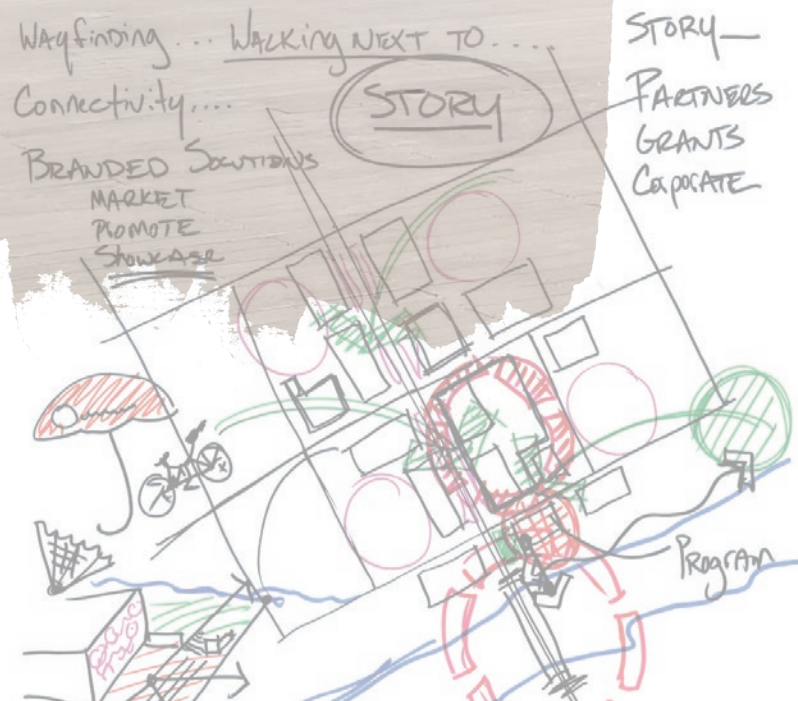




Reimagining Selma, Alabama

A DesignPlace Report

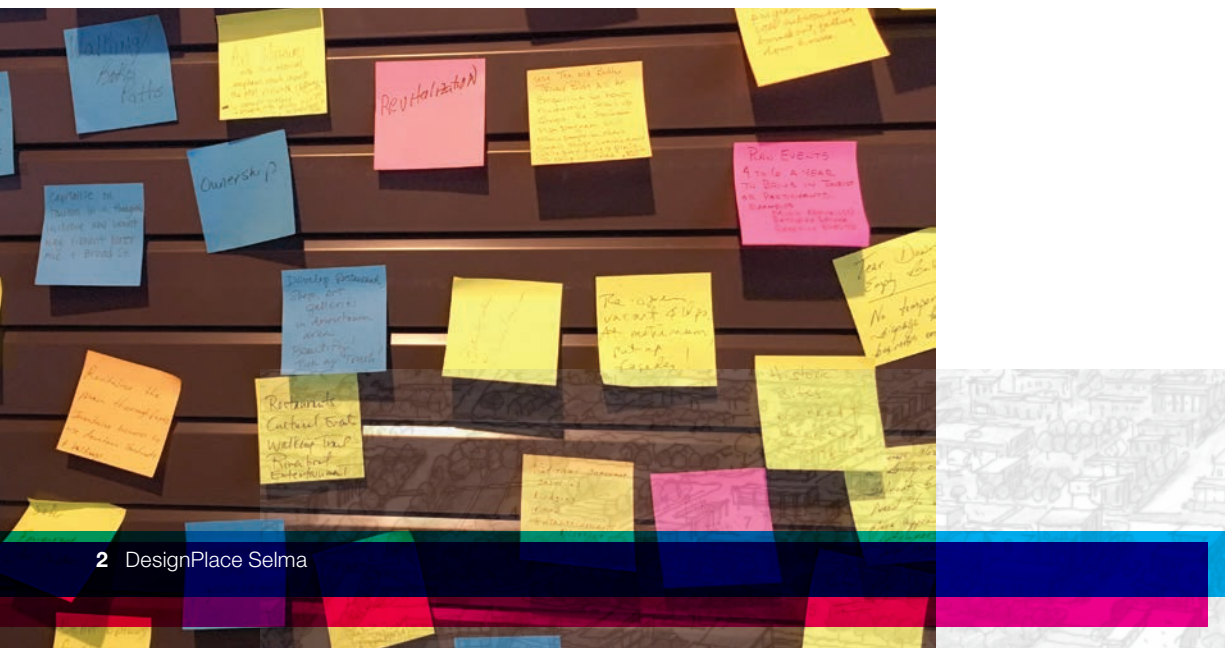


Just a Word...

The ideas represented in the following report are those of a design team brought together to work for three days in a charrette process for the City of Selma. The ideas found in this report are based on observations of the community, the significant public participation and insights the community shared with the team about Selma and your aspirations for it. The process has informed our thoughts about Selma, and this report represents our best professional recommendations in how to create and enhance spaces throughout the community. We look forward to seeing all the exciting things that come from our time in Selma.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world” - *Margaret Mead*

3	Introduction
4	Who is Selma?
6	How did we get here?
8	Concept Plans
9	Walking and Bicycling
11	Wayfinding
13	Downtown Building Redevelopment
17	George Washington Carver Homes
20	Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper
22	Branding
25	Next Steps
24	The Team



Introduction

In 2016 DesignAlabama decided to create a program that would give communities represented at the DesignAlabama Mayors Design Summit a “next step.” The idea was that mayors who gained so much knowledge about planning and design during their time at the Summit needed a chance to share that knowledge with their community, and thus, DesignPlace was born. The idea of the program is not to create a new place, but to enhance a community based on the assets of their community. Community assets include the built environment, the natural environment and most importantly, a community’s people.

DesignPlace is a three-day charrette process where DesignAlabama brings in a team of design experts with experience in architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, graphic design, interior design and planning, to show the underlying success of community development when design arts are used.

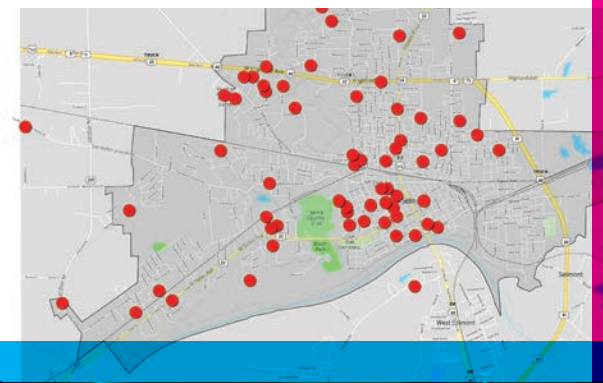
Perhaps the greatest benefit is the stimulation and mobilization of the public. Citizen participation is absolutely critical to the success of DesignPlace or any local design and planning initiative. A

DesignPlace visit is not an end; rather, a new beginning. A second and equally important benefit is the objectivity which a team of “outsiders” brings to a community. Professional consultants are free to carefully examine strengths and weaknesses with “fresh eyes” untainted by political ambition or economic self-interest. Further, for both design and non-design professionals on the team, professional skills are sharpened. And for all participants, appreciation is deepened through citizen participation in the design and planning process. Finally, DesignPlace is invaluable for illustrating the value of community design and planning in Alabama. It stimulates awareness of design issues and dramatizes the impact design can have upon a community’s vitality and the quality of life within its boundaries.



