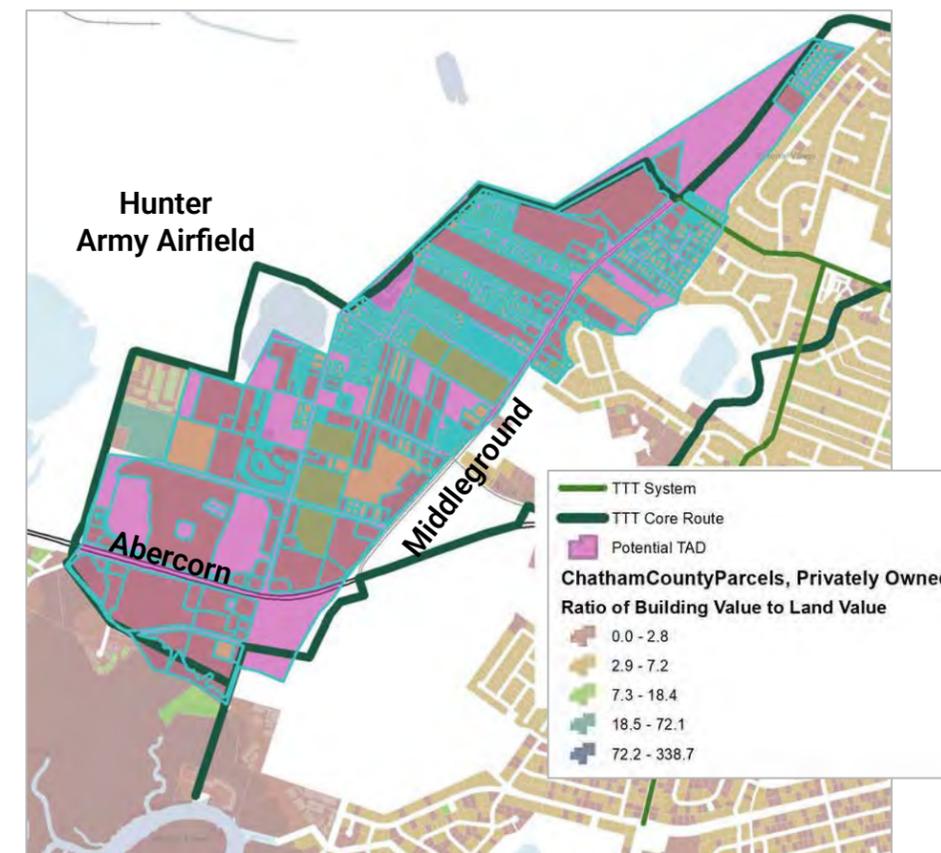
Development patterns should include mixed use, multifamily buildings as high as five or six stories. Greenspace investments in this area should include medians, tree lawns, and linear parks along Tide to Town.

The preliminary TAD area includes 313 assessed acres on 329 parcels valued at \$363 Million.

Potential Wilshire Estates/Savannah Mall TAD Area

The potential southside TAD area follows the Middleground Rd. corridor. It lies east of Hunter Army Airfield. The area includes a portion of Abercorn St. Mohawk and Apache Streets are significant cross roads, but the network lacks through streets. Redevelopment of the Savannah Mall has been proposed for years and was the subject of a 2018 The Congress for the New Urbanism Southside Retrofit Study. The potential for this area to emerge as a mixed-use walkable activity center with access to the Armstrong campus of Georgia Southern University, is a significant opportunity to promote economic stability for residents and businesses. As expressed in the CNU plan, the vision includes smaller and well connected blocks, mixed-use neighborhoods with population growth in activity centers, increased opportunity for public transit, and safe walking and biking. TAD revenue could support public gathering places, such as a band shell, farmers' markets, active recreation at pools, increased housing options, and infrastructure. Multifamily, mixed-use buildings six to eight stories high are appropriate for a redeveloped mall. Consistent with the master plan, the proposed trail system promotes access to the river. Greenspace investments in this area should include the proposed Tidal Marsh Park, squares, medians, tree lawns, and linear parks along the trail.

The area includes 905 assessed parcels on 472 acres, valued at \$347 Million in 2022.

