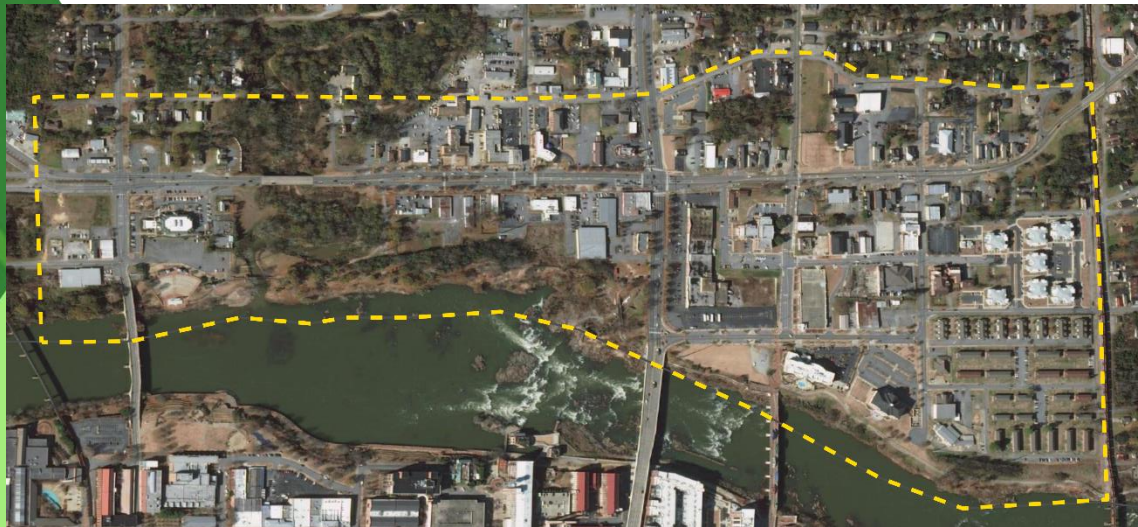


# **DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**



---

CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO

Instructor: Binita Mahato  
Spring 2022

---

## CPLN 7200: Graduate Students

Mark Aniadaga

Yasaman Bahadori

Kelsey Lynn Bousquet

Courtney Jamaine Harris

Bria Alexis Hudson

Charles Frank Jones

Ben Gregory McGarr

Patrick A Patterson

Tianyou Wang

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	1
Field Trip	1
Sensing	2
Synthesizing	4
Theorizing	6
Making - Draft Poster, Draft Report, Mock Presentation	8
Communicating - Final Poster, Final Report, Final PowerPoint Presentation	8
<b>Group 1: A City of New Beginnings</b>	11
An introduction to Phenix City	13
Vision, Mission, Values	19
Analysis	21
Goal, Objectives, and Strategies	25
Case Study	27
Proposed Plan	28
Conclusion	33
References	34
<b>Group 2: Paving the Way for a Revamped Phenix City</b>	35
List of Figures	36
Acknowledgments	37
Introduction	38
Getting To Know Phenix City	39
The frame of mind	41
What are the goals, objectives, and strategies?	42
What can we learn from other cities?	45
Proposed Plan	47
Limitations and opportunities?	54

Appendices	55
References	58
<b>Group 3: Renewing the Heart of Phenix City</b>	59
Introduction	60
Vision	62
Mission	62
Values	63
Analysis	64
Themes	70
Goal, Objectives, Strategies	71
Case Study	73
Proposed Plan	73
Conclusion	77



## Introduction

### 1- Field Trip

Dr. Binita Mahato's Urban Design Studio Class, as well as Dr. Sweta Bayhut's Transportation Planning class, took a field trip to Phenix City on January 28, 2022, in preparation for their downtown revitalization plan project in Phenix City. This field trip involved students meeting with city planners and touring the subject area of the project. Tracie Hadaway, a city planner, provided students with an overview of the history and prior efforts of Phoenix City. The students of the Urban Design Studio course then visited the study area. Following this visit, students explored downtown and the riverfront to gain a better understanding of the study area as they listened to Tracie Hadaway and Shaun Culligan explain the problems and issues facing downtown.







## 2- Sensing

Any urban design or urban planning project begins by understanding the project site and its context. To design and plan for a place and its people, we need to know and have a sense of the stakeholders' needs and wants. This assignment serves that purpose by creating a series of maps and graphics that illustrate, document, and present the studied Downtown area of Phenix City, AL. We did this by first - observing and collecting data and information, mapping and documenting people, places, and phenomena, and then - organizing, structuring, and absorbing collected data. The purpose of the assignment was threefold –

- Understand the context of the City of Phenix, AL – its historical, cultural, social, political, and physical aspects
- Collect primary (collected by you) and secondary (obtained from other sources) data on the study site and illustrate or map them
- Organize, structure, and synthesize from the collected data to recognize the needs and wants of the community

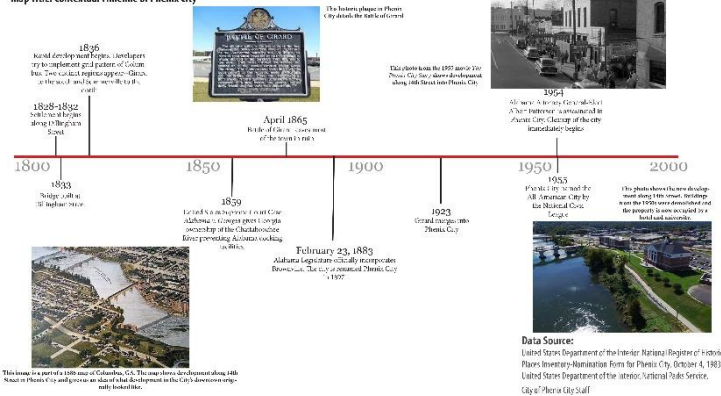




### CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

Spring 2022 | Assignment 1: Sensing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Map Title: Contextual Timeline of Phenix City



Contextual Timeline of Phenix City

### CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

Spring 2022 | Assignment 1: Sensing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahadori, Kelsey Bousquet, Bria Hudson

Map Title: Open Space



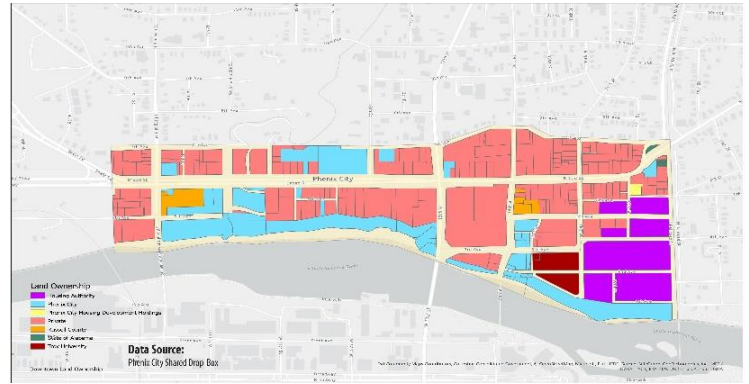
Open Spaces

Map Title: View to the Southeast



Birds' Eye View

Map Title: Land Ownership



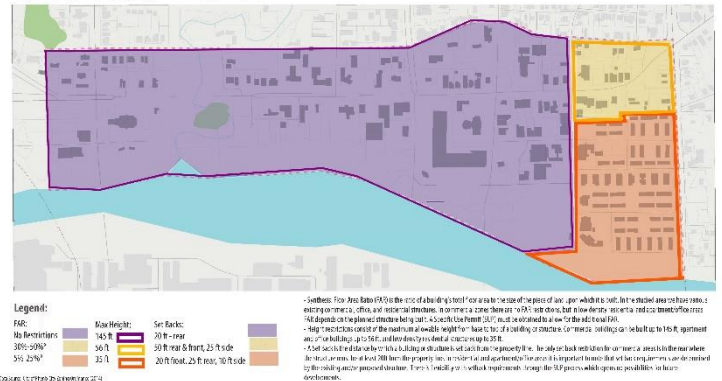
Land Ownership

Map Title: Detailed Businesses - Phenix City 2022



Detailed Businesses

Map Title: Floor Area Ratios, Height Restrictions, & Set Backs



Floor Area Ratios, Height Restrictions, & Set Backs

### 3- Synthesizing

Assignment 1 focused on observing and collecting data and information, mapping and documenting people, places, and phenomena. In Assignment 2, students organized, structured, and absorbed collected data by preparing a series of syntheses of each map/ chart/ item created in Assignment 1. The purpose of the assignment was to –

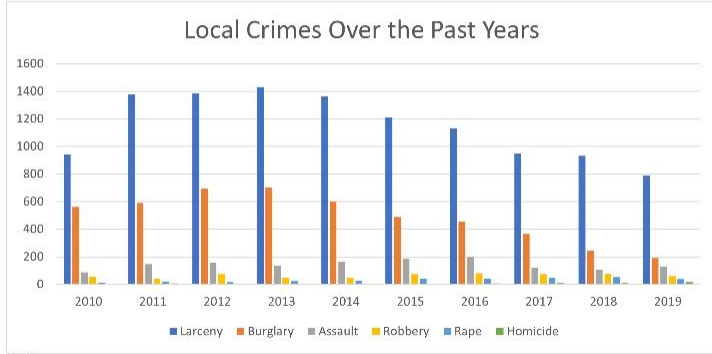
- Identify the key issues of Phenix City and the study area
- Answering the "so what" questions - what do the maps/ charts/ items tell you?
- What do we learn from the maps/ charts/ items?



**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 1: Sensing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Map Title: Local Crime Over the Past Years



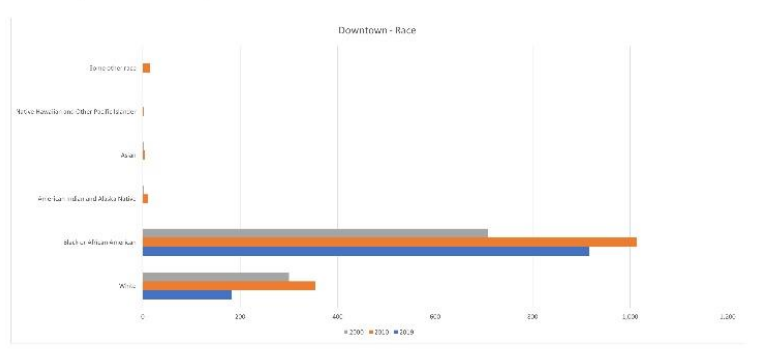
Data Source: Alabama Law Enforcement Agency, Phenix City Police

Local Crimes Over the Past Years

**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 2: Synthesizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Title: Race-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown



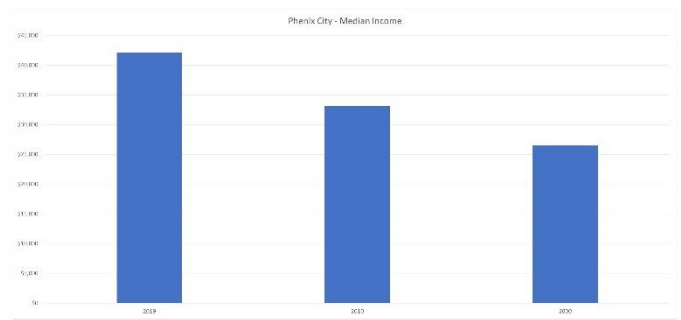
Data Source: United States Census Bureau, Phenix City Census (2019)  
 Synthesis: From the graph above, one can surmise that the race in Downtown is more predominantly Black. Also since 2010 the population has decreased.

Race-Comparison between Phenix City and Downtown

**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 2: Synthesizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Title: Income-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown



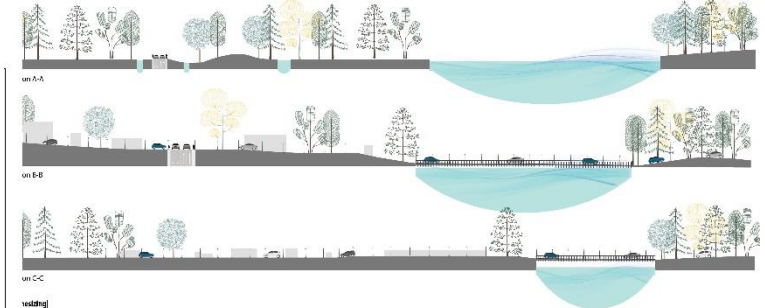
Data Source: United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/  
 Synthesis: From the graph above, one can surmise that the median income in Phenix City is rising steadily.

Income-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown

**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 1: Synthesizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahadori, Kelsey Bousquet, Briia Alexis Hudson

Title: Sections



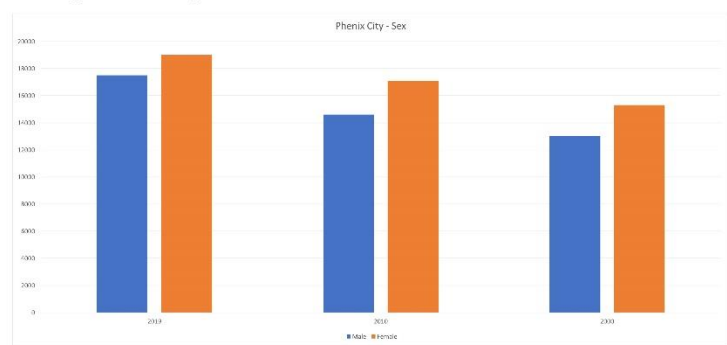
Section A-A: This section passes through Mill Creek Blue Road. At this section, we see the most vegetation and green space that are located around the Mill Creek waterway. In this part, the building density is low and no street passes through it.  
 Section B-B: This section runs across Dillingham Street. This street will create an intersection with Broad Street at this section. At this point, Dillingham Street crosses the Chattahoochee River and provides car access to that side of the Chattahoochee River. In this section, the vegetation is dense and the building density is higher than section A-A.  
 Section C-C: This section runs along 13th Street. This street and Broad Street have also created an intersection. Vegetation in this section is much lower than the previous two sections and the building density is higher. 13th Street also crosses the Chattahoochee River, facilitating car access.  
 In three sections, the vegetation in Columbus is more dense than Phenix City.

Sections

**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 2: Synthesizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Title: Sex-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown



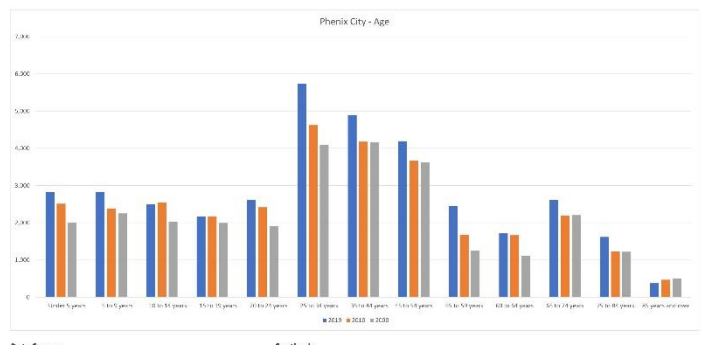
Data Source: United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/  
 Synthesis: From the graph above, one can surmise that the predominant sex for Downtown and Phenix City in 2000, 2010 and 2019, is female.

Sex-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown

**CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL**

Spring 2022 | Assignment 2: Synthesizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

Title: Age-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown



Data Source: United States Census Bureau, https://www.census.gov/  
 Synthesis: From the graph above, one can surmise that the predominant age group for Phenix City is age twenty to thirty-four years.

Age-Comparison Between Phenix City and Downtown

## 4- Theorizing

In the theorizing process, students established missions, visions, values, and sets of goals and objectives for the corridor supported by their findings from sensing and synthesizing assignments. Each student developed their own mission and vision statements and identified their values, goals, and objectives that may or may not align with Phenix City's overarching development goals for the downtown area. Students, however, needed to provide data as evidence to support their mission, vision, values, goals, and objectives.

### CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

Spring 2022 | Assignment 3: Theorizing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahaduri, Kelsey Bousquet, Bria Hudson

Map Title: Vision, Mission, and Goals

VISION	
Paving the way towards a vibrant and active future.	
MISSION STATEMENT	
Creating a lively and vibrant downtown for a future thriving Phenix City. This will be achieved by providing successful public spaces to bring people together, promoting economic growth, and creating a city with a distinct architectural style while preserving historic resources. Residents and visitors alike will be drawn to the walkable, friendly community that is being cultivated in the revamped Phenix City.	
VALUES	
Connectivity, Uniqueness, Community, Inclusivity, Vision, and Economic Growth	
GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES	
GOALS	STRATEGIES
<b>Goal 1: Economic Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating more mixed-income and mixed use housing to promote migration of new residents.</li> <li>Add more restaurants, coffee shops, and various food establishments throughout the downtown area. Restaurants and coffee shops should be placed within mixed-use buildings whereas areas for food trucks and local vendors can be set up closer to the riverfront.</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Safety and Walkability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Installing a downtown streetscape treatment, including street trees, street lights, trash receptacles and benches</li> <li>Creating more walkable sidewalks, internal pathways, and bike lanes for a safe and hospitable pedestrian environment.</li> <li>Adding protective barrier and canopy coverage for safety and aesthetic reasons</li> <li>Making downtown accessible and safe for everyone especially elderly and people with disability</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Safety and Walkability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract targeted audience and stakeholders to the downtown area</li> <li>Creating a space for local boutiques and businesses will make the downtown area community oriented</li> <li>Incorporate food trucks around the entertainment district to encourage traffic around the downtown area</li> <li>Beautify the surrounding downtown area and create a welcoming environment for residents and tourists</li> <li>Since the downtown area is mostly car oriented this will help with providing another option for residents and tourists to explore the city</li> <li>Enhance the riverfront and protect the pedestrians around the river</li> <li>Using ramps in the ways that connect Phenix City to the riverfront and urban public spaces</li> <li>Designing pedestrian-friendly streets, creating sidewalks where there is a lack of it, and enhancing the quality of existing sidewalks</li> <li>Creating a distinctive flooring for blind people to use the space</li> </ul>

Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, and Objective

## 5- Analyzing

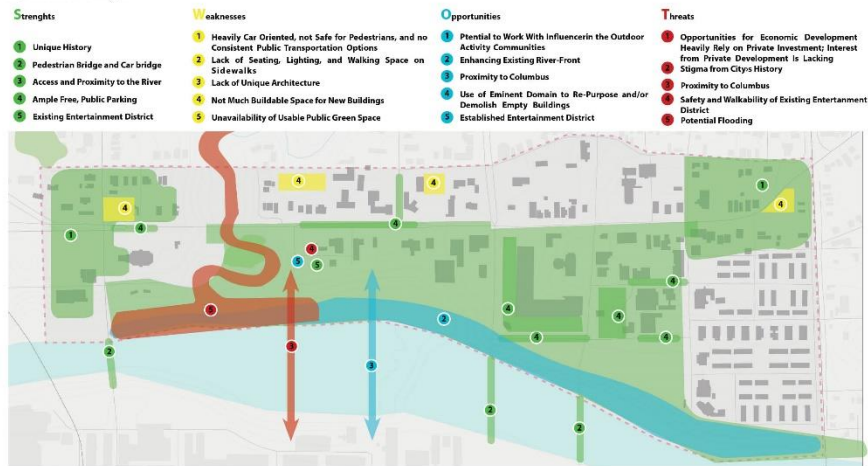
The analyzing phase helped students to evaluate the feasibility of their project in achieving its goals and objectives. As a process, the analysis helped to identify the prospects and constraints of the projects and the possible strategies to address those. There were three major purposes of this assignment – first, to support the vision, mission, goals, and objectives with data; second, to gauge the impact of the project on the stakeholders; and third, to familiarize with the context, policies, and standards to devise implementation strategies. Components are:

- SWOT Analysis
- Network Analysis
- Context Analysis

### CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

Spring 2022 | Assignment 4: Analyzing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahadori, Kelsey Bousquet, Bria Hudson

Map Title: SWOT analysis

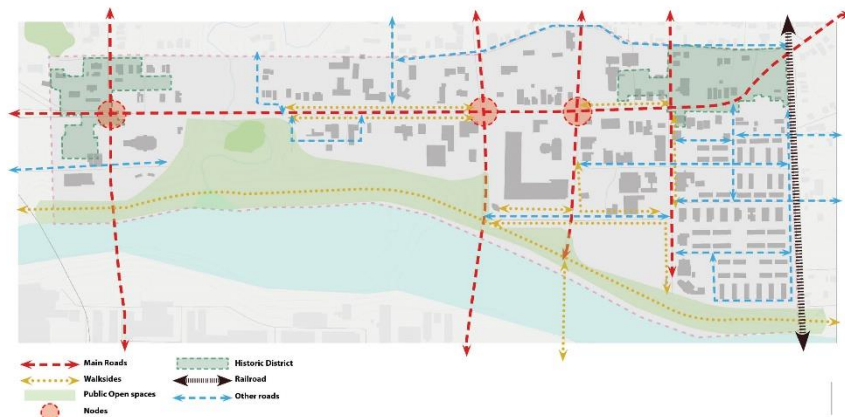


SWOT analysis

### CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

Spring 2022 | Assignment 4: Analyzing | Instructor: Binita Mahato | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahadori, Kelsey Bousquet, Bria Hudson

Map Title: Network Analysis



Network Analysis

## 6- Making - Draft Poster, Draft Report, Mock Presentation

At this point, the students have collected data on Phenix City and its Downtown, identified issues, set visions, missions, goals, objectives, and strategies, and analyzed the area for potential development. In the making phase, the students worked towards developing an urban design concept plan for Downtown Phenix City. This phase includes implementing goals, objectives, and strategies through realistic plans. Students conceptualized different components of their projects that reflected their vision for the area, conducted case studies of best practices that align with their project ideas, and identified the stakeholders, their roles, and ideas for financing the project. Components were:

- Case Study
- Draft Concept Plan
- Project Details
- Stakeholder

The report supplements the posters by communicating the project's ideas, visions, missions, values, goals, objectives, and strategies through writing. Urban Design Plans consist of both visuals and written materials. Reports provided a detailed explanation of the plan.