Many citizens of Selma attended the first meeting of DesignPlace. The top five issues identified in the Come and Go post-it note exercise were:

- > Community Image and Branding
- > Economic Development (including downtown revitalization and tourism)
- > Historic Preservation
- > Arts, Culture, Recreation and Entertainment
- > Housing



Who is Selma?

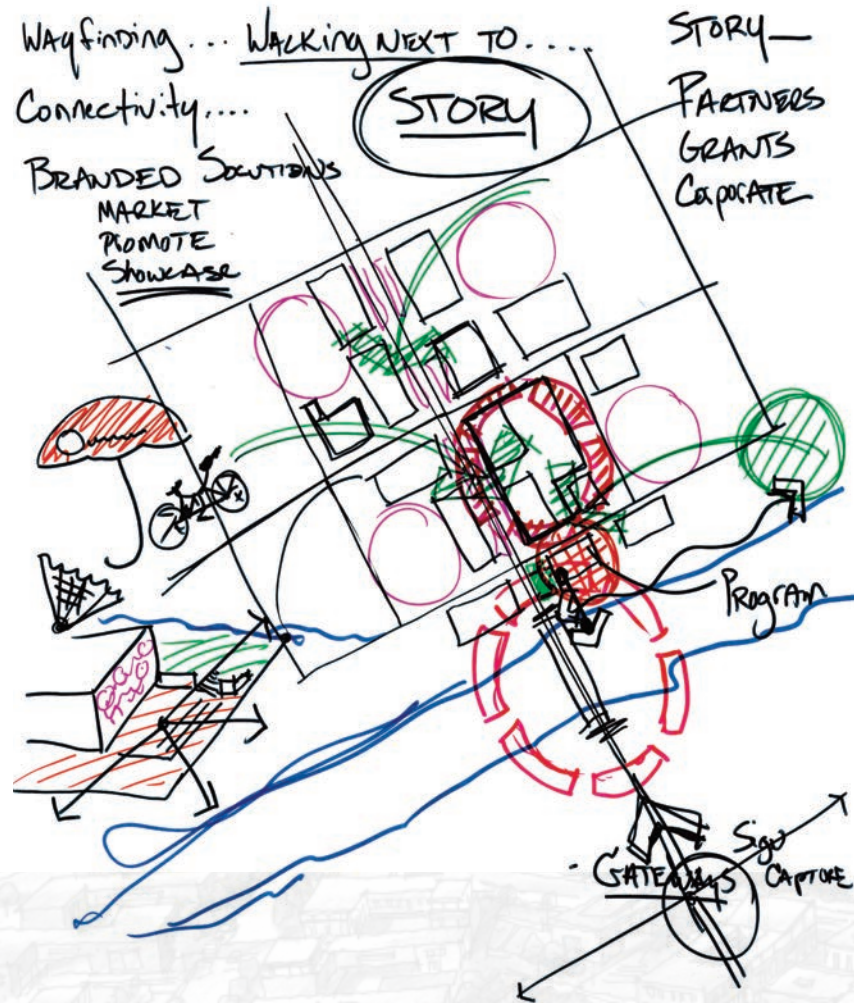
Selma serves as the gateway to the Black Belt and is the largest city in central Alabama between Montgomery and the Mississippi border. This beautiful historic city has many structures dating back to the 1800s and is the second oldest city in the state. Selma's history spans from the "Civil War to Civil Rights" with the city serving as the starting site for the historic Selma-to-Montgomery March. Selma, whose name was selected by U.S. Senator William Rufus King and means "high seat" or "throne," was incorporated in 1820. King's Selma Land Co. planned the development of the city in a grid pattern with wide streets befitting the cultural and commercial center it became. It was the cotton capital of the state and a major munitions supplier for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Two-thirds of the city was burned during the Battle of Selma in 1865. Selma arose from the ashes fueled by profits from the cotton speculation boom.

In the first half of the 20th century, it served as a trade center for numerous surrounding agricultural communities. On March 21, 1965, Selma emerged into the national spotlight as the location for mass demonstrations led by African-Americans to achieve voting rights. The Selma-to-Montgomery March, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., is one of the most significant civil rights protests and led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act, which forever changed political life in this country.

Downtown Selma's unique collection of architectural styles represents various periods of the city's prosperity from antebellum to turn-of-the-century. Highlights are the historic St. James Hotel, Bridge Tender's House, the Old Depot Museum, the Smitherman Building, the Federal Building, the Dallas County Courthouse and a number of beautiful historic church buildings.







How did we get here?

In 2018 Mayor Darrio Melton participated in the 12th Annual Mayors Design Summit. He presented to the team of design professionals at the summit a design challenge for Selma that focused on utilizing the physical locations of historical sites in the city to tell the city's unique and important story, while treating the places sensitively and creatively. He also wanted to begin to look at ways to build tourism and economic development in ways beyond historic tourism.

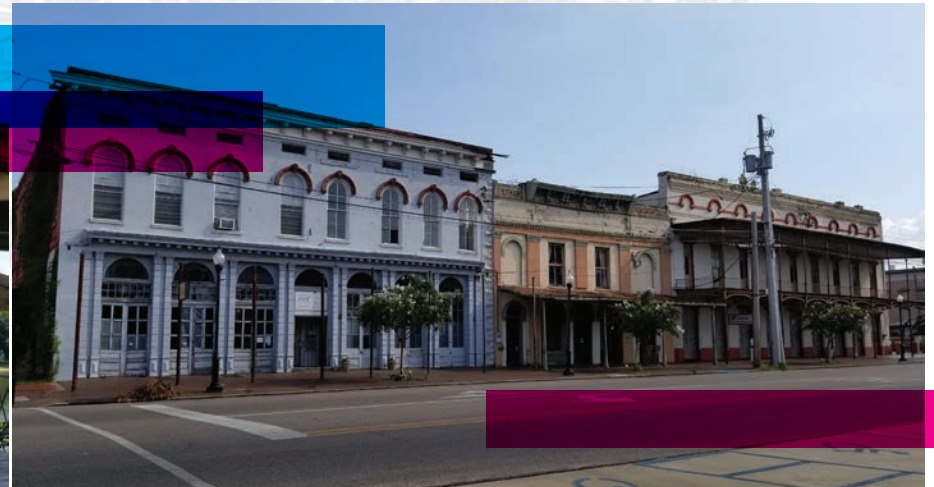
Some of the key points established during the Summit included:

- > Selma has some great momentum – elected a young mayor and has a number of young, hometown entrepreneurs who are committed to Selma – seize the opportunity
- > To help fund some development, think about increasing your lodging tax — this increase would not affect your citizens, just the captive audience you already have with tourists

Concept Plans

During the team's time in Selma, the team spent most of its time looking at the many assets and opportunities for reinvestment in the downtown area. The areas of focus developed by the team included the following:

- > Create a more walkable and bicycle friendly downtown
- > Create a wayfinding system
- > Adaptive reuse of buildings in downtown that accommodate both the residents of the community and the many visitors
- > Redevelop the historic George Carver Neighborhood while maintaining its essence
- > Riverfront development
- > Community branding/identity



A) Walking and Bicycling

Selma is relatively compact and features an impressive street grid. This is an untapped asset that can be used to improve mobility options for residents and visitors. For much of Selma's history, the businesses and other community destinations in downtown and along Broad Street north of Chestnut Boulevard were easily accessible from the city's central neighborhoods. Later on in the city's development, retail, dining and other functions moved north to Highland Avenue, making them much less accessible for residents, particularly those with limited mobility.

With strategic investments in streetscape enhancements – adding sidewalks and bicycle facilities – Selma can become one of the most walkable and bikeable cities in the southeast. This would make access to jobs and other day-to-day activities easier for residents. And, because tourism is an increasingly important component of the city's economy, such investments would have a direct positive impact on that industry. For much of their activities, tourists tend to walk from one site to another, particularly when the sites are relatively close together. Making bicycling safer and more convenient in central Selma, would allow tourists to visit most all historic sites without cars.

Creating a bike share program has been effective in larger cities and may be viable in Selma with tourists being a major user. A bike share program subsidized by tourism could help to make the system useful as well for residents with limited access to personal transportation.

Because many downtown streets have wide rights-of-way, there are many opportunities to improve them for walking and biking. Several downtown streets appear now over-designed, having more travel lanes than are needed for the number of cars travelling on them. Four and five-lane streets can be redesigned as three-lane streets with outside bicycle lanes (while maintaining on-street parking that is important to local businesses). Two-lane streets in downtown residential areas could incorporate “sharrows,” wide lanes marked for use by cars and bicycles. On-street bicycle facilities can be installed initially at a relatively low cost, primarily requiring only lane marking, and can be done in phases. Over time, more permanent changes can be made after initial improvements are tested, and the downtown bicycling network can be expanded where desired.

On-street facilities can also be complemented by off-street multiuse paths that accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists. It may be possible to create a path generally following Valley Creek. This would connect north Selma, from Highland Avenue to the river west of downtown with no at-grade street crossings. Connections into downtown could then be made through a riverfront trail or some combination of off-street and on-street paths. Right-of-way or easements would need to be obtained from individual landowners for construction of the trail. Because much of the land along the creek is floodplain, it is mostly undeveloped and development options limited, making acquisition more likely.



Proposed Water Avenue Streetscape

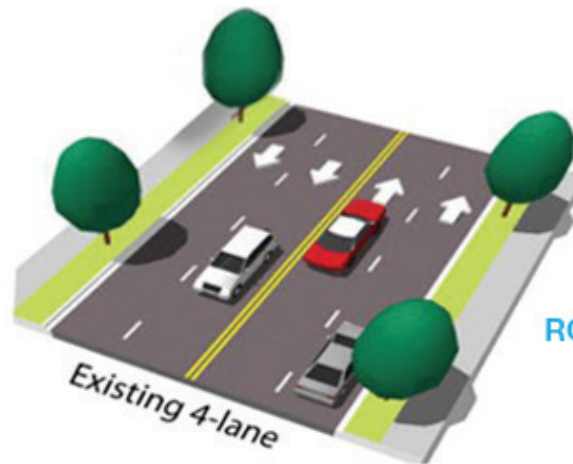
Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities.

Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work.

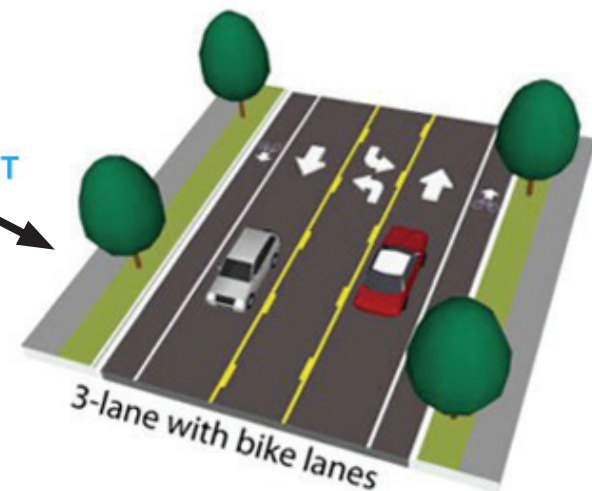
- Resource: smartgrowthamerica.org



Proposed development of Selma Avenue between Broad and Lauderdale



ROAD DIET



B) Wayfinding

a must for bolstering Selma's tourism economy

Civil rights-related tourism is becoming a more and more vital part of Selma's economy. While there are a number of things that need to be pursued to optimize the economic potential of tourism (dining, shopping, entertainment and lodging options), the City of Selma and its partners can bolster tourism by developing a comprehensive wayfinding system. This includes vehicular signage along wayfinding routes, district banners, kiosks and online tools to help visitors find the places they've come to Selma to see and experience. A robust wayfinding system can also help lead visitors to places they did not know about before arriving, whether those are additional historic sites or places to eat, shop, play or stay.

Wayfinding Routes

Vehicular signage should be installed to lead visitors to important destinations within the community. A vehicular signage system begins along the major roads leading into Selma, including where tourists may be arriving from civil rights and other historic destinations in Montgomery, Marion and other nearby communities. Vehicular directional signs should direct visitors along preferred routes. For example, for travelers coming from the west on US Highway 80, direct them to turn right onto Medical Center Parkway rather than continuing to Broad Street. The Medical Center Parkway route provides a positive first impression, with visitors travelling through different eras of the city's development and arriving downtown by way of Dallas Avenue.



