

WRITTEN REPORT OF FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

LaGrange | Troup County

Spring 2017

GeorgiaForward has a

unique record of bringing Georgians together and acting as a catalyst for big ideas and new collaborations. Rather than directly implementing projects, GeorgiaForward facilitates cross-sector and cross-region conversations and partnerships that pursue solutions on their own. Since 2012, GeorgiaForward has been hosting the Young Gamechangers program with the goal of developing big idea solutions to challenges that communities face in our state. Not only does this program benefit the host community, but it builds bridges between the communities represented by the participants and creates a statewide network of leaders.

From January until June of this year fifty of Georgia's emerging leaders have been focused on LaGrange and Troup County with the purpose of developing creative ideas to leverage the successes taking place within the community. The Spring 2017 Young Gamechangers are between the ages of 24 and 40 from communities across our state. Roughly one third of this cohort is from the Troup County area, one third is from Metro Atlanta and one third is from Greater Georgia. This group represents a variety of professional sectors which brings a unique edge to these recommendations as they are thought through from many different angles.

The Young Gamechangers were divided into four groups that each focused on a different challenge:

- How can Troup County strengthen the relationship between the local colleges (West Georgia Technical College, LaGrange College, Point University) and the community in order to encourage and incentivize more students to remain in the community post-graduation?
- Troup County is home to outstanding tourism assets that currently attract travelers ages 45+. How can the community appeal to more millennial travelers/
- With great industry partners and proximity to excellent engineering schools, how can Troup County become a center for advanced manufacturing and innovative technologies?
- With The Ray as a catalyst for conversation regarding environmental sustainability, how can Troup County become the greenest community in America?

In this report you will learn each group's three "Big Ideas" that are detailed with scope, budget, potential funding sources, likely partnerships, and measures of success. The ideas are meant to build upon each other and have a positive ripple effect throughout the community when implemented.

This program would not be possible without the support of our generous sponsors as well as the Spring 2017 Steering Committee comprised of Kathy Tilley - Executive Director of the Troup County Center for Strategic Planning, Page Estes - President of the LaGrange Troup County Chamber of Commerce and Meghan Duke - Economic Development Director for the City of West Point.

GeorgiaForward is excited to share the Spring 2017 Young Gamechangers' Final Recommendations to the Community with you. It is our hope that these recommendations will be prioritized and implemented by the LaGrange/Troup County community and create lasting change for years to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve your community,

Kris

Kris Vaughn
Executive Director
GeorgiaForward





SECTION 1

How can Troup County
strengthen the relationship
between the local colleges
(West Georgia Technical
College, LaGrange College,
Point University) and
the community in order to
encourage and incentivize
more students to remain in the
community post-graduation?

SUPER TROUPERS

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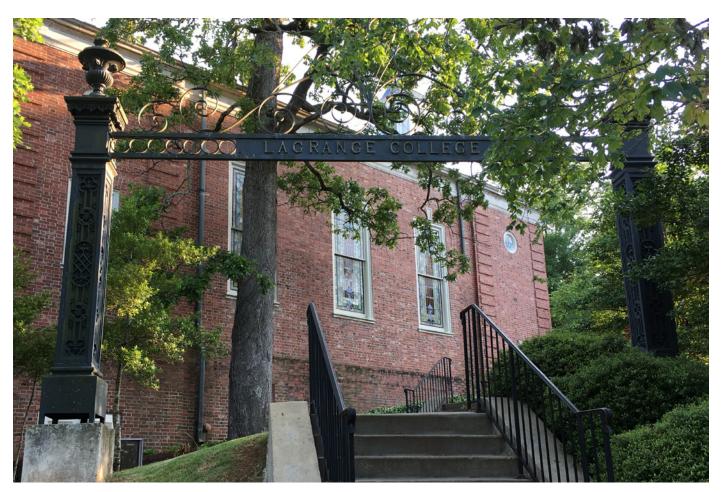
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Troup County seeks to retain graduates from its three higher education institutions: LaGrange College, West Georgia Technical College, and Point University. The Young GameChangers were tasked with ways to strengthen the relationship between local colleges and the community to encourage and incentivize more students to remain in the community post-graduation. Thirteen GameChangers, calling themselves the Super Troupers, proposed a variety of ideas for strengthening this connection, including housing incentives for graduates, a college leadership program, and a community innovation center to connect students directly to employers.

The final recommendations are grouped by a student's progression through college. First, the community will "spark" the students' interest into the great opportunities, community, and lifestyle offered in Troup County. The spark will lead to "light the fire," which encourages students to work in the community post-graduation through developing relationships with innovators and businesses in a *Launch Troup Center*, a community maker space. Finally, the community will "fan the flame" to integrate the graduating students into the community they now call home through various housing incentives.



LaGrange College

INTRODUCTION

Troup County charged the Young GameChangers program with developing ways to strengthen the relationship between the local colleges and the community to encourage and incentivize more students to remain in the community post-graduation.

Super Troupers researched timing and best practices for connecting each student to the community and found that each student must be connected to and understand Troup County offerings in multiple ways on their pathway to graduation. Our recommendations are grouped by student progression through college.

First, each student's engagement and interest in Troup County will be "sparked" with a student discount card, a freshman experience course, a collegiate leadership experience, and a mentorship program. The spark leads to "light the fire", which facilitates student innovation, entrepreneurship, and employer connection in a *Launch Troup Center* maker space. The space will coordinate an internship/work-based learning program, spearhead a centralized internship database for all students and employers to use, and oversee programming that connects employers, students, and the community. The goal of the center is to light the fire in students to work or innovate in Troup County postgraduation.

Third, the community will "fan the flame" to integrate the graduating students into the community they now call home through various housing incentives. In sum, from the first day of the college experience through graduation, each student will become immersed in the community and find meaningful work and connections.

Certainly, Troup County is a super community. Now, every student will understand just how special it is to be a "Super Trouper."



DESCRIPTION

It's human nature to yearn to be where you feel valued, heard, and engaged in a communal setting. Those conditions create community connection and foster community pride.

Be the spark is more than a big idea. It's a call to action for Troup County, Lagrange, Hogansville, West Point, the LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce, and the business community to engage with the postsecondary population throughout their learning experience. Beyond creating programs, we are challenging the community to build and strengthen relationships with the collegiate community through intentional outreach and engagement. The goal is to develop college students into engaged citizens.





Point University

LaGrange College

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

We recommend launching a community connection with college students during their freshmen year through a community student discount card, a community-infused freshman experience course, collegiate leadership experience, and Helping Young Professionals Engage (HYPE) mentorship.

The student discount card connects students to local businesses, which encourages them to buy local. Simply providing students with percentage price breaks creates loyalty to your business and prominently lays a welcome mat for students at your respective business' front door step.

While the colleges offer freshmen experience courses, the community-infused course would include curricula that expands beyond learning about the different departments and organizations at their respective College or University. We encourage you all, as a community, to teach incoming Freshman about your community and challenge them to engage with your government, non-profits, churches, civic clubs, etc.

To further capitalize upon the foundation set by the freshman experience courses, the community should offer college leaders a leadership experience and/or option to participate in strategic planning. This could be done dynamically through the creation of a leadership experience for college students at LaGrange College, Point University, and West Georgia Technical College. In addition, ambassadors, presumably student government leaders or graduates of the leadership experience, should be invited to speak on behalf of students as part of the existing strategic planning board, downtown planning, and/or other city planning opportunities.



West Georgia Technical College

Finally, we encourage the further engagement of students through connecting them to mentorships with the existing members of HYPE. Networking on this level promotes relationship building between young professionals and aspiring young professionals. It also provides direct marketing to and recruitment of the collegiate population. After all, aspiring graduates are trying to get a sense of how they fit into your community. Let them learn from young professionals whom have already found the answer to that question.

By leveraging the existing multidisciplinary strengths of the community (county, the cities, the businesses/nonprofits, etc.) we are creating genuine engagement between students and the community. Those bonds, while they may not increase graduate retention tenfold instantaneously, would certainly spark increased student engagement and begin to make a case of post graduate citizenship in Troup County. Over time, these programs can and will present a case to students that they are not only valued during their collegiate career, but also wanted and valued after completing their degree.

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM (July 2017-December 2017)

- Establish student discount card strategic planning committee.
- Implement the student discount card program.
- Prepare new discount cards to be distributed with parking passes at the beginning of each academic year.
- Establish an exploratory committee to build a HYPE mentorship program with college students.

MEDIUM-TERM (January 2018-May 2018)

- Establish a strategic planning group for the new freshmen experience course that includes community partnerships, tours and service learning.
- Create the leadership experience and/or course.
- Appoint student government leaders from each respective college/university to serve as members on strategic planning committees.
- Charge the HYPE mentorship exploratory committee with defining the program and preparing for implementation.

LONG-TERM (August 2018-December 2018)

- Fall Semester 2018: Implement the leadership course/experience.
- Fall Semester 2018: Launch the Hype Mentorship Program.
- Identify (a) standout members of the leadership program and/or (b) standout student government representatives to serve on community/college master planning committees, community organization boards, and other community leadership positions.
- Appoint student leaders to these defined community planning positions.

BUDGET

1. Discount Cards

Total = \$1,000 annually

Local businesses will have an initial cost for providing 10% discounts, but the program should encourage more business over time. The cost to create discount cards ranges from \$1,000 for 5,000 cards annually, which could be split among the three institutions. Options for offsetting the cost include a possible trade with a local printing facility or engaging a student graphic designer for the card design.

2. Freshman Class

Total = \$15,000 annually

Point University, LaGrange College and West Georgia Tech have a freshmen orientation course. Our recommendation enhances the course by adding community engagement elements. Main costs would be for the instructor and transportation around the community, which is estimated at \$5,000 for each school or \$15,000 total per year.

3. Leadership Experience Course

Total = \$25,000 annually

The costs can be offset by creating an alumni "Student Spark Campaign" by way of crowd funding, segmented mail communications, a special alumni revenue generating event in LaGrange or Point downtowns, or requesting independent major donors gift (\$10K + donors). A small budget should be available for marketing/events in the range of \$25,000

4-HYPE Mentorship

Total = \$5,000 annually

Costs will be minimal since HYPE is an active group. Costs can be offset by creating an alumni "Student Spark Campaign" or identifying angel donors to sponsor membership.

The total for all four ideas is \$46,000 annually.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Cities of LaGrange, West Point, and Hogansville
- Callaway Foundation
- Postsecondary institutions (LaGrange College, Point University, West Georgia Technical School)
- Troup County Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown LaGrange Development Authority
- College alumni association campaign
- Local printing companies
- Individual angel donors by way of alumni
- Individual donations through crowd funding activities
- Local businesses

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

- LaGrange College
- Point University
- West Georgia Technical College
- Alumni associations
- LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown restaurants/stores
- Downtown LaGrange Development Authority
- Strategic Planning Committee
- Community Leaders
- HYPE

EXPECTED IMPACT AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

By exposing students to offerings within the community and offering dynamic networking opportunities during their first year and beyond, Troup County college students will ultimately be better positioned to remain post-graduation. As they become integrated into the community, through discount cards, a First-Year Troup County course, subsequent leadership experience offerings, and a mentorship program with the HYPE young professionals group, we expect to see graduate retention rise in Troup County. Measures of success could include:

- Number of transactions at businesses honoring the student discount card
- Number of students involved in the leadership course
- Number of students involved in strategic planning
- Number of students in the HYPE Mentorship Program
- Number of student volunteering hours through leadership experience course
- Number of student community internships from leadership course



DESCRIPTION

Troup County has experienced tremendous job growth, especially in the manufacturing and hospitality sectors, over the last five years adding 2.9% jobs annually. Over the next ten years, employment is projected to grow at an annual rate of 1.3%, faster than the state average of 0.8% (JobsEQ).

The competition to recruit workers, especially highly skilled workers, is stiff. Troup County launched Troup Works in January of 2017 to study the labor market, identify workforce gaps, and provide recommendations for workforce development and education, talent recruitment, and talent retention.

The community identified one strategy for talent recruitment–strengthen the connection between local colleges and the community to encourage and incentivize students to remain in the community post–graduation. The benefits associated to citizens with higher education include a higher per capita income and lower poverty rates; accelerated job growth; and increased tax revenue through the contributions of a skilled, productive workforce (KY Council on Postsecondary Education).

The community and local colleges have formed some connections to support graduate retention including the THINC College & Career Academy for high school students, employer workforce programs through the technical college, service learning opportunities, and required internships. However, there is no centralized, collaborative space and/or program that supports deeper, more beneficial relationships between employers and students.

