Young Gamechangers

a GeorgiaForward program

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

MONROE/WALTON COUNTY 2019

MESSAGE FROM GEORGIA*FORWARD*

Georgia*Forward* has been bringing together statewide thought leaders to talk about the future of Georgia since 2010. From these conversations, the leadership action program Young Gamechangers was born, and after seven successful programs across the state, the work of Young Gamechangers has had over a $12 million impact on the state of Georgia. We are proud to work with companies, governments, nonprofits, institutions of higher learning, and other business and civic leaders to grapple with their community's most persistent challenges.

Since January of 2019, 45 of Georgia's best and brightest have been working in Monroe/Walton County to develop big idea recommendations to some of this community's problems. The Young Gamechangers, young professionals between the ages of 24 and 40 from a variety of sectors across the state, were divided into four groups to work on the four challenge questions crafted by the community steering committee. The group met in Monroe three times over the course of the eight-month program and worked for countless hours to learn, research, collaborate, and reflect on the "game changing" ideas they developed.

The recommendations that follow are the result of some of Georgia's brightest young leaders thinking outside the box to creatively solve problems in Monroe/Walton County. This product would not be possible without the invitation to bring Young Gamechangers to Monroe/Walton County by community leadership, the guidance of the local steering committee, the enthusiasm of the class, the willingness of local leaders to be open and honest, the engagement of our Young Gamechanger alumni, and the support of our sponsors. Thank you to everyone who has played a part in making the 2019 Young Gamechangers program possible.

Georgia*Forward* is excited to see which recommendations most resonate with the community and which will be implemented first! We look forward to a continued partnership as these ideas come to life.

Kris Vaughn
Executive Director
Georgia*Forward*

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SO

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MONROE

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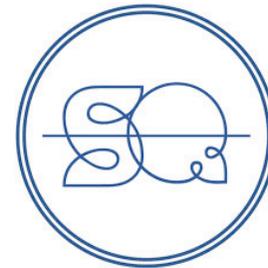
SECTION

1

MEET ME IN MONROE

CHALLENGE QUESTION

HOW CAN MONROE AND WALTON COUNTY LEVERAGE EXISTING ASSETS AND CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN ITS WORKFORCE PIPELINE?

THE TEAM

Nicole Baxby
Featurespace
Columbus, GA

Lily Bilsland
Sailor Studio
Monroe, GA

Patrice Broughton
Walton County Government
Monroe, GA

Sarah Flesher
Endurance Project Management
Atlanta, GA

Abigail Johnson
Center for Disease Control and Prevention
Atlanta, GA

Eli Lussiana
PSP Group
Monroe, GA

Daniela Perry
Georgia Chamber of Commerce
Atlanta, GA

Donna Peters
Independent Insurance Agents of Georgia
Monroe, GA

Jon Ryce
Action Inc.
Moultrie, GA

Melissa Waller
Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta, GA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last five years, Walton County has experienced substantial job growth, an increase of 18.2%, and as of 2018, a very low 4% unemployment rate. Much of this job growth is due to the increase of industrial employers, the revitalization of downtown Monroe, and Piedmont Healthcare purchasing the local hospital system. Walton County is projected to continue to experience job growth due to its close proximity to Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the Savannah and Brunswick Ports, Hard Labor Creek Regional Reservoir, and benefits from a strong highway and interstate system. Additionally, it has a few large land parcels available for new industry in its existing industrial parks.

The City of Monroe and Walton County are located 45 miles east of Atlanta; this allows residents to enjoy small town and rural living that are vital to the area's culture and history. However, this also entices much of its workforce to travel outside of Walton County for employment and, often, young professionals who have left for college do not return after graduation. Additionally, the 40-mile radius surrounding Walton County is home to over 3.8 million people; therefore, large industries have access to potential employees from neighboring counties.

The Meet Me in Monroe team was tasked with providing recommendations to the City of Monroe and Walton County on ways to leverage existing assets and create new opportunities to strengthen their workforce pipeline. By conducting interviews with residents, nonprofits, and employers, the team identified three themes to address this challenge:

- First, there is an immediate need to strengthen the relationship between existing industry and the K-12 education system.
- Second, there is an opportunity to increase support services for Walton County residents who are unemployed or underemployed.
- Lastly, existing industry needs support to reduce barriers to employment and resources to provide a good work-life balance for their employees.