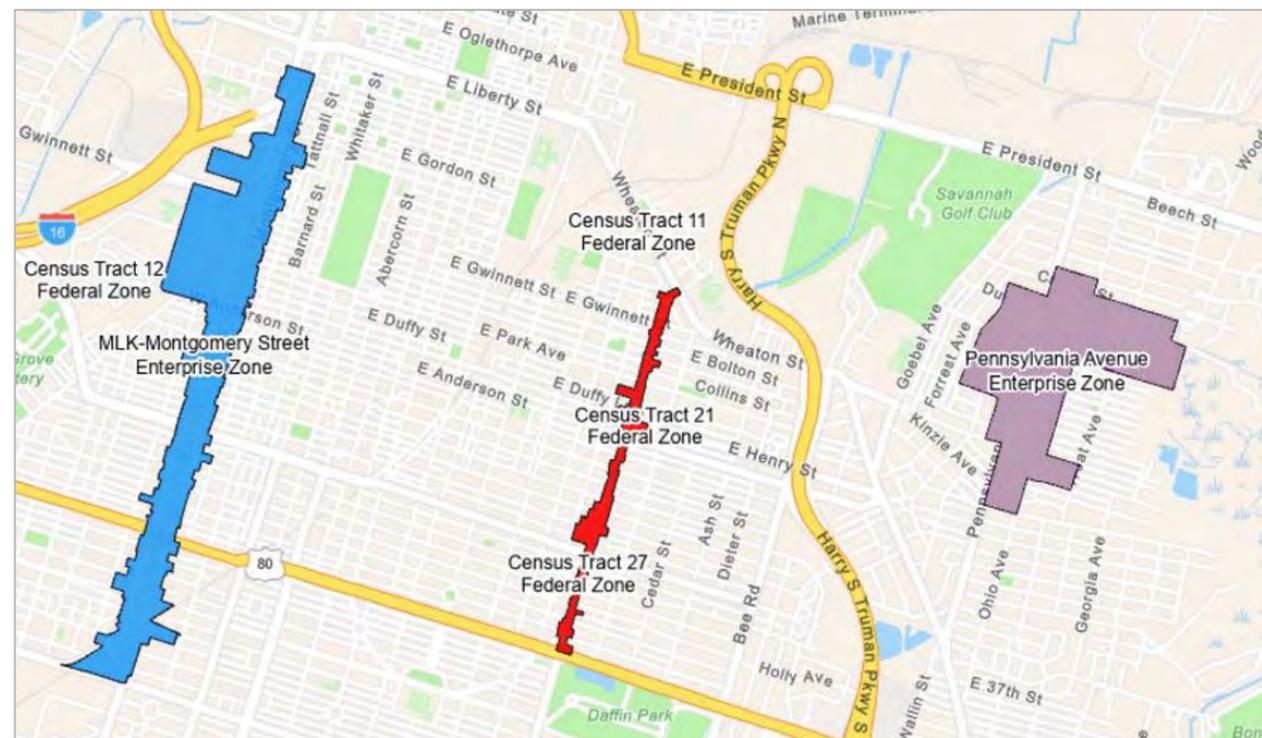


TAD Related Initiatives

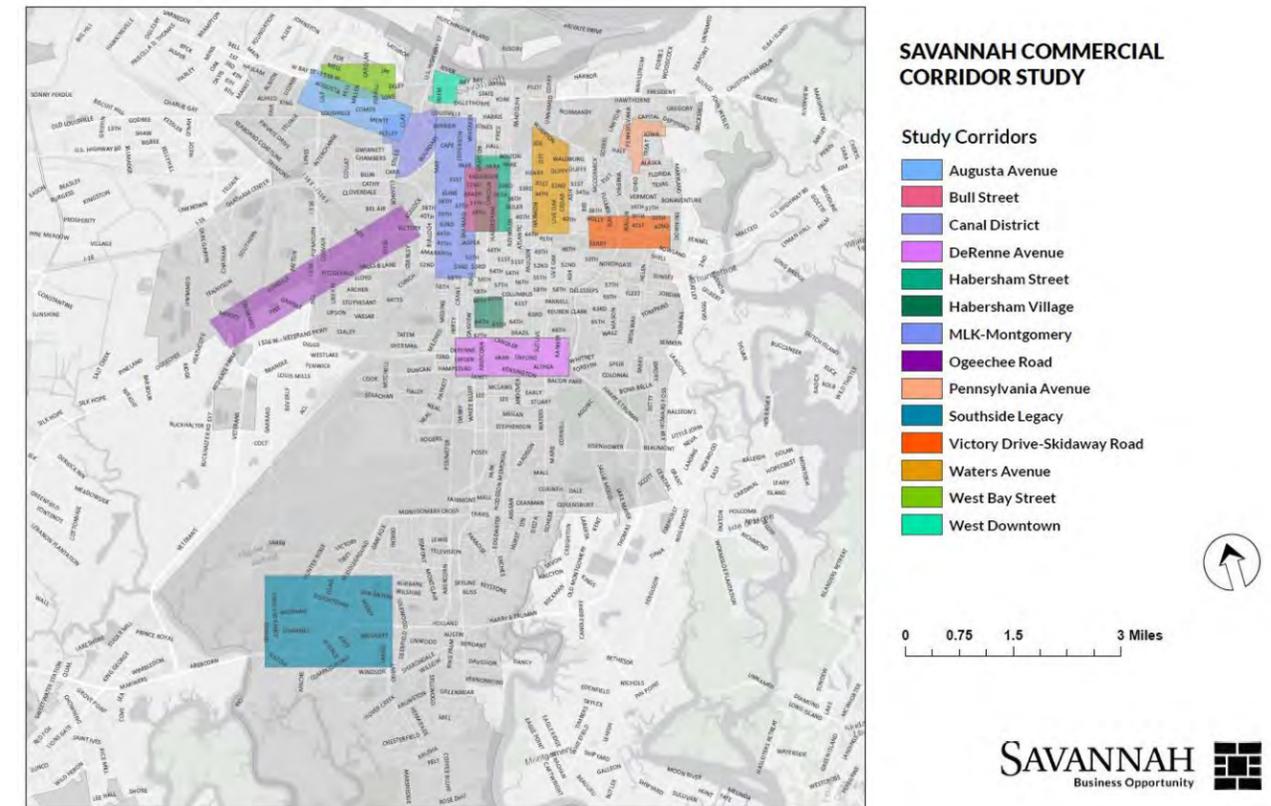
TADs and Commercial Corridors

A number of community and economic development initiatives are being examined for feasibility that align with the aims of potential trail-related TADs. A few of these include the City's Enterprise Zone program, the development of Targeted Corridors initiative as well as the consideration of reactivating Savannah Downtown Development Authority (DDA), along with possible Community Improvement Districts (CID). These are described below.

Enterprise Zones are aimed at bringing new life to key areas, encouraging investment, and helping local businesses grow. They offer local incentives to help create jobs and boost development and provide different incentives to attract businesses and create jobs in areas that need it the most. Businesses in these zones can get property tax breaks for up to ten years on a graduated scale. To qualify, businesses need to either create five new full-time jobs or invest in building or fixing up homes, with improvements worth five times more than the land. Currently there are three active Enterprise Zones that partially overlap a few areas of the proposed trail. These include Enterprise Zones along Pennsylvania Ave. (President St. to Skidaway Rd); MLK, Jr. Blvd. and Montgomery St. (parallel corridors, from 52nd St. to the Bay St.); and Waters Ave. (Wheaton St. to Victory Dr.). In the future, others may be created that correspond with potential trail-related TADS.