A Launch Troup Center is proposed to facilitate community innovation and entrepreneurship, coordinate an internship/work-based learning program in the center, spearhead a centralized internship database for all students and employers to use, and oversee programming that connects employers, students, and the community. The goal of the center is to light the fire in students to work or innovate in Troup County post-graduation.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Launch Troup will be both the physical and programming link that connects the community to the three colleges. Key components of the program will be affordable office space with business services, student internship/work-based learning (WBL) opportunities, employer/student events, and a centralized internship database that employers and students from all three colleges can use.

The unique aspect of the Launch Troup Center is the engagement of students in the Center's operation and programming in addition to college or external WBL/internship opportunities. Sample work options could include:

- Provide business services to startups with oversight from college departments;
- Coordinate programming between employers, the community, and colleges;
- Manage day-to-day customer service at the space;
 and
- Maintain the internship database.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

- Form a Launch Troup committee comprising representatives from the three colleges, chamber, cities, major employers, and economic development organizations.
- Identify a part-time staff member to support the effort.
- Assess local needs and assets or consider contracting with Georgia Tech to do so.
- Host community outreach events, such as meetups, speaker series, and other events, to build the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Develop partnerships through creating agreements, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), and key stakeholders.
- Identify space to rent or lease.
- Create branding and marketing.
- Plan the internship/work based learning programming
- Outreach to potential employers in local businesses and industry to build relationships and develop training programs.

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM (July 2017-December 2017)

- Establish the *Launch Troup* Committee.
- Engage community stakeholders in conversation regarding the program.
- Hire a part-time staff person to manage the oversight and implementation.
- Engage Georgia Tech Incubator support services to conduct a community study on viability of a makerspace/innovation space.
- Identify possible spaces for the facility.

MEDIUM-TERM (January 2018-May 2018)

- Create proposals with budgets for the space.
- Solicit public/private partners.
- Request proposals for build out or renovation.
- Create branding and website to advertise space/programming.

LONG-TERM (August 2018-December 2018)

- Open the space.
- Build centralized internship portal.
- Hire 1-2 full-time staff.
- Host employer/student summit.

BUDGET

The budget for a makerspace varies based on the building, renovations, and equipment desired. Below are three proposals for space in Troup County.

OPTION 1: 200 Main Street: Bank of America Space

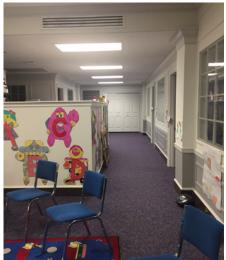


OPTION 3: Church Street

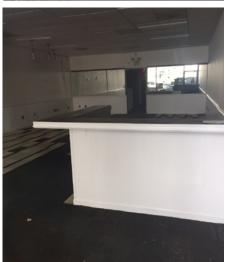












The space is on the first floor of the Bank of America across from the Downtown LaGrange Development Authority. There is a lobby, area for a receptionist, conference room, and individual offices but the space needs updating.

This space is on the corner of Main Street and Vernon Road. This building needs complete renovation so the price would be higher.

Rent: \$1250/month Total Cost for Renovation: \$100 - \$140/square foot

Total Square Feet: 2000 Total Cost for Renovation: \$80 - \$140/square foot or \$160,000 to \$280,000 Total Square Feet: 2200 Total Cost for Renovation: \$100 - \$140/square foot or \$220,000 to \$308,000

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Callaway Foundation funding through Downtown LaGrange Authority
- Membership fees drop in for center, classes, programming ticket prices (nominal)
- Apply for Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund (Georgia Community Affairs)
- Apply (if applicable) Redevelopment Fund <u>Program</u> (Georgia Community Affairs)
- Downtown LaGrange Development Authority earmarked budget
- Advanced Technology Development Center Seed Fund – potentially \$1M
- Real Estate and Equipment Loans through US Small Business Administration
- One Georgia Authority <u>Grant and Loan Programs</u>
- Georgia Grant Watch multiple opportunities

EXPECTED IMPACT AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The expected impact is that there will be increased connections between students and employers through internships and programming that will ultimately lead to students accepting jobs in Troup County. Measures of success could include:

- Number of internships facilitated through the makerspace
- Number of students, faculty, businesses and community members attending events at the Center
- Number of transactions for rented space and events at the Center
- Contributions (cash and in-kind) from local business and government
- Number of overall guests at the Center

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

- Regional Commissions
- US Small Business Administration
- Advanced Technology Development Center
- LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown LaGrange Development Authority
- Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
- United Way of West Georgia
- Georgia Community Affairs
- Georgia Department of Economic Development
- Callaway Foundation
- Three local colleges: Point University, LaGrange College, West Georgia Tech





DESCRIPTION

After young adults have spent time becoming immersed in the community during college years (The Spark), and they have found meaningful work they can feel passionate about (Light the Fire), they will need housing options that fit their lifestyles (Fan the Flame). We realize young professionals can live anywhere they choose, so we have devised a set of housing options and incentives to encourage recent graduates to reside in Troup County after graduation. These options are below.

Local utility providers offer a utility bill credit of up to \$100 per month to recent graduates of LaGrange College, Point University, or West Georgia Technical College in exchange for living in areas designated by local officials. The credits would be available for a maximum of 24 consecutive months. This incentive would be available on a first-come, first-served basis and would be available to no more than 10 households per utility provider at any given time.

Large employers in Troup County offer housing rental or purchase incentive options to newly-hired, managementlevel employees as a "sign-on bonus". The rental option would provide an annual rental allowance of \$3,000 for new leases (1st year) and \$1,500 for renewed leases (2nd year) in designated areas. The purchase offer would provide a forgivable loan of up to \$10,000 for employees wanting to purchase or build a home in designated areas.

Local non-profit developers build one- and two-bedroom apartments/townhomes for rent at affordable price points to recent college graduates.

Local municipalities donate up to five lots each in designated areas with utility hook-ups and paved streets to local college graduates (within five years of graduation) who will build a new home and occupy the property for five years.

Local municipalities offer student loan reimbursement for local college graduates with student loan debt (within five years of graduation) who purchase or build a home in designated areas. Reimbursement amount is based on 2% of the market value of the property purchased or built (maximum of \$10,000). Offer will remain available until \$50,000 fund is depleted for each municipality.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Reduced utility costs will lessen financial pressures for recent college graduates while they begin to establish their professional careers.

When employees live close to work, both employers and employees benefit. Employees spend less time commuting and more time doing things they enjoy. Employers experience less competition with companies in other locations, and are better able to retain talented staff and reduce employee turnover.

Non-profit developers can produce quality residential developments at relatively low costs. Keeping costs down allows the units to be rented at prices affordable to young professionals. This also increases quality housing stock throughout the area and increases market values for existing properties, which increases the tax base.

Providing lots with paved streets and utility hookups at no cost is a substantial savings to the potential homebuilder. This also increases the number and quality of housing stock in the county.

Student loan debt can be an immense financial burden to a recent college graduate. A student loan reimbursement offer may provide an opportunity for a young professional to become a homeowner without experiencing financial hardships.

This mix of incentives will retain talented citizens; increase the educated, motivated work force; increase desirable housing stock; increase the tax base; and strengthen the larger community.



ACTION STEPS

- Establish a steering committee to determine a desired plan of action and monitor progress going forward
- Steering committee members meet with possible partners to determine key participants
- Local utility providers establish and implement a utility bill credit program for recent graduates
- Participating employers establish and implement a policy for providing housing incentives to newlyhired managers
- Obtain funding to purchase land and build apartments/townhomes, then complete development of housing units
- Local municipalities acquire vacant, buildable lots with utility hook-ups and paved streets
- Local municipalities establish and implement a fund for student loan reimbursement program
- Market all programs to soon-to-be and recent college graduates

TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM (July 2017-December 2017)

- Establish a steering committee to determine a desired plan of action and monitor progress going forward
- Steering committee members meet with possible partners to determine key participants

MEDIUM-TERM (January 2018-July 2018)

- Local utility providers establish and implement a utility bill credit program for recent graduates
- Participating employers establish and implement a policy for providing housing incentives to newlyhired managers
- Local municipalities acquire vacant, buildable lots with utility hook-ups and paved streets
- Local municipalities establish and implement a fund for student loan reimbursement program

LONG-TERM (January 2018-December 2019)

- Obtain funding to purchase land and build apartments / townhomes, then complete development of housing units
- Market all programs to soon-to-be and recent college graduates

BUDGET

Utility Credits

Total Investment = \$48,000 annually

 \$100 per month for 10 households = \$12,000 per year for each utility provider. Utility providers include City of LaGrange, City of Hogansville, City of West Point, Diverse Power

Employer Rental & Purchase Incentives Total Investment = \$122,500 annually

- Top Five (5) employers provide rental assistance to 2 households at \$4,500 each employer per year = \$22,500
- Top Five (5) employers provide purchase assistance to 2 households at \$20,000 employer per year = \$100,000

Apartments / Townhomes

Total Investment = \$700,000

- Vacant land to build apartments/townhomes = \$75,000
- Develop apartments/townhomes = \$625,000

Lot Donations

Total Investment = \$200,000

• Each local municipality donates 5 lots at \$10,000 each lot = \$50,000 per municipality

Student Loan Reimbursement

Total Investment = \$200,000

 Each local municipality offers student loan reimbursement until the \$50,000 fund is depleted

Fan the Flame Big Idea Total Initial Investment: \$1,270,500

Fan the Flame Big Idea Total Annual Investment (on-going): \$170,500





POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- City of LaGrange
- City West Point
- City of Hogansville
- Troup County Government (unincorporated)
- Diverse Power
- Local large employers
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- USDA Rural Development
- Federal Home Loan Bank Atlanta
- Callaway Foundation



LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

- LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce
- Point University
- LaGrange College
- West Georgia Technical College
- Callaway Foundation
- DASH for LaGrange
- City of LaGrange
- City of West Point
- City of Hogansville
- Troup County Government (Unincorporated)
- Kia
- WellStar
- Sewon
- Great Wolf Lodge
- Interface

EXPECTED IMPACT AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

This mix of incentives will retain talented citizens; increase the educated, motivated work force; increase desirable housing stock; increase the tax base; and strengthen the larger community.

- Utility providers will experience an increase in the number of customers who are recent college graduates
- Large employers will report being able to attract and retain newly-hired, college graduate employees more successfully than in the past
- All rental properties targeting recent college graduates will be occupied
- More recent college graduates will rent, purchase, or build on homes in Troup County than in the past
- All donated lots will have new homes built on them
- Recent college graduates will report feeling less financial stress due to student loan debt than their cohorts who did not take advantage of the incentives

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Super Troupers team would like to acknowledge the Troup County partners who have assisted in our research, planning, and guidance to reach our ultimate recommendations. Without these willingness participants, our Big Ideas would never have come to fruition. Thank you to all of the following:

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Kat- Fan https://georgia.grantwatch.com/cat/8/economic-development-grants.html



SECTION 2

Troup County is home
to outstanding tourism
assets that currently
attract travelers ages 45+.
How can the community
appeal to more millennial
travelers/tourists?

MILLENNIAL MINDS

THE TEAM

MILLENNIAL MINDS

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SARAH BETH SNIDER

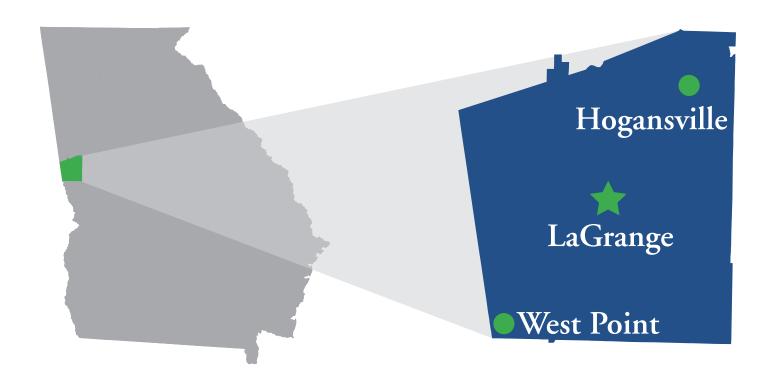
Advertising Professional, Advertising Made Easy *LaGrange, GA*

JARED TOLBERT

Public Health Analyst, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention Atlanta, GA

HOLLY WINNER

Tourism Project Manager for Department of Economic Development *LaGrange, GA*



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About an hour from Atlanta, Georgia and Auburn, Alabama sits Troup County, Georgia. For decades, Troup County has been positioned as a strong tourist attraction for the Baby Boomer generation and beyond. Now is the time to reintroduce Troup County as the newest magnet for millennial tourism in the state of Georgia. Troup County may be the hidden gem of Georgia's western border, but we think it is time the secret got out.