The City of Monroe and Walton County are uniquely positioned to strengthen the workforce pipeline, grow their local economy, and become leaders for other communities who are working on solutions to similar challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Local leaders for the City of Monroe and Walton County recognize the importance of creating a workforce development strategy and have devoted staff and financial resources to meet the needs of current and future industry. Leveraging the work that has already been completed, the Meet Me in Monroe team recommends the following solutions:

- Create a Workforce Liaison position at each public high school in Walton County. This person will work alongside guidance counselors to provide students with college and career opportunities that are available to them upon completion of high school.
- Create the Walton Works Center, a one-stop shop center for workforce and career needs, to serve as a connector between industries and citizens looking to enter the workforce or change careers. The center would provide information about available jobs, training opportunities, and support programs to ensure progression through training programs.
- Create the Walton County Cooperative Group, a network of worker-owned businesses, to provide high quality job opportunities to underemployed or unemployed residents and supply goods and services that meet the needs of local employers.

These recommendations address the challenges and opportunities raised by industry, business owners, community leaders, and residents. The recommendations also leverage existing assets, including partnerships and resources, to continue strengthening the City of Monroe and Walton County's workforce pipeline.

WALTON COUNTY K-12 EDUCATION APPROACH AND WORKFORCE LIAISON

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

In November 2018, Georgia was designated the "Top State to Do Business" for the sixth consecutive year as a result of the many industries that have located to or expanded in Georgia. The state's success affords Georgians the opportunity for a multitude of jobs and the potential to build strong, sustainable careers for Georgia families. Many cities and counties in Georgia are experiencing an industry boom but are struggling to meet the needs of employers because of the lack of a well-trained workforce. Because 28.4% of the workforce in Walton County comes from high school graduates, it is imperative that we focus efforts on training the next generation of workers (Emsi, 2019).

For several years, the trend has been to encourage the vast majority of students to attend a four-year university upon high school graduation. However, with the expansion of industry, schools across the state are encouraging students to broaden their post-graduation options to include entering the workforce directly, pursuing a technical degree, or participating in a short-term training program. Students now have the opportunity to take Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) classes that enter them into a career-specific pathway. These pathways allow students access to relevant training and education before they graduate.

The Walton County Development Authority, Communities in Schools of Walton County (recently renamed Student Success Alliance), the Walton County Board of Education, Athens Technical College, and local industry leaders have taken a unique approach to teaching soft skills and employability skills that are not taught extensively as part of the traditional high school curriculum. This group is called Walton Works. The program enlists the help of community volunteers to make presentations at every public school in Walton County, six times a year. Presentations focus on resume building, the application process, interview preparation, and interview skills. Students receive an opportunity to interview with local industry leaders and are often offered employment upon graduation from high school.

The Walton Works' high school outreach program reaches upwards of 1,900 students in the Walton County School System. This program is unique and innovative in its approach; however, because it relies heavily on volunteers to deliver programming rather than full-time staff, local leaders have shared their uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the program in its current iteration.

The Meet Me in Monroe team proposes creating a position at the local high schools that will continue the momentum of Walton Works by working closely with the Walton County Development Authority and other partners such as Communities In Schools - Student Success Alliance, the Workforce Council, the Walton County Chamber of Commerce, and other entities. Under the direction of the principal and Communities in Schools site coordinator, the liaison will work directly with high school students to identify careers that exist in their own community and beyond. The positions will be funded by the Walton County Development Authority and Communities In Schools.

Individuals in these roles would be charged with helping students navigate the college admissions process and developing post-graduation plans, raising awareness of job training programs, operating a college and career center, and providing and distributing a wide variety of career information and materials. The liaison will also address concerns about college planning and enrollment with students, faculty, parents, and community representatives. The liaison will work to increase the awareness of local job opportunities and how students can obtain the necessary training and skills to gain employment and perform assigned job duties.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

College and career guidance and counseling is imperative in rural counties in Georgia. Many rural youths are not exposed to the numerous careers available to them in their own communities.