The students gave a mock presentation to the MCP faculty before presenting to Phenix City. The purpose of the mock presentation was to rehearse presenting professionally and in an effective and timely manner. Also, the intention was to get useful feedback from the faculty members on the project and make necessary changes before the final presentations. The components of the mock presentation resembled the components of the final presentations.

## 7- Communicating - Final Poster, Final Report, Final PowerPoint Presentation

The purpose of the final poster was to facilitate informal discussions between the students and the attendees from Phenix City after the formal presentations. Students also presented to Phenix City on May 4 as part of their assignment. In this meeting, Phenix City officials, including the mayor, were present. At the end of the presentations by students from the Urban Design Studio and Transportation Planning students, the mayor and other participants asked questions regarding the projects. Students of Urban Design Studio also provided their final posters to Phenix City.





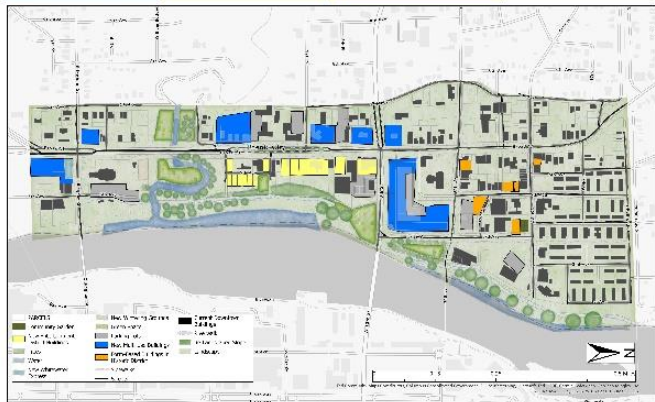






## Downtown Revitalization Plan | Phenix City, AL CPLN7200: Urban Design Studio

Spring 2022 | Assignment 6A: Communicating | Instructor: Binita Mahata | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Mark Anandapa, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr



### Case Study

City of Phenix City, Alabama - Specific Plan

Phenix City is a small town in the heart of Alabama, known for its historic architecture and scenic views. The city has a rich history and a strong sense of community. The downtown area is a mix of historic and modern buildings, and the city is working to revitalize this area to attract more visitors and businesses.

**Problems**

- The downtown area is in decline, with many buildings in poor condition and a lack of investment.
- The city is facing a population loss, which is leading to a decrease in tax revenue and a decline in public services.
- The city is struggling to attract new businesses and residents, which is further exacerbating the decline.

**Business and Investments**

- The city is looking to attract new businesses and investors to revitalize the downtown area.
- The city is investing in infrastructure improvements, such as street lighting and sidewalks, to make the area more attractive.
- The city is also investing in marketing and promotion to attract visitors and businesses.

**Issues Identified in the Downtown Area**

- Lack of investment in historic buildings and infrastructure.
- Decline in population and tax revenue.
- Lack of public services and amenities.

**Interventions Identified in the Downtown Area**

- Investment in historic buildings and infrastructure.
- Marketing and promotion to attract visitors and businesses.
- Investment in public services and amenities.

## CPLN 7200: URBAN DESIGN STUDIO | DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN, PHENIX CITY, AL

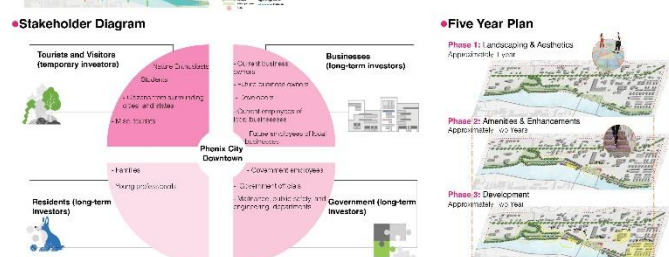
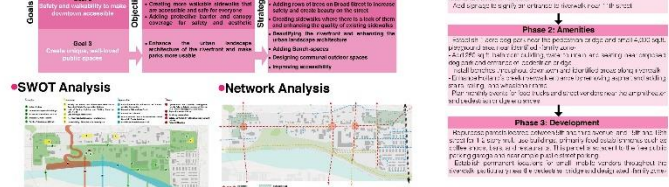
Spring 2022 | Assignment 6A: Communicating - Final Poster | Instructor: Binita Mahata | Project Facilitator: Phenix City, AL | Student Name: Yasaman Bahaduri, Kelsey Bousquet, Briq Hadson

- Mission Statement**  
 Creating a lively and vibrant downtown for a future thriving Phenix City. This will be achieved by providing successful public spaces to bring people together, promoting economic growth, and creating a city with a distinct architectural style while preserving historic resources. Residents and visitors alike will be drawn to the walkable, friendly community that is being cultivated in the revamped Phenix City.
- Vision Statement**  
 Paving the way towards a vibrant and active future.



- Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

Goal 1	Objectives	Strategies
Economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding more activities throughout the downtown area to attract visitors.</li> <li>Attracting new businesses and investors to the downtown area.</li> <li>Creating more walkable streets that are safe and easy to use.</li> <li>Adding public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracting the private sector and investors to the downtown area.</li> <li>Attracting new businesses, visitors, and investors to the downtown area.</li> <li>Adding public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> <li>Creating more walkable streets that are safe and easy to use.</li> <li>Adding public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>
Safety and walkability to make downtown accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhancing the urban landscape with more trees and green spaces.</li> <li>Adding more benches and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding more trees, benches, and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> <li>Adding more walkable streets that are safe and easy to use.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>
Green infrastructure and public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding more trees and green spaces to enhance the urban landscape.</li> <li>Adding more benches and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adding more trees, benches, and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> <li>Adding more walkable streets that are safe and easy to use.</li> <li>Adding more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.</li> </ul>
- Phasing Graph**
  - Phase 1: Landscaping & Aesthetics**  
 Add more trees, benches, and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable. Add public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.
  - Phase 2: Amenities**  
 Add more benches and seating to make the downtown area more comfortable. Add more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.
  - Phase 3: Development**  
 Add more walkable streets that are safe and easy to use. Add more public art and street lighting to enhance the downtown area.



Final Posters

# A City of New Beginnings

---

PHENIX CITY DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

Patrick Patterson, Tianyou Wang, Courtney Harris  
CPLN 7200 URBAN DESIGN STUDIO, SPRING 2022 | DR. BINITA MAHATO

## LIST OF FIGURES

**Figure 1- Downtown Study Area**

**Figure 2- Downtown Phenix City Zoning Map**

**Figure 3- Downtown Phenix City Land Ownership Map**

**Figure 4- Picture of Phenix City sign**

**Figure 5- SWOT Analysis**

**Figure 6- Network Analysis**

**Figure 7- Phasing Chart**

**Figure 8- Proposed Plan**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Tracie Hadaway and Shaun Culligan for their assistance throughout this project. This would not have been possible without their knowledge of the Phenix City area.

Thank you to Dr. Binita Mahato for her guidance throughout the entirety of this project.

## Introduction

The development of a city faces many challenges, from its inception to its sustainability. There are many factors that go into the development of a city which include but not limited to population size, topographical factors, industrialization, and even commercialization. A city must also look at its rich resources and plan for educational and recreational facilities, moreover, transportation within a city is a key factor in city development and sustainability. Throughout city development, many challenges arise that affect not only the people who reside in that community but the economy as well. These challenges have had a major impact on several cities throughout history and Phenix City, a city in Alabama is no exception to this urban growth phenomenon.

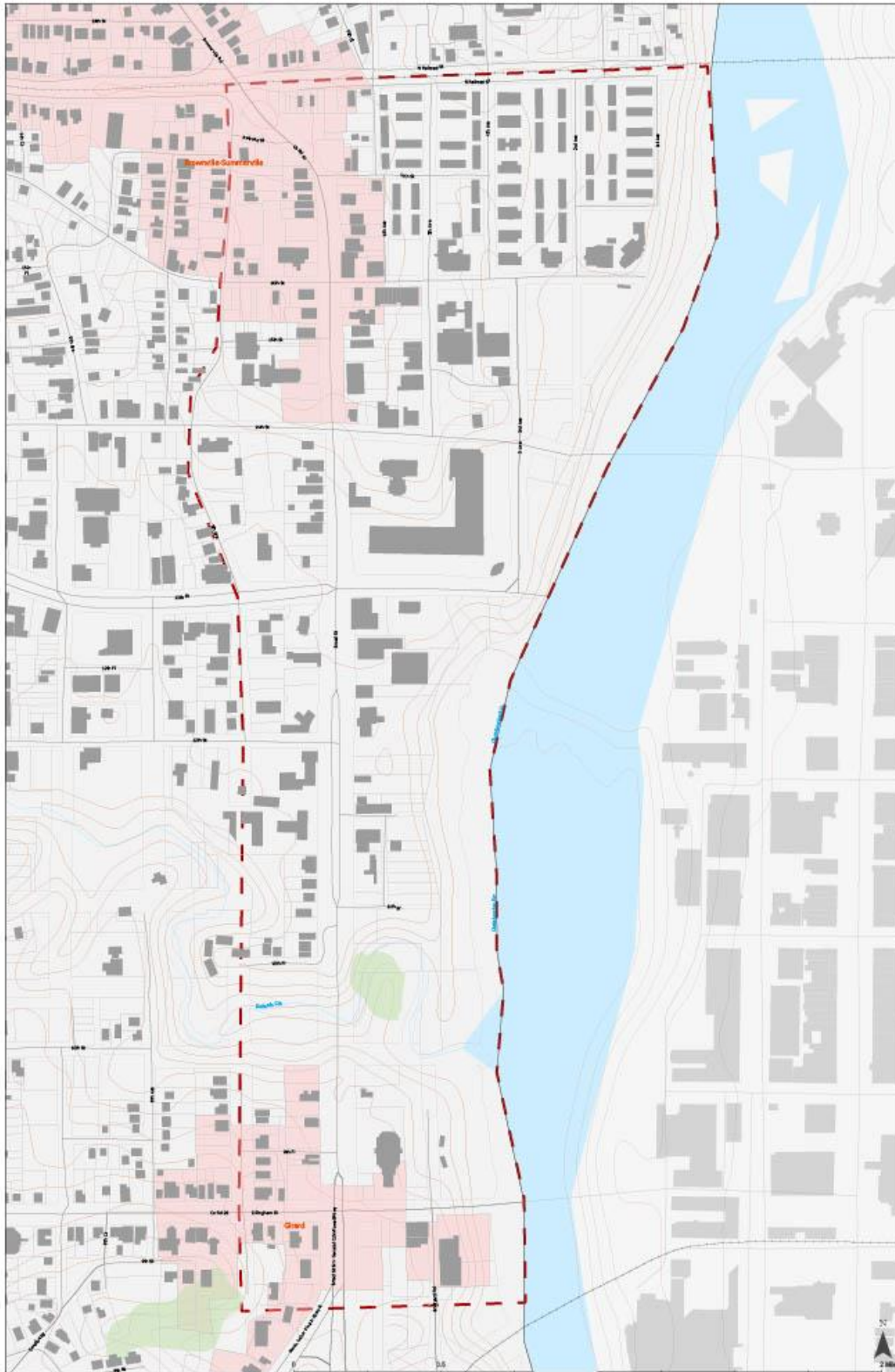
Phenix City is a city located in East Alabama along the Chattahoochee River which separates the city from Columbus, Georgia. It is part of two counties Lee and Russell, with it being the county seat of the latter. It is the largest metropolitan area in Russell County, however, it did not start that way. It has rich history and history that the city would like to forget. In its early days, Phenix City was known for crime and corruption. This heavily impacted the city's economy and social status. Phenix City and the land around it originally belong to Indians. Once Columbus, Georgia was established in 1828, the town was heavily regulated. The people in the area did not want to oblige by the rules and regulations of the town, so they moved into the land that the Indians occupied. This Indian territory eventually became known as the town of Girard, which was named after a slave trader from Philadelphia. Not long after acquiring Girard and much of the land surrounding it, Stephen found himself engulfed during the Civil War. The Union troops had taken over many of the cities in Alabama, which included Montgomery, Selma, Tuscaloosa, Macon, and they were headed toward Girard and Columbus area. In 1865, Girard was attacked, and a majority of the Confederate troops were pushed back into Columbus. The Union troops then attacked Columbus and this battle was called 'The Last Battle of the Civil War'. The Union troops eventually prevailed, and the town of Girard went through major changes. The town was divided into two towns. In the north was Brownville and in the south was Girard. The town of Brownville caused confusion among people not in the town because it occupied the same name

as another town in Tuscaloosa County. Because of this, the town representatives change the name of Brownsville to the name Lively. For unknown reasons, the town of Lively was changed back to Brownsville. On February 23, 1883, the Alabama Legislature officially incorporated Brownville. A few years later, on February 19, 1897, for unknown reasons, the Alabama legislature changed the name of Brownville to Phenix City. The two towns of Girard and Phenix City thrived and worked together to support its communities. They worked together to grow each other's economy and on August 9, 1923, the town of Girard merged with Phenix City with a population of 10,374. This newly merged city chose the name of Phenix City. Not long after the two towns merged to form Phenix City, the Great Depression hit the city in a major way. The city became bankrupt accumulating more than 1 million of debt. Also, during this time there was major crime and corruption in the city. However, there wasn't much done about this by the local authorities as they rationalized the crime as being a necessary revenue for the city due to other businesses in the city not helping the economy. The city even went further and enforced a system of fines and licensing for gambling and alcohol sales to raise money for the city's treasury. By 1945, Phenix City was collecting more than \$228,000 per year in fines. Because the city was doing so well financially, the city turned a blind eye to the crime that was rampant in the city. This caused the mob to settle in Phenix City because they could run their business with little interference. Once the mob settled in, Phenix City came under the control of organized crime bosses. These bosses ran gambling, drug, and prostitution operations throughout the city. They also rigged all local and state elections in the city which allowed them to hold important leadership positions in the city. The police and many of the city's officials were also members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Phenix City operated this way for a while with the city bring in a plethora of funds through organized crime. However, the crime began to get so bad that residents in the community began to protest their disdain for social impact the crime had on their community. They then began to try and clean the city up and get rid of the mob that took over their city. One of the first attempts to do this came from Hugh Bentley, a local businessman, who organized a group called the Crime Cleanup Resistance, to help clean up the city. Albert Patterson, a local attorney, joined Hugh Bentley in his efforts and they formed the Russell Betterment

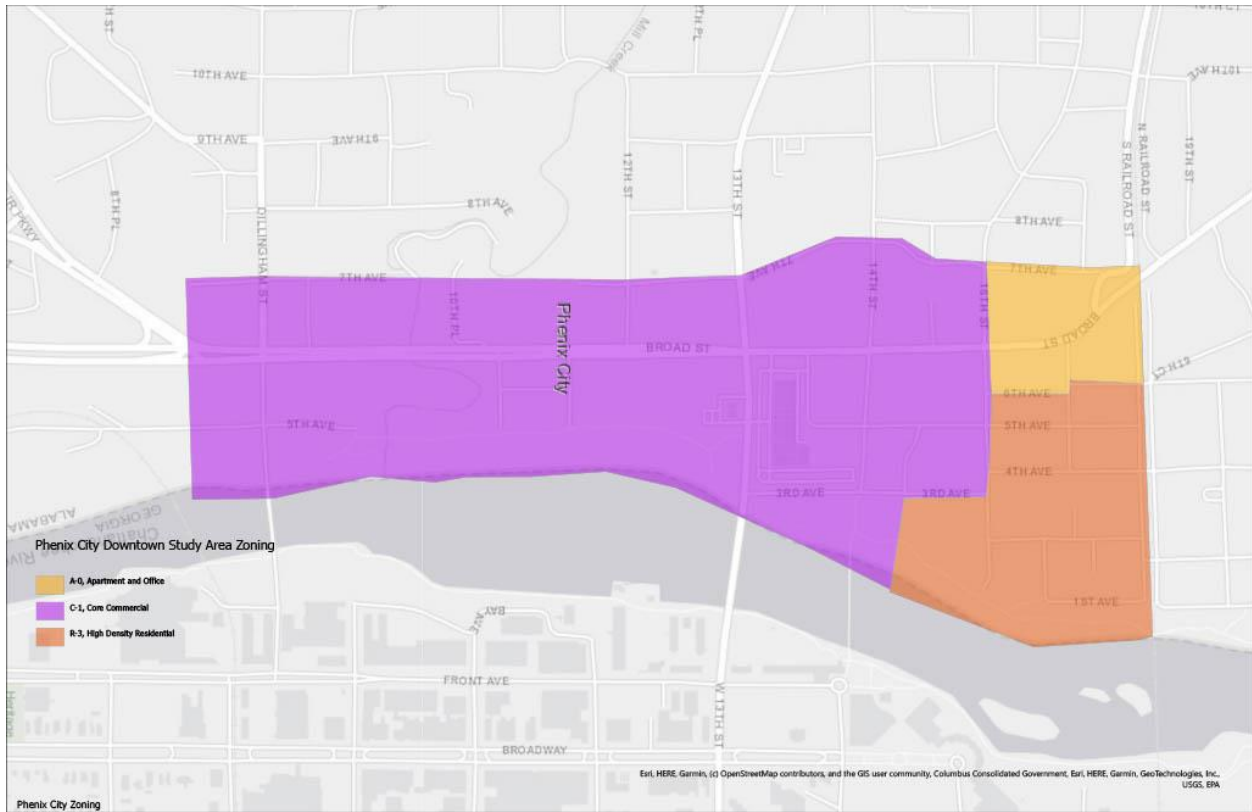


Association, whose purpose was to fight corruption in Russell County with a main focus in Phenix City. They believe the best route to change the city was politically. So, Albert ran for the States Attorney General's Office and was able to win the Democratic primary despite the local officials tapering with the election. The local officials and mobsters within the city began to see Albert as a big threat to their operations. The attempts to clean up the city was met with heavy pushback. So much that Albert was assassinated walking outside his law office on June 18, 1954. This was a major blow to the cleanup efforts. The assassination got the attention of everyone and the community and the outcry for change was higher than ever. After Albert was killed, the mayor of Phenix City, Homer Cobb, ordered all businesses who sold alcohol to close on Sunday's. The town was also placed under martial law and raids were enacted throughout the city. Albert's son ran for State Attorney General's Office in 1955 and won. He picked up where his father left off. During his term, more than 700 people were indicted by a Russell County Grand Jury and by the end of 1955, Phenix City eradicated all organized crime. The city never fully recovered, however there are major efforts to restore Phenix City to prominence. The city is steadily growing with a population of 36, 682 people and the economy is beginning to boom which is why Phenix City has reached out to Auburn University to help restore and revitalize aspects of the city and to make it a main attraction to not only the people in the community but people all around the world. One of Phenix City's main attractions is their downtown area. By applying urban design principals to this area, it has the potential to surpass the economic and social goals set by city officials.