By capitalizing upon Troup County's existing assets and introducing fresh ideas to the tourism market, the county can position itself as a travel destination for young adults aged 20-36. These young adults, according to *Millennial Marketing*, contribute to the \$180 billion travel industry with over 200,000 million tourists annually. The same study found that 78% of millennials prefer to spend their disposable income on experiences and travel rather than material possessions (Millennial Marketing, 2017). Georgia has benefited from the growth of the leisure-travel industry, with a statewide growth rate of 3 percent in 2016, totaling almost 80 million domestic visitors (DK Shifflet, 2017).

In fact, the state of Georgia is no stranger to the tourism industry. In 2016, tourism had a \$61.1 billion economic impact on the state's economy. This is an impressive 3.5% increase from 2015 figures, outpacing the national average growth rate of 2.1%. In addition, this \$61.1 billion impact is 34% higher than pre-recession levels were in 2008. In

2016, Georgia not only had a record-breaking year in economic impact figures, but also in the number of tourists. In 2016, Georgia saw 105 million visitors, a 3% increase from 2015 (Market Georgia, 2017).

Full of natural beauty, a deep and rich history of textiles and transformation, and an excellent foothold between major metropolitan areas, Troup County is one of the fastest growing communities in all of Georgia and is poised to become a leader in industrial, retail, and economic development. As such, it is imperative to focus on the growing need for the millennial generation to visit, familiarize themselves with, and eventually make Troup County their home. There are some truly incredible assets and opportunities that will not only make this effort a reality, but a sustainable one at that. Focusing on the revitalization of downtown, creating more exciting opportunities on the area's breathtaking lakes and parks, and creating new attractions for millennials to discover will make Troup County not just a pass-through for tourists but rather a final destination.

With all of these possibilities at the community's fingertips and the support of community leaders committed to making these exciting opportunities a reality, there are no limits as to how far the millennial renaissance in Troup County can go.

INTRODUCTION

Troup County – comprised of county seat LaGrange as well as the cities of Hogansville and West Point – was once a textile production giant on the far western border of Georgia. Neighborhoods formed around the textile mills and Troup County became the ideal setting for settling down and raising a family. While the textile industry is not the only key player in LaGrange's economy now, there are other major corporate players on the scene. In fact, Troup County is home to more Fortune 500 regional sites than anywhere else in the United States, as well as other strong business influencers like Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia (KMMG) and Interface Flor, LLC (LaGrange Troup County Chamber of Commerce, 2017). Troup County's rich history and heritage, combined with a forward-thinking population, serve as a foundation for continued success in what has become one of Georgia's premier communities.

Since its creation by the state legislature in 1826, Troup County has honed a worthy reputation as a center for commerce and as a community of fair-minded people seeking to improve its citizens' lives. This commitment to residents and passion for excellence has catapulted Troup County forward for close to two centuries. Even as similar-sized towns throughout the nation have faded, this community shines brighter with each decade that passes (LaGrange Troup County Chamber of Commerce, 2017).

Troup County is a great place to live, but is it a great place to *play*?

For millennial tourists, the answer is *not yet*. Currently, tourism in Troup County boasts over \$156 million in direct spending, supports over 1,100 jobs, and saves each county household \$428 in local taxes (Georgia Tourism Industry Portal, 2017). At the center of these economic impact figures are two of the amazing tourist attractions in LaGrange. The first is the Biblical History Center, the most visited attraction in Troup County and an educational museum boasting over 200 artifacts from the Israeli Archives. The second is Hills & Dales Estate, a 13,000 square foot home designed by the famous Neil Reid and overseen for four generations of the Fuller E. Callaway family. While these attractions are unique, they have traditionally attracted more tourists from the Baby Boomer generation than those of the millennial generation (LaGrange Troup County Chamber of Commerce).

Millennial Minds was tasked with answering the question: How can the community appeal to more millennial travelers and tourists? After months of great conversations and lengthy research, we propose three big ideas to Troup County that we believe will attract more millennials to play and stay in LaGrange, Hogansville, West Point, and the broader county.

Through our research and conversations, we identified some common themes in millennial travel habits and trends. Millennials seek *experiences*. They are looking for authenticity. Millennials are not looking for something they can find anywhere else. They want to post and share via social media their special and specific experiences. Millennials want walkability and attractive downtowns. They enjoy nightlife and unique beverages. So maybe Troup County has *not yet* capitalized on millennial tourism, but we believe that in time, it will not only capitalize but also *thrive* on it.

So our question is: Are you ready to be surprised?



Biblical History Center



Hills & Dales



BIGIDEA 1 DOWNTOWN DRAW

Driving Millennials to the HeART of LaGrange

Our recommendation is to position downtown LaGrange, GA as a unique cultural arts attraction for traveling millennials.

DESCRIPTION

We recommend that downtown LaGrange focus on free public art, music, streetscaping, facade updates, intentional business recruitment, and the LaGrange Art Museum. The LaGrange Art Museum has an underutilized unique venue space, which can be used to attract millennial tourists to downtown. In addition, we propose that downtown capitalize on the already-existing merchant district downtown by hosting First Fridays, thereby encouraging overnight weekend getaways that accentuate the arts, culture, and vibrancy of LaGrange, Georgia.



SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

The scope of this initiative will encompass Bull Street [from the intersection at Broad Street (LaFayette Square) to East Depot Street and Byron Hurst Street (Wild Leap Brewery)]; Main Street [from the intersection of Broad Street to East Broome Street]; Broad Street [from Church Street to Ridley Avenue]; and Vernon Street [from Bull Street to Morgan Street]. The corridor includes intentional incorporation of the Lagrange Art Museum located on LaFayette Parkway and Morgan Street (Downtown LaGrange Development Authority, 2017).





Thomasville Main Street

1. Streetscaping

We recommend streetscaping to include laying brick pavers and installing removable locking bollards. These additions will encourage more walkability focusing on the city-maintained streets of Bull Street and Main Street. The installments of brick paved streets and removable locking bollards will allow for an ideal area to host First Fridays, future festivals, and provide a designated space for open alcoholic beverage containers. This recommendation also includes sidewalk extensions on Main Street to allow for restaurants to expand seating to the outdoors. Additional streetscaping in designated downtown areas will consist of outdoor benches and landscaping that allows for increased retail and restaurant visibility. Streetscaping downtown will create the vibrant atmosphere millennials crave.

2. Business Recruitment

Currently, there are many vacant street-level retail spaces on Bull Street, Main Street, and surrounding LaFayette Square. While vacant spaces often pose a deterrent to foot traffic from millennial tourists and residents alike, there is the opportunity to repackage these vacancies through large scale public art installations in the store fronts. Moving forward, we recommend the Downtown Development Authority focus on recruiting retail and unique dining that appeal to tourists to fill street level vacancies. Examples of these businesses would be coffee shops, dessert shops, and shops with unique inventory. Ideally, shops that generate foot traffic and sales are located on street level properties while office spaces are located on second and third floor properties. The scope of this project calls for zoning ordinances and tax incentives to be re-examined and used for recruitment. This incentivizes greater foot traffic during the day, potentially even seven days a week, an increase in sales tax through spending, and a vibrant downtown that intrigues traveling millennials.





3. Incorporating The Thread

In order to increase walkability and connectivity between the new Wild Leap Brewery, the Courtyard Marriott, and The Thread, we recommend there be an intentional connection between The Thread and the downtown area, possibly through sidewalks. Visible directional signage for The Thread's paths and bike racks would improve communication of opportunities and encourage alternative means of transportation.





4. Nightlife

The development of nightlife is crucial for millennial attraction and will help support Wild Leap Brewery and the Courtyard Marriott, as well as all of downtown. Jazz clubs, stand-up comedy and poetry reading spaces, unique bars, and dueling piano establishments would all compliment the current downtown scene, yet not compete with Sweetland Amphitheatre. Additionally, we recommend that the Downtown Development Authority, in conjunction with all the downtown business owners, operators, and stakeholders, reconsider extended hours of operation as well as Sunday operations, should the tourism market expand rapidly enough to sustain such adjustments.

5. LaGrange Art Museum

The scope of this initiative includes incorporating the LaGrange Art Museum (LAM) into the core of downtown through utilization of the events space in the Center for Creative Learning (CCL) and the outdoor patio behind the museum. These spaces are ideal for evening events such as stand-up comedy, wine tasting, live entertainment, and more that could attract additional millennial tourists. The LAM spaces are not currently being utilized to their fullest extent by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and are wonderful spaces



for the museum and DDA to partner on. The CCL space at LAM is a wonderful complement to the capacity of the Del'avant Event Center; the LAM can host more intimate events. We strongly encourage a future partnership between the DDA and LAM.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM:

- Establish a committee within the existing coalition of downtown partners, city officials, etc. to help plan and execute First Fridays
- Downtown Development Authority and Chamber of Commerce discuss a tourism-related business recruitment plan
- Downtown Development Authority and City of LaGrange assess zoning ordinances
- Engage with landscape architects and Department of Community Affairs to discuss streetscaping options and phasing
- Downtown Development Authority meet with LaGrange Art Museum to discuss events partnership
- Ensure natural incorporation of The Thread into downtown

MEDIUM TERM:

- Implement a tourism-related business recruitment plan
- Encourage downtown businesses to apply for facade grants
- Host inaugural First Friday
- Incorporate The Thread into the downtown through signage

LONG TERM:

- Purchase and install brick pavers and removable locking bollards
- Apply for downtown revitalization grants and implement
- Implement streetscape phases

BUDGET

Advertising	\$20,000
First Fridays (for permits, band honorariums, etc.)	\$10,000
Streetscaping	\$150,000
Signage	\$10,000
Zoning	\$15,000
Total Budget	\$205,000

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- National Trust for Historic Preservation: grants are awarded between \$2,500-5,000 and must be completely matched by another supporter (potentially city or another foundation). Public agencies and nonprofits who are members of the National Trust (\$350/annually) may apply during three annual rounds of competitive grants and receive notice of decision within 8 weeks. (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2017).
- Department of Community Affairs' Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund: assist cities, counties, and development authorities in their efforts to revitalize and enhance downtown areas by providing below-market rate financing to fund capital projects in core historic downtown areas and adjacent historic neighborhoods where DD RLF will spur commercial redevelopment. The maximum loan is \$250,000 per project. Applications will be accepted throughout the year and as loan funds are available to the Department (Department of Community Affairs, 2017).
- Department of Community Affairs' Redevelopment Fund Program: provides flexible financial assistance to locally initiated public/private partnerships helping local governments implement projects that would not proceed otherwise. The Redevelopment Fund is used to leverage investments in commercial, downtown, and industrial redevelopment and revitalization projects. The Redevelopment Fund primarily focuses on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's national objective of "eliminating slums or blight".
- Historic Preservation Fund grants for Certified Local Governments: The 60/40 matching grants enable cities, towns, and rural areas to undertake projects that aid in the preservation of historic properties.
- Georgia Council For the Arts, Vibrant Communities Grant: In fiscal year 2017, GCA launched the Arts Education Program Grant in an effort to put greater emphasis on arts education in Georgia and to align GCA's arts education funding with the Governor's Arts Learning Task Force Recommendations, Grants are for \$1,500-\$5,000 and require a one-to-one cash match (Georgia Council For The Arts, 2017).

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/RESOURCES

With the support of the LaGrange Downtown Development Authority, LaGrange and Troup County leadership, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Cities Foundation, LaGrange Art Museum, the LaGrange Police Department, the businesses and owners of the properties in downtown LaGrange, and the citizens of LaGrange, the Downtown Draw initiative can become a viable tourist attraction for millennials.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The anticipated impact is great on the downtown LaGrange corridor. Millennial Minds' recommendations, in conjunction with other Young Gamechangers groups' ideas, will create a vibrant downtown that attracts various stages of the millennial generation. We anticipate these changes will enhance the experience of guests at the Courtyard Marriott, compliment Wild Leap Brewery, and overall, put LaGrange on the map as an easy choice for a millennial trip.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Measures for success will be demonstrated by increased sales in retail shops and restaurants, increased sales at the Courtyard Marriott, preliminary attendance and then growth of attendance at First Fridays, and increased attendance at planned LaGrange Art Museum events.





DESCRIPTION

Pyne Road Park is nestled on beautiful West Point Lake, surrounded by deep forests and rolling fields. West Point Lake extends 35 miles along the Chattahoochee River on the Alabama-Georgia state line. With 500 miles of shoreline, West Point Lake offers the perfect opportunity for camping, boating, fishing, and watching a gorgeous sunrise or sunset over the water. There's a great opportunity to capture millennial tourism at Pyne Road Park because it is "far from the main*stream*".