Walton County counselors do a great job of providing resources for college entrance requirements and testing, graduation requirements, course registration, scholarship and financial aid assistance, and employment opportunities. At the high school level, each counselor advises over four hundred students to ensure that each student graduates informed of college and career options upon graduation.

The creation of the Walton County Education/Workforce Liaison (Liaison) position will assist counselors since liaisons will focus solely on helping students make more informed choices about their post-secondary education and future careers. Liaisons will also provide information on high school course offerings, career options, as well as academic and occupational training needed to succeed in the workplace. The focus will be on employability skills and post-secondary opportunities that are associated with their field of interest.
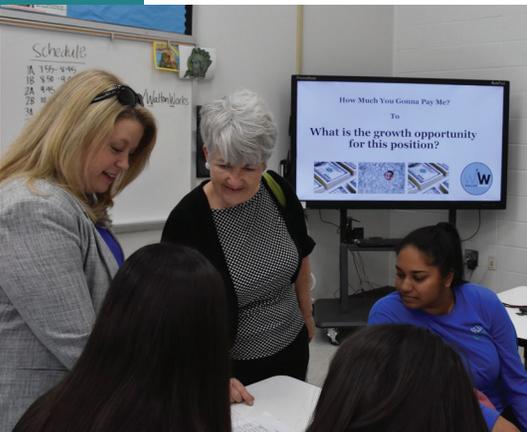
Each high school in Walton County would employ a liaison who would have access to a classroom that would also serve as a career center. By providing this type of space, the liaison will be able to provide instructional material and workshops on college and admissions as well as local industry and workforce. Additionally, the liaison will be responsible for leveraging existing resources and bringing additional financial resources to support initiatives related to employability and workforce development that are not supported by general funds.

THESE DUTIES INCLUDE:
- Generating significant new external resources for the school district through the development of public-private partnerships
- Securing corporate and foundation funding, corporate sponsorships, and individual donations
- Increasing fundraising by hosting special events
- Supporting the development of school-business partnerships
- Supporting district leadership by exploring and expanding new revenue sources as opportunities arise

For the Walton County Education/Workforce Liaison to be successful, a job description outlining the duties must be agreed upon by the partners and should be posted on several job sites.

The job description below details the requirements needed for the candidate to perform the duties of the Education/Workforce Liaison successfully.

WORK EXPERIENCE:
1 to 3 years of experience in grant writing, strategic partnerships, and/or fund development. Involvement in community activities. Background knowledge of K-12 education is strongly preferred.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES:
➤ Promotes relationships and strengthens business and foundation ties to benefit the Walton County School District.
➤ Assist with local college and career awareness initiatives.
➤ Develop, implement, and promote partnerships between businesses, schools, and the district to increase student achievement, employability, and enhance community engagement.
➤ Develop and maintain a current and comprehensive guide from local colleges; organize, coordinate and publicize career-related events and other opportunities for students to learn about higher education and vocational training and preparation.
➤ Assist students with career center materials and equipment.
➤ In concert with Walton Works, the liaison will contact, schedule, and arrange guest speakers from the local business community, colleges, and military services to present information regarding specific occupations that exist in their own community.
➤ Communicate a vision for the development and management of externally-funded initiatives for the Walton County School District and workforce development, including a plan to regularly communicate to internal and external stakeholders and recognize external partners.
➤ Assess the educational funding needs of the district through external and internal input and metrics.

➤ Oversee the completion and implementation of a long-range school and community fund development plan and activities to advance the district strategic plan.
➤ In partnership with Walton Works, create an external fundraising plan and calendar for workforce development and the school district; coordinate an agenda of corporate and foundation funding applications that align with workforce and school district priorities.
➤ Assist Walton Works with the development of a communication plan regarding the partnership and development process, the creation of a website with a toolkit, and resources for campuses and ongoing news for current and potential donors.
➤ Provide training to campus principals and designated staff to build their capacity regarding the use of tools for workforce training and local initiatives and resources in workforce development.
➤ Oversee state and district policy and practice related to various initiatives with community partners.
➤ Perform other duties as assigned by administrators.