Savannah's Three Enterprise Zones



Map showing potential Commercial Corridors, with several that would overlap with potential trail-related TADs.

Businesses in Enterprise Zones and potential Commercial Corridors can also get reductions on their Business Tax Certificate Renewal if they hire at least two full-time workers (not including family members). In Savannah's West Downtown Opportunity Zone, businesses can receive job tax credits, getting \$3,500 for each new job they create.

TAD Related Initiatives

Downtown Development Authority

With the consideration of TADs, the City should consider reactivating the Savannah Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with boundaries that include areas along the proposed Tide to Town trail. Authorized by the Downtown Development Authorities Law of 1981 (O.C.G.A. § 36-42), DDAs can issue bonds, acquire and develop property, and levy taxes which are tools to lead major development efforts and enhance urban infrastructure like Tide to Town. DDAs are overseen by a board of directors appointed by local governments, ensuring that their activities remain transparent, accountable, and aligned with the priorities of the community they serve.

While Savannah's Downtown Development Authority was historically instrumental in supporting the growth and revitalization of the downtown, a reestablished DDA could shift its focus to the neighborhoods and commercial corridors along the Tide to Town trail. Rather than concentrating solely on downtown, the renewed DDA would bring resources and strategic planning to areas adjacent to the trail. It could also serve as a key mechanism to establish and manage TADs while supporting equitable development.

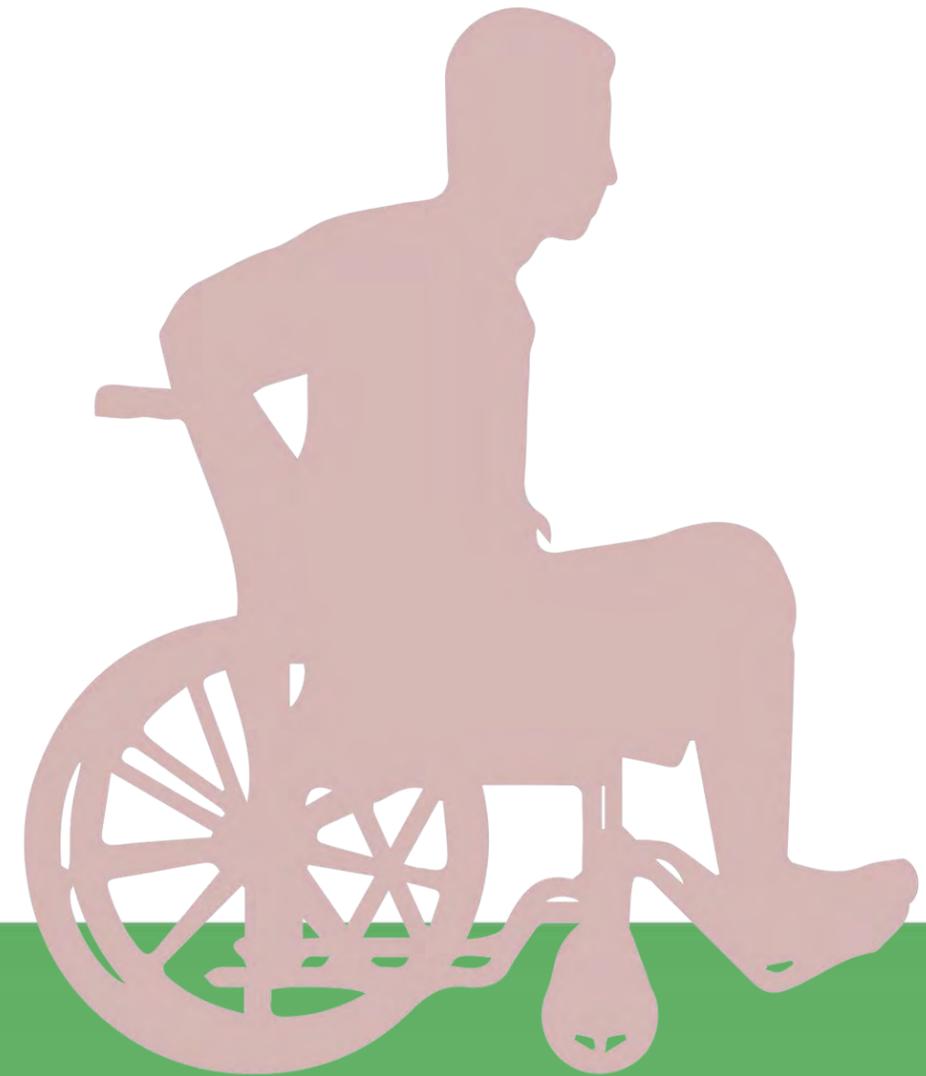
The Savannah DDA would have the authority to capture increased property tax revenues within TAD boundaries, issue bonds, acquire and develop real estate, receive grants and donations, levy taxes, and extend loans. It could also offer property tax abatement to incentivize desired developments. Invest Atlanta administers multiple TADs to support the Beltline. To complement traditional economic development incentives, Invest Atlanta has also created programs offering tax abatements to both residential and commercial developers and launched a tax relief initiative for senior homeowners aged 60 and over at risk of displacement due to rising property taxes.

Savannah's DDA could fund and staff programs to promote inclusive growth, including business retention, affordable housing development, community marketing, grant program management, and other economic development activities as well as implement recommendations from Chapter 2 Wealth Building.

Community Improvement Districts

Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) could also be used to help with maintenance of the trail and other trail-related activities. Unlike TAD revenues, CID revenue can only be raised from taxes, fees and assessments levied on real property that is used for non-residential purposes. CID revenues may be used only to provide governmental services and facilities within the CID.