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

We recommend developing an easier way of reserving campsites by creating a portal where guests can make reservations online. We recommend beautification of existing campsites and introduction of new camping experiences such as renting yurts (similar to a teepee) and offering more millennial-friendly activities, such as kayaking and paddle boarding, water trampolines, floating water parks (Tarzan Boat), and music festivals.

1. Online Portal

Creating an online portal and implementing new strategies for social media will allow millennials visitors, as well as the general public, to search, view, and book an amazing experience at West Point Lake. Currently guests can only book reservations for the campsite in-person at the campsite office. We believe the current process is a roadblock to millennial tourism and we thereby recommend a new user-friendly reservation system. The Parks and Recreation Department has an existing online reservation system installed that is not currently being marketed or utilized, so there is no additional software cost to using this existing asset.

While there is an initial investment in utilizing a reservation system, we believe it will improve employee productivity by allowing them access to information and tools. In addition, such a system will allow Pyne Road Park to extend the power of collaboration to its customers, partners, and vendors. Checking customer calendars, scheduling meetings, and digitally interacting with customers will give employees the power to better serve guests, especially millennial guests, at Pyne Road Park.

In addition, we believe Pyne Road Park could incorporate more social media usage into its overall marketing strategy. Promoting incentives on Facebook and other social sites; tapping into local and online media such as local newspapers, magazines, and bloggers; getting listed in local online directories; reaching out to the state's visitor centers; and paying for online advertising could all promote Pyne Road Park to a previously untargeted demographic – millennial guests.





2. Redevelopment of Campsites

By beautifying and redeveloping the campsites, Play on Point will develop into a distinguished must-visit spot for millennials to book a "staycation." These renovations include the development and building of yurts to set a high standard of elegance, the building of round fire pits for cool nights, the creation of beautiful outdoor benches, the creation of stunning garden paths, and the hanging of commercial grade string lights. In addition, we recommend offering more outdoor and water activities that appeal to millennials, such as kayaking, water sports, and festivals.

Similar investments by High Falls State Park, primarily in yurts, lead to an increase of 55% average occupancy year around, three times higher than their average occupancy prior to adding yurts. Yurts' peak usage months are early Summer and Fall, but with the minor adjustment of adding A/C window units, high usage could span all twelve months. While each yurt costs approximately \$35,000, maintenance is minimal with minimal refreshes being needed every ten years.

3. Develop More Recreational Water Activities

Through the addition of recreational water activities such as paddle boarding, kayaking, water trampolines, and Tarzan Boats, Pyne Road Park will appeal to millennials and become a "must visit" location. There is currently a massive launch pad for boats, but there is not one for small vessels such as paddleboards or kayaks. We recommend developing a shallow launch point for such activities. In addition, we recommend pursuing options like water trampolines and/or Tarzan Boats. These activities do not have to be offered at all times, but could be special events during the peak summer months or summer concert events.





RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

SHORT TERM:

- Create online portal and design a website that is directly linked to the tourism website, Chamber of Commerce's tourism page, and the Parks & Recreation Pyne Road Park Page.
- Hire a part time marketing coordinator to advertise amenities at West Point Lake

MEDIUM TERM:

- Develop experiential lodging via yurts (Georgia State Parks, 2017)
- Add new recreational activities to site amenities

LONG TERM:

- Host Bass Masters tournament
- Host wakeboarding tournament
- Advertise and market 4th of July entertainment and family fun
- Develop unique festivals to utilize park activities

TIMELINE

This recommendation as well as its implementation is almost completely dependent upon successful passing of the next SPLOST vote. With the vote convening in November 2017, the next allocation of SPLOST funding will not take effect until 2019. However, the County will enter budget sessions summer 2017 and summer 2018 in June of both years. We recommend that both the online portal as well as the hiring of a part-time marketing and communication contact be an immediate action step. We recommend the budget be redistributed with the onset of SPLOST funding to accommodate another employee as soon as next fiscal year. If SPLOST passes this fall, we recommend that the online portal be one of the first funding priorities in that distribution.

BUDGET

Yurts (6)	\$210,000
Campsite Amenities	\$50,000
Water Trampoline	\$6,000
Shallow launch pad	\$15,000
Advertising	\$60,000
Part-Time Marketing/Communications Employee	\$25,000
Total Budget	\$366,000

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

SPLOST: The community will have the opportunity to allocate funds towards the redevelopment of this area in the next SPLOST vote in 2017.

The North Face Explore Fund: The North Face Explore Fund provides \$500,000 annually in grants to nonprofit organizations working in powerful and creative ways to encourage participants to experience outdoor activities and develop an enduring appreciation of the outdoors. Grant applications open each spring.

We realize that funding sources for outdoor recreation not involving trail development are scarce and generally funded through either Hotel Motel Tax or SPLOST funds.

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/RESOURCES

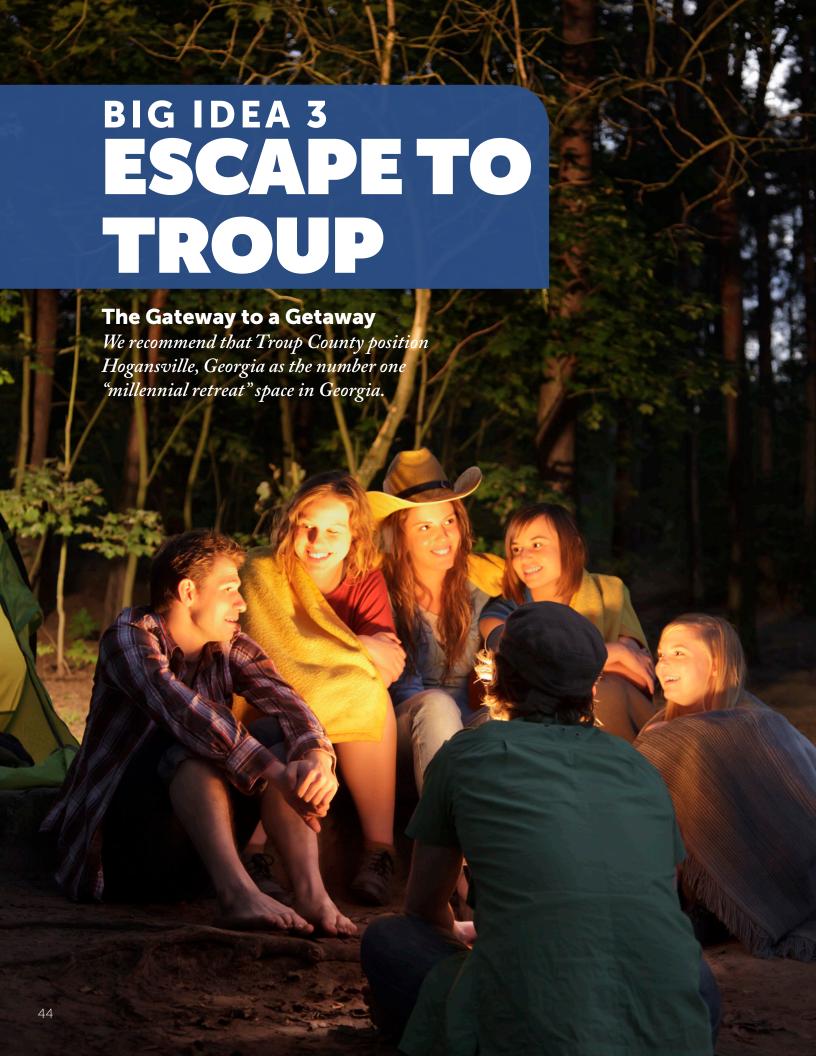
We will look to Parks and Recreation, LaGrange city leadership, Troup County leadership, and private partnerships such as the Callaway Foundation for continued support of this project.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The impact of this project could be immeasurable, especially for generating new tourism and improving quality of life for existing residents. The area at Pyne Road Park has been vastly underutilized in the past years, but remains a hidden gem in Troup County with a lot of potential. With Parks and Recreation's hopeful addition of the new "Celebration Center," it is imperative that Pyne Road Park's existing reservation system be utilized, its online presence capitalized on, and its grounds improved and showcased. Revenue generated from these efforts could eventually provide for an expanded staff to include a full-time marketing and communications coordinator as well as a reservations and hospitality manager. Better accessibility and new activities provided at Pyne Road Park would continue to instill unity in the Troup County community as well as attract younger travelers to the area.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

We anticipate measures of success to include occupancy and facility rental increases as well as increased awareness of the facility. We can measure these tangibly as return on investment with increases in reservations and with surveys measuring awareness prior to, during, and after implementation of the project.





Downtown Hogansville

DESCRIPTION

Less than an hour from Atlanta and Auburn, Hogansville is the perfect escape from the big city (NuMundo, 2017). Specifically, we suggest utilizing the Lake Jimmy Jackson recreation area that is currently pre-development, to host an all-inclusive young-to-middle-aged adult lake and forest retreat center. Millennial Minds has already reached out to a few adults-only camp providers, and many vendors have expressed interest in working with Hogansville to bring a programmed schedule of retreats to the area.

Over the past decade, Hogansville, like so many communities across the nation, has suffered from the downturn in the national economy and housing market. Throughout this period, the Hogansville City Council, in cooperation with the Troup County Chamber of Commerce, Hogansville Development Authority, and the Hogansville Downtown Development Authority, has worked diligently to attract new business and industry and to sustain and support existing businesses, while ensuring a safe and healthy community. Hogansville is a city of great opportunity. With the advent of a new "millennial retreat", millennial tourism could be a game changer for Hogansville and Troup.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

The scope of the proposed initiative is to create a nontraditional retreat atmosphere that boasts incredible scenery and great relaxation as the go-to destination for millennial vacations in Georgia.











All-Inclusive Resort

We recommend recruiting a millennial-focused retreat company, such as Camp Bonfire or Camp No Counselor, to facilitate a camp experience in Hogansville. Preliminary conversations have been had with both camps and there is interest in franchising to Georgia.

Amenities may include:

- Resort package including all you can eat and drink
- Outdoor Jacuzzi and soaking hot tubs included
- Yoga retreat including restorative yoga and meditation in a stunning landscape to create inner peace
- Spa treatments for rejuvenating experiences for the mind, body, and soul
- Delicious and healthy dining surrounded by beautiful and relaxing scenery
- Beautiful serene lodging the gateway to your getaway

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

Short Term:

- Internally create or hire a consultant to compile an effective business recruitment plan for a third party facilitator
- Identify land at Lake Jimmy Jackson available
- Contact Camp No Counselor and Camp Bonfire to initiate due diligence about a Hogansville location

Medium Term:

- Contact potential investors
- Recruit vendors and developers for hotel/lodge, restaurants, yoga, and sparetreatment

Long-Term:

 Continue with a strong community base by continuing to establish a close knit community by partnering with local festivals, Downtown Development Authority (DDP), and local government which will further develop the economy of Hogansville

BUDGET

Total Budget	\$250,000
Estimated Land Cost	\$250,000* Land cost dependent on

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

We recommend the Hogansville City Council, in cooperation with the Troup County Chamber of Commerce, Hogansville Development Authority, and the Hogansville Downtown Development Authority identify a sum of acreage available to "gift" or lease at minimal cost when needed for this project.

As this recommendation involves a for profit company, funding will come primarily from the vendor themselves.

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/RESOURCES

We have identified potential partnerships to initiate in the culmination of this project. There are countless other local and statewide vendors who could be incorporated into a mutually beneficial and profitable partnership.

Camp Facilitators – Both Camp Bonfire and Camp No Counselors have expressed interest in expanding their businesses to the southeast. They each are interested in learning more about the potential project.