Establishing a Workforce/Education Liaison allows the Economic Development Coordinator to focus on the needs of industry leaders and provides the liaison with opportunities for daily interactions and conversation about a student's post-secondary plan. Walton Works is a critical partner and will continue to be relied upon for the development of training for students and industry. However, the liaison position opens new opportunities to create a stronger workforce pipeline that isn't currently feasible.
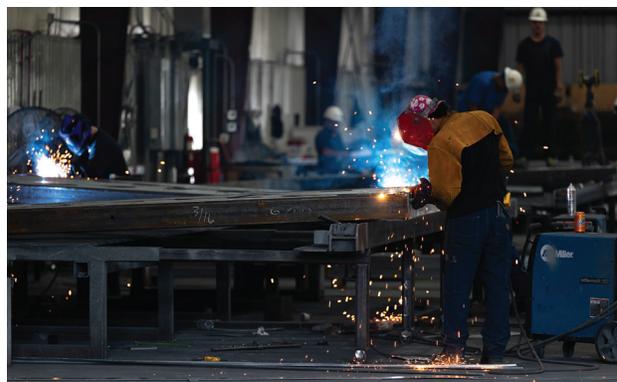
RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

Considering there is an approval process and the search for the candidate would take a considerable amount of time, the Meet Me in Monroe team suggests a target implementation for the 2021-2022 school year.

SHORT TERM

During the first quarter of the 2020-2021 School Year, it is imperative to meet with officials to discuss and outline the needs, deliverables, and outcomes of having this position in the school system.

During the second quarter of the 2020-2021 school year, Walton Works would present the position to the local school board for approval and implementation into Monroe Area High School as a pilot.

Once the position has been assessed and data analyzed, the position can be phased into the other high schools in the county, or in the case of Social Circle High School, expanding the College Corps of Advising position to include a workforce component the following year.

MEDIUM TERM

While approaching the third quarter of the 2020-2021 school year, school officials and Walton Works will post the position on job boards to attract talent for interviews, create an interview board consisting of key partners, and facilitate the selection process and choose viable candidates to interview.

By the fourth quarter of the 2020-2021 school year, the interview process should be underway, and the position should be offered to the best candidate. This timeline will allow Walton Works and the local school system to have a candidate ready for the onboard process at each school by summer 2021.

LONG TERM

During the summer before the 2021-2022 school year, have a candidate ready for the

onboard process at each school by summer 2021. The candidate then takes the summer to get acclimated to Walton County and meet with partners to discuss the deliverables for the school year 2021-2022.

BUDGET

The budget for this initiative consists of providing salary, benefits, and the tools to carry out daily functions of the job.

The salary for the position should be commensurate with peers in similar roles in the school system and other youth development organizations, providing a starting salary in the range of $35,000 to $45,000.

If partnering with an organization such as the Georgia College Advising Corps, the cost to fund this position at Monroe Area High School could be a little as $27,000 a year. In anticipation of a potential partnership with Monroe Area High School, the Georgia College Advising Corps secured 40% of the $45,000 to fund this position from their national office. Monroe Area would be required to fund the balance of needed funding for the position at $27, 000. If run independently, costs would exceed the $27, 000 and would fall closer to the $45,000 a year range for salary and benefits.

This budget would also need to include an additional line item of $5,000 for a strategic marketing plan that includes advertising, print, and digital marketing.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

With workforce development being a key issue for the employers of Walton County, the position could be funded through the

Development Authority of Walton County. The Development Authority could underwrite these costs by having each industry represented in Walton County provide an agreed-upon dollar amount to fund a workforce training line item in their budget. With resources coming in from each industry, the burden to fund the position in each high school becomes manageable.

KEY FINANCIAL PARTNERS WOULD INCLUDE:
- Walton EMC
- City of Monroe
- Takeda
- Hitachi
- Walmart
- DART
- Goodyear Tire
- Tucker Door

OTHER FUNDING SOURCES COULD INCLUDE:
- Partnership with 21st Century Community Learning Center Grants
- Partnership with Northeast Georgia Regional Commission through the Workforce Opportunity and Innovation Act
- Walton EMC Foundation Grant - Walton EMC Roundup
- Walmart Logistics in Monroe offers grants up to $25,000 to local charities and foundations

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES
- Development Authority of Walton County
- Walton Works
- Communities in Schools
- Walton County Board of Education
- Walton County School District
- Walton County Chamber of Commerce
- Local Industries
- Athens Technical College
- Georgia State University - Newton Campus
- Georgia Piedmont Technical College