District & Event
Banner

Vehicular
Direction Sign

Pedestrian
Kiosk

Broad Street, between Highland Avenue and downtown, does not offer a good first impression to visitors. And for those arriving in Selma from the north or east, there is no alternative route to direct them to downtown. As part of a larger revitalization effort, the City of Selma and its economic and community development partners should focus efforts on this corridor – not solely to impress visitors – but to reverse the severe decline along the spine of Selma. It is unlikely that all of the vacant commercial buildings along Broad Street north of downtown can be re-filled with businesses, and so revitalization efforts should look to other uses to sustainably re-inhabit this section of Broad Street.

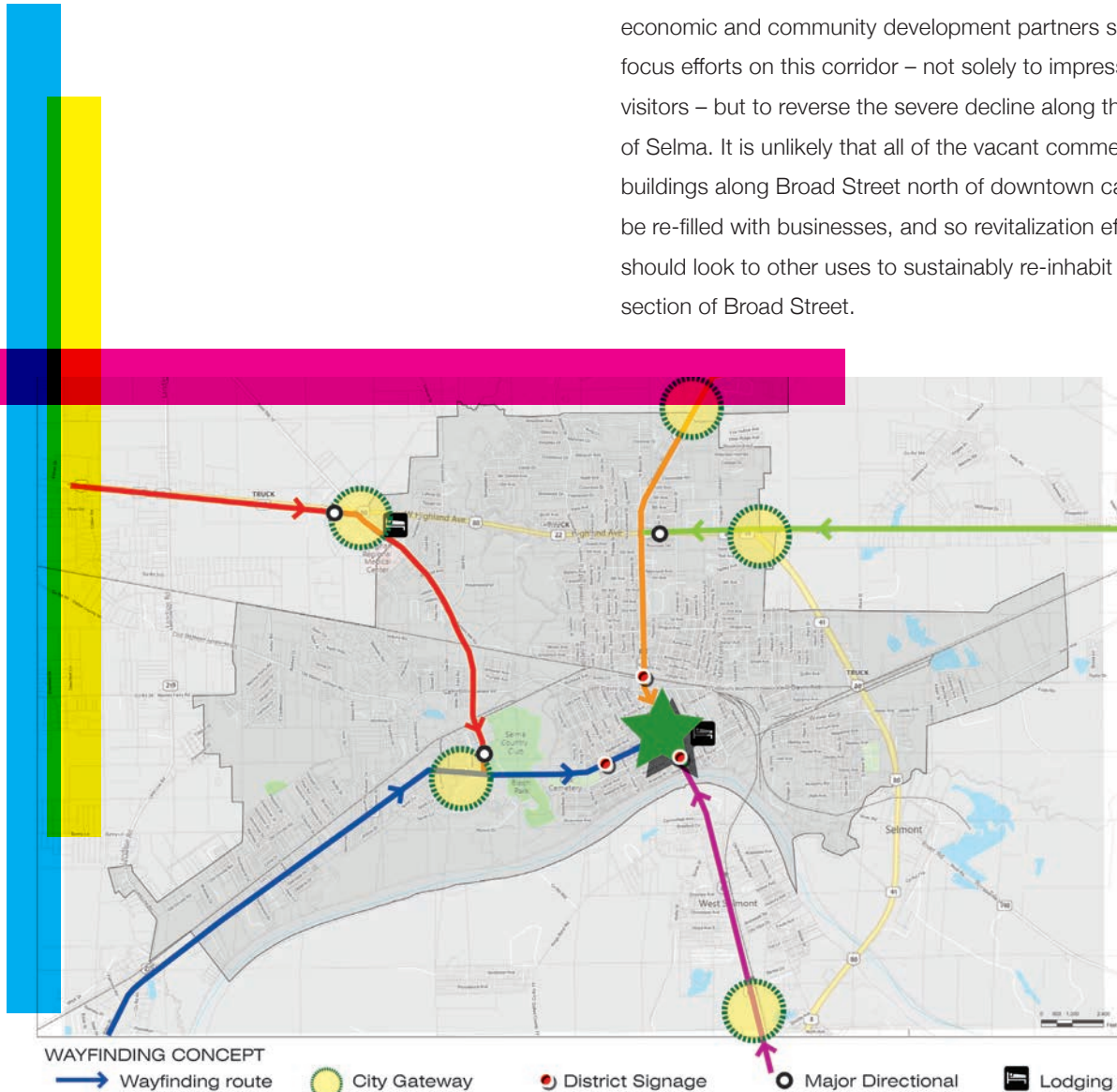
Wayfinding Recommendations

Vehicular directional signs can contain only a limited amount of information. At driving speed, signs with too much text become illegible. Therefore, the community must be very methodical in determining the destinations that will appear on vehicular signs. A priority should be placed on including tourist districts on vehicular signs. Upon arriving in a district, tourists can be directed by kiosks and other pedestrian signage, which can contain much more directional information.

Wayfinding systems should include not only vehicular signs, but also gateway improvements, district signage, and kiosks and web-based mapping and wayfinding tools. While most of Selma's tourist destinations appear on major web map platforms (Google, Bing, etc.), it is critical that this information be proactively expanded, enhanced and kept up to date by Selma's tourism industry.

Wayfinding signs, gateways, banners and any online wayfinding apps developed for Selma should be graphically coordinated as much as possible. These can also be used as ways to project Selma's updated brand graphics.

Directional signs should be carefully designed to optimize their effectiveness. Use clean, legible fonts for text, high contrast between sign background and text, and title case (not upper case) text.



C) Downtown Building Reinvestment

Historic Downtown Selma has an abundance of beautiful, architecturally significant building stock. However, the original use and layout of these buildings were based on antebellum year market conditions associated with cotton trading, resulting in vacant buildings in today's time. What if the existing buildings could be reinterpreted for 21st century market conditions such as Live-Work units along Broad Street, Downtown Selma's central corridor? The Live-Work layout would feature ground floor business space for entrepreneurs catering to Selma's Tourist industry and upper floor residential space for the same entrepreneurs or for tourists visiting Selma.