Camp Bonfire: Ben, Camp Director (610) 220-8550

Email: directors@campbonfire.com

Camp No Counselors: Adam Tichauer, CEO (818) 922-6941 ext. 700

Email: adam@campnocounselors.com

EXPECTED IMPACT

Hogansville would benefit tremendously from a retreat and more millennial growth in their community. For many years, Hogansville, with a few small shops and antique stores, has appealed to an older generation of tourists and residents. There have been some investments recently in the community and it is anticipated that a retreat of this type would add to the appeal of investing in Hogansville.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

A measurement of success for this recommendation is based on the development of a retreat and the number of reservations booked.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Millennial Minds would like to thank the entire Troup County community for extending their gracious hospitality to us. We would especially like to thank the following local leaders for their enormous support, feedback, and insights:

- MS. KAREN BRIGGS Executive Director of LaGrange Art Museum
- **MR. BOBBY CARMICHAEL** Executive Director of Downtown LaGrange Development Authority
- MS. LAUREN CLARK Director of Marketing and Communications at Hills & Dales
- MS. BECCA EILAND Director of Sweetland Amphitheatre
- MS. PAGE ESTES President of Troup County Chamber
- MR. ROB GOLDSTEIN Co-Founder at Wild Leap Brewery
- MR. CAJEN HEAD Director of Troup County Parks and Rec
- MS. LAURA JENNINGS Development Director at Biblical History Center
- MR. DERRICK LEWIS Director at Biblical History Center
- MR. DAVE MARLER VP of Marketing and Tourism
- MR. ANTHONY RODRIGUEZ Co-Founder at Wild Leap Brewery
- MR. BILL STANKIEWICZ Mayor of Hogansville
- MR. JIM THORNTON Mayor of LaGrange
- MR. KEITH VERNIS General Manager at Great Wolf Lodge
- MR. CARLETON WOOD Executive Director at Hills & Dales

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SECTION 3

With great industry

partners and proximity to

excellent engineering schools,

how can Troup County

become a center for advanced

manufacturing and

innovative technologies?

thinc TANK

THE TEAM

thINC TANK

CASEY BETHEL

GA DOE & Douglas County School System Douglasville, Douglas County

QUAY BODDIE

Troup County School System LaGrange, Troup County

WESLEY BROWN

Central Atlanta Progress Atlanta, Fulton County

JANA BYRD

Macon-Bibb County
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Georgia Department of Economic Development Atlanta, Fulton County

LORA HAWK

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Stone Mountain, Dekalb County

JESSICA HOOD

Development Authority of Burke County Burke County

SHONDRAE KNIGHT

TNT Academy

Austell, Cobb County

TRAE LONG

LaGrange, Troup County Gay & Joseph, CPA, PC

KRISTEN MILLER

University of Georgia Archway Partnership Jackson, Butts County

MARION PHILLIPS

Georgia Power Community Economic Development *Atlanta, Fulton County*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Home to nearly fifty major industrial employers, a thriving college and career academy, multiple post-secondary education institutions, and the spirit of continuous improvement in the community, Troup County is well-positioned to emerge as a geographic center for advanced manufacturing and innovative technologies in West Georgia. Preliminary meetings with local elected officials, leaders from the business community, as well as representatives of academia, revealed a vast collection of accomplishments and a history of collaborative efforts that speak volumes to the hard work and dedication that these groups have exhibited over the past few decades. Troup County is not content with the status quo.

Each organization or industry sector in Troup County appears to have a clear vision for the community and understands their unique role in striving toward this common goal. The success of these efforts is outwardly evident as the community awaits significant growth in industrial, tourism, and residential markets, as Sentury Tire, Great Wolf Lodge, and several multifamily housing developments have announced plans in Troup County and are currently in various stages of development. Community leaders have already begun laying the groundwork for support services and programs for these new developments through the chambers of commerce, K-12 school systems, post-secondary education institutions, and municipal partners.

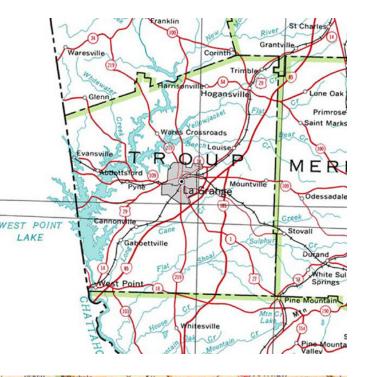
Positive momentum and economic growth seem to be a long-term trend in Troup County, one in which it appears the local workforce has struggled to maintain. Empirical and data-driven evidence suggests that a majority of the higher-skill advanced manufacturing jobs, as well as innovative research and development positions, are held by workers that do not reside in Troup County (OnTheMap, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2014). Interviews with local employers and business leaders indicate that workers in these positions are inclined to live in areas with a wider variety of housing, retail, and educational options. While the community has a firm grasp on economic, community, and workforce development, the attraction and retention of talent appear to be a concern that may prohibit Troup County from establishing itself as a center for advanced manufacturing and innovation.

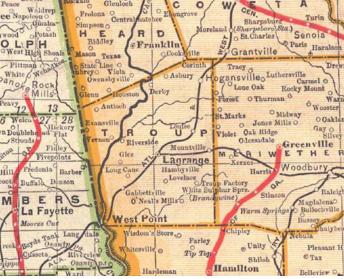




Talent attraction and retention is a vast and continuous process, with each approach often being as unique as the community it serves. The following recommendations are meant to serve as a starting point to address the strain on the current technical labor force, as well as to create, attract, and retain a highly technical and innovative workforce long term and in turn, establish Troup County as west Georgia's advanced manufacturing and innovation hub.

While these recommendations are not meant to be comprehensive, they do address talent creation and cultivation, talent attraction, and talent retention across a spectrum of age groups for higher-skill industrial careers. Implementing these programs should spark an interest in advanced manufacturing and innovation in school-aged children, promote and substantiate careers in these fields among high school students and teachers, and create an environment where young professionals in these fields can congregate among peers while still immersing themselves in the community.





INTRODUCTION

Named for George Troup, Georgia's thirty-fourth Governor and a twice United States Senator, Troup County has thrived through the agriculturally-based boom of the textile business and now sits poised on the precipice of Georgia's next big innovation in advanced manufacturing. Its county seat named after the French estate of General LaFayette, the City of LaGrange was destined from the start to beckon to shores farther than its red hills, once a part of the Creek nation. A community with deep Georgia roots wherein international businesses such as KIA, Sentury Tire, and Jindal have established their corporate campuses, Troup County continues to be the location in West Georgia that spans the divide between today and what business rests on the brink of tomorrow. This forward-thinking mindset coupled with the welcoming of international commerce perpetuates why famed Southern bridge architect Horace King chose this area as his home. Troup County has long been a place for business, great minds, and hospitality. This tradition, combined with the below ideas will translate to a legacy of welcoming and retention of commerce and community.

In the course of our initial analysis of the county, many essential professional stakeholders of the area shaped the discussion and offered feedback to mold this presentation. From panel discussions and tours from educational leaders, interviews with corporate stakeholders, and conferences with economic development consultants, all were aware of the need for growing and retaining young talent.

The proposal offered below is foundational, in which the total is greater than merely the addition of the constituent parts. Each idea links the keystone transitional moments in a student's journey, spanning age groups, creating a functional pipeline into the educational and career path of residents within the county. Each theory builds one on top of the other in the timeline and budget. Our aspiration, in accordance with Troup County's legacy, is to build yet another bridge between the challenge and solution, current climate and future horizon, and to create a community here that learns, labors, lives, and lets loose together.





DESCRIPTION

Through discussions with education leaders in Troup County, we identified a gap in the STEM-focused and workforce-based education. Industry internships and apprenticeships are available at the high school level, but that can often be too late for some students. An article on the subject of school dropouts in *The Atlantic* sites "ninth grade as the year that determines whether a young person will move on or drop out of school," (Willens, 2013). Therefore, it is important to introduce manufacturing and STEM careers in middle school rather than waiting until high school. By having students participate in Georgia Tech's InVenture Challenge in middle school, they will be exposed to STEM and innovation in a fun and creative group setting. Finalists will even have the opportunity to compete on a state level.

Additionally, as of spring 2017, the Georgia Institute of Technology is in the process of applying for a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant, the Promoting Rural Access



to Invention and Student Entrepreneurship (PRAISE) grant. The PRAISE project, a collaboration between Georgia Tech and Boise State University, seeks to increase the number of K-12 students from low-income rural and small town communities who have access to and actively participate in programs that promote invention, design, and entrepreneurship (IDE), with the long-term goal of increasing the percentage of these students who choose to pursue high quality, STEM-related careers. If Georgia Tech receives funding for the PRAISE project, Troup County would be an excellent pilot community to host to competition. Troup is classified as a rural county but has thriving cities and booming industry. We also believe opportunities will be available for industries to sponsor and mentor teams participating in the PRAISE project.



SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Since the K-12 InVenture Challenge is an established program with established guidelines and ample supporting materials, there will be few external hurdles to integrating the contest into the middle school curriculum in Troup County. The program will require one or two teachers attend the program's one-day workshop in the summer at Georgia Tech to learn how to facilitate the program. See Appendix A for Sample Project Requirements and Appendix B for a Sample Timeline.

Additionally, with the support of the superintendent and other local education leaders, Troup County will have a respectable chance at hosting the PRAISE project competition, considering no other counties have shown interest at this time.

ACTION STEPS AND TIMELINE

SHORT TERM

- The Troup County superintendent should send a letter of intent to the organizers of Georgia Tech's K-12 InVenture Prize to express interest in being selected as a pilot community participant in the PRAISE grant.
- The Troup County superintendent should identify interested teacher(s) and send them to Georgia Tech for the InVenture workshop in June or August.

MEDIUM TERM

- The Troup County superintendent should have these teachers build the InVenture contest into the curriculum or as an after-school program.
- The Troup County superintendent should hold the first Troup County K-12 InVenture contest.
- If Georgia Tech receives the PRAISE grant, the Troup County superintendent should work with the organizers of the K-12 InVenture Prize to have Troup County as one of the host communities.

LONG TERM

 The Troup County superintendent should evaluate the program and replicate at middle schools across Troup County.



BUDGET

Travel for one teacher to Atlanta for the one day workshop in the summer: \$100

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- LaGrange Chamber of Commerce
- Troup County School System

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/ RESOURCES

- Dr. Roxanne Moore, Director, K-12
- Troup County School System
- Troup County Superintendent
- Local industries if they are interested in sponsoring a team

EXPECTED IMPACT

Georgia Tech's K-12 InVenture Challenge can engage a younger demographic in innovation, manufacturing, and a STEM career. This program not only will encourage an interest in STEM but could also prevent students from dropping out of school completely. An article from the Center for Public Education sites that researchers in Philadelphia, "have discovered that they can identify about 50 percent of that city's eventual dropouts as early as sixth grade and a full 80 percent of eventual dropouts by ninth grade," (Jerald, 2007). Interestingly, another study cited in the article found that engagement and an interest in the material also played a role in dropout rates (Jerald, 2007). Students were making decent grades, but they were bored and disengaged. The InVenture Challenge will be designed to bring real life application and creativity into the classroom by identifying a problem and developing a solution. This program has the potential to keep students engaged and on a path that could lead not only to graduation but also a successful career.

Additionally, the manufacturing industry is battling a stigma problem. People assume manufacturing facilities are dirty and dangerous as they were in the 20th century. Manufacturing is associated with low-paying, repetitive work for uneducated individuals who will be stuck in the plant for the duration of their career. These assumptions

are not only coming from students but also from parents. An article in *IndustryWeek* states that, "nearly every survey ever conducted on parents' views of manufacturing as a career choice confirms that the old 'dirty, dumb and dangerous' stigma endures," (Panchak, 2016). However, those familiar with modern day manufacturing know these assumptions are far from the truth. A writer from *The Fabricator*, the publication of the Fabricators & Manufacturers Association, describes this scene perfectly, "The more progressive plants I visit, the less I see workers as 'laborers' performing repetitive, menial tasks. Instead, I see them as operators and technicians who handle a variety of tasks and have a comfortable middle-class life, more comfortable than many who have less marketable fouryear degrees," (Heston, 2014). For a county like Troup that has a strong, blossoming manufacturing industry, including the state's only automotive plant, reducing this manufacturing stigma will be vital to establishing the county as a center for advanced manufacturing and innovation technologies. Georgia Tech's InVenture Challenge will have the ability to do just that. Through the program, students will build a project and work with their hands. They can find that there are real career opportunities for them in the manufacturing facilities in their backyard that students may never have considered otherwise.



MEASURE OF SUCCESS

- Success will be defined as having at least one school in Troup County participate in the K-12 InVenture Challenge in 2018. Ideally, this would grow to every middle school across the county over the new few years.
- If Georgia Tech receives the PRAISE grant, success would be having Troup County selected to be a pilot community.
- Success will be defined as having an increase in students from Troup County choosing advanced manufacturing as a career option.
- Success will be defined as having an increase in emphasis on advanced manufacturing as a viable career by middle school teachers.
- Success will be defined as having an increase in awareness of manufacturing opportunities among middle school students.
- Success will be defined as having excitement for innovation among middle school students.
- Success will be defined as having a decrease in dropout rate due to view of possible career.