EXPECTED IMPACT
The Education/Workforce Liaison position provides a strategic focus on increasing the knowledge of career pathways and awareness of the local opportunities for Walton County students. Students with more information are better positioned to make smarter decisions regarding their post-secondary options which could include a career, technical college, job training program, or a university. A tighter chain of preparation within the workforce pipeline in Walton County will allow more students to successfully transition from high school to the workforce with the necessary training and skill sets to succeed in their desired positions and be better prepared for a career after graduation.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS
The success of this position will be measured by tracking the number of high school students who graduate from the Walton County School System and go on to work in the local industries, enroll in technical college, enroll in a job training program or certificate program, enlist in the military, and attending traditional four-year universities.

If 28.4% of the local workforce is derived from recent graduates, the majority of the students should seek to attain employment and consider living, working, and building a career in Walton County as a viable option.

The liaison should be able to track those who have completed the course work and are ready to enter the workforce by the deliverables set forth by the curriculum (having a functional and professional resume, the number of job applications completed, the number of job interviews each student has scheduled after graduation, etc.).

The measurable impact should be quantified by the key performance indicators as outlined by the Development Authority of Walton County and other community partners.

WALTON WORKS CENTER

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

Monroe and Walton County are fortunate to have numerous high capacity partners that are willing and able to work with local industry to meet their needs and provide employment opportunities for citizens. Walton County's population is projected to grow by 18.8% and available jobs are expected to increase by 12% by 2027. This means there is abundant growth and the community is full of opportunities for industry and job seekers (Jobs EQ, 2017). However, 24% of adults ages 25 to 64 in Walton County are not working (American Community Survey, 2017). Walton County also has very low unemployment at 3.53% creating a tight labor market (Emsi, 2019). Tight labor markets require leaders to think of ways to encourage those who have stopped looking for employment or are underemployed because they do not have the right skills or support to be successful (Federal Reserve, 2018). This demonstrates the need to have a physical center to connect those that are not working or underemployed with hundreds of job openings in Monroe and Walton County.

A one-stop shop center for workforce and career development would create a physical hub to serve as a connector for industries and citizens looking to enter the workforce or change careers. Recent research by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's Center for Workforce and Economic Opportunity made it clear that building a workforce strategy focused on the K-12 system is not sufficient. There are simply not enough students in K-12 to meet the demand for jobs, so communities must make upskilling their existing adult workers a major part of their workforce strategy (Federal Reserve, 2018). The Walton Works Center would provide citizens information about available jobs and access to training and certification opportunities, as well as soft skill support to ensure progression through these programs and into a job. Local business owners will also utilize the center for staffing needs and resources to grow their companies. The Walton Works Center would expand the reach of established local service providers and develop additional resources to fill the current gaps in service to enable a holistic approach to workforce development.

SCOPE
WALTON WORKS CENTER

> The Walton Works center will be housed in the former police department building located in the heart of downtown Monroe. Grow Monroe will also be housed in the building with an incubator space and community center, making it a hub for a multitude of community resources.

> The City of Monroe will hire a staff member to foster relationships with partners and coordinate the training and events schedule at the center. This person should have a background in workforce development, project management, case management, social work, and/or nonprofits.

> Partners will be recruited to have a physical and consistent presence in the center as well as host events and trainings in the center. Each partner should represent a unique service rather than being duplicative of each other.

- The City of Monroe will hire part-time staff to greet individuals and direct them to services and resources. This could include the large stay-at-home parent population in Monroe as well as the high school student population that needs work experience.
- Key partners include: Walton County Schools, Local Industry, Development Authority of Walton County, Walton County Chamber of Commerce, Athens Technical College, Team Up Mentoring, Goodwill of North Georgia, Walton County Boys and Girls Club, and Communities in Schools.