Downtown Study Area (Figure 1)



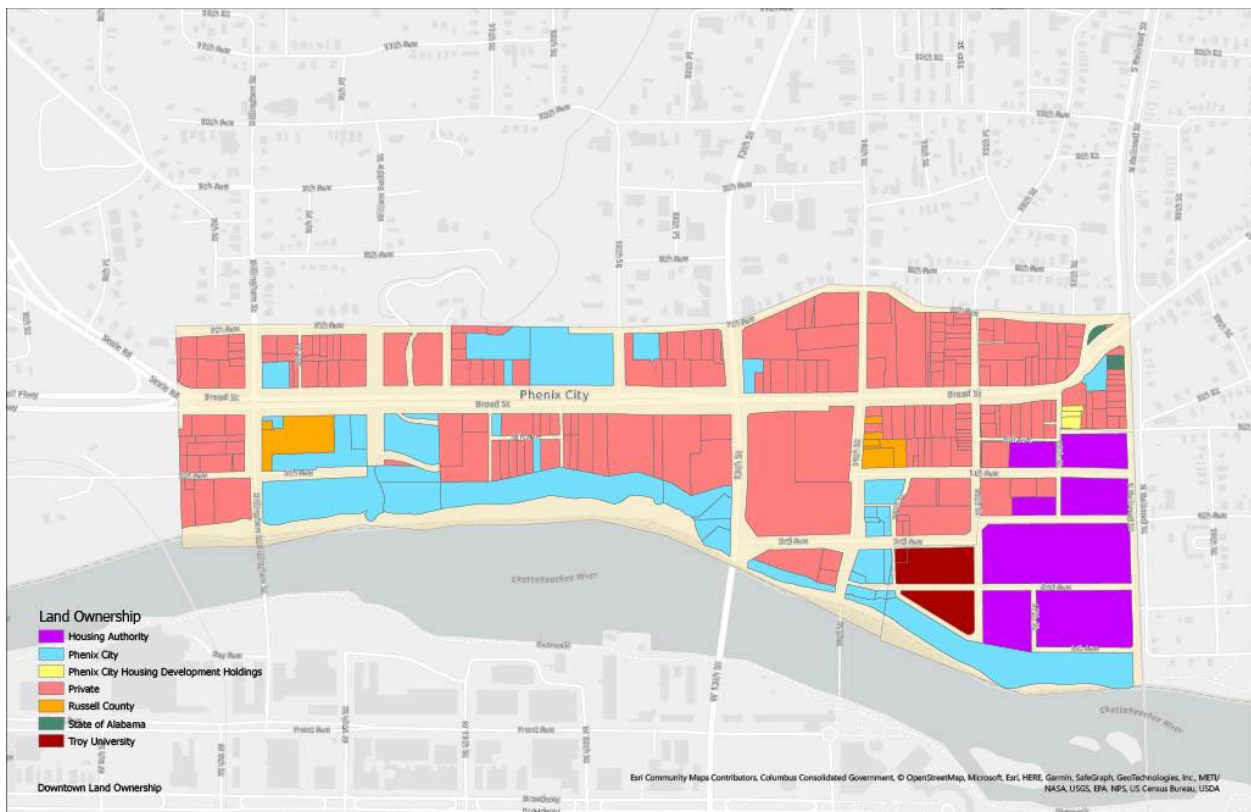


**Phenix City Zoning map (Figure 2)**

In the downtown Phenix City area there are only three zones: C-1 (Core Commercial District), A-O (Apartment and Office District), R-3 (High Density Residential District). These zones all have different uses and that effects what kind of activity we see in that area. In the High-Density Residential District, it is entirely apartments, whereas, in the A-O district we can see some apartments and some residential style office buildings. The largest zoning district in the downtown area is C-1, or the Core Commercial District (purple district on map). This district contains mostly retail, office, financial, government, food service, and personal service facilities. In the zoning ordinance it is stated that the use of upper floors for residential is encouraged and pedestrian access is desirable. This will be the main area in the downtown area that we will be focuses on in this project as it already contains most of the commercial and is the most developed out of all the zoning districts. All development must be approved by the Planning Commission and City Council to ensure that it follows the City’s development plan and design standards.

The second largest zoning district in the downtown area is R-3, or High-Density Residential. This district is used for High-density residential buildings and is occupied solely by public housing and run Phenix City’s Housing Authority.

The third and smallest zoning district is the A-0 District, or Apartment and Office district. This district encourages a mixture of residential and office buildings. It is similar to the C-1 district, but contains many historic buildings and is part of historic district.



**Phenix City Land Holdings map (Figure 3)**

The downtown Phenix City Area is mainly composed of private commercial establishments, with a few state, county, and Phenix City owned parcels. Troy University also owns a small, but prime parcel in the bottom right corner of the study area. The bottom right area of the study area is almost entirely Phenix City Public Housing and High Density residential. Phenix City also owns almost all the riverfront property. This is a great opportunity for Phenix City as they can be in control of what they want to see developed near the river and in other

areas in the downtown area. So, Phenix City is in a great position to find developers that they can work with to help add more density, in both residential and commercial, and any other goals that Phenix City wishes to achieve.

## Vision, Mission, and Values



Figure 4- <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/75998312437606464/>

## *A City of New Beginnings*

Phenix city has a long history and tradition, and there are also famous events in history. The reason we put forward this slogan is that we hope to go through our proposed

project to make this historic city have a new beginning, so that more people can know the history of the city and make the city more modern as well.

## Mission Statement

Below is our mission statement for Phenix City. A mission statement helps us clarify and declare our strategy for the downtown revitalization plan for Phenix City.

*For Phenix City we want to create a vibrant downtown area that has a lot to offer to its citizens and people visiting. We want to improve the economic development in the downtown area and land use conditions. We also want to support many transportation options in the downtown area (walking, driving, biking, public transportation). We will enhance and protect the historical districts, while promoting new growth and sustainable development.*

## VALUES

### 1. Activity

We hope that more activities can be held in Phenix City in order to increase the attractiveness of the city and attract more people to come here. We would provide activities that will attract Phenix City and Columbus residents, as well as tourists, to the downtown Phenix City area

### 2. Connectivity

We hope that more roads and human roads can be built so that residents in Phenix can have more areas for activities and facilitate their daily travel. We would make people to move effectively and safely throughout the downtown area.

### **3.Uniqueness**

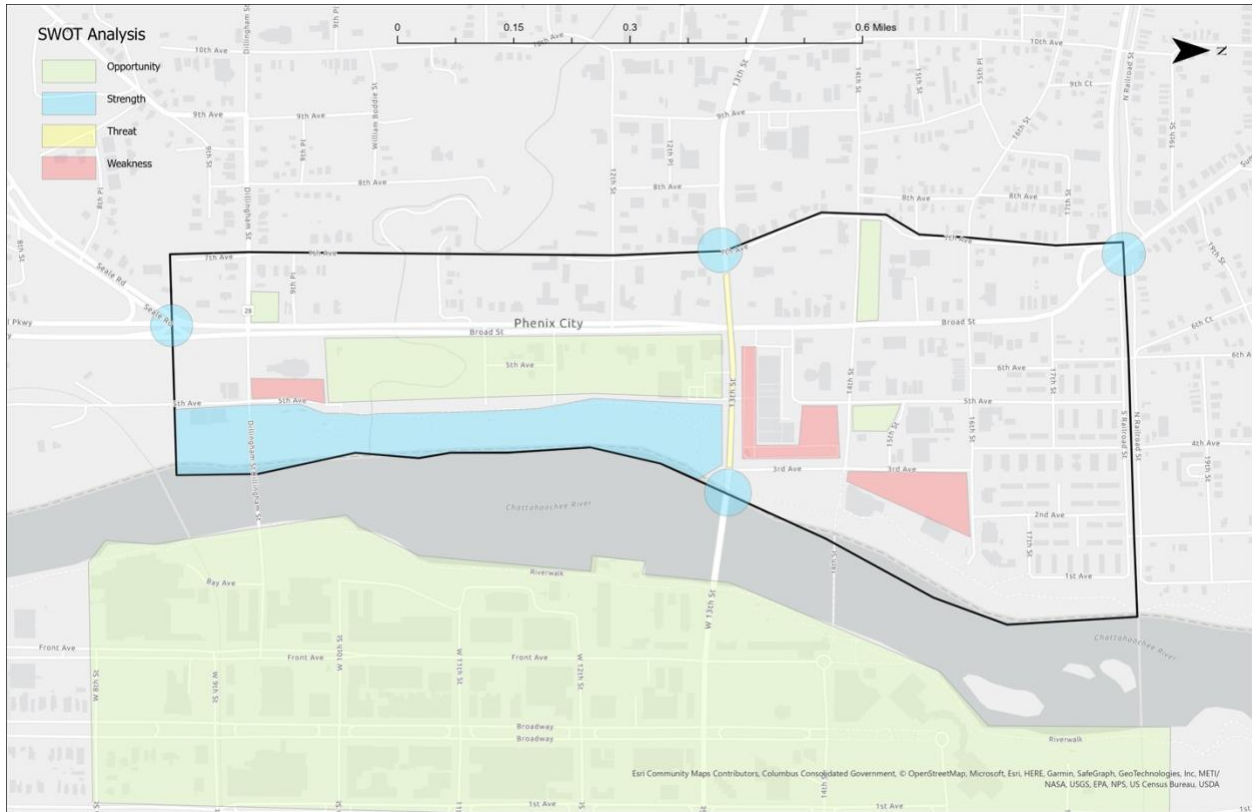
Phenix City has many historic buildings and rich histories. We hope to make use of these histories and renovate historic buildings to attract more people and give Phenix a business card of a historic city through history. We would help grow and develop Phenix City while keeping it unique and maintaining the existing character

### **4. Sustainability**

Sustainable development is the key to a better future. Human beings rely on natural resources for commerce, activities, and survival. Ignoring sustainability may lead to the depletion of natural resources. Sustainable development is the key to a better future. When planning Phenix City, we should adhere to the idea of sustainable development.

## **Analyses**

During this project we performed two analyses of the downtown study area. The first analysis was a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis analyzes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the downtown study area. This is an important process early in the project as it allows one to identify the positive and negative aspects of the study area. Below is a map of the SWOT analysis and a brief explanation of each Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat.



**SWOT Analysis (Figure 4)**

## Strengths

The first strength identified in the downtown area was the riverfront. It is represented on the map as the large blue polygon next to the river. The Riverfront is a huge strength in Phenix City as it provides people will access to the Chattahoochee River and nature in the downtown area. The second strength identified is the pedestrian bridge connecting Columbus to Phenix City. This pedestrian bridge allows people from Columbus to come over to Phenix City through a mode of transportation different than a car or bus (Walking, biking, etc.) The third and final strength are the high traffic roads into the downtown area. They are represented on the map by the blue circles. Their importance will be explained in the upcoming Network Analysis.

## Weaknesses

The three weaknesses we identified are the large surface lots, lack of diverse housing stock, and lack of business diversity. The only weakness identified on the map are the large



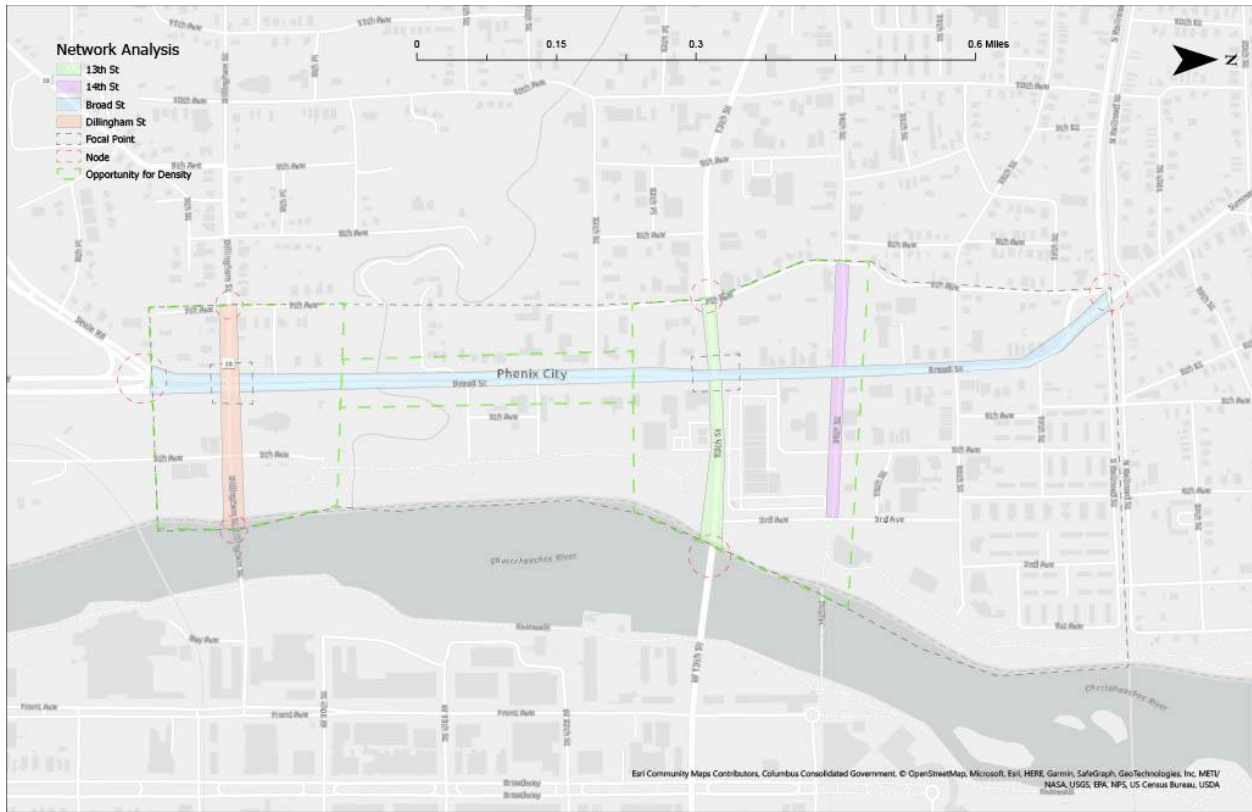
surface parking lots, and they are represented with the large red polygons. These surface lots take up a lot of valuable real estate that could be used for commercial development.

### **Opportunities**

The three opportunities identified are; The proximity to Columbus, the newly established Entertainment District, and undeveloped lots. The proximity to Columbus is represented by the green polygon covering the Columbus area. The Entertainment District is represented by the large green rectangle in the middle of the study area. The remaining three green polygons represent the undeveloped lots.

### **Threats**

The two threats identified in the area are the height allowance in the downtown area and 13<sup>th</sup> Street. Currently the zoning allows for a building height of 145 feet, which has been identified as too tall by city planners and employees. The other threat is 13<sup>th</sup> Street, which is represented by the thin yellow polygon in the middle of the study area. This is a large thoroughfare in the downtown area and is difficult to cross and inadvertently separates the area.



## Network Analysis (Figure 5)

For this Network Analysis we are observing the nodes, streets, and focal points that will experience a high level of human traffic. We have identified that 13th Street, 14th Street, Broad Street, and Dillingham Street are the four main points of entry into the downtown area. By identifying these nodes, streets, and focal points we can help direct Phenix City to what areas should become denser and should see more development. A little more than 45,000 people drive through the intersection of 13th Street and Broad Street every day and if we can get some of those people to stop and stay it would greatly increase the economic value of downtown Phenix City. After we identified the focal points and nodes, we then identified the three best areas for density in the downtown Phenix City area. Those are: At the intersection of Dillingham and Broad Street, along Broad Street in between Dillingham and 13th, and at the intersection of 13th Street and Broad Street. By identifying these three areas, we can help Phenix City begin to develop in increments, that will hopefully spread throughout the downtown area.



## Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Below are the groups identified goals and the corresponding objectives and strategies. These goals, objectives, and strategies were recognized after our analysis phase.

### Connectivity

**Objective 1a:** Make Phenix City walkable throughout the downtown area, and make sure they have a reason to walk (Stores, Shops, Restaurants, etc.)

**Objective 2a:** Improve sidewalk quality (use other design options for sidewalks). Add flashing indicators at crosswalks to make crossing the street safer.

**Objective 3a:** Decrease the speed limit in the downtown area to protect pedestrians and encourage drivers to take in their surroundings.

**Objective 4a:** Make area bikeable by adding bike lanes and a place to lock up bikes.

**Objective 5a:** Improve Public Transportation options into the downtown area.

### Activity

**Objective 1b:** Build up and establish entertainment district (Breweries, Bars, Restaurants). Make sure the river is not ignored and continues to be a vibrant riverfront (Festivals, Concerts at Amphitheater).