Potential redevelopment of Broad Street



Potential redevelopment of Masonic Lodge



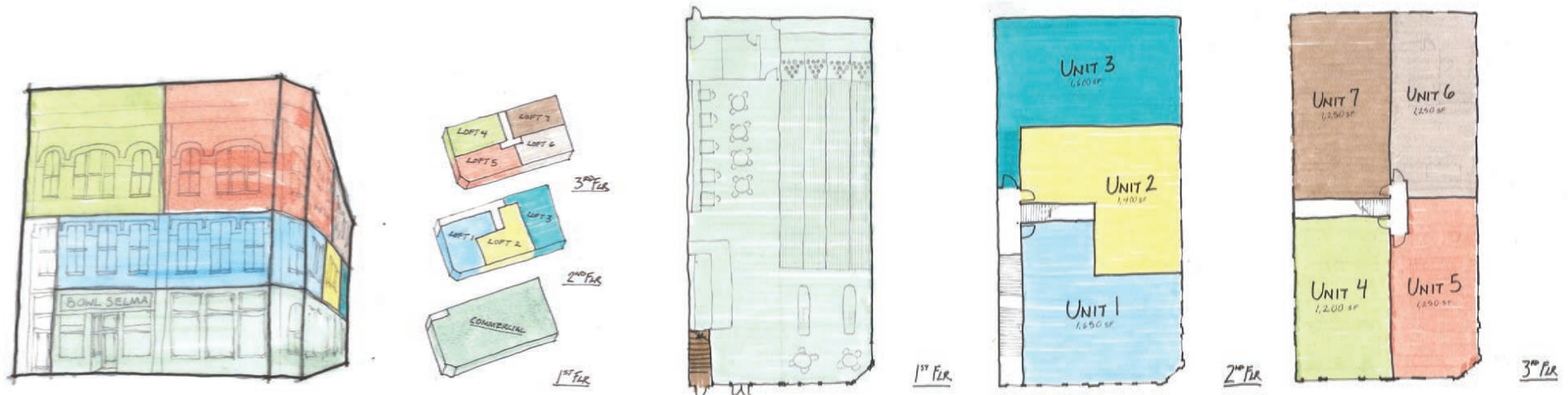
Potential redevelopment of Songs of Selma Park



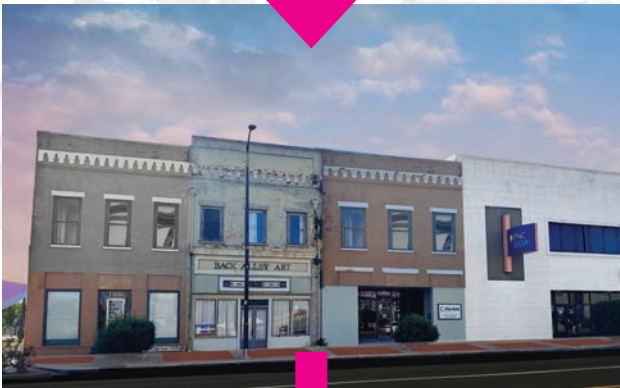
Façade improvements would include modern storefront glass systems, awnings and new refurbished exterior cladding systems. Modern exterior building Signage and Murals would enliven the facades, provide advertising for new businesses and showcase the talent of local Selma artists. Energy-efficient upgrades such as thermally efficient windows and HVAC systems would help reduce power consumption for the new building uses. New street landscaping, outdoor furniture and bike racks would soften the facades, thereby improving the pedestrian experience along sidewalks and connect pedestrians to the River and neighboring street blocks.



Suggested renovations for this building include converting the first floor into a small bowling alley with upper floors converted to residential.



Potential Broad Street Live/Work Units



DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION CONCEPT



D) George Washington Carver Homes



Existing George Washington Carver Apartments

George Washington Carver Homes is important to the history of Selma's role in the Civil Rights Movement. The public housing complex was the neighborhood backdrop of Brown Chapel AME Church, which served as a meeting place and hub for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The modest brick apartment buildings have not aged well and do not meet contemporary standards for public housing. The stark complex was designed to be separate from its downtown surroundings and so it remains today. Tourists visiting Brown Chapel AME likely

note the condition of Carver Homes and how it feels disconnected from Downtown Selma, the heartbeat of Dallas County, despite its being only a few short blocks away.

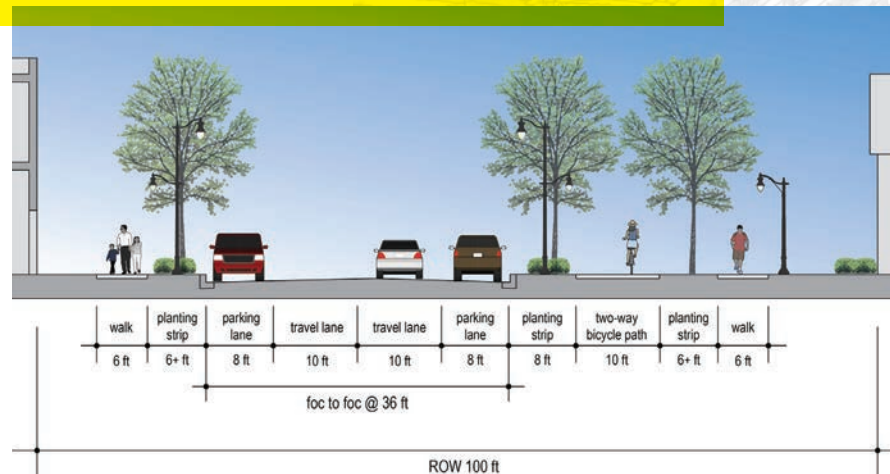
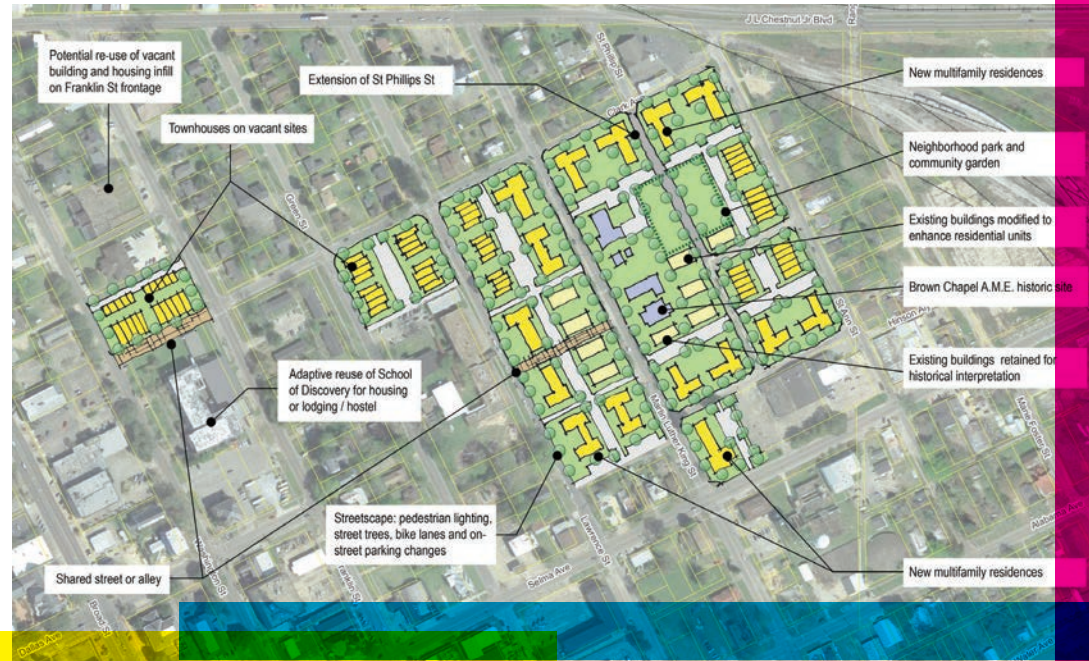
Improvements to Carver Homes is recommended for multiple reasons: to offer better housing options for residents, to enable mixed-income housing opportunities, to remove the perceptual barriers that separate Carver and its residents from downtown and to stand as an example to visitors how Selma has moved beyond 1965.