Additional details regarding programming are below:

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Adult Education programming will center around connecting Walton County residents with existing resources, training, and job opportunities. The goal is to enable adults to move into stable jobs, improving their quality of life and economic mobility. Programming will include:

- GED classes
- Foundational literacy skills
- Financial literacy classes
- Drug and alcohol classes
- Two generation programming
- Soft skill-specific programs
- Career counseling services
- Space for current employers to conduct interviews and sessions on necessary credentials for employment
- Work with Goodwill of North Georgia to see if they can offer skills training information classes, industry sector-specific training, and help individuals access state and federal programs like the SNAP works program

STAFFING AGENCY

A staffing agency within the center will support the current needs of employers in the community and individuals looking for a job. Companies will pay the center a fee to participate in this service. There will be a rate for manufacturing companies and a rate for small businesses. There is a current need for assistance with the hiring processes, including screening for criminal backgrounds, aptitude testing, and interviewing. Aptitude tests will be given to those looking for a job to see where they might be a good fit. Employers will physically visit the center and interview candidates they are interested in based on the aptitude test results. Having a for-profit business service in the center could help with operational costs of the center.

BUSINESS RESOURCES

The center will work with existing small business development centers, including Grow Monroe's incubator, to bring those resources to the businesses of Monroe and Walton County. This could include providing classes to increase small business success such as tax help, payroll services, staffing, hiring skills, strategic growth planning, small business funding, etc. Resource videos could also be shared on the website/app.

K-12

Many services offered to the adult programs could be offered to high school juniors and seniors. Working with the Walton County School District would be essential in getting alerts out to individuals. The center coordinator will work with the school workforce liaisons to determine programming needs. Walton County schools currently have parent academy programs, so this could serve as a blueprint for events while allowing for new opportunities with the center's resources.

PR CAMPAIGN

A major part of this program is generating awareness about the existing opportunities in the community. Walton Proud is a project of the Walton County Chamber of Commerce which promotes the quality of students, teachers and schools throughout Walton County. Walton Proud has been an extremely successful advertising campaign and could serve as a guide for how to promote the Walton Works Center.

Walton Works Center staff will work in concert with Walton Proud to promote Walton County training and education opportunities. This will include:

> Creating industry documents that explain the real jobs a person could have, what education is required, and expected salary earnings for each job

> Highlighting the work of educators in the community that are promoting workforce readiness and innovative ways to get motivated for a job or post-secondary opportunity after high school

> Sharing success stories from individuals that have utilized the Walton Works Center through the website, app, and social media channels

WEBSITE AND APP
A Walton Works app and website will connect citizens digitally to everything the center offers. There is a Walton Works website in place now, focusing on the industrial job market, which could be expanded to include center resources. These interactive tools, with daily job postings as well as a community message board, will further the center's reach and influence.

The app will have notifications set up for new job postings in the area as well as new training opportunities to keep people connected. This will streamline the process of businesses getting the word out about jobs.
Citizens can also:

> Set up appointments online

> Access a calendar for classes or training information

> Watch training/resource videos related to the local job market

MOBILE UNIT
> A mobile approach could first be utilized by attending community events with a booth detailing Walton Works Center services and location. The Monroe Works staff will organize center partners to be present at community events. Industry brochures will be available that explain local job opportunities and salary earnings. This could be done at Movies at the Mill, farmers markets, and other events. Working with local partners in the center, there is a lot of information that could be shared without being too burdensome on any one entity.

> Eventually a mobile unit could be purchased that would have computers inside allowing individuals to take classes, apply for jobs, and other tasks such as those offered by WorkSource Metro Atlanta. This would take resources to where people are located, making it more accessible.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM
> Identify and recruit strategic partnerships in the community. The City of Monroe will serve as centralizing partner and its staff members will coordinate the center.

> Set goals and objectives for the broad activities of the center.

> Begin strategically assessing needs in the career community center, identifying the resources each partner brings, being cognizant not to duplicate resources.

- Initiate outreach efforts to build client lists and identify any gaps in services.
- Engage community leaders, both elected and appointed, to create buy-in for the center, answer questions, and identify gaps.
- **Note:** Initial outreach is underway, and many partners have already expressed interest in hosting classes and delivering services at the center.

MID TERM

- Renovations to the center should take place as financially feasible.
- Create a website to promote the center, ensuring it will interface with the app that is being created by Walton Works.
- Staffing schedule for each partner should be established to ensure staff is always there.
- Create PR campaign in conjunction with partners and key stakeholders to raise awareness about what services are available.
- Continue programming around the community to meet people where they are and raise awareness about services in the community.
- Track monthly metrics to see how many people are being brought into center and for which programs.
- A mobile approach can also begin with the help of partners at community events.