**Objective 2b:** Add more Mixed-Use Development in the downtown area (Vertically or Horizontally).

- Increase density (No more than 4 floors)

**Objective 3b:** Make sure the downtown area is for everyone.

- Not just nightlife activities

- Space and activities for children and families. (River festivals, Concerts at the Amphitheater.

## Uniqueness

**Objective 1c:** Share the history of Phenix City

- Placing informational plaques at significant locations
- Allow Phenix City to tell its history.

**Objective 2c:** Keep Phenix City Unique

- Different and unique architecture.
- Find what Columbus is missing and offer what is lacking.
- (Make Columbus Curious)

**Strategy 1A-i:** Identify areas in downtown Phenix City where sidewalks are needed and build them (12th Street).

**Strategy 2A-i:** Improve sidewalk quality and widen sidewalks on higher traffic roads (13th Street & Broad Street).

**Strategy 2A-ii:** Improve crosswalk safety and add flashing indicators on 13th Street and make it easier to cross and less of a barrier.

**Strategy 3A-i:** Decrease the speed limit in the downtown area on 13th Street

- Narrow the lanes on 13th Street and Similar design to Broad Street

**Strategy 4A-i:** Add Bike lanes along 13th and Broad Street

**Strategy 5A-i:** Lengthen hours of Phenix City Express. (Currently Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.)

- Operate bus on Saturday and make it free for certain events held downtown.

**Strategy 1B-i:** Work with developers to get a diverse set of businesses in the newly established Entertainment District

-Increase density in district to help with ease of walking and to create a more convenient, enjoyable place to live

**Strategy 2B-i:** Make sure the downtown area offers different types of housing. Both in type and price. (Apartments, Multi-Family Housing, Single-Family Homes, etc.)

**Strategy 2B-ii:** Encourage mixed use development in the downtown area. Mixed use within blocks and within buildings.

-Establish a height limit for buildings in the downtown area (No more than 4 floors)

**Strategy 3B-i:** Hold different types of temporary events downtown (Event-Based Development)

-Make sure there are activities for families and children

**Strategy 1C-i:** Place informational plaques at significant locations throughout the downtown area

-Work with the community to make sure the history is told in a way that is appropriate

**Strategy 2C-i:** Offer more family friendly/safer spaces that Columbus is lacking.

### **Case Study- Utilizing Underused Spaces with Food Trucks**

For our case study we decided to study different ways food trucks are being implemented to help come up with ideas about low-cost development to help Phenix City. The case study we found was done by an Urban Planning graduate student at MIT who studied what made food truck spots successful in Los Angeles. Now even though Los Angeles has over 10 million people and Phenix City only has 36,000, these core components she identified can translate well to Phenix City. The graduate student studied several locations in the Los Angeles area where food trucks were prevalent. She then identified several different components that made the area suitable for food trucks. She found out that food trucks can have several benefits to underutilized spaces. Food trucks can act as a magnet to spaces that would otherwise go completely unused. For example, food trucks can be placed in alleyways, parking lots, and empty roads. These food trucks can turn an unused or underused space and turn it into a

thriving space that people congregate at. Below I have provided the components identified that will be the most helpful to Phenix City.

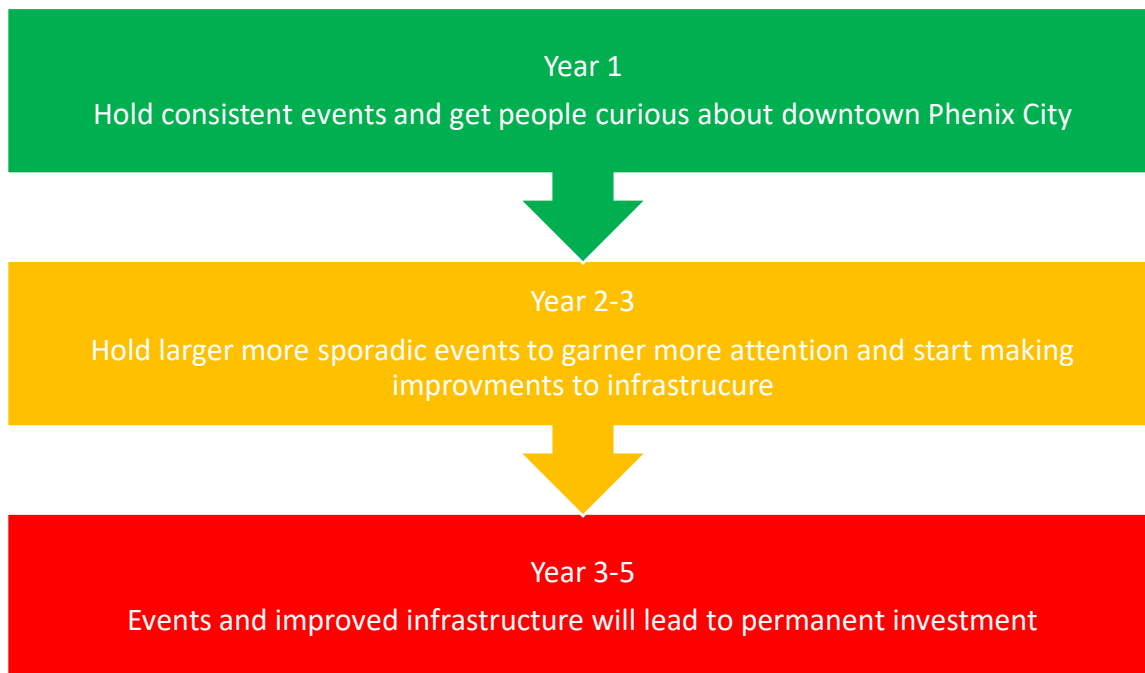
- **Land Use type-** Is the land type more commercial or more residential? In the case of Phenix City, the area chosen is more commercial, but residential buildings are close by on the Columbus side.
- **Place food trucks in high density areas-** Food trucks have been identified to perform better in higher density areas. For the case of Phenix City, the downtown area has an acceptable amount of density that would allow food trucks to thrive.
- **Access-** The location of the food trucks needs to be in an area that is easily accessible. In the case of Phenix City, it is in a prime location for accessibility. It is between 13th and 14th street, which are main thoroughfares in the Phenix city area. It is also next to a hotel, the Troy University satellite campus (885 students) and the pedestrian bridge connecting Phenix City to Columbus.
- **Community Engagement-** Food truck event is an opportunity for community engagement and allows civic involvement.

### Proposed Plan

Our proposed plan for the city of Phenix City is to use Food trucks and similar temporary events to help boost its economy and grow interest in the downtown area. This is a great option for Phenix City as these events require very little cost and can help grow the city in a different way. This type of development is a more bottom-up approach, instead of top-down. This means that the development can be more community led and community based instead of led by developers. This allows Phenix City to have a unique amount of control over the development they would like to see. These events will allow Phenix City to garner interest from the public first, and then develop later. Below we have a visual of what we would like to see regarding our phases. For the first year, we would like to see consistent events held in the downtown area to give people a reason to come to the area. This will be a weekly food truck event that is held in several different empty lots or surface parking lots in the downtown area. For years 2 and 3, we would like to see those consistent events continue and see the addition of some larger less consistent events in

order to garner more attention and attract more people. This will coincide with the improvements in infrastructure that were talked about in the above Goals, Objectives, and Strategies section. For years 3 to 5 we would like to see these events and infrastructure improvements start to lead to permanent investment in the downtown area. On page 20 a map of the proposed plan be seen to give a spatial concept.

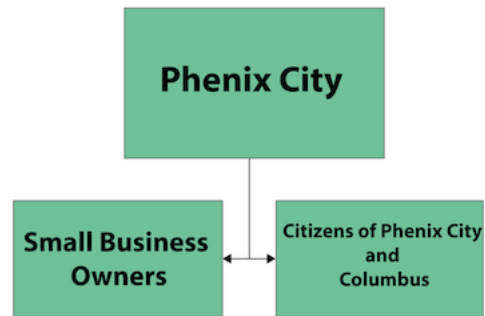
## Phases



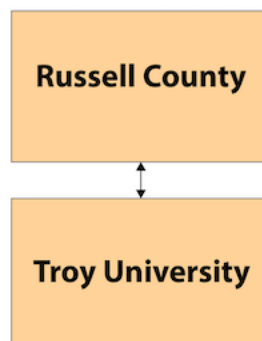
## Phasing Chart (Figure 7)

## Stakeholders

For this project there are several stakeholders who have different levels of importance to play in this project. Each stakeholder is color coordinated to signify when they will be involved in the phases.



The first three stakeholders are The Phenix City Government, Small Business Owners, and the citizens of Phenix City and Columbus. Phenix City will provide the land for the events, provide the connections to local food vendors and food truck businesses, and help orchestrate and run events. The Small Business Owners will use these events as an opportunity to grow their business in Phenix City and get involved with the community. Finally, the citizens of Phenix City and Columbus will act as consumers and help start bottom-up development.



The next two stakeholders are Russell County and Troy University. Both own land in the downtown Phenix City area and would benefit if Phenix City became a better city.

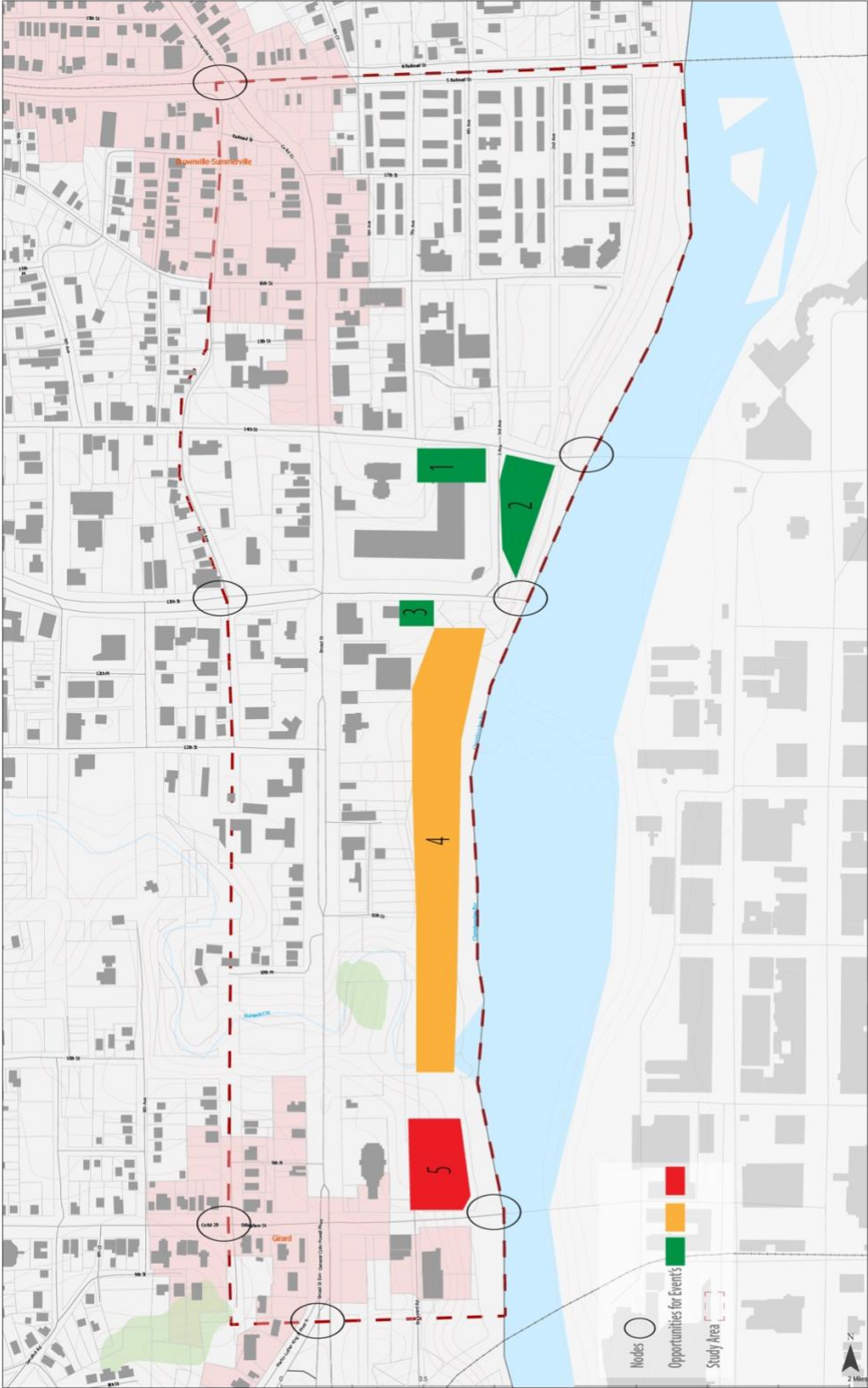
## Potential Developers

The last stakeholders are the Potential Developers that we are looking to attract with these events and infrastructure improvements.

### Proposed Plan Map

On the upcoming page is a map that displays the areas that have been identified by our group as prime areas for temporary events. These areas include; **A gravel lot just north of White Water Alabama (1)**, **the grassy area across Whitewater Avenue (2)**, **the grass lot next to Chattahoochee Brewing Company (3)**, **along the Riverfront (4)**, and **next to the Phenix City Amphitheater (5)**. Three out of the five areas identified are also owned by the Phenix City government, which will make it easier to plan the events. The events spaces are also located next to plenty of parking, while simultaneously using underutilized surface parking lots. These areas are in safe pedestrian areas that people will feel safe to walk around and enjoy the riverfront. We would like to see park benches add along the riverfront and in the grassy areas for seating and eating. Access to a restroom is needed and improving the landscaping will add nice touch. These small changes will help these underutilized spaces become more appreciated and used.

We have also identified the major nodes of the downtown Phenix City area. These nodes are where most people will be coming into the area and the event spaces were set up where they are in order to try and capitalize on the amount of traffic those nodes will experience. The main goal is to implement these small, consistent events to attract attention and people to the downtown area. This will then lead to larger, more sporadic, events in the downtown area to attract more attention, which will then lead to permanent stores, restaurants, and investment in the downtown Phenix City Area.



Final Plan Map (Figure 8)



## Conclusion

This project did have some limitations that effected the results. For example, our Urban Design Studio class only had one visit to the Phenix City area. That limited time, both in quality and quantity restricted our ability to get the best and most complete proposal. We also had limited interactions with the Phenix City officials and Phenix City planners. Like mentioned before, our group only had one visit to Phenix City, and we met with several governmental officials while there, but it was only a limited amount of time. It should also be noted that we had not interaction with the citizens of Phenix City at all. This affected the results of our project. We also only had 4 months for our project, so our analyses are very surface level and not as in-depth as required or wanted.

We hope that with the plans implemented from this project we will see Phenix City become the vibrant, active city that it can become.

## References

Sheppard, Alison Marguerite. "Curbside Eating: Mobilizing Food Trucks to Activate Public Space." 2013.

"History." *Phenix City, Alabama*, 16 Feb. 2017, <https://phenixcityal.us/our-community/history/>.

## Figure References

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/75998312437606464/>

# DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN PROPOSAL

CPLN 7200 Urban Design Studio – Spring 2022

## CITY OF PHENIX CITY



By Yasaman Bahadori, Kelsey Bousquet, & Bria Hudson  
Instructor: Dr. Binita Mahato



# List of Figures

Figure 1: Bird's Eye View of Downtown ..... 1  
Figure 2: Map of Downtown Phenix City ..... 1  
Figure 3: Parking Map of Downtown ..... 1  
Figure 4: Phasing Diagram ..... 1  
Figure 5: Phase I Diagram ..... 1  
Figure 6: Phase II Diagram ..... 1  
Figure 7: Phase III Diagram ..... 1

# Acknowledgements

*We would like to thank Phenix City officials, community stakeholders, and the Auburn University Masters of Community Planning Department for their support and guidance in the creation of this plan.*

## City of Phenix City

Eddie N. Lowe, *Mayor*

Wallace Hunter, *City Manager*

Shaun Culligan, *Economic Development Manager*

Tracie Hadaway, *Director of Planning*

Jennifer Lowman, *Economic Development Specialist*

Gil Griffith, *Chief Building Official*

Angel Moore, *Director of Public Works*

Michael Pattillo, *Assistant Director of Engineering & Public Works*

Ray Smith, *Chief of Police*

## Auburn University – Master of Community Planning Department

Dr. Binita Mahato, *Course Instructor*

Dr. Sweta Byahut, *Professor*

Yasaman Bahadori, *Plan Proposal Team*

Kelsey Bousquet, *Plan Proposal Team*

Bria Hudson, *Plan Proposal Team*



# Introduction

## Introducing Phenix City

Phenix City had unique characteristics from the very beginning. The city is located within Lee and Russell counties and has a population of 36,516. Unlike other small towns, this city has a history of rising from the ashes to rebuild its community throughout its historical timeline. We hope to bring out Phenix city's best assets through this downtown revitalization plan. In this plan, we created attributes that will cater to the growth in the downtown area in the near future. Our goal isn't to compete or compare with the neighboring cities but to make Phenix city its own through individuality.



*Figure 1: Bird's Eye View of Downtown*

Over the past decades, Phenix City has gone through multiple changes and still is transforming into a lively city today. This plan focuses on the downtown area, which encompasses 13th street, 14th street, Broad Street, and the Chattahoochee Riverwalk (see Figure I & II). In addition, this proposal aims to identify and enhance the area's existing assets to create an environment that welcomes everyone through nature and its small-city charm. To better understand downtown Phenix City we identified the stakeholders, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the community. By gathering this information, we began to see the possibilities intertwined with present-day hiccups. As a result, we have created a five-year, three-part phasing plan to meet community needs and bring energy to downtown.



*Figure 2: Map of Downtown Phenix City*

## Who is Downtown for?

This plan identified that the stakeholders are the residents, tourist, visitors, the government sector, business owners, and employees. The residents are the heart of any city. They contribute being consumers and the culture of Phenix city that have today. Tourist and visitors also are consumers and potential residents of Phenix city. With the river walk being a popular attraction, these stakeholders can contribute a lot to Phenix city economic growth. The government sector is throughout the downtown area and have economic influence over Phenix city. Lastly business owners and employees are stakeholder because it plays a major role on how fast economic development will grow in Phenix City.