Preservation or Redevelopment?

While it might normally be recommended that a public housing complex as old as Carver Homes be redeveloped, because of its historical associations, retaining at least some of its residential buildings – particularly those around Brown Chapel – should be considered. One or more of the retained buildings can be adaptively re-used for interpretive purposes, portraying the everyday lives of Selma's African American residents during the Civil Rights Movement. Other retained residential buildings could be resubdivided and renovated to create living spaces more in keeping with modern public housing standards.

The following are recommendations that should be considered as part of revitalizing Carver Homes and adjacent areas:

- > There should be a variety of housing types created to enable people of a range of incomes to live in the area. Mixed-income housing is financially more sustainable over the long-term for public housing authorities. And by deconcentrating poverty, it can reduce crime and/or the perception of crime.
- > Constructing a new street, shared street or multiuse path through two of the complex's superblocks, 1) extending St. Phillips Street between Clark Avenue and St. Johns Street and 2) between Lawrence Street and Martin Luther King Jr Street (aligned with the façade of Brown Chapel). Breaking down superblocks improves walkability and overall mobility. A shared street is designed, sometimes with special paving treatment, so that pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists can use the same space simultaneously. Without separated sidewalks, shared streets do not require curbs. They are designed to limit vehicular speed and often do not use any pavement markings, such as to separate travel lanes.
- > It is understood that Selma City Schools may close the School of Discovery – a standalone sixth grade public school – as a part of districtwide consolidation efforts. When this happens, yet another major building in the city will become vacant. In anticipation of that, we recommend plans be evaluated for adaptive re-use of the school building, preferably by the private



Streetscape improvements along Lawrence Street including enhanced street lighting, street trees and a multiuse path

sector. While there are a number of institutional and commercial uses for the building, we believe the community would be better served if the building can be converted to residential use, tourist accommodations or a combination of the two. In fact, the Housing Authority could convert the building to residential to provide a convenient choice for displaced residents if Carver Homes is substantially renovated.



- > Install regularly spaced street trees and trees within interior spaces throughout the development to provide shade during the hot summer months, soften the overall look of the housing complex and provide a degree of privacy for the housing units and outdoor spaces within the development.
- > Establish a community garden adjacent to the Carver Nutrition Center building. The garden would be maintained by residents, with potential oversight by Housing Authority staff, the Nutrition Center, or a local nonprofit organization. Depending on the scale and success of the program, it could produce items for sale as well as for use by residents.
- > Residents in the neighborhoods clustered around downtown must travel far to buy groceries. Currently, a church occupies a former grocery store on Dallas Avenue just south of Carver Homes. Should the church



relocate, the building would be an ideal location for a community grocery/co-op and is well-located to serve residents of Carver Homes and nearby neighborhoods.

- > School of Discovery and Clark Elementary have portions of their sites that are unused (30,000 sf and just under 50,000 sf, respectively). These locations could be used to develop townhouses, a housing option appropriate in scale and density for the downtown location and that can be designed as market rate or affordable.



E) Lighter Quicker Cheaper

One of the greatest advantages of LQC is the ability to create and test a project immediately and with direct community involvement. Initial LQC projects are often temporary—relatively inexpensive alterations to a public space that take place while more long-range projects grind through the lengthy development pipeline. Bringing multiple and wide-ranging benefits to communities, the early implementation of LQC projects can help:

- > Bring life and amenities to previously lifeless public spaces
- > Break down resistance to change, while empowering vulnerable or overlooked communities who may have lost faith even in the possibility of change
- > Generate the interest of potential investors, both public and private
- > Establish (or re-establish) a neighborhood or region's sense of community
- > Inform best practices for later planning efforts
- > Encourage community buy-in (by demonstrating, for example, how a new street design would impact traffic flows not only for cars, but also for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit)
- > Bring together diverse stakeholders in generating solutions and a collective vision
- > Foster a community's sense of pride in, and ownership of, their public spaces



Try temporary ideas of road dieting to help your community understand the long term goal and the new way the road will be utilized.



Bring vibrant play equipment to this concrete area, that calls for kids and adults to gather.

Although a Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper approach is not for every situation (it may not be the right solution, for example, for large infrastructural projects like building a bridge—though that would surely be interesting!), it can be a creative, locally-powered alternative to the kind of capital-heavy and top-down planning processes that so often yield end results that are completely detached from the needs and desires of the communities they are meant to serve. - From Project for Public Spaces



The building behind this historic facade no longer exists – consider converting this area into a lighted park with seating and gathering spaces, games.



Pollinator habitat is dwindling. Planting a pollinator meadow creates beneficial habitat for pollinators, and makes for a beautiful landscape. Native pollinator plants create a natural ecosystem where a variety of pollinators are able to forage and nest. Create shade for children and adults both at the Riverfront Playground using the Butterfly Capitol of Alabama theme



F) Branding



Selma's Brand Story

Selma is a historically significant place of pilgrimage for equality and democracy.

As a bridge to the future we are becoming the technology center of the Blackbelt Region with a strong and growing economy. Located in central Alabama we are accessible to major transportation hubs. (back home easily and quickly) Our river offers a wonderful opportunity for recreation and commerce alike.

We are a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. We offer affordable and friendly neighborhoods where Southern hospitality is alive and well.