CHALLENGE

Month	Activities
August	 School will start. Discovering your Design Challenge – Students will select their engineering design problem area. All lesson plans available at http://inventurechallenge.gatech.edu/lesson-plans/
September	 Empathize Lesson – Students will practice identifying users and their authentic needs. Define Lesson – Students will develop their concise engineering design problem statements targeting user needs. Ideate Lesson – Students will brainstorm possible solutions.
October	 Prototype Lesson – Students will evaluate designs and will begin construction. Test Lesson – Students will collect data to determine how well the prototypes will meet the original engineering design problem.
November	• Prototype and Test – instruction will continue as needed.
December	 Pitch Day – Georgia Tech faculty and students will listen to student pitches and will critique project ideas and initial prototypes. Students will submit drafts of papers and abstracts to teachers. Capstone Expo – Students will be invited to attend Capstone Expo at Georgia Tech and will vote in the People's Choice Award (students are only observers and will not bring their work.)
January	 Iterative design process will continue (student driven, outside of classroom.) Provisional Patent Discussion and Prepare Submissions. Launch Lesson – Students will practice pitching their projects by creating 30- second videos and presenting a 5-minute talk on their design process and final product.
February	 Students will compete for InVenture exhibit space (at their schools.) Teachers will submit student names, titles, and abstracts of top projects by February 15th.
March 16 th	 InVenture Prize Day Top projects from each school will compete in finals. Challenge participants will be invited to be in audience & to attend student reception (based on space available.) Top project (s) will be highlighted (possibly on air) & will receive technology/entrepreneurship prize.
April & May	 Teacher feedback on lessons will be due. Begin planning for 2018 Challenge. Revised lessons will be posted for Year Six schools to use.



INVENTURE CHALLENGE PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

(2016-2017 Academic Year)

How do schools select finalists?

Each school should use the InVenture Challenge rubrics to select their top projects for the finals. The number of finalist spots for each school will be finalized by January 1 based on the number of schools who commit to sending projects. Each project should have no more than 3 team members!

What are the required components of an InVenture Challenge Finalist project?

Teachers should submit the following electronically by February 15, 2017

- Title
- 200-word abstract

Students should bring with them to InVenture Challenge Finals on March 15th

- Required Elements
- Backboard or Poster display to explain the product and design process
- Trifold board should be encouraged, but display should not exceed the following dimensions
- Depth (front to back): 30 inches
- Width (side to side): 48 inches
- Height (floor to top): 108 inches
- Optional Elements
- Physical prototypes (may not be possible for all projects)
- Engineering Design Paper or Provisional Patent Application
- Engineering Design Notebook or Log

How are InVenture Challenge finalists judged?

 Volunteer Georgia Tech judges will use Georgia Tech's High School InVenture Challenge rubric to select top projects.







DESCRIPTION

Gear Up is a plan to initiate an aggressive program that combines apprenticeships for high school students with summer internships for teachers that will aim at promoting advanced manufacturing as a viable career option.

Each of the industry partners will take on three high school seniors for one semester. These may be students who qualify for work-based learning (WBL), so it can be coordinated through the WBL coordinator in the local schools. Each student, or team of three, will be partnered with a practicing professional in the plants to serve as a guide and mentor. Students can participate in a myriad of activities while on site, including job shadowing or another authentic but lower level, safe activity. The industry mentor will have the ability to integrate work-based, soft-skills such as punctuality, effective communication and problem-solving into their interaction with the students. Successful completion of the program will earn each student a \$1,000 grant to study engineering or manufacturing at a technical college or fouryear college or university.

Additionally, each industry partner will take on one teacher for an intensive five week internship experience. Teachers will be embedded in daily plant operations with the goal of identifying opportunities to bring their experiences back the classrooms. Upon completion, each teacher will be required to submit two items: a new or improved lesson plan that incorporates an aspect of their summer experience and a shorter, minilesson where they will promote engineering or advanced manufacturing as a viable career option for their students. Successful completion of the program will earn each teacher a grant of \$2,000.

Auburn University and the Georgia Institute of Technology will help to coordinate a field trip at the end of each summer, where students and teachers will be able to tour the research and academic settings on each campus.





SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

LaGrange students rarely choose engineering or manufacturing as a career path. This mirrors state-wide and national trends. During the 2014-2015 school year, only 1,617 high school students in Georgia were enrolled in the manufacturing pathway compared to 66,269 in business management. In fact, state-wide enrollment in manufacturing ranks 15th out of 16 possible pathways offered through the Career Technical Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs in local schools. One potential reason is that students are largely unfamiliar with engineering and manufacturing and lack exposure to practicing professionals in these careers. Additionally, many students may not have the confidence to pursue these options. With a window to observe the day to day activities of engineering and manufacturing professionals, it is likely that students will become more excited about these professions. Likewise, exposure may dispel misconceptions and engender the confidence to pursue these majors. Familiarity will breed confidence.

Troup County is in a favorable position to overcome this obstacle. The thINC (Career) Academy has already identified and attracted industry partners who invest and support

career and STEM education financially and through their volunteering. The program recommended here would be a natural next step for thINC students.



ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT-TERM

- Industry partners willing to participate should be identified, starting with current partners and pitching this as the next stage then moving to new potential partners
- A county-wide coordinator should be identified for the program.

MEDIUM-TERM

- Funds for student grants and teacher stipends should be assembled.
- Marketing information, flyers, and other collateral should be created.
- The application and selection criteria and materials should be created.
- Criteria for the two teacher submissions at the end of the program should be identified.

LONG-TERM

- Year-end field trip to Auburn and Georgia Tech should be planned.
- Effectiveness measures and a means to evaluate the program should be identified and formulated.

BUDGET

- \$30,000 per year for 3 students at 10 industry partners (costing \$1,000 each)
- \$20,000 per year for 1 teacher at 10 industry partners (costing \$2,000 each)
- \$5,000-\$10,000 for marketing material such as brochures and ads
- \$5,000-\$10,000 for application and selection material
- \$1,500 per year for the college field trips

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Troup County School System
- Governor's Office of Student Achievement Innovation Grant
- National Science Foundation Grant
- Local grants (Georgia Tech, Auburn, or other)
- Donations from industry partners

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/ RESOURCES

- Troup County School System
- thINC Academy Board of Advisors
- Auburn University CEOE (Center for Educational Outreach & Engagement)
- Auburn Engineering Outreach Office
- West Georgia Technical College
- Georgia Institute of Technology CEISMC (Center for Education Integrating Science, Math & Computing)
- LaGrange College
- American Council of Engineering Companies of Georgia (ACEC Georgia)
- Georgia Society of Professional Engineers (GSPE)
- Callaway Foundation

INDUSTRY PARTNERS

- Duracell
- Jindal
- Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia
- Mobis
- Interface
- Sewon
- Georgia Power
- Electric Cities of Georgia
- Caterpillar
- Mountville Mills
- Milliken

EXPECTED IMPACT

This program has real potential to help alleviate the stigma against advanced manufacturing by allowing both students and teachers to see what work is actually like in a manufacturing facility. A real apprenticeship program like this one will train students for an actual job so that when they graduate, they will be prepared to enter the workforce directly. They will have marketable skills they would not have had otherwise. This program will also create a homegrown workforce to support the local industries.

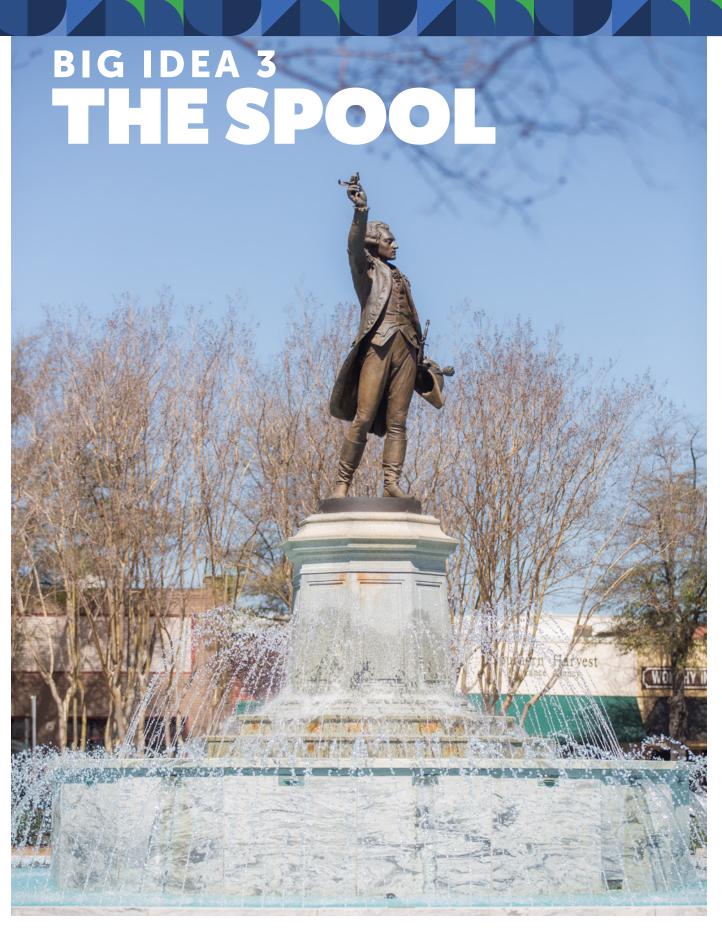
Additionally, this program will support teachers to articulate the benefits of advanced manufacturing. With the knowledge they will have gained through their summer internship, teachers will be able to identify students who would be candidates for a career in manufacturing. Not all students need to attend a four-year college, and if teachers can explain what it is like to work in a manufacturing facility, students will be more inclined to pursue manufacturing. The stigma against manufacturing will be lifted.





MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Success would be defined as having both the apprenticeship and teacher internship program up and running with at least 1 industry partner in the next two years. In five years, success would be defined as 3 industries participating. On the most conservative end, even if this program generates 3 additional engineers who return per year (out of 30), then 10 years from now that will mean 18 engineers will have been retained.
- Success would be defined as an increase in students from Troup County choosing advanced manufacturing
 as a career option.
- Success would be defined as an increase in emphasis on advanced manufacturing as a viable career by high school teachers.
- Success would be defined as an increase in awareness of manufacturing opportunities among high school students.
- Success would be defined as a decrease in the dropout rate due to view of possible future career.
- Success would be defined as an increase in interaction between teachers/students and industry.
- Success would be defined as excitement for advanced manufacturing as a career.



DESCRIPTION

The Spool will be Troup County's pilot innovation community. With a business incubator / shared space named the thINCubator as its core, it will have loft apartment housing geared toward millennial talent and mixed use retail, restaurant, and shared space to foster a collaborative community environment that will attract the young professionals, especially engineers and creators, who will make up a part of Troup County's advanced manufacturing workforce. The concept is centered around a business incubator / shared space model that is geared toward attracting high-tech and advanced manufacturing companies.

Businesses located in the thINCubator that meet the targeted industry requirements will receive subsidized rents to help offset the cost of startup. After a predetermined period, these companies must either begin paying market rates for the use of the thINCubator, or vacate the space to make room for other companies in need of accelerator services.

Preference for loft apartments should be given to those professionals who are employed in the advanced manufacturing sector in Troup County. These loft apartments will be reasonably priced to take into consideration the salary of the aforementioned professions.

The street-level spaces of The Spool will be reserved for shops or restaurants that create an environment for networking and idea sharing. A locally-owned coffee shop or pub with open seating, free Wi-Fi, and regularly scheduled social events would be ideal.

The Spool will be a place for young, enterprising professionals to truly live, work, play and create!

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

LIVE (Penthouse)

The group found there to be a shortage of "millennial" housing in greater Troup County, making the goal of attracting and retaining new talent in the community very difficult from a fundamental standpoint. In addition to the lack of housing options for young professionals, the group felt that improving upon retail, restaurant, and entertainment options in the downtown districts would help create a draw for this demographic, as well as opportunity for mixed-use growth. The group observed a relatively vibrant downtown in LaGrange, with a good mix of commercial and retail uses, as well as an up and coming downtown district in West Point. It was brought to the group's attention that there is very little loft apartment space in the downtown district, leading to a "lights out" effect at a certain time in the evening as well as a failure to take advantage of residential opportunities above many businesses in this district.



The lofts at The Spool will be designed provide a reasonably priced option for young professionals interested in living in close proximity to their advanced manufacturing employers. A significant number of industrial employees who work in Troup County choose to live in neighboring counties. Empirical research implicates that this is due to more restaurant, retail, affordable housing, and recreational opportunities. With a design similar to the Ponce City Market in Atlanta or City Market in Savannah, The Spool will create a millennial-friendly locale within walking distance to other downtown amenities. While the exterior of the building will be in keeping with the historic look of downtown mainstreets, the interior will be designed to have a more modern, industrial, and inspiring feel. The lofts will also be an ideal place for co-op students working at the local industries to live. If the co-ops live in a development together and are given the opportunity to interact with co-ops working with other industrial employers, they will build a community of students. This will help them to become better acquainted with the LaGrange-Troup County community so that they will be more likely to choose to live and work in Troup County after graduation.

