

Community Serving

SUMMARY

This Community Transformation Strategy focuses on developing an environment that is entrepreneur-friendly and intentionally incentivizes businesses, which serve the needs of the residents in the city and greater region. A Community Serving strategy is designed not only to address comprehensively the wants and needs of those who live in your city but also should serve those who live beyond the traditional “walls” of the central business district. Special consideration should be given to creating community gathering spaces, as well as to the support and development of inclusive public amenities. The types of businesses recruited and their standard hours of operation should reflect the day-to-day needs of residents and their target audience, with the understanding that more metro-based cities may need to accommodate a commuter workforce.

KEY DESCRIPTORS

Business diversity, walkability, knowing your audience, commuter metrics, business hours, engagement, promotions, incentives, uses, convenience, community gathering spaces, beautification, accessibility, user experience and amenities, participation, volunteer base, accessible necessities, grocery stores, entrepreneur friendly, safety, transportation solutions and amenities, education, public amenities, educational institution engagement, public/ private services and professional services.



Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

— Jane Jacobs

PROS

- This strategy creates a district where people want to live.
- This strategy increases the quality of life for residents.
- A Community Serving strategy can build overall community support.
- When you build a place where people want to live, you are inherently creating a place where people want to visit.
- This strategy helps support the business community.

CONS

- Public infrastructure requires maintenance.
- You may find it difficult initially to garner support.
- Opponents may say a Community Serving cannot deliver quick and tangible results.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Retail follows rooftops.
- You need to understand your local market.
- What are the demographics of your population base?
- Where do your downtown workers live?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- What can your market support?
- How do commuter metrics affect your daily population?
- What current amenities exist to support residents?
- What transportation infrastructure is available?
- Does downtown feel inclusive for all residents in the community?

Thomasville, ExploreGeorgia.org



FOUR-POINT APPROACH ACTIVITIES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Create an online business directory highlighting a business of the week/month.
- Develop an incentive packet highlighting the financial resources available for potential new businesses and work to bring in particular resident serving businesses, i.e. grocery stores, daycares, hair salons, hardware stores, restaurants and retail.
- Educate business owners about the importance of business hours that coincide with commuter metrics and local residential needs, i.e. businesses open after 6 p.m. and open on Sundays and Mondays.
- Work with business owners to develop a “love your local” campaign in which local businesses would offer discounts to city residents.
- Work with local banks to offer low interest loans specifically geared towards local residents opening businesses downtown.

DESIGN

- Develop wayfinding signage to identify both businesses and local amenities.
- Conduct a sidewalk inventory to identify gaps in walkability for pedestrian traffic.
- Add or repair sidewalks to make them more pedestrian friendly and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Add bike lanes with bike hubs downtown.
- Plant a community garden specifically for downtown residents.
- Build a dog park and dog sanitation stations.
- Install or update downtown lighting to illuminate alley ways and parking lots for increased safety and visibility.
- Develop special parking for residents only.
- Add benches and other furnishings to encourage people to spend more time downtown.

PROMOTIONS

- Create a residential amenities guide focusing on shops, restaurants and services to serve the local community. Offer this guide online and in print.
- Create a “welcome to downtown” campaign to reintroduce downtown to the greater community and to create a feeling of inclusiveness.
- Work with partners to develop a community calendar with events.
- Develop a special section on your website with information and deals for locals only.
- Design and distribute a newsletter both in digital and print.
- Host events that serve the residents, such as trick-or-treating, Easter egg hunts, a farmers’ market, movie nights and creation of a shop local/shop small campaign.
- Write news releases/create social media videos promoting business and property owners who give back to the community.

ORGANIZATION

- Develop a welcome packet for new residents and work with local partners such as real estate professionals and the chamber of commerce to distribute.
- Work with Georgia Power, Georgia Electric Membership Corp., Electric Cities of Georgia or other local utility companies to pull drive-time metrics reports, retail leakage surveys, tapestry reports and demographic reports to understand better the needs of your community’s residents.
- Develop a relationship with Main Street and the greater community’s neighborhood associations to develop a shop local campaign.
- Create volunteer opportunities downtown for students and civic organizations.
- Offer a community input survey in print and online to learn how your downtown and Main Street program can work better to serve the community.

PARTNERS

AARP

Association of real estate professionals

Chamber of commerce

Higher education institutions

Neighborhood associations

Civic clubs

City and county government

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Local convention and visitors bureau

Business or merchants’ association

Community foundations

Power companies

Georgia Department of Community Affairs Design Studio

Georgia Council for the Arts

Local media outlets

Financial institutions