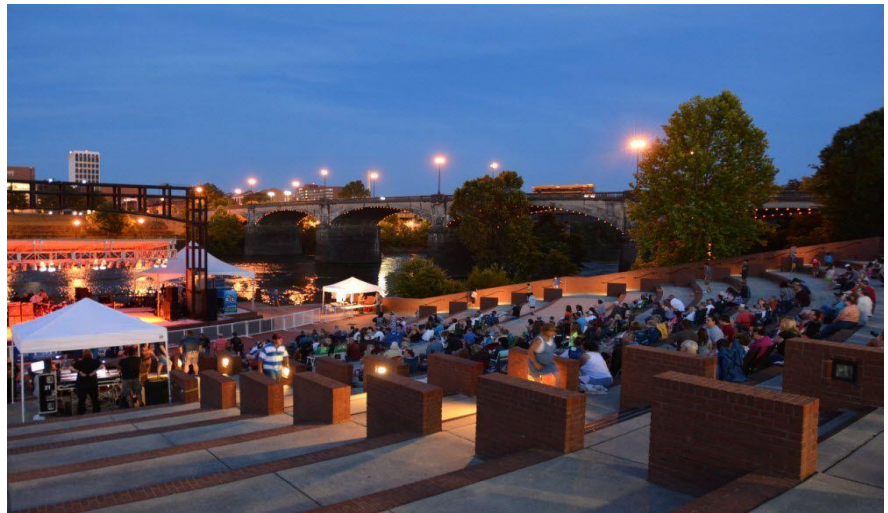


Photo: Chattahoochee River Whitewater

## Understanding Phenix City

The Strengths of Phenix city is their pedestrian bridge, car bridge, access to the riverfront, ample free public parking, and the existing entertainment district. The pedestrian bridge and car bridge are great assets because of the high volume traffic and close proximity of the neighboring cities. This way Phenix city can get potential new residents, visitors, and tourist. Access to the riverfront increase walkability and connectivity through the downtown area. Free public parking can increase traffic and create another opportunity for residents and tourists alike to explore the city. It is also great for annual events like concerts, competitions, and festivals. The existing entertainment



Photo: Chattahoochee River via City of Phenix City Gov

district is a good asset for the city to increase economic growth around the downtown area. The weakness is heavily car oriented in the downtown area, safety for pedestrians, no consistent public transportation, lack of seating, lack of lighting, no walking space on sidewalks, lack of unique architecture, and not much buildable space for new buildings. The weakness stem from the lack of landscaping treatment, land use, and transportation.





Figure 3: Parking Map of Downtown

## Looking to the future

The first opportunity that Phenix city have is the potential to work with influencers in the outdoor activity communities. Phenix city main attractions are the riverfront and the outdoor activities it has to offer. Through the river front we want to build a relationship with social media influences to increase the growth of Phenix city. Social media is becoming a big platform that have a heavy influence over the mass population. With the relationship between Phenix city and social media influencers, it can connect the city to the audience that need. The second opportunity is Enhancing existing riverfront. This can be succeeded through a minor landscaping treatment throughout the existing park. The third opportunity is the proximity to Columbus,GA. Since Columbus is right across the river, this will impact on the influx of new

residents, visitors, and tourist coming into the city. The last opportunity is the Ability to repurpose and/or demolish empty buildings. The plan encourages the redevelopment of empty building for mixed use developments. Also to demolish empty building for new development or green space. city.

We want to break away from the past and create a new and improved Phenix city. The third threat is the proximity to Columbus, GA. This is like a double-sided sword to the growth of Phenix city. On one side you have it being an opportunity for new residents and on the other side you have the threat of losing residents to a bigger city. The last threat is the lack of walkability in the entertainment district. safe walkways, lighting, nor seating to enjoy the district.

## Frame of Mind!

**Paving the way towards a vibrant and active future.**

## What is our mission statement?

Creating a lively and vibrant downtown for a future thriving Phenix City. This will be achieved by providing successful public spaces to bring people together, promoting economic growth, and creating a city with a distinct architectural style. Residents and visitors alike will be drawn to the walkable, friendly community that is being cultivated in the revamped Phenix City.

## What are our values?

The values according to the vision and mission statement are as follows: Connectivity, Uniqueness, Community, Inclusivity, Vision, and Economic Growth.

# What are the goals, objectives, and strategies?

## Goal I: Economic development

### Objectives

The first objectives for this goal is to create more mixed-income and mixed-use housing to promote the migration of new residents. The other objective is to add more restaurants, coffee shops, and various food establishments throughout the downtown area. Restaurants and coffee shops should be placed within mixed-use buildings whereas areas for food trucks and local vendors can be set up closer to the riverfront.

### Strategies

The strategies stated according to the goal and objectives are as follows: attract targeted audience and stakeholders to the downtown area, create a space for local boutiques and businesses will make the downtown area community-oriented, and incorporate food trucks around the entertainment district to encourage traffic around the downtown area.



Photo: Cersan International



## Goal 2: Safety and walkability to make downtown accessible and safe for everyone especially the elderly and people with disabilities

### Objectives

Safety and walkability include several objectives. First is to install a downtown streetscape treatment, including street trees, streetlights, trash receptacles, and benches. The other objective is to create more walkable sidewalks, internal pathways, and bike lanes for a safe and hospitable pedestrian environment. Adding protective barriers and canopy coverage for safety and aesthetic reasons is our third objective. Our last objective is to make downtown accessible and safe for everyone especially the elderly and people with disability.

### Strategies

Strategies for this purpose include beautifying the surrounding downtown area and creating a welcoming environment for residents and tourists. Since the downtown area is mostly car-oriented this will help with providing another option for residents and tourists to explore the city. Enhancing the riverfront and protecting the pedestrians around the river is another strategy for our objectives. Designing pedestrian-friendly streets, creating sidewalks where there is a lack of them, and enhancing the quality of existing sidewalks can Make downtown accessible and safe for everyone. another way to make the downtown more accessible is to create a distinctive flooring for blind people to use the space and use ramps in the ways that connect Phenix City to the riverfront and urban public spaces.



Photo: Make Cities Safer

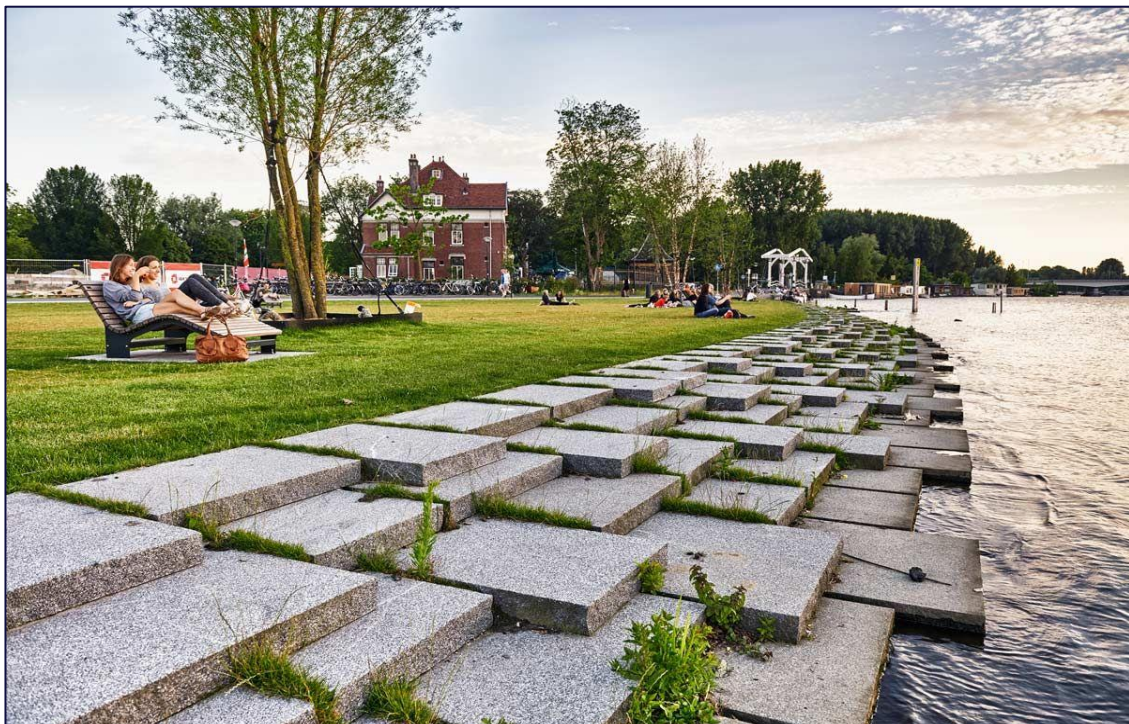
## Goal 3: Create unique, well-loved public spaces

### Objectives

There is one objective for this goal; enhance the urban landscape architecture of the riverfront and make parks more usable.

### Strategies

We propose a number of strategies for enhancing the urban landscape architecture of the riverfront and making parks more usable. These strategies include: beautifying the riverfront through water features such as foundations, using color in flooring, using natural landscaping like flowers, and adding bench-spaces. To achieve this, we designed communal outdoor spaces to play, gather, and explore nature, improving accessibility, and connecting the riverfront and parks to the Phenix city through more accessible ways. To bring energy to the riverfronts and parks we recommended various activities, enhancing the urban landscape architecture of the riverfront and making parks more usable. Distinctive landmarks and an attractive entrance, create an enticing destination on the riverfront.



*Photo by Felixx via Landezine International Landscape Awards*



# What can we learn from other cities?

*For inspiration we began looking at cities that had similar attributes to Phenix City like size, natural assets, and similar values. We found two examples of revitalization efforts in Texas and Oregon to help us visualize an action plan for Phenix City's downtown area.*

## Lockhart, Texas

In small towns throughout West Texas, a renaissance is happening due to young people and families migrating from larger cities such as Austin, Dallas, and San Antonio for lower living costs and housing. Lockhart, Texas, is one of the small towns highlighted in the case study *How a New Generation Is Reviving Small-Town Texas* by John Nova Lomax.

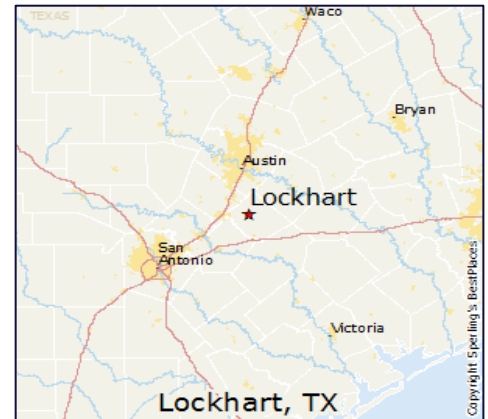
Lockhart is located just thirty-three miles south of Austin and has a population of 14,379 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The town is far enough from the large metropolitan to retain its small-town feel without having to be too far out. Tourists have been drawn to Lockhart for many years thanks to the downtown's preservation of historic architecture. Recently, the rise in housing and living expenses in the larger metro areas has encouraged people to do more than visit.



*Photo by Adrian Martinez via Flickr*

the downtown area made the town that much more appealing. Lockhart did an excellent job of keeping these historic buildings, but many throughout downtown lay empty. Of the existing businesses, there was not much variety in the restaurants and shops. This lack of number and type of restaurants and shops provided opportunities for new business owners in a market where little competition existed. The attraction of small business entrepreneurs has added to the town's culture and has fostered a growing community.

The combination of preserving existing assets, lower costs of living, proximity to metro areas, and opportunities for small business entrepreneurs have encouraged Lockhart to thrive. Likewise, Phenix City can use aspects of this same model to enable its downtown area to succeed.



*Photo: Sperling's Best Places*

# What can we learn from other cities?

## Bend, Oregon

The City of Bend is located in central Oregon, along the Deschutes River. Bend has a population of 99,178 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020), which has increased by 20,000 residents since the case study report *How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets To Rebuild Their Economies* case was initially published by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2012.

The city's local economy was hit hard during the 2008 housing market crash due to rising housing prices. The primary industries at the time, building and construction supplies, suffered a significant decline due to the housing crash. As a result, the city focused on recruiting microbrewing, biosciences, and recreation equipment manufacturing companies to encourage economic development to introduce new industries to the downtown area. The commonality between these fields stems from the flexibility to choose where they are located, and Bend's local government understood the way to attract these companies was to prioritize the walkability and quality of life of their downtown.



Photo: Environmental Protection Agency



Photo: Meeting News Northwest

Bend prioritized its downtown center by prioritizing projects along its riverfront and concentrated on development suitable for human scale and quality of life. Bend accomplished this by redeveloping former lumber mills that sat afront the river and encouraging infill development through repurposing existing buildings for restaurants, shops, trails, and entertainment venues.

By spotlighting the need for a walkable community that offered various activities, Bend grew their industry sectors and encouraged population growth. Creating a people-centered, easily accessible downtown is the foundation needed for an active and vibrant downtown Phenix City.

# Proposed Plan

## Five-Year Phasing Plan

We believe the best way to achieve long term success for a revamped Phenix City is to make incremental changes over a period. We have assembled a five-year plan that is separated into three phases: Landscaping & Aesthetics, Amenities & Enhancements, and Development.

### Phase 1: Landscaping & Aesthetics

Approximately One Year

→ Focuses on actions to beautify the existing streetscapes and riverwalk

### Phase 2: Amenities & Enhancements

Approximately One Year

→ Focuses on ways to encourage community and activity

### Phase 3: Development

Approximately Two Years

→ Focuses on building long-lasting establishments



Figure 4: Phasing Diagram



# Proposed Plan

## Phase I: Landscaping & Aesthetics

The first phase of this plan is focused on beautifying the existing downtown streetscapes and riverfront trail and will take approximately one year to complete. We believe strengthening existing assets by adding shrubbery and trees, colorful imagery, and unique art pieces such as water fountains will lay a solid foundation for the future Phenix City.

Broad Street, Third Avenue, and the riverfront have some existing plants and trees. Still, we believe adding taller shrubs and more trees would help establish a psychological barrier between pedestrians and cars, which would make the area feel safer to walk through. Another benefit of adding more greenery is that more trees would result in shadier sidewalks and people enjoying walking around and spending time outside. We recommend plants that can survive diverse climates would be best like Katsura trees and hardy plants like Rosemary pictured to the right.



*Rosemary bushes, Photo by David Hopman via Planting Design*



*Photo: Dogipot, Inc*

To help keep the downtown area and riverfront clean and beautiful, we believe in installing Dog Waste Bag Dispensers along the riverwalk and the nearby sites with small grass plots. Installing waste bag dispensers will help also maintain the beautifully landscaped downtown.



*Katsura Trees, Photo: Dainichi Consultants, Inc*

## Phase I: Landscaping & Aesthetics



Photo: Colorado Pond Pros

Natural rock water fountains like the one pictured on the left are pieces of art that look more authentic and can seamlessly fit into their surroundings. We recommend that a natural rock water fountain be added along the riverfront trail to add a section of calm and serve as another site downtown for people to take some time to enjoy the view and natural beauty of the Chattahoochee River.

One way to add vibrancy and establish that Phenix City is a marvel for all to visit is by adding colorful imagery on the existing paved riverwalk trail and throughout the downtown entertainment district. The entertainment district is located along 3rd Avenue and abuts the riverwalk (see Appendix A). Both the entertainment district and the riverwalk are places for people to spend time and gather and adding vibrant colors will help distinguish these locations from other parts of downtown. The colorful sidewalks can also be used as paths to follow when exploring the area. Therefore, our final recommendation for Phase I is to add signage near the 11th street riverwalk entrance near Hollands Creek. Adding more visible signage will make it easier for visitors to find access points to the trail.



Figure 5: Phase I Diagram

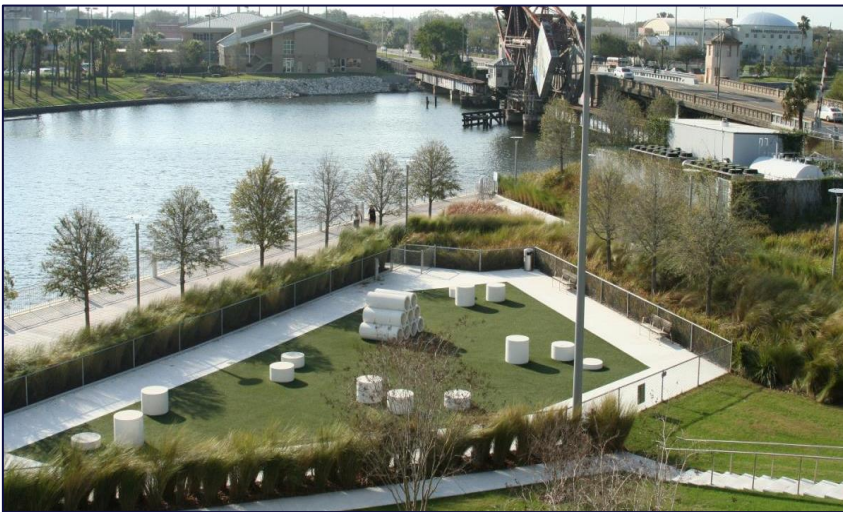


# Proposed Plan

## Phase 2: Amenities & Enhancements

The second phase of this plan focuses on establishing spaces that foster an inviting atmosphere for people to come together and will take approximately two years to complete. Public spaces designed for people of all ages should be included to promote this kind of atmosphere. Three of the focused areas in this plan are near the existing pedestrian bridge at West 13th Street, along the riverfront, and at the entrance at 11th Street near Hollands Creek.

The pedestrian bridge is a focal point of the downtown area. It is located near the Troy University Satellite Campus, Courtyard Marriott Hotel, and within walking distance of the Russel County Courthouse. Near the bridge is an open space covered with grass and gravel. Previously, The site has been used to host events and an Arts Park. We propose this space become a full-time, dedicated family and dog park for the future.



*Photo of Curtis Hixon Waterfront Dog Park via tampafloridaphoto.blogspot.com*

family and dog park for the future.

The fenced-in dog park would be roughly one acre in size. The dog park would provide a place for dog owners to let their pups get out energy and provide opportunities for neighbors and visitors to socialize. In addition, the dog park would be equipped with a water fountain, benches, and unique structures for the dogs to use as obstacles to play on.

Adjacent to the dog park would be an unfenced park with ample tables and seating for people to gather, rest, enjoy lunch, and more.

Additionally, a 250-350 square foot bathroom would be built near the park and bridge entrance. Installing public restrooms in this location encourages passersby to slow down and take their time exploring downtown without worrying about searching for a public restroom.



*Photo of Washington Square Convenience Station by Paulett Taggart Architects*

# Proposed Plan

## Phase 2: Amenities & Enhancements

Further down the riverwalk, a 4,000-square-foot playground would be added for children to enjoy themselves. The play area would provide a safe space for children to let out energy and enjoy the outdoor experience of the river walk. The playground equipment would mainly be composed of pieces made out of reclaimed wood to preserve the natural element of the riverfront.



*Photo by Bureau Chekharda via Landezine International Landscape Awards*



*Photo by Kristan Hoff-Andersen via hoff-andersen.blogspot.com*

The riverwalk entrance near 11th Street and Hollands Creek is a steep paved incline. This entrance would be redone to be wheelchair accessible and handicap friendly. Railing, stairs, and a ramp would be added for easier access to the riverwalk from that entrance. This entrance would be closer to the proposed playground and would also become safer for younger children to walk down.



**Figure 6: Phase II Diagram**



# Proposed Plan

## Phase 3: Development

The third and final phase of the five-year plan focuses on building long-lasting establishments in the downtown area. The first two phases highlighted amplifying Phenix City's assets that make the city a unique place to live and visit. The development phase aims to build the downtown's assets with new, multi-use structures and permanently place vendors' spots along the riverfront for continued economic growth. The development phase is meant to be flexible for multi-use installations to welcome a variety of potential businesses.



*Photo of proposed Edes Building via KTG Architects*

We are proposing development in the parcels located across Troy University's Phenix City Campus and following the Eastern Frederick Douglas Neighborhood, as outlined in the city's proposed neighborhood transformation plan (see Appendix B). Businesses we believe would thrive downtown include restaurants, coffee shops, bars, and local retail businesses.