4 Community Engagement



Community Engagement

Listening to the Community

Effective trail and urban planning requires sincere and systematic efforts to solicit the opinions of those living and working along the proposed Tide to Town Trail route and larger community. The aim of this process was to create opportunities for residents, businesses leaders and representatives of community organizations to share their hopes and concerns for the future of Tide to Town. The major objective was to foster discussion about the trail and its potential contribution toward promoting equitable growth and generational wealth.

Early in the development of the community engagement process, the planning team recognized that it was vital to draw upon the seminal work accomplished by the Friends of Tide to Town, Inc. who first imagined the Tide to Town Trail concept. The first step was to convene an introductory meeting with representatives of the organization's Board of Directors on Aug 22, 2024. At that meeting, the community engagement strategy was presented and it was agreed the Friends would play a key role in all four engagement meetings. This included the organization's Chairman, Armand Turner, participating in all four engagement meetings, helping to lead discussions and sharing historical insights on the Tide to Town Trail concept. The involvement of representatives of the Friends proved to be a critical factor in understanding the factors that determined the original route, thereby providing a firm basis for the adjustments that emerged from the community engagement and planning process.



Small groups were organized by major topics.

Key Community Engagement Findings

Connect the trail to multiple recreational destinations, including recreational centers, parks and open space, including safe travel for children to schools

Incorporate policies to prevent gentrification and displacement threats to local neighborhoods; e.g., keep tax valuations fixed, provide for auxiliary dwelling units and rear-yard subdivisions

Place a priority on leisurely off-road experiences over speedier shared roadway travel; address the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists at major crossings

Place strong focus on the establishment of East-West connectivity, including connecting neighborhoods on the West Side and East Side

Provide opportunities for community-beneficial small local businesses, including bike shops, food and ice cream shops, coffee shops, restaurants, farmers markets, community gardens, etc.

Incorporate historical markers and interpretive signage to celebrate cultural and historical features. Also consider audio tours along corridor to explain historical events

Ensure that CAT buses are equipped to carry bikes and expand "dot" access for parking and transfer points

The Process

The engagement process included a strong emphasis on inclusivity and conducted targeted outreach to diverse populations. This included sending invitations, emails, and making phone calls to key contacts in the African-American community. Additionally, the team engaged Our Black Media to host the citywide virtual community meeting on 8 October, 2024.

The community engagement process consisted of the following elements:

- **Community Forums:** 3 In-Person and 1 Citywide Virtual
- A **Survey** administered online through Survey Monkey
- A **Website Page** on the City's website
- Distribution of printed and digital community forum invitations
- **TV Public Service Announcement and dissemination of other project informational media**

Help Shape the Future of the Tide To Town Trail

Please come join a community forum about the future development of the Savannah's Tide To Town Trail. A key focus of the meeting will be ensuring the trail's development results in economic, social, and recreational justice for the culturally rich, yet economically low-wealth communities along the trail.

The City of Savannah is organizing the community forums at three locations to make it more convenient for local residents, community organizations representatives, and businesspeople to share their views. There will also be a virtual meeting for those who are not able to participate in-person.

<p>South Side Monday, Sept 16, 6 - 8 pm Windsor Forrest High School 9402 White Bluff Rd</p>	<p>West Side Tuesday, Sept 17, 6 – 8 pm Beach High School 3001 Hopkins St</p>	<p>East Side Thursday, Sept 19, 6 – 8 pm Jenkins High School 1800 E Derenne Ave</p>	<p>Citywide Virtual Tuesday, Oct 8, 1 – 3 pm https://www.ourblackmedia.com</p> 
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For more information, please visit www.savannahga.gov/tidetotown or contact the City at 912.651.3108 or planning@savannahga.gov.

Beverages, healthy snacks, and **childcare will be provided.**



Community Forum invitations were printed in English and Spanish.

Community Forums

A series of four public meetings, called “Community Forums,” formed the backbone of the Tide to Town community engagement process. The three in-person meetings were held at various locations during the week of 16 September, 2024, while the citywide virtual meeting was held on 8 October, 2024. The four Community Forums were as follows:

South Side: Monday, Sept 16, 6 - 8 pm at Windsor Forest High School 12419 Largo Drive

West Side: Tuesday, Sept 17, 6 – 8 pm at Beach High School 3001 Hopkins St.

East Side: Thursday, Sept 19, 6 – 8 pm at Jenkins High School 1800 E Derenne Ave.

Citywide Virtual Meeting: held online on Tuesday, Oct 8, from 1 to 3 pm, hosted by Our Black Media

An average of 2500 total individuals participated over the course of the citywide meeting, with a peak participation of 2608.



Our Black Media hosted a virtual Community Forum in which about 2500 people participated.

Community Forums (continued)

The three Community Forums were organized around small-group discussion and idea sharing among participants on each of the five topics below. The topics were selected to promote energetic participation and thoughtful discussion on issues relevant to the Tide to Town Equitable Growth planning effort. The five discussion topics are:

- Promoting Connections
- Housing and Community Preservation
- Community-Beneficial Economic Development
- Health and Recreation
- Heritage and Culture

The rationale for the five-topic approach was to ensure that each Forum participant would have multiple opportunities to express his or her ideas, concerns, and issues from a variety of perspectives. This purpose was reflected in the fact that a given issue—such as access to parks, for example—emerged in multiple categories, such as Promoting Connections, Community-Beneficial Economic Development and Health and Recreation.



Forums began with a project history provided by a Friends of Tide to Town representative.

Community Forums Process

Each Forum participant was assigned to a discussion group. Each group rotated among the five topics over the course of each evening, spending approximately 20 minutes on each topic. Each topic was set up in a fixed “station” within the meeting space, so that the groups could readily rotate among them after a fixed amount of time. Each discussion topic was assigned a facilitator, who remained in the same fixed “station” to promote discussion and interaction on the topic as each group rotated among the other stations. To help ensure efficiency, each facilitator was given a facilitator orientation and then posed questions to the small groups in accordance with each group’s topic area. In addition, a scribe was assigned to each group to record salient points on large Post-it pads. When each small group finished, the pads were collected and summarized by topic category for later consolidation and synthesis.