LONG TERM

- A mobile unit can accompany this to further the work of the career community center. Partner volunteers can use this mobile unit to be in the community while work is still taking place in the center.
- Develop partnerships within the region with neighboring counties including: Barrow County, Newton County, Rockdale County, etc. that could lease/rent/hire this unit. Additional grant funds could be acquired if it had a regional emphasis.
- Examine data from the year to see how many people used the center, most popular classes, most popular times of visiting, and most requested information.
- After reviewing the data, assess what needs are being met, what needs are unmet, and what services could be brought in that would fill the gap.
- Review workforce needs to see if those have altered over the year and if any services/ programs need to be added or removed based on these changes.
- Establish a capital improvement fund in the form of a 501(c)(3) so funds can be donated, raised, and designated to the maintenance of the facility.

BUDGET

Item	Cost	Frequency
Center Coordinator	$45,000 (including benefits)	Annually
Renovations to Center	$100,000 (funding can come from grants and partners)	One Time
Utilities	$15,000 (to be shared among partners)	Annually
Part-Time Staff	$12 per hour per staff (Scalable based on need and funding limits)	Monthly
Development and Printing of Workforce Materials	$3,000	One-time development, print more copies as needed
Advertising Budget	$5,000	Annually
Website and App Development	$1,500	One Time, updates as needed
Computers and Software	$3,000	Bi-Annually

POSSIBLE FUNDING OPTIONS

- Walton EMC Operation Round Up: The Center or its partners could apply to be a recipient of these funds. The amount of funds varies among organizations, but most organizations receive somewhere between $1,500 to $10,000.
- Community Block Development Grants: Annual CDBG Competition: Grants under $300,000 do not require a local match, grants of $300,001 to $750,000 require matching funds of 5%, and grants more than $750,001 require 10% local matching funds. Partnering with neighboring counties could increase the amount of funding and likelihood of project being selected.
- Employment Incentive Program financing could be utilized to help with the costs associated with renovating the building and equipment that might be needed for job training courses. Loans are generally at 3% interest and repayment is typically from five to fifteen years.
- Enroll more individuals in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs which provide assistance with tuition and fees, textbooks, program supplies, and work experience. This will help cover the costs of providing programs by partners.
- Community Foundation for Northeast Georgia grants.
- For-profit staffing agency on site to generate revenue.
- Other business services offered will have a fee that can go back to the center.

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

Many partners are mentioned in the above section with the specific resources they will provide. A full list of potential partners is below.

- City of Monroe
- Development Authority of Walton County
- Faith in Serving Humanity (FISH)
- The Partnership

- Athens Technical College
- Communities In Schools
- Boys and Girls Club
- Walton County School System
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Walton County Chamber of Commerce
- TeamUP Mentoring
- Athens Small Business Development Center
- Jobs for Life/The Ministry Village
- Goodwill of North Georgia