In addition to building structures, we propose establishing permanent spots for mobile vendors to set up locations along the riverwalk on designated days. The exact days and locations should be determined based on the outcomes of the monthly events and the beginning stages of introducing mobile vendors in Phase II. Vendors will be provided an opportunity to test out the best locations to attract customers and for customers to provide constructive feedback.



*Photo: Texas Insurance Company*



## Phase 3: Development

In the Phase III figure below, specific nodes have been highlighted in yellow circles. We've highlighted these nodes as a way to provide distinct experiences throughout downtown and the riverwalk.

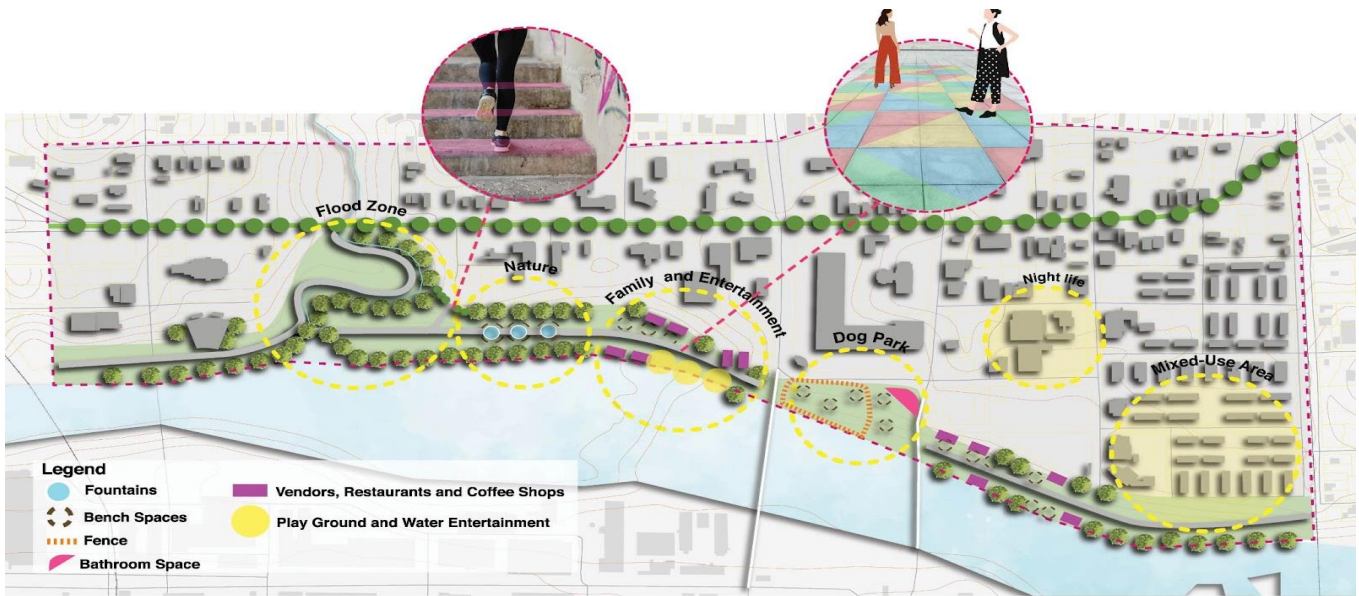







Figure 7: Phase III Diagram

 <p><b>Flood Zone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain the existing naturalness of the Holland's Creek area as much as possible</li> <li>• Idea is to avoid adding too much impervious surface near that area so that water can still drain and flow easily.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Nature</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose is to retain the natural beauty of the riverwalk and a more calming, serene atmosphere</li> <li>• The proposed water fountains will serve as an attraction and space for people to gather and enjoy the views</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Family &amp; Entertainment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serves as a space for children and families to play and socialize</li> <li>• Providing the playground encourages activity and movement</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Dog &amp; Family Park</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dogs and their owners will love the opportunity to let out energy and meet new people</li> <li>- Both parks are meant to be an inviting introduction to the downtown area thanks to the provided amenities</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Mixed-Use &amp; Nighlft Areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restaurants and retail opportunities will provide add activity and energy to the downtown area</li> <li>- Having a variety of restaurants and shops will attract a wide range of visitors and residents</li> </ul>
---	--	---	---	---

# Limits and Opportunities

## Outsides Forces Can Hinder Progress

The success of potential food vendors, weather, and sources of funding can all hinder the success of the proposed revitalization plan. The hope is that small business entrepreneurs will be drawn to Phenix City's downtown by implementing small, incremental changes. In order to assist businesses in achieving success in downtown, resources available through the city's economic development department should be advertised. Some of these resources include assistance programs, information on tax incentives, and working with the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

Many of the activities proposed in the first two phases revolve around outdoor experiences. The limitation of planning for adding so many outdoor fixtures is taking into account the days when the weather is not so enjoyable. Though there will most definitely be days where anybody wants to be outside, the draw of the revamped Phenix City will attract visitors and residents to the growing number of food establishments and future businesses.

Lastly, ensuring funding for the items named throughout the proposed plan can at times be difficult. Local government budgets change yearly as priorities shift and administrations change. To help promote a vibrant and active Phenix City, securing adequate funding for revitalization efforts is vital.



Photo: Great Rivers Greenway

## Looking Ahead

The mission, vision, and vision statement reflect the change this plan wants to see in the future of Phenix City. Emphasizing community involvement is a key part to make the city prosper. The feedback and interest the residents can cause a domino effect on the growth of its city. With a strong community it brings a social connection and sense of belonging. The benefits of communities can provide a strong foundation that Phenix City can build off of and improve the life of the residents. Residents can get involved by attending a city council meeting, serve on the city board, volunteer at the annual events hosted by the city, and participating in community planning surveys. We came to conclusion that in order for there to be long-term investment both socially and economically incremental changes to enhance to safety, walkability, and the perception of Phenix City.

Appendix A: Phenix City Entertainment District Map

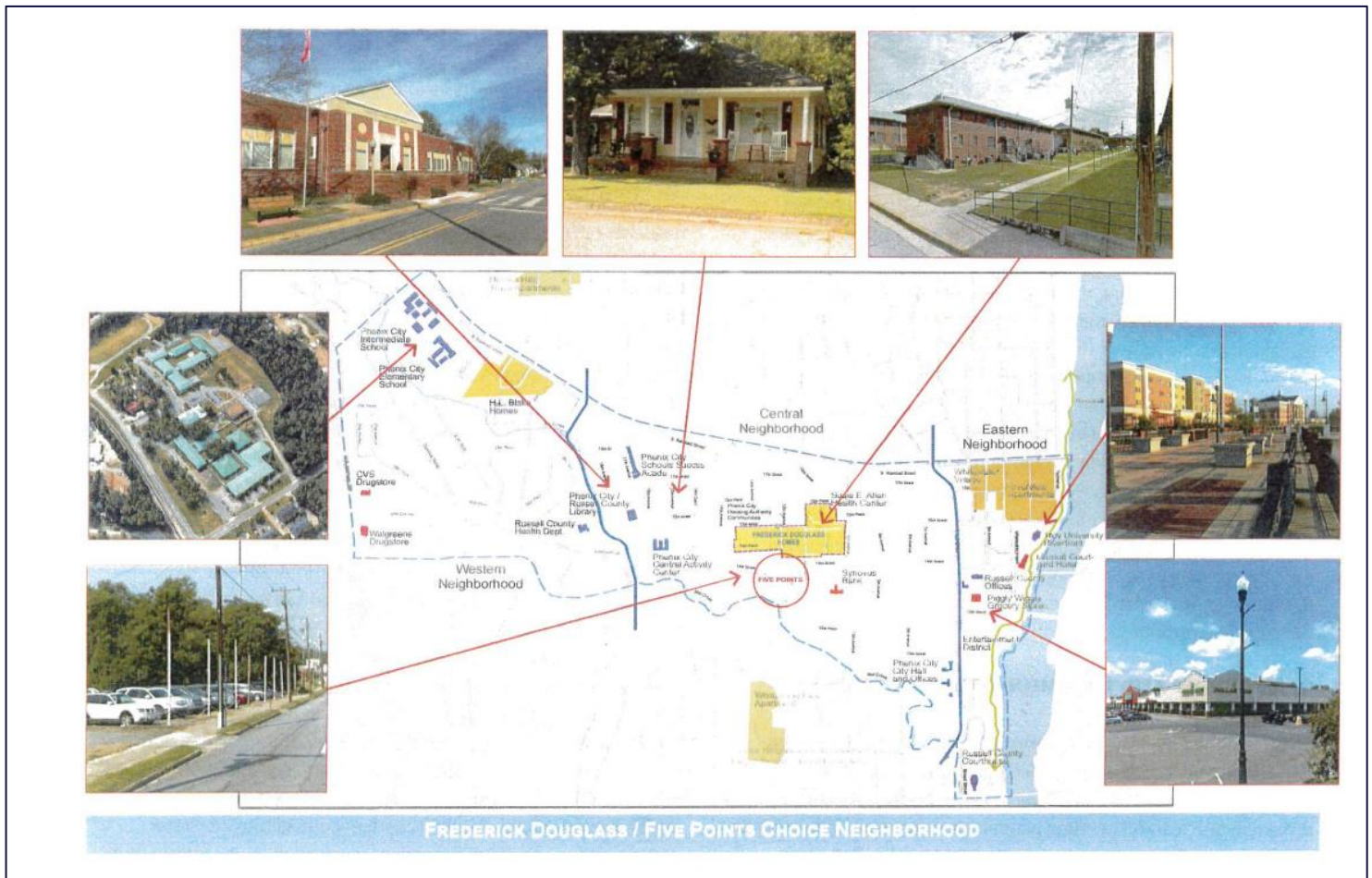
Appendix B: Map of Frederick Douglas/Five Points  
Neighborhoods Transformation Plan, 2020

*Phenix City Entertainment District Map*






## Map of Frederick Douglas/Five Points Neighborhoods Transformation Plan, 2020





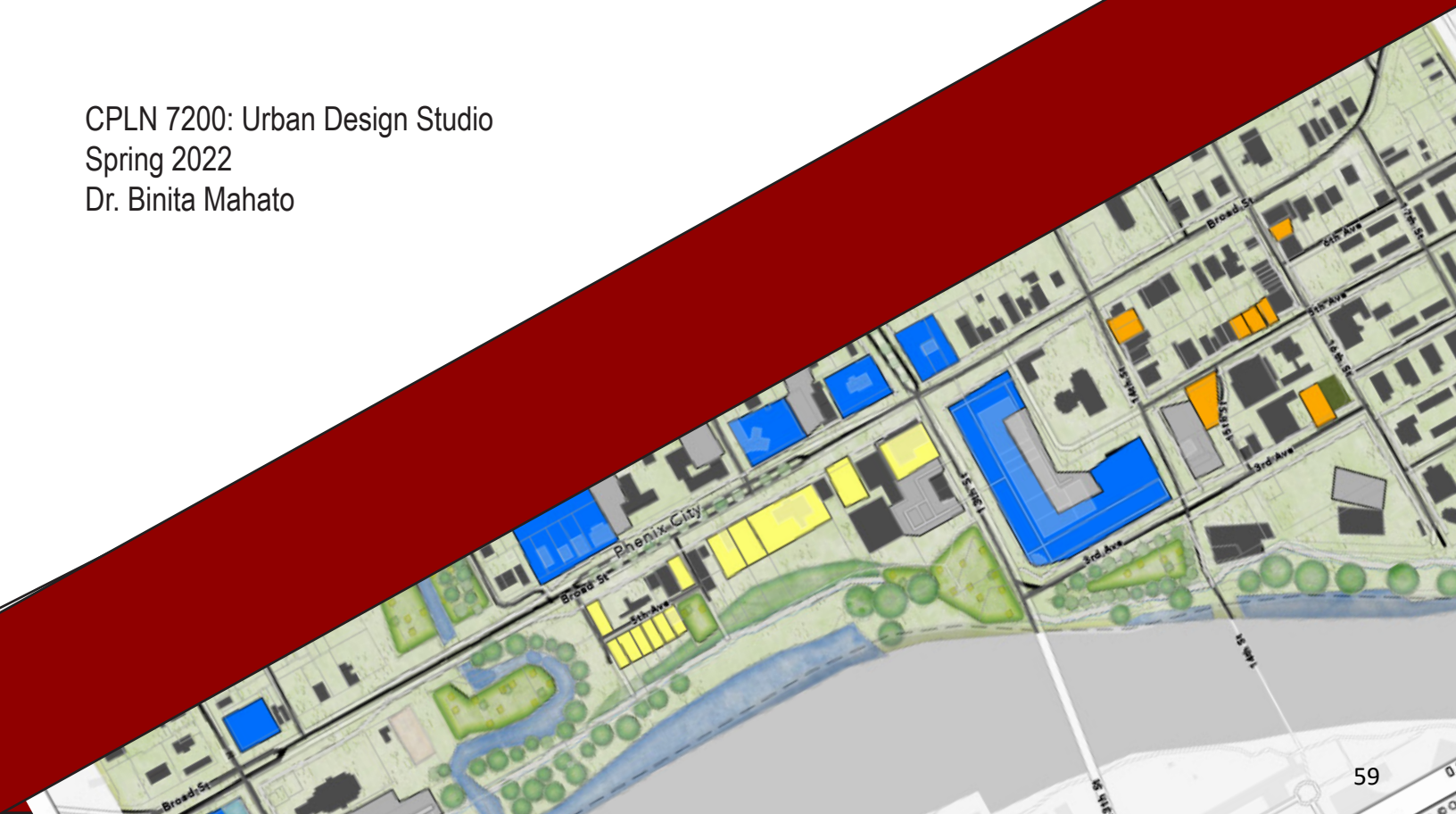
- Kramer, Melissa. Environmental Protection Agency. *How Small Towns And Cities Can Use Their Local Assets To Rebuild Their Economies*. May 2015. [How Small Towns and Cities Can Use Local Assets to Rebuild Their Economies: Lessons From Successful Places \(epa.gov\)](#)
- Lomax, John Nova. Texas Monthly. *How a New Generation is Revising Small Town Texas*. August 2018. [How a New Generation Is Reviving Small-Town Texas – Texas Monthly](#)
- Phenix City Housing Authority. *Transformation Plan for the Frederick Douglas/Five Points Neighborhood*. December 2020.
- Phenix City Economic Development. *Economic Development Resource Center*. April 2022. [Resource Center | Phenix City, Alabama \(phenixcityal.us\)](#)
- U.S. Census Bureau. *QuickFacts: Lockhart City, Texas*. 2020. [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Lockhart city, Texas](#)
- U.S. Census Bureau. *QuickFacts: Bend City, Oregon*. 2020. [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Bend city, Oregon](#)



# Renewing the Heart of Phenix City

Mark Aniadaga, Charles Jones, Benjamin McGarr

CPLN 7200: Urban Design Studio  
Spring 2022  
Dr. Binita Mahato



## Introduction

Phenix City serves as the gateway to East Alabama and is home to 38,816 residents according to the 2016-2020 American Community Survey. The city lies within both Lee and Russell counties and is bordered to the east by the Chattahoochee River. Most residents of Phenix City work in Columbus—a sprawling metropolitan area located just across the river in Georgia. The downtown areas of Phenix City and Columbus are located right across from each other as well. However, the two sides have developed differently. Today, Phenix City’s downtown consists of a few businesses, an amphitheater, a university, and a hotel. Yet, the city has a tremendous opportunity to revitalize its downtown area through strategic economic and planning principles.

## History

The city started out as two independent communities, named Brownville and Girard. When settlement began around Dillingham Street—located in the southern portion of downtown Phenix City—residents sought to replicate the grid patterned development from Columbus. Unfortunately for the residents, the terrain on the Alabama side of the river was unaccommodating to the grid pattern and resulted in streets broken by creeks or hills. Still, the residents found ways to prosper. To the north, Columbus residents were building summer homes.

The two communities continued to grow and consolidated under the name Phenix City in 1923. The city’s economy was growing; that is, until the Great Depression hit in 1929. The Great Depression decimated the local economy and resulted in the clearing of historic neighborhoods for the purpose of public housing. It was also during this time that vice began to take over the city’s economy with many bars near the Phenix City bridges expanding due to the influx of soldiers into Ft. Benning during World War II. Vice continued to control the city until, in 1954, the state’s Attorney General-Elect, Albert Patterson, was assassinated in Phenix City. As a result, the city was put under martial law and many of the buildings associated with vice were destroyed. For its efforts at cleaning up the city, Phenix City was named the National Civic League All American City in 1955.

The years following the clean-up saw rapid expansion in Phenix City. Historic buildings along 13th

and 14th streets were torn down replaced with car lots, parking lots, and commercial structures. It was during this time that Phenix Plaza was constructed along 13th Street. Today, Phenix City is still home to a number of car lots that are located near the downtown area.

Recent history has seen Phenix City complete projects to bring people to its downtown. In 1995, the city constructed a riverwalk and amphitheater in preparation for the 1996 Olympics. In 2009, the city completed a 4 million dollar relandscaping project along Broad Street. In 2012, the riverwalk was extended half a mile to the north. In 2013, Troy University constructed a riverfront campus in Phenix City. In 2014, a hotel was constructed next to Troy University. In 2016, the city completed a streetscape project along Whitewater Avenue. These projects, along with the construction of the Chattahoochee River whitewater course, have enticed more and more people to visit downtown Phenix City (City of Phenix City Staff).