Selma inspires a calling for the greater good locally and globally. **Selma, a place that changed the world is a place that changes you.**



Selma

QUEEN CITY *of*
HISTORY ~ CHANGE ~ FUTURE



Arts
DISTRICT



Bridge
DISTRICT



Selma



Unity Park
~~~~~

New City of Selma Seal

Bridge District and Event Logo





# Next Steps

Sustained improvements to Downtown Selma and the community overall will require a committed, holistic effort—the problems challenging the city today did not arise overnight and it will take time and persistence to overcome them. The causes of these challenges are often complex and must be addressed from multiple perspectives to have lasting effect. With only limited resources, public and private partners must act collaboratively and strategically. They must pool their resources to accomplish larger tasks and invest carefully, focusing funds into efforts and projects that are likely to have a ripple effect, creating positive change beyond the physical boundaries of a single investment.

Progress will require building capacity among nonprofit and community organizations for them to be more effective in their own missions as well as in taking actions in support of this plan.

Early wins are important. Even very small projects accomplished early on will generate excitement in the community, build hope and maintain that private and public partners are committed and making progress. Successful projects can also indicate to funders that local partners are able to work together. Each year there should be some visible accomplishment to maintain enthusiasm for the long term endeavor of revitalizing and sustaining Downtown Selma and the community overall.

## Priorities

During our time in Selma, we quickly realized that there are many important efforts to be pursued. Selma is worth it and we truly believe in Selma's potential. Only part of its story has been told. The rest has not yet been lived.

As a team of outsiders, we have the benefit of looking at Selma's challenges and aspirations objectively, without agenda or perspectives slanted by local politics. And while we hope our recommendations offer value to Selma, we also know there is still much about Selma we cannot understand—not without having lived it and participated in the struggle to make life better there and across the



country. Having acknowledged that, we humbly offer the following “next steps” toward revitalizing Downtown Selma and building confidence among the community to pursue greater and greater accomplishments:

> **Create a modern, well-organized tourism industry.**

People travel from all over the world to see the Edmund Pettus bridge and the many other sites connected to Selma’s exceptional history. The community will be able to generate more tourism activity by presenting a more united front, establishing a stronger presence on the web, integrating mobile technology (especially with the city’s wifi program), installing a wayfinding system and phasing in bike facilities. In addition to telling Selma’s story, investing in tourism should bring about more economic activity in shopping, dining, lodging and entertainment. Tourists need a clear, comfortable and attractive starting point and suggested routes to get them going. The local museums need to be assessed by professionals for guidance on improving interpretation and visitor experience. Make the experience so easy and meaningful that visitors convince their friends and family to make the trip with them next time! Continue working with other communities and partners along the Civil Rights Trail.

> **Develop a plan for and implement a citywide wayfinding system that helps visitors find their destinations and explore all that Selma has to offer.** Tie the wayfinding system in with branding efforts and tourism marketing so the community promotes a singular, coordinated image to the outside world. Involve tourism, economic development, cultural and other key community stakeholders in a formal planning effort.

> **Plan out and phase in a downtown bike system for tourists and residents.** Downtown Selma has many overly wide streets with room in the travelway to fit in bike lanes, taking some streets down from four to three lanes and others with room outside the right-of-way for bike paths or multiuse paths. Plan it all out first, then start striping bike lanes on a few key streets in a tactical, do-it-yourself approach. Tap state and federal transportation funds for bigger, more permanent improvements, including connecting the downtown system to the trail system proposed by the Blackbelt Benefit Group.

> **Instigate creation of the Riverfront Entertainment District.** Raise funds, possibly through private sources or crowdfunding, to make necessary improvements to get the amphitheater up and running and clean up around its edges. Create and promote a full menu of federal incentives (Opportunity Zone), historic preservation tax credits and local incentives to encourage private reinvestment in downtown’s available building stock to recruit restaurants, retailers and entertainment venues. Start with regular local events

celebrating Selma’s arts, food and music (tourists welcome!). Work toward a highly walkable riverfront and Water Avenue environment with a necklace of places to eat, drink and celebrate local culture. The rehabilitation of the St. James Hotel should provide energy and excitement for improvements along Water Avenue and the Riverfront.

> **Prepare a plan and seek HUD and other funding sources to improve public housing downtown.**

George Washington Carver homes and available properties owned by the Housing Authority, the City and Selma City Schools should be planned together with the intent of: 1) preserving portions of GWC that are important to the physical context of Brown Chapel and its part in Selma’s civil rights story and 2) creating a high quality mix of affordable and market-rate housing options that are better integrated into the downtown fabric.





## Resources and Tools

It should be expected that city funding will be limited. Not only will public agencies and their community partners need to act strategically—setting priorities and working incrementally as funding allows, it will also be necessary to find and leverage outside funding. The following are some of the funding sources and tools that can be brought to bear in achieving the community's goals.

### > Federal and State Programs

The federal government has many programs and funding sources that may be tapped to support revitalization, including the Opportunity and Promise Zone initiatives. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 created new types of tax-exempt and qualified tax credit bonds that may be used by local governments in designated Recovery Zones. Both FEMA and the US Army Corps of Engineers have programs that may be applied to improvements along the riverfront.

The City of Selma is an “entitlement community” and receives annual funds from HUD’s CDBG program. The Entitlement Communities program provides funding that can be used for projects and programs to improve living conditions and economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income communities. The New Market Tax Credits program administered by the Department of the Treasury is another source of funds for development projects in low-income communities.

> **Transportation funds.** Through the Alabama-Tombigbee Rural Planning Organization federal and state transportation funds may be obtained to assist with street construction and improvements, streetscape and bicycle-pedestrian enhancements and off-street trails. The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) offers funding that can be used for development of recreational trails.

> **Housing funds.** Through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development there are federal and state funding sources available to help public and private housing developers build quality affordable housing. These include Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), Community Development block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds, among others. The Alabama Housing Finance Authority disburses LIHTC and other funding

resources annually through competitive and non-competitive processes. The City can help increase the competitiveness of AHFA applications by providing local HOME fund matches to priority projects.

Funding assistance is available through ADECA to improve energy efficiency of existing homes and reduce utilities costs for low-income households. These improvements often have high-up front costs but can be critical in upgrading historic housing to modern standards and reducing monthly energy costs for homeowners.



### > **Redevelopment District**

Redevelopment districts are areas designated by local ordinance in accordance with Section 24-3 of the Alabama State Code, which provides city governments and housing authorities specific powers to support redevelopment and reduce blight, including the acquisition and conveyance of property for affordable housing and other public purposes. The designation of a redevelopment district can also be of benefit in seeking funds from state and federal agencies.

### > **Private and Nonprofit Housing Developers**

Local nonprofit Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) and regional and national development companies build workforce and affordable housing. Several private housing developers are active in Alabama who work with CHDOs and public housing authorities to assist those organizations in planning, acquiring funding assistance and building affordable housing.