Community Forum Findings

Following the completion of the Community Forums, the planning team compiled and collated all comments that were recorded. The following represents a summary of the key points made by small the groups.

Promoting Connections

- Better connectivity is needed to more neighborhoods on the West Side and the arena.
- Establish connections to multiple recreational destinations.
- Create provisions for children to safely access schools, recreational centers, and parks.
- Ensure that CAT buses are equipped to carry bikes and expand “dot” access for parking and transfer points.
- Consider pleasant rides as opposed to the most direct routes.
- Promote marketing and education to provide for good signage, wayfinding, and visibility.

Community Forum Findings (continued)

Housing and Community Preservation

- Establish policies to prevent gentrification and displacement; keep tax valuations fixed for properties in the trail corridor.
- Provide for auxiliary dwelling units (ADUs) as income generators; explore use of rear-yard subdivisions as appropriate.
- Provide code enforcement education for homeowners; provide funding for home repair.
- Promote neighborhood buy-in and “ownership” of trail.

Community-Beneficial Economic Development

- Provide for wide range of community-beneficial activities along trail, including: bike/ebike rental, bike shops, repair shops, trail side booths; food trucks, ice cream, coffee shops, restaurants, farmers markets, community gardens, etc.
- Make local trail connections to neighborhood associations to enhance marketing and information dissemination.
- Provide for good wayfinding and signage, including walk and bike travel times.

Health and Recreation

- Use data to identify areas of greatest need, especially on south side; play stations along trail; improved shade locations; dog clean-up stations; outdoor workout and exercise.
- CAT stops that intersect trail should have shelters; bike parking, with lockups; shade and resting areas; water availability.
- Address safety concerns, e.g., near Truman Pkwy.; crossing Eisenhower; intersection near Jennifer Ross Sports Complex; need clear separation, like Daffin Park Loop; policy on e-scooters, golf carts, etc.

Heritage and Culture

- Use trail to cultivate stories; understanding the heritage of our neighbors.
- Teach about Hispanic, native cultures; find environmental/ecological stories—plants, animals, engineering—link to curricula.
- Establish community sponsorships of trail segments to promote local investment and custodianship.
- Create audio tours along the corridor to explain historical events, markers, QR coded to online sources; section names for the trail to be selected by local communities.



Facilitators guided lively small group discussions.

Online Survey: Summary of Responses

An online survey was conducted between September and November, 2024 using the application SurveyMonkey that was accessible through the City's Tide to Town Trail website. The survey received a total of 488 responses. Key points relevant to the planning process that emerged from the aggregated survey responses are as follows:

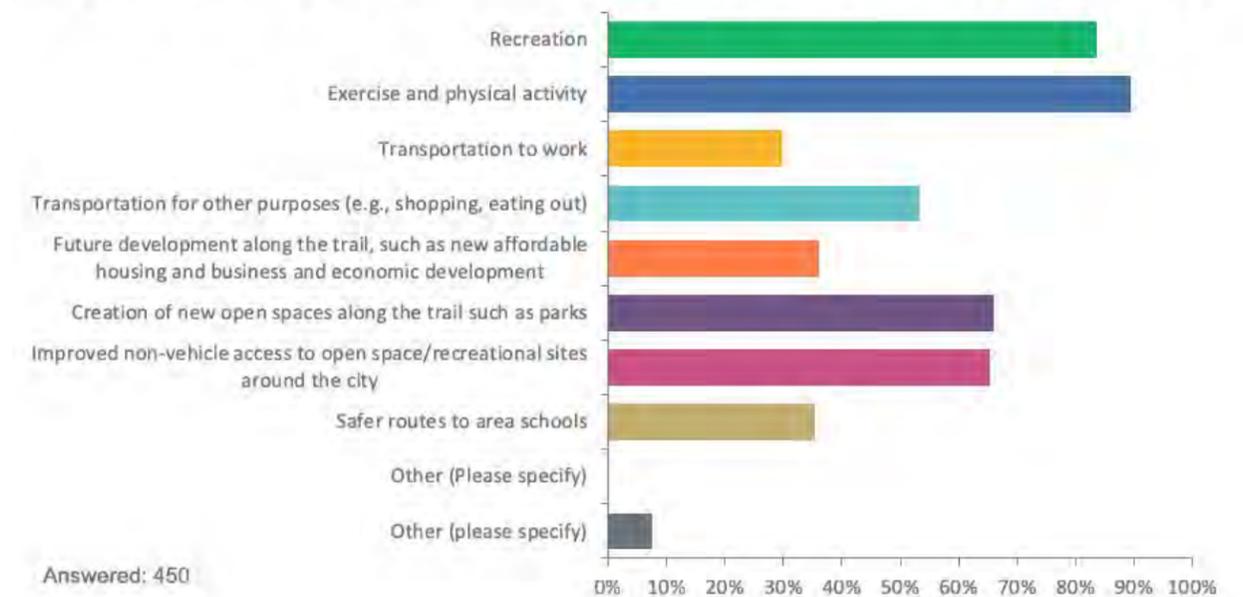
Trail Awareness and Use

- 75% of respondents were at least "somewhat" familiar with the Tide to Town trail concept.
- 15% of respondents live or work within ¼ mile of the original trail alignment, with 30% within ½ mile.
- 80% report that their use of trails is for mostly recreational purposes; fewer than 8% use trails for commuting.
- 13% of respondents reported regular use of the CAT system and 50% said that their use of the trail would be unaffected by CAT connections. 31% reported that bike racks on CAT vehicles would affect their use of public transportation.
- With respect to the perceived advantages of the trail, 90% of respondents cited exercise, and 66% cited access to open space; opportunities for new development and safe routes to school were cited by 36% and 35%, respectively.