WORK (Middle Floors)

A business incubator is defined as a facility for the maintenance of controlled conditions to assist in the cultivation of new companies. An incubator is a multi-tenant facility providing affordable space and an environment that promotes the growth of small companies. Incubators provide an inexpensive physical environment to startups in formerly old or vacant buildings. A range of services can assist the small company, including shared support services with the availability of secretarial help, a receptionist, and access to copiers and professional services such as business planning and legal, accounting, and marketing support. Access to working capital can also be arranged through provision of debt financing and equity financing, government grant/loan assistance, and connection to a financial network of angels, bankers, and venture capitalists.



There are two common types of business incubators, for profit venture-capital incubators and nonprofit incubators. The group recommends structuring the incubator as a nonprofit 501(c)(3). This would allow the incubator access to both government and private foundation funding as well as to donations from private citizens in Troup County interested in investing in the advancement and growth of this project. Without a profit motive, the incubator will be better able to objectively serve its clients, since there will be no shareholders looking to benefit financially from the operations.

There will also be a shared, open-design workspace designated for the co-op students. This will allow them more opportunity to interact and work with each other on project ideas. This will further allow the co-op students to build a community to keep them continually engaged. Their shared space can function both as a work space and as a meetup location for any community events in which they would like to participate. It will act as their hub.







PLAY AND CREATE (Ground Level)

Creative and inspired thinking is often generated and nurtured in environments that are laid back and low pressure. The ground level of The Spool takes the notion that the best deals are created on a bar napkin, and provides a comfortable space for those interactions to take place. A coffee shop (and) or pub would generate additional rent revenue to cover capital and operating costs of the facility, as well as provide a "meetup" for young, enterprising minds. While generating a steady revenue stream for the facility, these businesses should also provide conversational seating areas where patrons (and residents) can sit and discuss business matters, innovative ideas, or the latest local gossip.

Ideally, these businesses would also host regular events like live music or trivia to further enrich the community feel of the downtown districts, and provide additional opportunities for millennials to get to know one another, and the community. If the property allows, an outdoor space in these businesses would be optimal.



RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS AND TIMELINE

SHORT TERM (4-6 months)

- A core group of community stakeholders should be identified to decide market niche, recruitment strategy, and breadth of incubator services. This group may also consider consulting with other similar concepts that have a few years of operational experience. (The Clubhou.se Augusta or Thinc Savannah are good options)
- Additionally, real estate options (preferably existing buildings) in or near the LaGrange or West Point downtown districts should be identified.
- A contractor should be engaged to help estimate renovation / construction costs for each individual "Spool".

MID TERM (12 months)

- Using information gathered during short-term planning, determine cost of operation for facility, as well as market tolerance for lease rates (residential and commercial).
- Hire incubator manager and staff
- Property acquisition and rehabilitation.

LONG TERM (Ongoing)

- During the construction process, a steering committee should begin identifying small
 businesses and entrepreneurs that may be interested in taking advantage of the services and
 amenities offered at The Spool.
- Request proposals and applications from interested tenants
- Steering committee should also assist in oversight of tenants, cash flows, and building maintenance over time.
- Consider additional property acquisition to expand the physical footprint of The Spool (other buildings in downtown district or other cities in Troup County).

BUDGET

- \$500,000 to renovate donated building for the construction of the business incubator
- \$75,000 to \$100,000 in initial years the operating budget of the business incubator
- Annual estimated revenue from rents would be \$60,000 (10 offices at full rent of \$550 per month) to offset operating costs
- \$660,000 (\$100 per square foot) to build out remaining spaces

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Private funding through public-private partnerships with a developer.
- Government Grants Troup County is an eligible area for USDA rural development grants as well as grants from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for new business development.
- Business tax districts
- Rent/lease revenues

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS/ RESOURCES

- City of LaGrange
- City of West Point
- LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce
- Troup County
- Industries in Troup County
- Private development firms
- Partners of The Clubhou.se or ThincSavannah

EXPECTED IMPACT

This project is meant to create a culture of innovation in Troup County by attracting young talent and entrepreneurs with a technological mindset to start and grow their businesses in Troup County. This project will also help to increase the percentage of engineers who live and work in Troup County, rather than working in Troup County but living in a neighboring county. The Spool will be a hub of innovation and creativity that can attract a new young professional demographic.

In addition, this project will be a catalyst for additional development in the downtown districts, which improve the quality of life by creating a unique community center with a variety of locally owned restaurants, retail stores, and art spaces. This district should be a draw for both residents and tourists.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Success will be defined as construction of a business incubator and surrounding mixed use space.
- Success will be defined as recruitment of first business to incubator.
- Success will be defined as residential and commercial tenants moving into the Spool.
- Success will be defined as the "graduation" of first business from the incubator.
- Success will be defined as an increased percentage of employees at industries choosing to live in Troup County.
- Success will be defined as excitement for innovation in Troup County.
- Success will be defined as growth of new local businesses to support industry.
- Success will be defined as self-support revenue stream for The Spool.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the community leaders of LaGrange and Troup County who have helped us through this process and have provided feedback and guidance. We could not have completed this program and report without your support. We appreciate your willingness to give your time and help, so that we were able to understand how our ideas can become a part of LaGrange and Troup County.

ROBBY BURCH – Interface

SPEER BURDETTE – Callaway Foundation

DR. KATHY CARLISLE – thINC College and Career Academy

BOBBY CARMICHAEL – Downtown LaGrange Development Authority

MIKE CRIDDLE - City of LaGrange

STUART COUNTESS – Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia

CYNTHIA CULBREATH – Duracell

TONY DELISI – Avalanche Consulting

KEVIN DONOVAN – Jindal Films

MEGHAN DUKE – City of West Point Development Authority

PAGE ESTES – LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce

CORINNE HODGES – Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia

DR. PENNY JOHNSON – Troup County School System

SCOTT MALONE – LaGrange Development Authority

DAVE MARLER – LaGrange-Troup County Chamber of Commerce

DR. ROXANNE MOORE – Georgia Tech K-12 InVenture Challenge

LEIGH NEWMAN – West Georgia Technical College

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JOE SUMNER – thINC College and Career Academy

KATHY TILLEY – Troup County Center for Strategic Planning

DR. CHRIS WILLIAMS – thINC College and Career Academy

RENAE WILLIS – LaGrange Troup County Chamber of Commerce

DEREK WOODHAM – Georgia Tech Manufacturing Extension Partnership

We would also like to thank our employers for allowing us the time to participate in the Young Gamechangers program.

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SECTION 4

With "The Ray" as a
catalyst for conversation
regarding environmental
sustainability, how can
Troup County become the
greenest community in
America?

RENEW TROUP

THE TEAM

RENEW TROUP

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The question posed to the Renew Troup Team of the Young Gamechangers program is built around the foundation of The Ray, an eighteen-mile corridor running from the Georgia Welcome Center in southern Troup County to LaGrange. This corridor is looking for ways to trial and tests new technologies that will carry forward Ray C. Anderson's vision of a sustainable future. Specifically, our question was, "With 'The Ray' as a catalyst for conversation regarding environmental sustainability, how can Troup County become the greenest community in America?"

Our group was charged to learn about sustainability, learn about the sustainable efforts in Troup County and to develop the "Big Ideas" that would carry the vision forward in the community.

Through research in sustainability and sustainability practices, through conversations with local government/public, business and nonprofit leaders as well as interviews with residents, we discovered varying views and understandings on what it means to be sustainable, of what communities around the globe are doing to be more sustainable, of benchmark communities, and of the impact The Ray was or was not having in the community. We also gained a better understanding of the challenges sustainable concepts face in being adopted and accepted by the greater general community.

These conversations coalesced into the formation of our three "Big Ideas":

- **1. The Generator** Sustainability, demonstrated
- **2. WattWalks** The next step in solar roadway integration
- **3. The Needle** Weaving sustainability through the fabric of the community

Ray Anderson knew that the only way he could convince corporations to incorporate sustainable practices into their operations was to show them what he knew to be a fact. His company, Interface Inc., became more profitable after becoming sustainable. We believe our three "Big Ideas" encapsulate the challenge Ray espoused, to "become the greenest community in America" the implementers of these ideas need to show to the community how sustainability works and what it looks like first before the community can be expected to adopt sustainable practices themselves.



Signage designating Ray C. Anderson Memorial Highway dons Interstate 85 in Troup County



The route of the Ray C. Anderson Memorial Highway

INTRODUCTION

Ray C. Anderson was a visionary. He was an industrialist who believed companies made negative impacts on the earth and should right its wrongs before it was too late. He led the charge to convert his company, Interface Flooring, into a sustainable enterprise, focusing on utilizing recycled carpet materials instead of raw nylon, which required large quantities of petroleum. This effort earned

him the title of "Greenest CEO in America" as well as a host of other accolades. He became the *de facto* corporate leader in sustainability and sustainable practices.

Upon his death in 2011, his family created the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, which focused on funding innovative ideas and projects that promote visionary change in society as it relates to sustainability. It also focused on educating the public and business leaders alike in meaningful ways that propel revolutionary, sustainable change, by inspiring a new generation of leaders and consumers to be good stewards of the planet's resources, igniting action that radically impacts the way we live, work and play, and by connecting thinkers, builders, innovators, and idealists to a shared, ethical responsibility to the environment.

So, what exactly is sustainability? How exactly does a community become the greenest or most sustainable community in America"? It is not an easy question to answer.

In the July 2013 issue of the Harvard Business Review¹, author John D. Macomber argues that sustainable cities must focus primarily on three areas: water, electricity and transportation. All other public services depend first on these three services. We believe that LaGrange is well prepared regarding water, what with the availability of West Point Lake, so we have decided to focus on electricity and transportation.

In looking at sustainable electricity, we found many communities are well ahead of LaGrange. In 2015, Los Angeles launched "The Sustainable City pLAn" to bring sustainable planning and practices to the city's design and operation.²



The late Ray C. Anderson, who had a vision for sustainability.

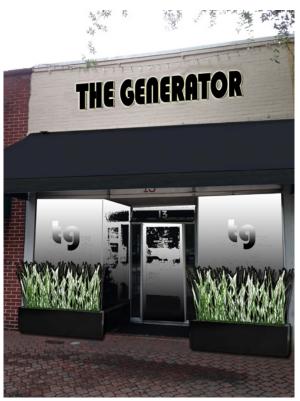
Also in 2015, the 55,000-person college town of Georgetown, Texas's municipal utility unveiled plans to tap wind and solar energy to meet all its customers' power needs, making it the first city-owned utility in the state to abandon fossil fuels, declaring that the deals made to provide green power were cheaper than those which previously utilized primarily fossil fuels.³

Finally, and closer to home, the City of Atlanta has decided to go full solar. In May of 2017, the Atlanta City Council unanimously voted to have all city buildings operating off "Clean energy" by 2025 and the entire City operating off "clean energy" by 2035.

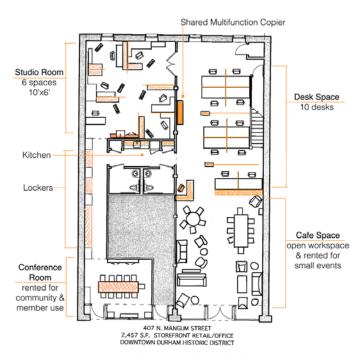
On the concept of transportation, we looked nearby. One of the first projects funded by the Ray C. Anderson Foundation was the creation of The Ray, an organization working toward new ideas and technologies around transportation systems. In partnership with such companies and organizations as KIA Motors, the Georgia Conservancy, Hannah Solar, Georgia Tech and the Georgia Department of Transportation, The Ray is implementing new ideas and technologies to create a regenerative highway ecosystem on an 18-mile stretch of I-85, from the Georgia Welcome Center in West Point, Ga. to LaGrange, Ga. This corridor is implementing ideas such as solar powered vehicle charging stations, climate modeling, tire safety stations, bioswales, road embedded solar panels, solar traffic barriers, solar panels in the highway right-of-way and other environmental ideas. We think it is time to bring some of these ideas into the City.

We believe that our ideas are Big Ideas for LaGrange and Troup County, and better yet, they are ideas the community can implement.





A concept storefront for the downtown LaGrange location of The Generator.



MERCURY STUDIO

A model co-working space floor plan from Mercury Studio in Durham, N.C.

DESCRIPTION

One of the biggest challenges with sustainability in LaGrange that our team discovered during visits to the community was that many in the community were unaware of ways the community could be more sustainable, or even how sustainability was being practiced in the community currently.

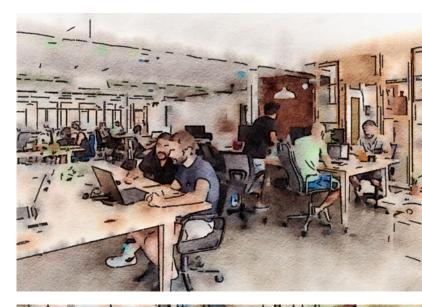
This concept brings about a facility for showcasing new sustainable technologies and practices in a way that is more than a lab or museum, but draws in "regular joes" off the street as a "third place." A place away from home and work where one can feel engaged and developing positively.