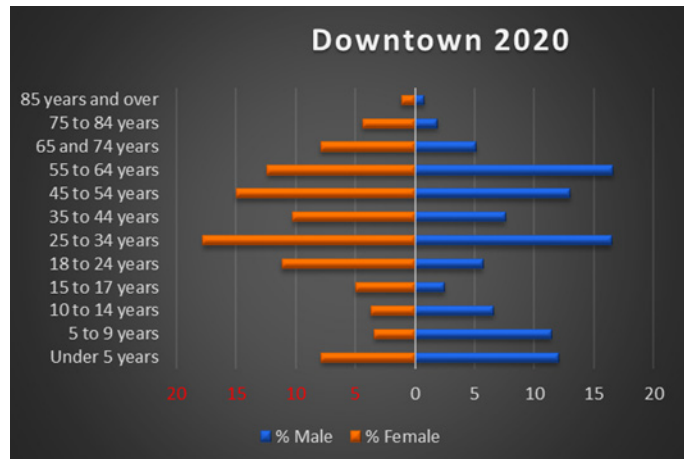
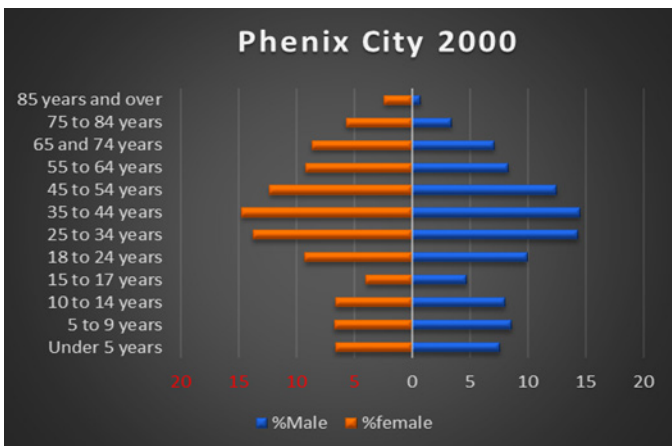
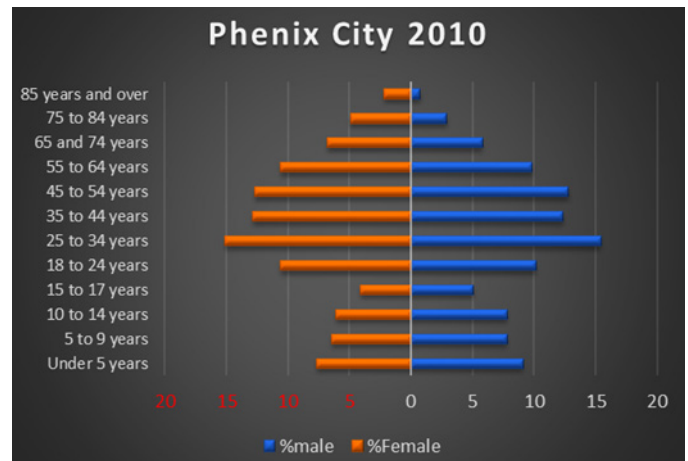
Source: City of Phenix City



## Population Pyramid

It's crucial to visualize the population in a population pyramid when conducting demographic research. This sort of graph allows a reader to make connections between population, age, and explanations for why there are more elderly in a retirement community, young adults in a job surplus, or children in a rapidly rising population. In this scenario, it's crucial to compare population pyramids not only with Phenix City Downtown, but also with the entire city of Phenix, to determine whether there are any significant discrepancies or parallels. Populations are also examined between the years 2000, 2010, and 2020 to discover whether any noteworthy patterns have emerged and what has changed. In the year 2000, the top for the male is narrow because their life expectancy is low, meaning females live longer than males in that male year group across

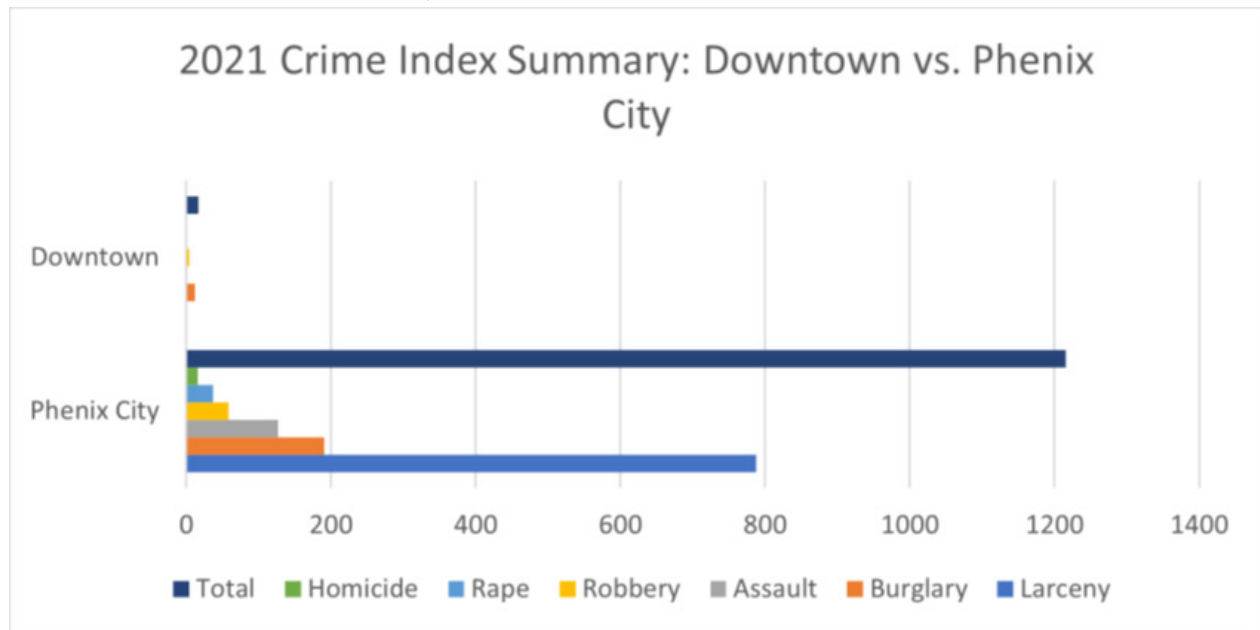
all the years but there are more males' new births than females in 2000, 2010 and 2020 for Phenix City and the Downtown, yet they don't live longer as compared to the female in this illustration. It could also mean that the majority of the aged group relocate to a different city after they retire. Another observation from the Pyramid is also high rapid growth of the youth population between the ages from 25-44 in 2000 and 2020 in Phenix City but that growth increased in 2020 for the Downtown but shrink again from 35-44. There could be high numbers among the youth because a lot of them could be students represented by the colleges found in the city and Columbus. The population structure also could mean that many people have stayed longer in their jobs and a lot of employment opportunities are also a possibility for the youth (U.S. Census Bureau).





## Crime

Phenix city overall crime trend analysis indicates that Larceny recorded the highest over the past 10 years with a total of 11,514, followed by burglary (4893), assault (1435), robbery (623), rape (321), and homicide (69). However, the crime rate for larceny and burglary started falling from 2013 till date representing 61.1% and 26% respectively of the total crime rate (Phenix City Police).



## **Vision**

A great project needs a vision to guide the goals, activities, and strategies during the implementation of that project. In meeting with stakeholders from Phenix City, one phrase stuck out to our team - “Renewing the Heart of Phenix City.” Renewal—this word was used over and over again as staff described the city’s history. Time after time, the city would prosper, only to phrase a downturn, and have to renew itself. The idea of renewal even finds itself in the city’s logo, the pheonix. The city has continuously renewed itself from the ashes of a downturn. This is yet another time of renewal, but this time, it’s in the heart of Phenix City. The downtown region should be a place of gathering for residents and should be an economic hub for the city. With this idea in mind, the team decided to use the phrase “Renewing the Heart of Phenix City” as the vision for this project.

## **Mission**

With a clear vision in mind, our group defined the mission of this downtown revitalization project as the following: The City will work in conjunction with residents of Phenix City to create a vibrant downtown area that is the economic and recreational heartbeat of Phenix City. This will be accomplished by the implementation of planning and economic development policies to mold the downtown area into a place that is welcoming to diverse businesses and encourages public gatherings. The City envisions a downtown area where residents come to socialize, shop, engage in recreational activities, and interact with City officials.

## Values

**Small Town** – Phenix City prides itself on being a thriving community with a small town feel; a place where “everyone knows everyone.” A place does not have to be small in size to still maintain the small town feel; there is no population or land area maximum. The strategies offered in this proposal strive to keep the small town feeling in downtown Phenix City while boosting economic activity.

**Unique** – If Phenix City could be described in one word, one would not be incorrect in describing the city as unique. From its past, to its location along the Chattahoochee River, to the resources available to the city, uniqueness runs through everything about Phenix City. City leaders expressed their wishes to honor the past, but to not recreate brick buildings throughout downtown Phenix City. City leaders want to invite creative building and creative spaces to their downtown area to maintain the city’s uniqueness.

**Active** – From the riverwalk, to the access to kayaking and whitewater rafting on the Chattahoochee River, downtown Phenix City offers residents activities that promote an active community. Have an active community and active space in the downtown area has become even more important after the Covid-19 pandemic. Urban planners now realize that planning for more active space in the community also promotes resiliency and better health. This proposal builds off of Phenix City’s existing “active infrastructure” and offers strategies to improve activity in the downtown region through walkability and creative spaces.

**Vibrant** – City leaders envision a downtown area that is energetic, active, and thriving, or, to put it into one word, vibrant. This not only includes bringing people back to the downtown area, but also bringing businesses back that entice more activity in the area.

**Natural** – If one stood on the 14th street pedestrian bridge and looked at the Columbus riverwalk and then the Phenix City riverwalk, one would notice a stark difference. Whereas, the Columbus side is built up with a retaining wall keeping the river at bay, the Phenix City side full of trees that give it a more natural feeling. The strategies offered in this proposal promote the perseverance of this natural feeling and, when calling for relandscaping to promote gathering spaces and resiliency against flooding, calls for guidelines to ensure that the newly built spaces keep the natural feel.

**Safe** – As with any area within Phenix City, city leaders wish to build a downtown that is safe for all residents. Luckily, the downtown area’s crime numbers have been relatively low, but as new development begins and residents return, it is essential to keep this safe feeling. This will be done with implementing urban design principles such as getting more eyes on pedestrian walkways through balcony seating. This also translates over to promoting walkability in the downtown area by installing and improving crosswalks and sidewalks.

**Welcoming** – Downtown Phenix City cannot thrive if residents feel like it is only welcoming to some people and not all. This proposal seeks to promote the feeling of welcomeness through design principals such as human-scale design in the downtown area.

## Analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in the downtown study area. SWOT analyses, named for the before-mentioned components, identifies aspects of the downtown area that the city can use to build upon. Furthermore, the SWOT analysis allows city leaders to inventory areas of opportunity. A contextual analysis was also conducted to understand existing planning documents and how regulations have and continue to shape development in the downtown area. The findings from both the SWOT and contextual analysis were used to create the goals of this proposal.

### Strengths

**Location along Chattahoochee River** - The river serves as a main attraction for the downtown area that the city did not have to build or invest money in. The river also allows buildings and spaces to be strategically placed along the riverbank to offer scenic views. One such space is the Phenix City amphitheater, which is located at the southern end of the downtown study area.

**Wintering Ground / Whitewater** - Another strength is the city's unique attraction as the wintering ground for world-renowned whitewater kayakers. Having a space for these athletes to stay while training on the Chattahoochee River is vital for Phenix City as it brings spectators and visitors from around the world. The Wintering Grounds are currently located next to Whitewater Express, which attracts visitors from the surrounding area to whitewater raft on the world's largest urban whitewater course.

**Infill in Historic District** - Located just up the block is what could be named as Phenix City's historic district. The buildings located here offer residents and visitors the chance to experience the city's unique history. Moreover, the area has a lot of potential for infill development which would further boost economic activity in the downtown area.

**High Traffic Area** - 13th Street, which bisects the downtown area, serves as a main thoroughfare for travelers wishing to go to Columbus or access Highway 280 and Highway 80. This is crucial because it means that the downtown area already has high traffic counts, and, as a result, means there are more eyes on the downtown area. As activity begins to grow in the area, these travelers will be enticed to stop and experience the vibrant downtown area.

**Population Increase** - Phenix City as a whole has experienced a growth in population. This means that there are more residents to entice to the downtown area. Not only that, but Columbus has also increased in population. This now gives Phenix City the chance to entice Columbus residents to come to the Phenix City side of the river.

**Low Crime in the Downtown Area** - Compared to the city-wide crime rates, crime is relatively rare in the downtown area. This means there is no negative stigma currently associated with downtown crime. Instead, city leaders can lean on the safety of the downtown area as another way to entice people to visit.

**Downtown Speed Limits** - For the most part, downtown speed limits range from 25 to 30 miles-per-hour. The one exception is at the southern portion of Broad Street, where the speed limit increases to 45 miles-per-hour. These low speed limits are already accommodating to downtown walkability.

Map Title: Downtown Strengths



**Strengths Not Mapped:**

- Unique History
- Traffic Coming Into Downtown
- Population Increase (City-wide)
- Low Crime in Downtown
- Speed Limits in Downtown are Accommodating to Downtown Walkability



Data Source: Esri; Phenix City Site Visit

## Weaknesses

**Riverwalk Access** – Although Phenix City is ideally situated along the Chattahoochee River, there are few points of access for the riverwalk and the river. Increasing the number of access points to the riverwalk will allow pedestrians to more easily go from Broad Street or Whitewater Avenue to the Riverwalk and visa-versa. The ease of access will increase pedestrian interaction with the space and the amount of interactions.

**City Buildings in the Downtown Area** – It is not a negative thing to have city buildings in the downtown area. However, for a downtown area as small as Phenix City’s, city and government buildings occupy a lot of space. Most of the western side of Broad Street between 13th Street and Dillingham Street is occupied by single-story government buildings. Russell County also has two locations in the downtown area—the Courthouse and the Judicial Center. In total, government buildings account for around 15% of the total square footage of land in the downtown area.

**Lack of Multi-Use Space Downtown** – Most buildings in the downtown area are single-story and single-use. This limits activities in the downtown area since any given space is limited to one activity, and also does not promote density in the downtown area. Multi-use buildings would allow for commercial or office space on the lower floors while providing prime apartment space in the upper floors.

**Lack of Transit in the Downtown Area** – The Lee-Russell Council of Governments operates a fixed-route transit service in Phenix City known as the Phenix City Express. However, the transit system would need to expand to bring more citizens to the downtown area. Also, with a current shortage in bus drivers, PEX buses may take longer to complete one route.



**Lack of Businesses to Draw People Downtown** – Outside of a couple of small restaurants, the Phenix Plaza, a hardware store, and a couple of banks, there are few businesses to draw people to the downtown area. Although this is a current weakness, Phenix City can utilize this as an opportunity by bringing new business into the downtown area.

**Most Land is Privately Owned** – Since most of the property in the downtown area is owned privately, it will take the implementation of planning and economic development policies to implement the strategies in this plan. City officials will need to work closely with these private owners to achieve the goals of this plan.

**Reconsider Setback Distances in Downtown** – Decreasing the setbacks of buildings in the downtown area will help promote a welcoming, pedestrian friendly atmosphere downtown. Currently, some buildings are appropriately setback; however, some, such as the Phenix Plaza, are not. Large setbacks can decrease the human-scale of the downtown area and cause pedestrians to feel out of place when trying to traverse these areas.

**Georgia Powerlines**—Georgia Power has powerlines that run the length of the riverbank in the downtown study area. Because of this, buildings are prohibited from being built within a certain distance of those lines. This limits the size and type of building that can be built close to the river.

Map Title: Downtown Weaknesses



**Weaknesses Not Mapped:**

- Lack of multi-use space downtown
- Lack of transit to downtown area
- Lack of access to riverwalk
- Lack of businesses to draw people downtown
- Most land is privately owned in the downtown area
- Reconsider setback distances in downtown
- Georgia Powerlines prevent building closer to river



Data Source: Esri; Phenix City Site Visit

## *Opportunities*

**Parking Spaces in Downtown Can Be Converted into Multi-use Spaces or Buildings** – There are a number of parking spaces in the downtown area that can be used for building or community space. The downtown area would benefit by bringing buildings closer to the street, with parking located behind buildings and out of site. The main parking space in downtown, located at the Phenix Plaza, would provide the space for a large multi-storied, multi-use building that would spark residential and economic activity.

**Landscaping Along Riverbank** – Phenix City wants to maintain the natural riverbank; however, there is a steep slope behind the buildings located on the east side of Broad Street between Dillingham Street and 13th Street. Currently, the slope prevents pedestrians from quickly going from the riverwalk to businesses located on Broad Street. Phenix City could work with a landscape architect to re-design the slope in such a way that it maintains the natural feel but also allows easy access and use for pedestrians.

**Increase Downtown Walkability** – Phenix City already has areas where the sidewalk infrastructure is in good condition and is more welcoming for pedestrians; these areas have sufficient sidewalk width and brick interlaid into the concrete to create a sense of place. Phenix City should ensure all sidewalks in its downtown area follow the same design standards. Phenix City should also ensure that all intersections in downtown have crosswalks.

**Providing Businesses that are not in Columbus** – Phenix City has always had to compete with Columbus, GA for economic activity. This proposal does not see any benefit in providing the same businesses that can be found in downtown Columbus. Instead, Phenix City should identify the business that area missing—namely, those businesses that are more geared towards outdoor activity.

**Accommodate Tourists Coming for Wintering Grounds / Whitewater Events** – Phenix City's downtown will always be in the spotlight with the Wintering Grounds and Whitewater Events. This provides a tremendous opportunity for Phenix City to advertise itself; as visitors come and experience the downtown area, they will travel back and tell their friends who will hopefully want to visit.

**Revitalizing Historic District** – Phenix City's history is unique and fascinating. The city has a tremendous opportunity to appeal to visitors who love historically significant sites by telling its story in the historic district.

**Increase in 25-54 Age Population** – The increase in this age group city-wide means there are more young adults and established adults that would be more open to experience recreational-type activities. It is also a sign that more teenagers have chosen to live in Phenix City or that more young adults are moving to the area.

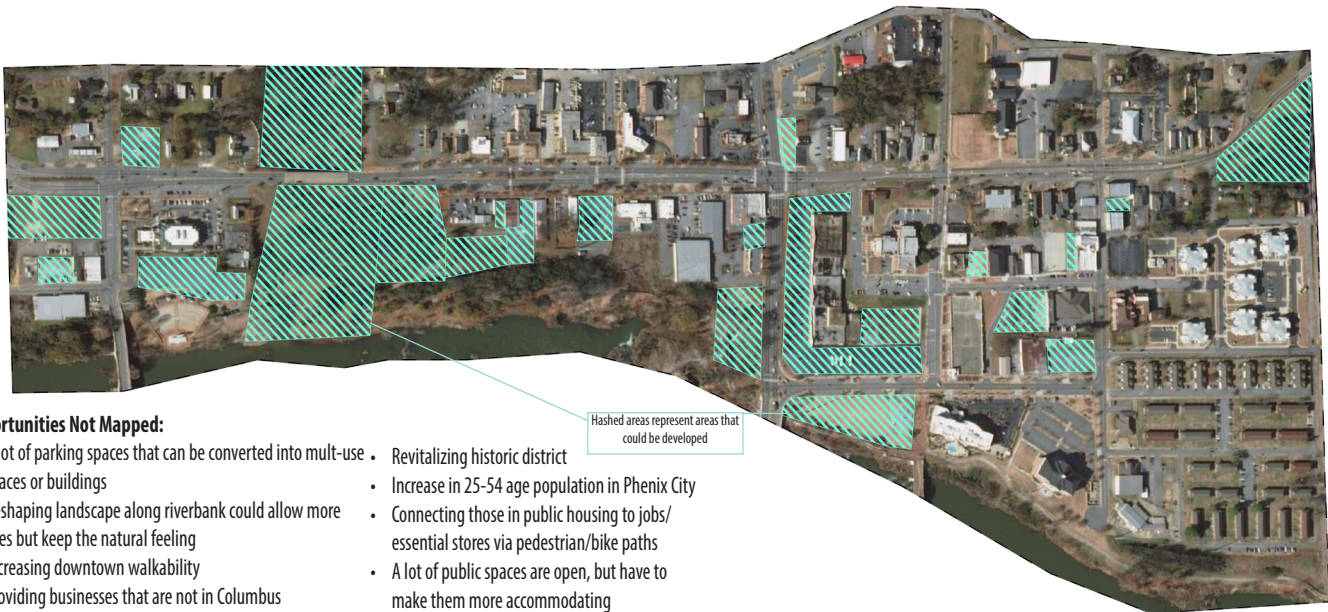
**Connecting Public Housing Residents to Jobs / Essential Stores** – The location of public housing in the downtown area provides a tremendous opportunity. The new businesses brought to the downtown area can become a source of income for these tenants. Furthermore, the improvement of pedestrian infrastructure would allow tenants that do not have vehicles to safely get to essential locations.