Trail Characteristics

- With respect to economic opportunities along the trail, 82% of respondents cited small local businesses, while affordable housing was mentioned by 34%.
- In response to the question about "concerns" about the trail, 48% of responses were related to threats to housing or neighborhoods 46% expressed "no concerns."
- Regarding "what to incorporate" into the trail, nearly 90% of respondents mentioned green spaces and over 70% cited enhanced landscaping.
- Concerning safety, 90% of respondents mentioned the need for adequate lighting and 86% identified the need for safe crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Approximately 46% felt that community gathering spaces near the trail were "extremely" or "moderately" important.
- With respect to cultural and historical features, 69% felt that historical markers would be appropriate and 59% supported interpretive signage.

Q6: Do you imagine possible advantages to you or a family member of the trail's future development? If so, what might those advantages be?



Online survey data provided additional insights regarding community interests.

Key Community Engagement Findings

After the Community Forums and the Online Survey were completed, all the community comments were synthesized. The findings were then curated and organized to extract clear relevance to the goals of Tide to Town Equitable Growth planning process. The summaries presented above are the product of that step. To maximize the usefulness of that guidance, however, it was necessary to synthesize the survey results with the community forum comments to provide the best possible guidance. The result of the synthesis process formed the list of key public engagement findings presented at the outset of the Community Engagement chapter under **“Key Community Engagement Findings.”**



A facilitator and scribe encouraged and recorded discussions.



Three in-person Community Forums were organized around the city.

5 Appendix



Socioeconomic Analysis

To support Tide to Town plan development, including route revision and wealth building, the planning team conducted a targeted socioeconomic and geographic analysis of the City. The primary goal was to identify those geographic areas of the City that (1) could be considered vulnerable, in view of the potential for neighborhood destabilization and (2) present opportunities to secure equitable growth benefits resulting from the development of the trail system. The data was also used for secondary purposes in support of the planning process.

Data Sources

The primary data sources used for the socioeconomic and geographic analysis are:

- The 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, obtained from the web site data.census.gov
- 2023 data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey

Use of the U.S. Census sources provide the most statistically stable source of socioeconomic data that is robust enough to support the analysis of variables such as housing tenure, race and income at the tract and block group levels. While it is concerning that both the decennial Census and the American Community Survey undercounted multicultural populations, the 2020 Census average undercount of 3.3% for the African American population was not of sufficient size to significantly alter the planning results for this project.

An extensive set of data from these sources was compiled for the entire City. GIS maps provided a visual display of 2020 decennial Census data at both census block and block group levels. This data was color-coded in accordance with specified data ranges. The GIS maps also displayed established Savannah place names to aid in the process of identifying vulnerable neighborhoods and their proximity to trail planning options. More than 50 socioeconomic variables were displayed on the GIS maps.

To supplement the GIS data, the analysis drew on additional data at the census tract level, using 2020 decennial U.S. Census data. This data helped to support the analysis by enabling comparisons among neighborhood areas at a higher level of geographic aggregation. Data that was extracted and applied at the tract level included, for example, number of Black owner-occupied housing units, percent Black owner-occupied housing units and percent of households in which a person over 60 is receiving SNAP benefits.

Neighborhood Vulnerability Assessment

To support the core objective of the Tide to Town project—to preserve and strengthen vulnerable communities—it was necessary to use socioeconomic analysis to identify those communities. In assessing the vulnerability of neighborhood areas, the analysis used the mathematical relationship between various neighborhood areas and the City as a whole, as measured by selected socioeconomic statistics.

We use the term “neighborhood areas” because the analysis led to the aggregation of contiguous places with established Savannah neighborhood names.

The initial step in vulnerability assessment was to apply statistics considered to be good descriptors of a neighborhood’s wealth status. The statistics selected for this analysis were (1) the percent of households in poverty and (2) the percentage enrolled in SNAP¹. In addition, certain other socioeconomic statistics in addition to those pertaining directly to low wealth, were taken into consideration. These supporting statistics, from the 2020 decennial Census, included percent elderly, percent elderly homeownership and percent Black homeownership. (These were available at both the block group and tract level.) As an example, where the data revealed a relatively high percent elderly, this was seen as an indicator of the vulnerability of elderly homeowners to home maintenance costs and the resulting pressures to sell property; and relatively high rates of African American homeownership was acknowledged as a factor that can mitigate vulnerability to neighborhood change.

¹ While poverty level and SNAP enrollment are highly correlated, we chose to use both statistics to obtain the best possible capture of neighborhood low-wealth, given that the source GIS maps expressed variables as ranges.

Socioeconomic Analysis (continued)

Statistics Used

The statistics used are shown below, together with the corresponding Citywide values.

The sources for these statistics are the 2020 decennial U.S. Census and the 2023 American Community Survey. Natural deviations between these two points in time was not considered significant for purposes of this study.