Our concept, The Generator, marries a sustainability research and development space with the need for a downtown co-working facility. Many entrepreneurs need a work space away from home. They also need to be able to engage with "co-workers". Green office space located in downtown LaGrange with the goal of serving as an office space that will serve primarily as an incubator for innovative ideas for developing technology around environmental sustainability. Also, the location will serve as an educational center for interactive learning about environmental sustainability.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

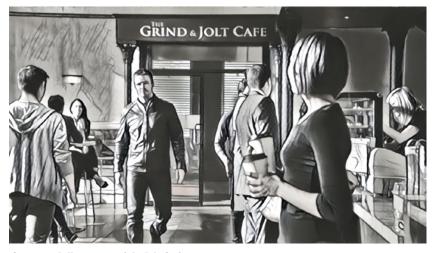
The Generator will be a space that draws a mix of users. Entrepreneurs can purchase memberships to a facility offering work and meeting spaces. There are existing models and franchises for co-working spaces that could be adapted to have a sustainable focus.

The space will also house the LaGrange Sustainability Institute (LSI), a non-profit organization we recommend that the community create, whose mission is to foster development of sustainable technologies in LaGrange, showcasing those technologies and demonstrating their applicability to the public in multiple settings, including home, work, school, travel, shopping and the outdoors. It is our recommendation to establish the organization with the community in mind, as it board and executive director should comprise of businesses, philanthropic communities and residents of Troup County. The facility will also include a space that is open to the public to draw in the community to see sustainability in practice. We believe that the LSI needs to be a community-driven activity, developed in a grassroots style the way the Thread Trail steering committee developed into Friends of the Thread, rather than being a top-down managed endeavor from an existing organization. With the topic of sustainability being a potentially polarizing one, a grassroots organization of seeded friends and neighbors will be seen more favorably than any specific organization with existing missions might be seen.





Conceptual interior illustration of The Generator.



Conceptual illustration of the Jolt Café

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS AND TIMELINE

SHORT TERM:

• Develop Generator Steering committee made up of representatives from the Downtown Development Authority, local businesses, LaGrange College, City and County Government, the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, the Callaway Foundation, and others as interested.

MEDIUM TERM:

- Steering Committee develops a business plan for LaGrange Sustainability Institute.
- Steering Committee finalizes facility mission statement and governing documents.
- Steering Committee identifies potentially available building locations in the downtown area with high visibility and access.

LONG TERM:

- Locate and acquire office space in the downtown corridor of LaGrange.
- Hire Operations Manager
- Steering Committee to accept and approve applications and for incubator businesses

BUDGET

Anticipated costs vary by space size. Office space in downtown LaGrange is approximately \$2,500 to \$5,000 per month or \$30,000 to \$60,000 annually. Design, construction and furnishings are valued at \$50,000. With ecological design features such as LED lights, smart thermostats, high efficiency appliances, utilities are expected to be less than half the average monthly cost for a similar sized space and usage. To drive foot traffic and users into the space, the Generator will need to have a consumer-focused activity present. We propose having a small coffee shop, The Jolt. A small kiosk operation can cost between \$25,000 and \$75,000. Additional costs such as staffing, programming, communications/marketing is estimated at \$50,000 in the first 18 months.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Rents from co-working tenants and small business operation
- Ray C. Anderson Foundation
- Callaway Foundation

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- Downtown Authority
- City of LaGrange
- West GA Tech
- THINC Academy
- Lagrange College

EXPECTED IMPACT

The expected impact of this facility is multi-faceted. It will provide a work space for those often without a standard place of work. That workspace will have all the conveniences of a modern office. It will be built out with a focus on sustainability and as an effort to educate the community on how to be more sustainable in their everyday lives through general walk-ins as well as by hosting symposiums and activities focused on sustainability.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The facility will be deemed a success when new sustainable focused technologies are regularly produced by the LaGrange Sustainability Institute.





Concept of the WattWalks in Downtown LaGrange

DESCRIPTION

In 2016, The Ray C. Anderson Foundation implemented model in-ground solar technology at the Georgia Welcome Center on I-85 in Troup County, a product called "WattWay", which installs directly on the top of paved surfaces and which is designed to hold the weight of traffic driving upon it while producing solar energy. This is only the second time this French product has been installed in the US.

Unfortunately, local Troup Countians are not very aware of this technology's use in their community as they don't regularly visit their own interstate welcome center. For LaGrange and Troup County to become the "Greenest community in America", they must implement sustainable technology. Our idea is to take the model of in-road solar power systems and install it in regularly used public thoroughfares (WattWays) and crosswalks, which we call "WattWalks" - bring the (solar) power to the people! Local citizens will be able to see the product in use first hand and it will place LaGrange and Troup County on the map as the first community to substantially install this technology in a public setting. The energy produced from the WattWays and WattWalks would then be placed into the local electric grid.



Conceptual illustration of a man crossing at a WattWalk.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

The scope of this effort would be to expand this technology's visibility and application throughout Troup County, by seeing it installed along significant corridors and public pedestrian routes throughout the community. Initially, the projects would begin with installations in the crosswalks of the LaGrange town square, as funding is available. As the project progresses, it would include major corridors in LaGrange's downtown, and in time, would include streets and crosswalks in West Point and Hogansville as well.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

- Develop a WattWay committee made up of representatives of local government (public utilities, public works), the downtown development authority, the chamber of commerce, the Ray C. Anderson Foundation, Hannah Solar (installers of the test WattWay project) and Ga DOT, as needed.
- Refine materials and installation costs based on any technology advancements and specific phases of installation.
- Identify appropriate short term and long term crosswalk areas for the WattWalk technology, based on usage and available solar activity.
- Run solar energy production projection models based on WattWalk locations and solar availability.
- Install WattWalk

TIMELINE

SHORT TERM:

- Due to current significant development costs, start with sidewalks and crosswalks in the downtown area as a model effort and use that energy produced to power downtown streetlights and traffic signals. The costs would be minimal and would only offset \$73/year/traffic signal in power costs.
- Get quotes Hannah Solar in conjunction with The Ray and Wattway for purchase of solar panels, installation and ongoing maintenance costs.

MEDIUM TERM:

Install Wattwalks on the entire LaGrange Square

LONG TERM:

 Install Wattwalks in West Point and Hogansville as well to further pique interest and generate discussion on sustainability.

BUDGET

Currently, WattWay developer Colas projects implementation costs at approximately \$69/square foot. A four-foot wide, 24-foot long crosswalk area would cost about \$6,624 to install WattWay's solar product. A community could install 7 crosswalk areas for under \$50,000. That amount does not take into account the savings the community would see from solar energy production.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Federal Department of Energy Grants
- Georgia Department of Transportation
- Callaway Foundation
- Ray C. Anderson Foundation

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- The Ray and Wattway
- Hannah Solar
- Sustainability Council at LaGrange College
- West Georgia Technical College and
- Point University

EXPECTED IMPACT

A visible and tangible sign of sustainability in Troup County that all of the population can see for themselves, and the impact will be the cognitive spark created by the launch of this new technology in the community.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The success of the project will be measured qualitatively by the buzz and discussion created by the WattWalks. If a tangible, objective measure is needed, we can partner up with the statistics department at LaGrange College to conduct the survey and run some regression models to measure the success of this project, which will provide some quantitative data to support the qualitative measure of success. We believe that ultimately, the measure of success will be the discussion it creates in the community.



DESCRIPTION

There is currently no widely available transit service in Troup County. With a population of roughly 60,000 in the County, and 30,000 in the core city of LaGrange, demand exists to create a small, fixed-route system bridging the three cities, major employers, and other trip generators (parks, schools, community buildings). The routes can act as a compliment to the Thread system of trails (27 miles) which are planned and under construction. Two existing systems for reference include: Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority and Clemson Area Transit (especially Seneca, SC. routes). Furthering Troup County as the greenest community in the country, the buses should be all electric, with the electricity generated through solar to the greatest extent possible. In order to ensure equity across the community and constant ridership, the system should be free to ride. Lastly, the system will be fully-electric, with capabilities of traveling over 45 miles on a charge and charges in minutes.





Examples of buses and shuttles in use by municipalities."

The Needle will stitch the City of LaGrange together by providing a public transportation link to some of the community's most valuable assets. Beginning with the downtown core, the Needle will connect LaGrange College, Lafayette Square, Sweetland Amphitheater, and the soon-to-arrive Wild Leap Brewery every 15 minutes via free shuttle. The routes will stop at many other destinations, connecting with the Thread, LaGrange's new network of bicycle paths, giving citizens and visitors alike multiple transportation options.



Proposed route of The Needle

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

- 1) Planning and implementation of fixed-route transit System
- 2) Installation of charging/solar infrastructure to power chargers
- 3) Continued operation of transit system, at no cost to riders
- 4) Expansion of system to serve additional community needs

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS AND TIMELINE

SHORT TERM:

- Develop transit plan (~6 months)
- Determine location of bus hub
- Begin fundraising/applying for Federal/State grants (within 1 year)

MEDIUM TERM:

- Purchase transit busses/shuttles and equipment
- Hire and train dispatch and transit drivers

LONG TERM:

- Begin operations (within 18 months)
- Expand to additional routes as demand increases and system becomes more viable (3-5 years)

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- Federal Transit Authority Formula Funding (through Georgia DOT)
- Cities/County (primarily LaGrange with initial routes)
- Callaway Foundation
- Sponsorships/Advertising

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- Electric Transit Vehicle Institute (ETVI) -Previous work with Chattanooga, TN
- Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) - Previous work with Seneca, SC
- Callaway Foundation and The Ray Capital and startup funding
- LaGrange College and DDA Marketing and promotion
- LaGrange City and/or Troup County -Operations and maintenance funding

BUDGET

Costs associated with implementing The Needle can be broken down into two categories: Capital/Startup and Operations/Maintenance. Most of the initial funding will consist of purchasing the buses and necessary charging infrastructure needed to power them. The proposed routing will require six (6) buses, which will cost \$789,000 each and \$550,000 for charging infrastructure (\$5,234,000 total). Additionally, the construction of a maintenance facility will be needed to service the buses. A similar facility in Seneca, SC, cost \$1,800,000 to build. After the capital expenditures, Operations & Maintenance costs will run \$50,000 per bus per year, for a total annual cost

of \$300,000. A five-year budget for this idea, if implemented as proposed, would be \$6,734,000. However, the implementation can be scaled to meet any funding constraints.



Concept for The Needle.

EXPECTED IMPACT

The Needle will connect the city of LaGrange in a way that it has not been connected before. Residents will use the shuttle to make short, common trips within the downtown area. Visitors to the city will use it to explore all that downtown offers, be it Sweetland Amphitheater, Wild Leap Brewery, or Great Wolf Lodge (when that connection is made). After the route has established itself to residents and tourists alike, private businesses will take note. The real estate along the route, particularly those spaces closest to the regular stops, will increase in value as business owners will see the benefit of having captive audiences upon their exit from the bus. Downtown will continue its march to become a place that people want to always be: during lunch, when running errands after work, and, of particular importance, in the evenings - advancing LaGrange's nightlife. The electric nature of the bus will be highlighted, but it will not be the primary draw for riders. Riders will notice the lack of diesel smoke and low noise levels; they will begin to identify LaGrange as a place that cares about the environment and acts to achieve its goal of becoming the greenest community in the country.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The Needle's success is measured in various ways. Directly, it can be measured by ridership, with potential monthly ridership conceivably at 20,000 trips per month. It can also be measured by the number of new businesses beginning along route and the increased foot traffic at drop off and connecting hubs. Lagrange/Troup's existing transit system (limited to 10 transit buses serving mostly senior citizens) drives between 18,000-24,000 miles per month (about 216,000-288,000 total miles per year). The Needle would immediately reduce emissions, pollution, traffic congestion, and actual costs and expense of maintenance, fuel, etc. Furthermore, the Needle provides a service that many local citizens would use and benefit from daily. It would also contribute to Troup's thriving tourist industry, stimulate the local economy by enabling transportation to jobs, prove LaGrange as a frontrunner for environmental sustainability and attract workers by providing a convenient mode of commuting.



Proterra Bus charging technology.

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Innovation Lab https://i-lab.harvard.edu/launch/

Green Office Space

http://inhabitat.com/tag/green-office-space/ http://sustainability.emory.edu/page/1069/Green-Offices https://green.harvard.edu/programs/green-offices

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https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-funding-opportunities #Funding % 20 Sources

Solar Panels:

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