**A lot of Open Public Spaces** – There are a lot of open spaces close to the riverwalk. Phenix City can utilize such spaces as places where residents can come and gather while enjoying the sites of the Chattahoochee River.

**Opportunity for Infill Development** – There are several places in downtown, and specifically in the historic district, that could be sites for infill development. This would promote more pe-

pedestrian movement downtown while also providing spaces for more businesses.

**Map Title: Downtown Opportunities**



**Opportunities Not Mapped:**

- A lot of parking spaces that can be converted into multi-use spaces or buildings
- Reshaping landscape along riverbank could allow more uses but keep the natural feeling
- Increasing downtown walkability
- Providing businesses that are not in Columbus
- Accommodate tourists coming for wintering grounds / white water events
- Revitalizing historic district
- Increase in 25-54 age population in Phenix City
- Connecting those in public housing to jobs/essential stores via pedestrian/bike paths
- A lot of public spaces are open, but have to make them more accommodating
- Opportunity for Infill Development

**Threats**

**Area Along Holland Creek and Chattahoochee River Prone to Flooding** – A major threat to infrastructure located close to the water is flooding. Often after a heavy rain, the river floods the riverwalk and can even flood the amphitheater. Phenix City should implement flood mitigation techniques when designing spaces in the downtown area.

**Brain Drain / Citizen Retention** – One of the main threats with most communities is loss of educated residents. Phenix City must continue to improve its attractiveness to these individuals. One way is to improve the attractiveness of its downtown area.

**Competition with Columbus, GA** – Phenix City will always have to compete with Columbus, GA for resources and economic activity. Instead of directly competing with Columbus, Phenix City should offer businesses and experiences that cannot be found in Columbus.

**Older Population in Downtown Area** – The population within the downtown area is older. This highlights the importance of drawing younger people to live in the downtown area.

**Height Restrictions in Downtown Area are too High** – Currently, the maximum height restriction 145 feet. Phenix City should change this as soon as possible to prevent any development that would be out of character for the downtown area.



Map Title: Downtown Threats



**Threats Not Mapped:**

- Brain Drain / Citizen Retention
- Competition with Columbus, GA
- Older population in downtown area
- Height restrictions in downtown are too high

Area is prone to flooding

Contextual Analysis

Phenix City’s current zoning ordinance was originally adopted in 2002 and was amended in 2014. According to the existing zoning map, the downtown area consists of three different zones: Core Commercial, Apartment and Office, and High Density Residential.

**Core Commercial District**

The zoning ordinance specifically states that this district consists of the “traditional downtown area of Phenix City.” Currently, the ordinance recommends but does not call for multi-use buildings. Lot line to lot line development is called for, but it would appear that this has not been enforced in the downtown area. Development in the Core Commercial District is subject to conditional use approval by the Planning Commission and City Council. Building heights should be immediately changed in this district. The current maximum height in this district is 145 feet. A building built to this height would not fit the current or desired character of Phenix City. The city should consider reducing the maximum height to 45 or 55 feet. Incentive zoning techniques should also be considered to allow the latter height.

**Apartment and Office**

According to the zoning ordinance, the purpose of the district is to encourage the development of appropriate areas for a mixture of residential and office uses. The ordinance does not specify that this has to be achieved through multi-use, multi-storied buildings, but added that to the ordinance would help ensure a mixture of high-density residential and professional offices. Building heights should be reconsidered for this district. The current maximum height is 65 feet. The city should reconsid-



er reducing that to 35 or 45 feet; the latter is the maximum height for principal structures in a High Density Residential zone.

## High Density Residential

This district's purpose is to preserve and protect that is and can be used for the construction of multi-family dwelling units. In the downtown area, this district mostly covers the public housing located in the northern portion of the study area. (City of Phenix City, Zoning Ordinance, 2002)

# Themes

## Economic Development

Kick-starting economic development in the downtown area is essential to renewing the heart of Phenix City. This proposal's goals all center around the theme of economic development. Economic development in the downtown area will not only bring revenue to the city, but will also increase the quality of life for its residents.



## Preserving History

The history of Phenix City is second to none. From its beginnings as two separate towns, to its reliance on vice for economic support, to its cleanup, Phenix City and its residents have constantly pressed forward. Now, the city needs to provide a way to tell that story to visitors. In doing so, Phenix City stands to bring visitors from Columbus over to the Alabama side of the Chattahoochee; and, while they're in the city, they'll stop and visit local businesses



## Placemaking

Placemaking is all about the feeling you get when you visit a place. Do you feel welcomed? Do you feel relaxed? Does the area look busy and hectic? Phenix City's geographic location already gives it a unique sense of place; one of a tranquil city on the banks of a beautiful river. Now, city leaders must build upon this through signage standards and sidewalk design guidelines to expand Phenix City's sense of place throughout the city.



# Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

## Goal #1

Design downtown signage and plots in corridors

### Objectives

- 1.a. Create a feeling of pride and ownership of the community
- 1.b. Direct people coming to the area to downtown
- 1.c. Highlight the beauty and history of a particular area

### Strategies

- 1.a. Create sign design guidelines for the downtown area
- 1.b. Place downtown signage along main corridors into Phenix City and Highway 280
- 1.c. Place signs around downtown that point out interesting facts about the City or land

## Goal #3

Create a community gathering space

### Objectives

- 3.a. Purchase property along the east side of Broad Street
- 3.b. Design the space to host community gatherings
- 3.c. Promote the new space to host community gatherings

### Strategies

- 3.a. Purchase property along the east side of Broad Street or utilize publicly owned space
- 3.b. Work with a landscape architect to design the space to allow for multiple uses
- 3.c. Host new events in the public space

## Goal #2

Promote downtown walkability

### Objectives

- 2.a. Create sidewalk/crosswalk design standards for the downtown corridor
- 2.b. Ensure all intersections have crosswalks on all sides
- 2.c. Ensure sidewalks connect people to destinations

### Strategies

- 2.a. Create sidewalk and crosswalk design guidelines for the downtown corridor
- 2.b. Install crosswalks at all intersections according to new design guidelines
- 2.c. Install sidewalks along all streets in downtown according to new design guidelines

## Goal #4

Promote and preserve the City's Historic District

### Objectives

- 4.a. Create preservation guidelines for Historic District
- 4.b. Restore historic buildings
- 4.c. Create historic walking tour with signage describing the importance of the area and pictures

### Strategies

- 4.a. Zone area bordered by Broad Street to the west, 4th Avenue to the east, 16th Street to the north, and 14th Street to the south as a historic district, keeping currently allowed uses, but changes design guidelines to maintain historic Phenix City feel.

- 4.b. Create design and maintenance guidelines for buildings in the newly-zoned historic district
- 4.c.1. Plan route for walking tour

### **Goal #5**

To promote economic diversity within the downtown area

#### *Objectives*

- 5.a. Identify and analyze existing businesses in the downtown area
- 5.b. Recruit various new businesses to promote economic diversity

#### *Strategies*

- 5.a. Identify and analyze existing businesses in the downtown area by looking at the downtown area and downtown Columbus, GA
- 5.b. Recruit businesses that are missing based on analysis

### **Goal #6**

Specific zoning for downtown area

#### *Objectives*

- 6.a. Create three new zones in downtown area (Commercial, Historic, and Entertainment)

#### *Strategies*

- 6.a.1. Create special zoning districts for downtown area (one commercial, one historic, and one entertainment)
- 6.a.2. Building height in entertainment district should be limited to two stories (~20ft); buildings in the historic district should be limited to three stories (~30ft); and buildings in the commercial district should be limited to four stories (~40ft)
- 6.b. Create a historic district zone to encourage preservation and infill development that meets the character of the current historic buildings
- 6.c. Encourage parking behind buildings if necessary, but place a priority on utilizing the existing parking deck in downtown

## Case Study

The City of Soledad, CA's Downtown Specific Plan was used as the main case study for this plan. Completed in October of 2012, the goals of Soledad's downtown plan closely resembled the goals of this project—creating a vibrant hub for commercial activity, entertainment, and hospitality; creating a pedestrian-oriented downtown that showcases the city's unique culture and history; creating a compact, mixed-use downtown; and creating a memorable place.

Soledad's downtown plan relied heavily on implementing form-based codes in the downtown area. According to the Form-Based Code Institute, form-based codes use the physical features of buildings as the base of the zoning ordinance. This is different from traditional zoning where the ordinance is based on the separation of uses.

The main takeaways from Soledad's plan are how form-based coding can allow for economic diversity in the downtown area while still molding the features of buildings to fit the fabric and history of a city. This applies to Phenix City in that, just like in Soledad, CA, different types of zoning in downtown can allow

the city to shape the area into an economic center; this can be seen by the goals of downtown Soledad.

City of Soledad  
DOWNTOWN SPECIFIC PLAN

FINAL | OCTOBER 3, 2012



## Proposed Plan

### Rezoning Downtown

We proposed rezoning the downtown area to create 3 new zones—Commercial, Entertainment, and Historic. Building height in entertainment district should be limited to two stories (~20ft); buildings in the historic district should be limited to three stories (~30ft); and buildings in the commercial district should be limited to four stories (~40ft). We recommend setting height limits relative to those listed above. In addition to these three new zones, we recommend zoning the northwestern most section of the study area to allow mixed-use buildings that maintain the character of the Brownville Historic District. This could include mixed-use buildings with commercial uses on the bottom floor and residential in the upper floors. We also recommend maintaining the residential district in the northernmost section of downtown due to the presence of government housing.

### Whitewater Express and Wintering Grounds

We recommend a multi-use building be built in the southern section of the downtown area. This new building would serve as the new location for Whitewater Express. We recommend moving Whitewater Express to keep its proximity to the Wintering Grounds, the new location of which would be situated just by the green space along Holland Creek. Visitors to the Wintering Grounds could use Holland Creek as an inlet and outlet for kayaking and other activities on the Chattahoochee River.



Map Title: Potential New Downtown Zoning



### *Relandscaping Behind the Entertainment District*

During our site visit, we noticed a steep slope behind what would be the new entertainment district. Currently, this slope is overgrown and is too steep to allow pedestrians to travel easily between the riverwalk and buildings along Broad Street. We recommend relandscaping this slope in a way that preserves the embankment but also allows pedestrians travel up and down the slope. One way to do this is to relandscape the slope to create a tiered grassy area that would not only serve as a pathway for pedestrians, but would also serve as a multi-use space where pedestrian can sit and enjoy the sites of the river.

### *New Historic District*

We recommend utilizing form-based coding in the new historic district. This would allow for infill development that would resemble the character of the old buildings, but allow for diverse uses within the zone. This area should also include unique signage, such as the traditional brown historic district signs used by a number of cities. This area would also include the new community garden at the corner of Whiewater Avenue and 16th Street. Specifics about this community garden will be provided in the “Stakeholder” section of this report.

### *New Commercial District*

The new commercial district will contain most of the city and county-owned buildings as well as Phenix Plaza. We have identified a number of areas that could be redesigned for new multi-use buildings that would allow commercial uses on the lower floor and residential uses on the upper floors.

### *New Entertainment District*

The new entertainment district would be located on the east side of Broad Street, between 13th Street the Russell County Courthouse. As was the case with the new historic district, we recommend using form-based coding in the new entertainment district. City planners could also use design standards that are specific to the entertainment district. The use of such codes would require buildings in this area to have entrances facing east and west. Buildings located on Broad Street should have a small patio area to allow for outside dining for those that wish to sit facing Broad Street. It would allow properties extending to the riverwalk to build patios or balconies on the east side of buildings for outside dining or socializing.

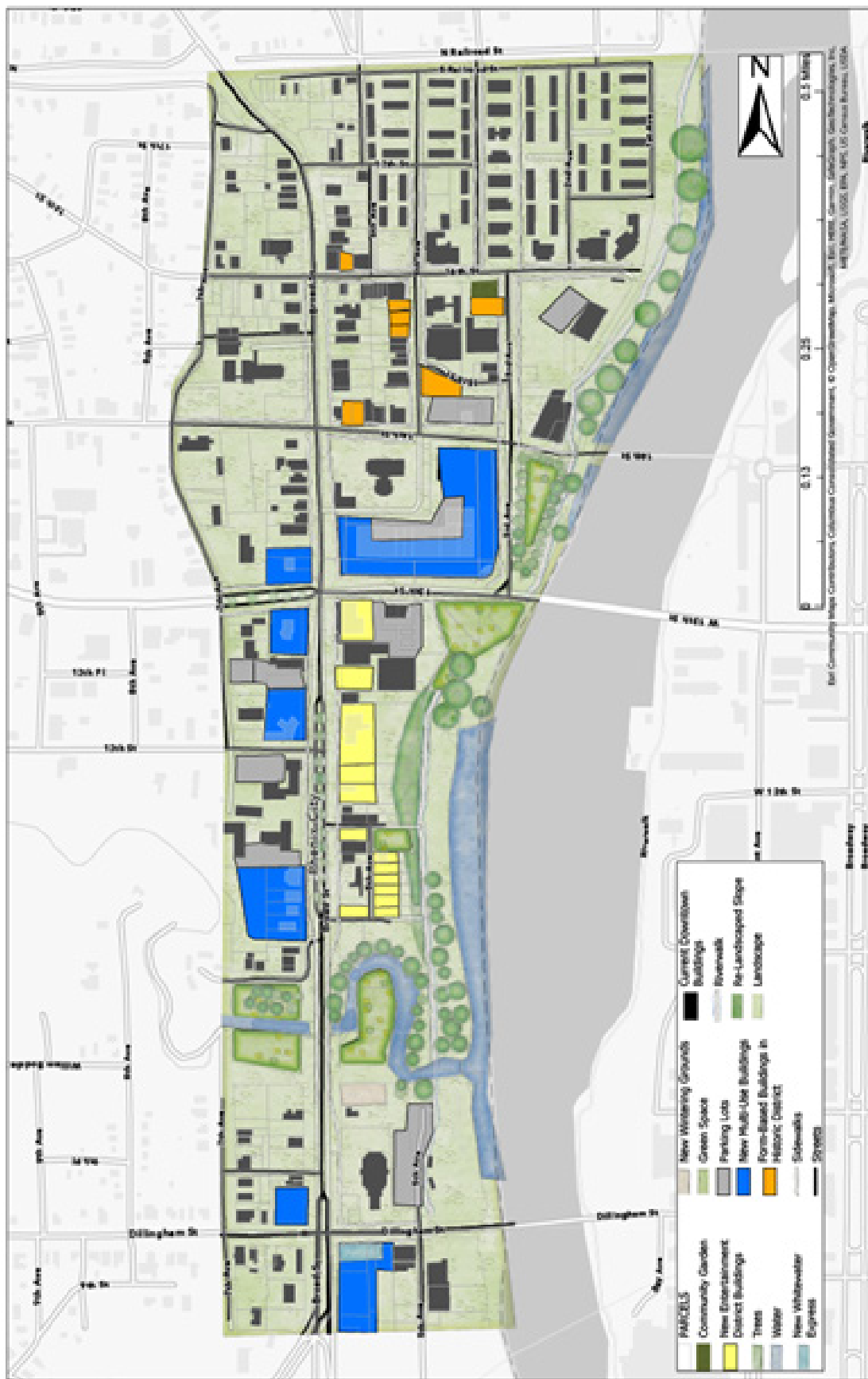
### *Stakeholders and Community Programs*

Stakeholders in the Phenix City downtown area are the residents, businesses (such as Chattahoochee Brewing, Piggly Wiggly, and Courtyard by Marriott Columbus Phenix City/ Riverfront), homeowners, those employed in the downtown area, university students in the surrounding area, and those considering one of those categories. We are proposing small community programs to get the community involved in the revitalization efforts of the Downtown area. We are suggesting two separate programs targeting different demographics of people in the area. These programs will begin small and be conducted in phases. It is important to get buy in from stakeholders. Therefore, the first thing we will do is get feedback from stakeholders throughout the community. We decided the best way to do this is send surveys. The proposed method to send out surveys is going door to door in the downtown area, a mail out campaign, or both. Although the mail out campaign may be less time-consuming, we believe that we will get the best community participation with the door-to-door method. If mailed out the survey could be confused with junk mail and thrown away. The door-to-door method of delivery will eliminate this scenario, also if the stakeholder has questions someone will be there to answer those questions, and the surveys can be completed right away. The downside is it will take a lot more time and require participation from more people. The two most likely programs to get involvement from most stakeholders, while keeping cost down is a community garden and volunteer led education and tutoring services.

### *Community Garden*

We recommend locating a community garden at the corner of Whitewater Avenue and 16th Street. Members of the community can share responsibility for the upkeep of the space and produce their own food in the low-income area. This is a very inexpensive project to begin, and once it is operable it is a project that will pay for itself for years to come. The garden will also feed some of the less fortunate people in and around the area. The project will also show pride in the community. It will be prompted by community clean-up and other area beautification efforts. The garden would consist of nine raised gardens to be with, that can be built using strap wood from old pallets and bricks. The seeds will be obtained from stakeholders (residents and markets in the area).

This project will have three phases: Phase one is the planning and organizing phase. This phase will begin immediately after the surveys have been completed. During this phase, elected officials and planners will coordinate with the communi-



ty to appoint volunteers to oversee different efforts moving forward. Planners will also coordinate with elected officials and stakeholders to acquire land and material for the garden (wood, nails, dirt, and seeds). They will also obtain the material for the community clean-up project. Small businesses such as food trucks, activities, and goods vendors should also be contacted and invited to participate in the activities.

Phase two is the implantation phase. It will begin a week after the conclusion of the community clean-up. The volunteers in charge, along with the planners will ensure information about the garden has been pushed out on social media, through the mail, Eventbrite, and other sites used to find local events. There will be a sign-up sheet to ensure there is enough PPE for the people coming to help. The sign-up sheet will also ensure that there are not too many people coming at one time. Vendors would be essential to keep people occupied while during the event. Once the garden has been assembled there can be a ribbon cutting ceremony for officials to come out and connect with the community, as well as talk about the garden, its purpose and introduce the personnel who will be heading the project. As well as how the community can get involved and the benefits of the garden.

The third phase is for evaluation of the effort and best practices moving forward. Planners and volunteers will correspond monthly to keep the officials aware of the efforts and needs of the community. As the seasons change volunteers will update planners and officials on what crops are being planted and need for expansion or more effort in the community.



## Conclusion

We believe Phenix City has the history and the potential to create a bright future with a thriving downtown area. The proposals listed in this report should serve as the basis for planning and economic development decisions in the downtown area. Unfortunately, this study was limited with respect to time, resources, public engagement, and the depth of analyses. It is recommended that city officials work with professional firms and other outside partners to implement any of the proposed activities. With respect to creating form-based codes, it is recommended that the city work with an architectural firm. It is also recommended that the city work with a landscape architect when considering the landscaping of the riverbank.



## **Sources**

City of Phenix City Staff

City of Phenix City. "Zoning Ordinance." 2002

City of Soledad. "City of Soledad Downtown Specific Plan." October 3, 2012

Form-Based Code Institute

Lee-Russell Council of Governments

Social Explorer Tables (SE), Census 2010, Census Bureau; Social Explorer

U.S. Census Bureau

United States Department of the Interior. National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form for Phenix City. October 4, 1983. United States Department of the Interior. National Parks Service