Statistic	Current Value for City of Savannah
Percent of Households in Poverty	19%
Percent of Households Receiving SNAP Benefits ¹	18%
Percent Elderly	14%
Black owner-occupied households	18%
Elderly owner-occupied households	16%

Vulnerability analysis began with classifying neighborhood areas on the basis of low wealth status. This was determined by (1) poverty rate and (2) percent SNAP enrollment as they compared to the mean of those statistics for the City of Savannah (see above table). Based on the ratio of these statistics, the selected neighborhood areas were assigned the following three classifications indicating the extent of an area's low wealth status: Very High, High, and Moderate. Their levels are defined in terms of the value for Savannah city, as shown in the following table:

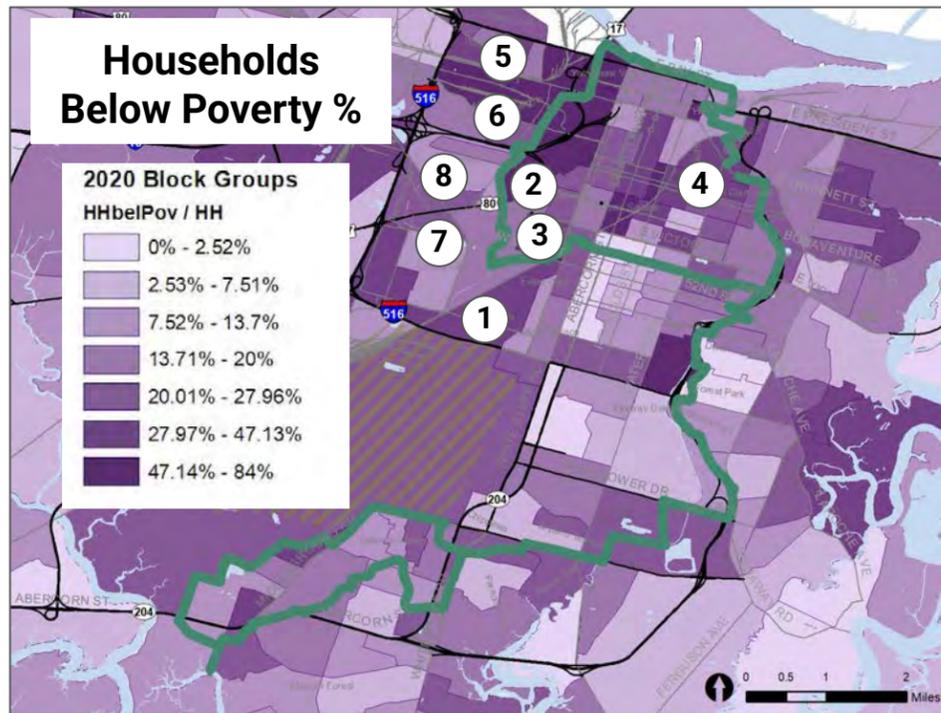
Low Wealth Status	City of Savannah Criterion
Very High	200% of City Poverty Rate or SNAP Enrollment
High	150% of City Poverty Rate or SNAP Enrollment
Moderate	Approximately equal to City Poverty Rate or SNAP Enrollment

Identifying Vulnerable Neighborhood Areas

Identifying vulnerable neighborhood areas was a three-part process. First, we determined low wealth status for neighborhood areas, as defined by established Savannah neighborhood names. These neighborhood names were superimposed on the GIS maps, which supported the process of attaching low wealth statistics to locations. When values for the primary statistics (poverty and SNAP enrollment) were similar for abutting neighborhoods, it was considered helpful to combine these into larger "neighborhood areas." Because traditional neighborhood boundaries rarely match census tract or block group boundaries, it was necessary to make subjective judgments in applying the two wealth-related variables as core neighborhoods were aggregated into the larger neighborhood areas. For the same reason, we created approximations of the GIS block group values of poverty and SNAP enrollment when expanding from neighborhoods to neighborhood areas.

Statistically-defined low wealth served as a primary indicator of the potential for change and displacement for neighborhood areas. The African American home ownership statistic, from the GIS maps, served as a secondary indicator; it was applied subjectively to account for the mitigating influence that home ownership would be expected to have on neighborhood instability caused by development pressure.

¹Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.



Vulnerability Factor 1: Households below poverty. Darker color indicates a greater percentage of households below the poverty level.

Vulnerable TTT Trail Neighborhoods:

1. Tatemville
2. Cann Park / Jackson Park / Bingville
3. Feiler Park / Dittmerville
4. Eastside
5. West Savannah
6. Carver Heights (inclusive of Historic Carver Village)
7. Liberty City / Summerside / Southover / Richfield
8. Tremont Park.

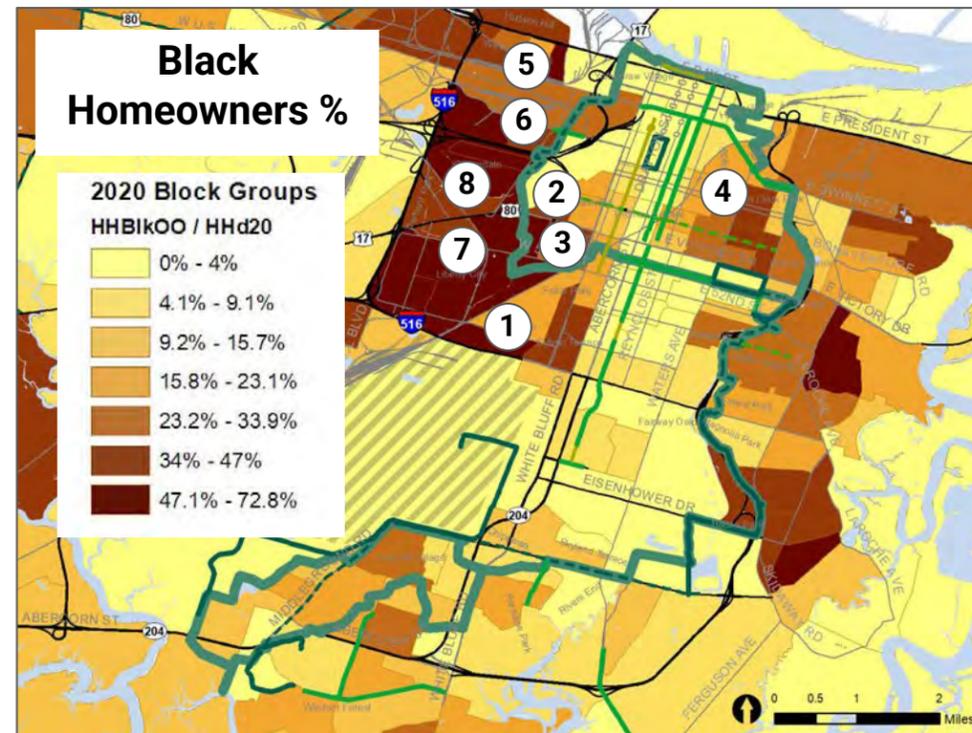
Vulnerability Factors:

1. *Income:*

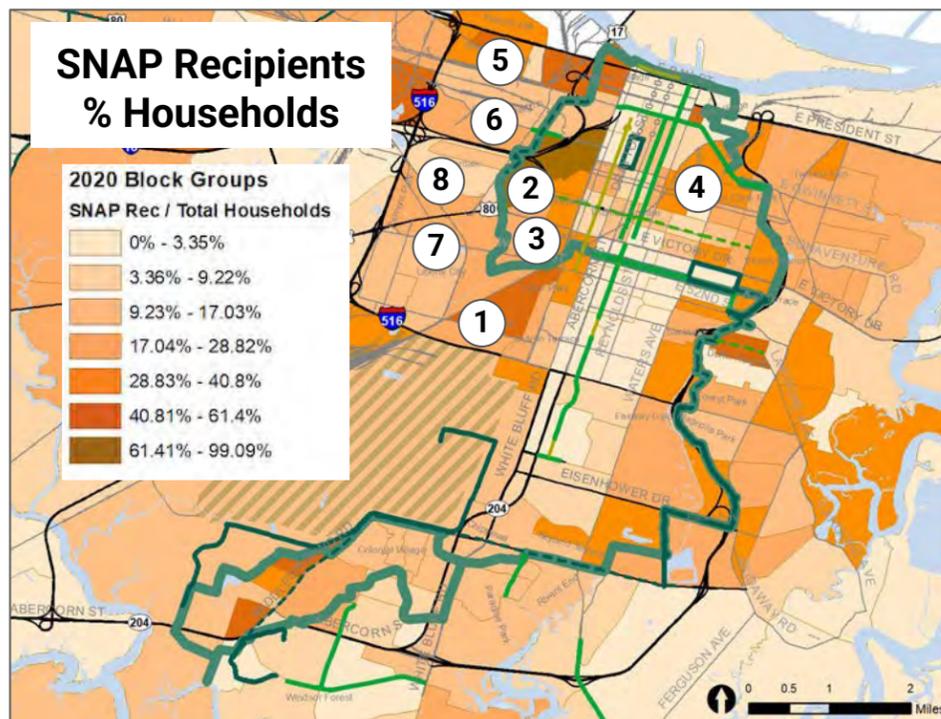
- Below Federal poverty guidelines and
- Enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

2. *Location:*

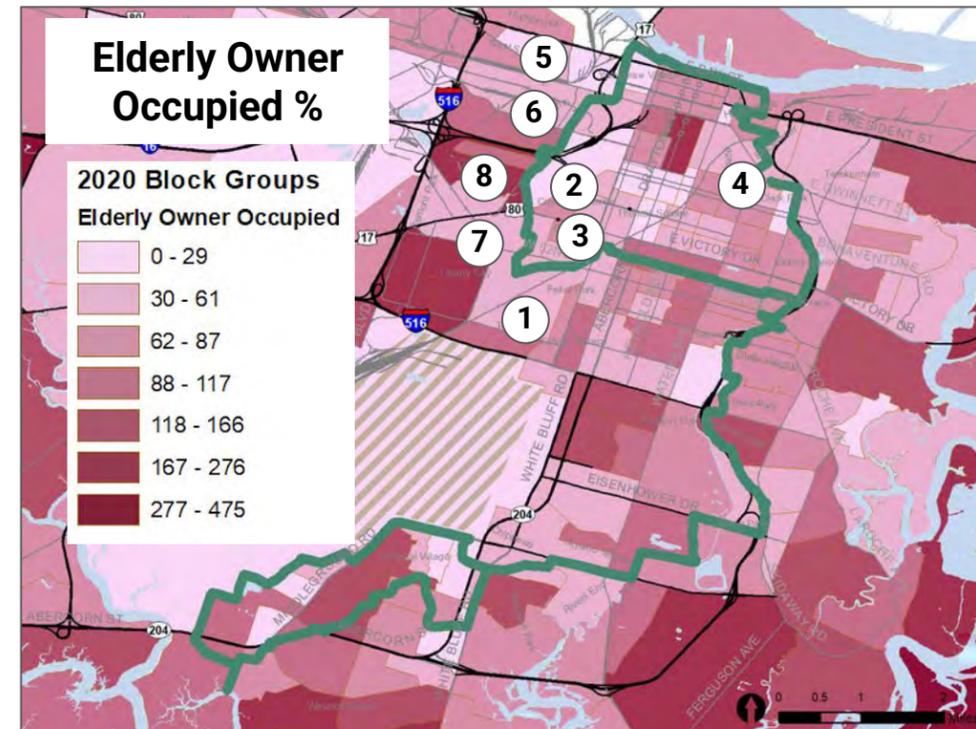
- Approximately ½ mile on either side of the TTT trail



Darker color indicates a greater percentage of black homeowners.



Vulnerability Factor 2: % SNAP Recipients. Darker color indicates a greater percentage of households that are SNAP recipients.



Darker color indicates a greater percentage of elderly homeowners.

Primary off-road Tide to Town trail

Acknowledgements

We begin our acknowledgement by recognizing the work of the **Friends of Tide to Town, Bike Walk Savannah**, and **Healthy Savannah**, three organizations that have done so much to bring the trail to life over the years.

Special thanks go to those who participated in the Tide to Town Trail Urban Trail System and Equitable Growth Plan.

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