### > **Land Banking**

There are tax delinquent, vacant and abandoned properties in and around Downtown Selma, many with title and lean issues that deter private investors. The City, housing authority and others partners may acquire tax delinquent properties through the Alabama Department of Revenue and provide marketable title to properties with complex liens and ownership histories.

### > **Community Organizations**

There are several private foundations and nonprofit organizations that are and have been active in Selma that may participate in the revitalization process such as the Downtown Selma Association, the Black Belt Community Foundation, ArtsRevive, the Selma to Montgomery March Foundation, the Selma Center for Non-violence Truth and Reconciliation, Blackbelt Benefit Group and the Weaver-Parrish Charitable Trust.

Churches and other faith-based groups, like the Fathers of St Edmunds Southern Missions, can be a valuable resource. They run community outreach programs where volunteers do cleanup and repair work in neighborhoods. Programs organized among congregations across the city can leverage greater access to donated materials and labor. Faith-based groups can also partner with the City and other organizations.

### > **Private Funding**

Philanthropic foundations, endowments and banks offer funding resources to public and nonprofit agencies. Local banks provide funding for revitalization efforts through their Community

Reinvestment Act (CRA) programs. National and local foundations, such as the Surdna, Charles Stewart Mott, John S. and James L. Knight, and Kresge Foundations provide grants to social service programs, arts and cultural activities and development projects.

### > **Historic Preservation Tax Credits**

Federal income tax credits have been available for renovation of historic buildings since 1986. The State of Alabama provides tax credits for renovating income-producing properties. It may be possible to combine state preservation tax credits with other funding assistance, such as CDBG funds, to make rehabilitation of modest homes more financially feasible.





# The Team



**Jason Fondren** (Facilitator)

Planning Studio leader for Birmingham's KPS Group

Jason has 20 years' experience as a planner and urban

designer, performing citywide planning, downtown and neighborhood revitalization, campus planning and code development work throughout Alabama. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and a LEED accredited professional. Providing planning and design services for cities large and small, his exceptional work with KPS Group has been recognized numerous times by the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association, including the organization's Distinguished Leadership Award in 2014.

Jason regularly shares his hard-won planning experience through training and speaking engagements to government and civic organizations, addressing topics such as downtown design, smart growth, zoning, land use law, asset-based planning and sustainability.

In addition to his professional work, Jason has lent his expertise to Alabama communities as a volunteer through DesignAlabama, Auburn University's Small Town Design Initiative and the Alabama Communities of Excellence program. He sits on the Your Town Alabama Board of Directors and is active in the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association.

Jason lives with his wife and three children in Birmingham.



**Mary Shell**

Mary Mason Shell has been a preservation planner with the Alabama Historical Commission since 1991. She assists communities with utilizing historic

preservation programs to identify and protect historic buildings and districts. As manager of the Certified Local Government program, Shell assists towns with establishing local historic preservation commissions and identifying and designating local historic districts and landmarks for regulation and protection. A member of

the State Scenic Byways Council, Alabama Communities of Excellence Board and Your Town Alabama Board, she provides historic preservation expertise to these community development programs. After receiving her bachelor's degree in history from Auburn University in 1986, Shell attended the master's program in historic preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. In 1988, she was hired to work with the National Register of Historic Places program at the Alabama Historical Commission. In 1989, she relocated to Salem, Oregon, to work with the state historic preservation agency until moving back to Alabama in 1991.



**Jeremy Cutts**

Jeremy Cutts is an Associate with Williams Blackstock Architects in Birmingham, Alabama.

There he lends his thoughtful design approach to a variety of project types, with special

interest in affordable housing and community-based design. He manages projects with a goal to design impactful spaces and provide design solutions that are successful for the entire project team and that benefit the broader community.

Jeremy graduated from Auburn University in 2010 with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. As a student, he served as Vice President of the Auburn chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students and served as a mentor in the Summer Enrichment Experience program of the College of Architecture, Design, and Construction. As a professional, he has continued to mentor through the ACE Mentor of Alabama, which grants local high school students exposure to the possible careers in the design and construction industry.

It is Jeremy's belief that through greater awareness, community engagement and collaboration, quality design can extend its impact to those who have routinely been underserved.



### Lea Ann Macknally

Lea Ann Macknally is a Landscape Architect and President of Macknally Land Design. Upon graduating from Mississippi State University in 2000, Lea Ann put down

roots in Birmingham, Alabama. Her professional experience has allowed her to foster a passion for the design of public spaces and sustainable landscapes through projects such as Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children and Railroad Park. This passion has led to

opportunities in promoting native landscape design and restoration, integrated stormwater management, and the importance of civic spaces. She leads the firm's focus in the philosophy of creating innovative and collaborative design concepts with a strong practical foundation. Her understanding and ability to balance the desires and needs of the client and characteristics of the site is clear in the firm's strong portfolio of long-term clients and successful projects. In addition, Lea Ann's belief in education and conservation is evident in her work with ACE Mentor of Alabama, Your Town Alabama and Cahaba River Society.



### Roman Gary, Architect

Roman Gary is a Vice President and Registered Architect with Cohen Carnaggio Reynolds Architecture, Inc. (or CCR) in Birmingham, Alabama. He is a 1996 graduate of Auburn

University with a Bachelor of Architecture degree. At CCR, Roman is responsible for the development and design of diverse building types, including office buildings, churches, schools, restaurants, multi-family housing developments, recreational facilities, healthcare clinics, and single-family residences. Several projects he has worked on include, the YMCA Youth Center, Downtown YMCA Renovation, YWCA YWoodlawn Campus, Burr & Forman Law Firm and Hillside Homes Multifamily Community to name a few.

Roman's main focus has been to serve others. He has served on the Pathways Board of Directors, Railroad Park Foundation Campaign Committee, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Foundation, New Hope Community Development Center Board and Jefferson County Memorial Project Planning Committee. Roman is also a member of the Leadership Birmingham Class of 2010.

Personally, Roman is married to the former Cheryl Jackson of Uniontown, Alabama and they are the parents of a lively 9-year old daughter named Kendal. The Garys currently reside in Hoover, Alabama.

Roman's personal mission is to rebuild blighted communities. As his quest continues to lead him, Roman Gary will aspire for higher heights and greater achievement in restoring underprivileged communities.



### Angela Stiff

Angela Stiff is the Managing Partner and Creative Director of Copperwing Design, located in Montgomery, Alabama. Angela succeeded in growing Copperwing into one of

Alabama's leading communications firms during the first decade of the company's existence. She founded the firm with brand management as its cornerstone, recognizing its critical role in creating breakthrough communications with long-term relevance. She continues to lead with the same out-front thinking as she sets the vision for the firm. She has successfully led branding initiatives for clients with regional and national reach. Her creative work has been recognized with numerous industry awards. Angela is a proud graduate of Auburn University, where she earned a BFA in visual communications.

Angela is a member of the Auburn University College of Architecture, Design and Construction Executive Board. She serves as member and Communications Chair to the DesignAlabama Board of Directors. She has served as past member of the Troy University College of Communication and Fine Arts Advisory Council. She has also served as past board member to AGAPE for Children, for whom she still advocates.





Thank you to Monica Dennis at Tri-State Consulting Services for providing the GIS data for our maps.  
This report is produced through the support of the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development