EXPECTED IMPACT

There are numerous available jobs and many individuals looking for opportunities to improve their career prospects. There is a great need for a central entity to connect individuals to jobs and training programs in a way that has not been done before. The expected impact of this project is that Monroe will have a stronger pipeline for connecting local talent with services to prepare them for jobs in Monroe, providing better economic mobility and quality of life. This will create a stronger, more prosperous community.
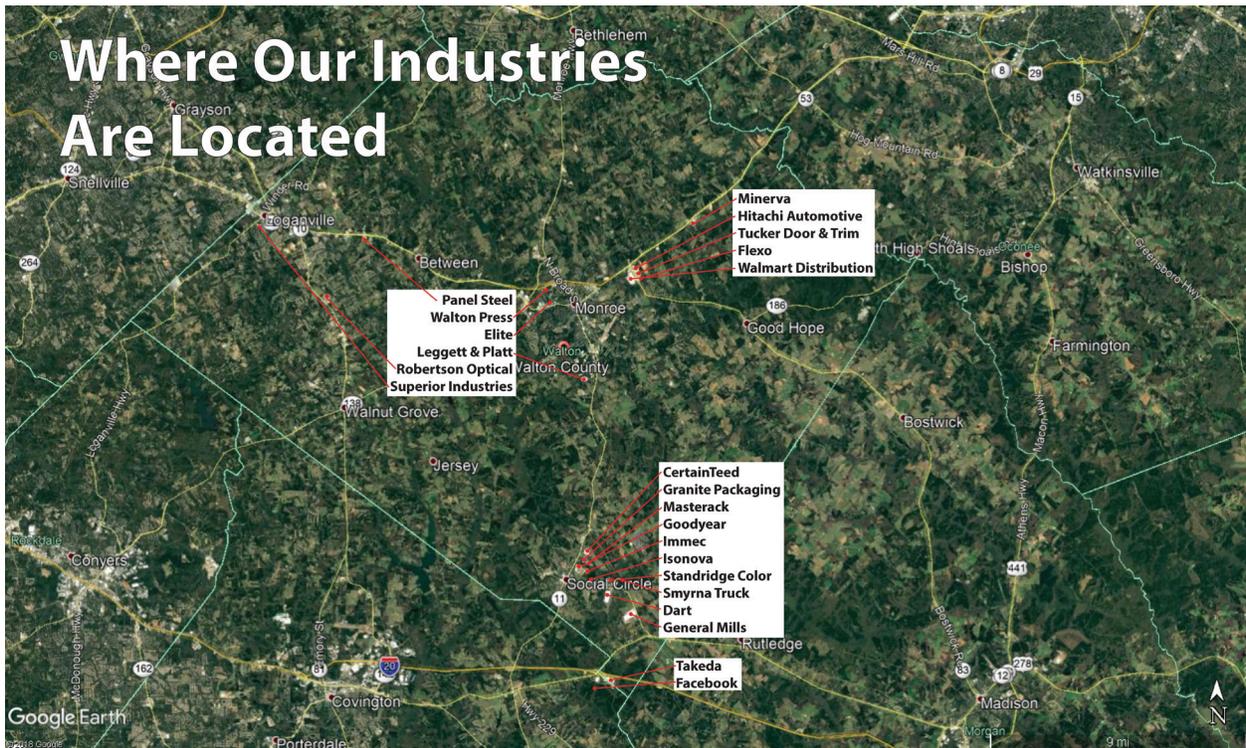
MEASURE OF SUCCESS

Performance of the center will be measured in a variety of ways. To gauge each program's workload, the number of people that utilize services in the center should be measured. Success will also be measured by how many individuals receive certifications, credentials, pursue post-secondary education, and are placed into jobs. This could be compared to the current rates of certification and degree completion as well as current job placement rates.

WALTON COUNTY COOPERATIVE GROUP

Where Our Industries Are Located

Minerva
Hitachi Automotive
Tucker Door & Trim
Flexo
Walmart Distribution

Panel Steel
Walton Press
Elite
Leggett & Platt
Robertson Optical
Superior Industries

CertainTeed
Granite Packaging
Masterack
Goodyear
Immec
Isonova
Standridge Color
Smyrna Truck
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OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

Monroe and Walton County have a rich tradition of reinvention, transitioning its workforce from cattle farming to textile mills to industry. In the last 20 years, the area has successfully become one of the top destinations in the Southeast for global corporations to select as their preferred location for their headquarters. The proximity to Atlanta and Savannah, the presence of manufactured and natural resources as well as the achievements of the Development Authority of Walton County continues to entice employers to the region. Major brands such as Walmart, Hitachi, Facebook, Piedmont, Takeda, and many more call Walton County home, which contributes to the rapid business and economic regional growth.

In an effort to identify the existing needs of local employers in Walton County, Meet Me in Monroe team members interviewed individuals from companies, hospitals, and educational institutions that collectively employ over 4,000 people. The results from these interviews demonstrated that there are existing services or needs that are unmet. As a response to these needs/services, the Meet Me in Monroe team suggests creating a worker cooperative to create businesses to meet the needs of existing industry.

To guarantee that existing and future large employers can attract and retain employees, it is paramount to involve these organizations in removing the barriers that prevent citizens in the community from working in local businesses. The worker cooperative model includes residents as key partners in the solution.

To accomplish this goal, Meet Me in Monroe recommends forming an advisory board comprised of representatives from major employers in Walton County which serve as anchor institutions in the community. These anchors would operate as the advisory board to the Walton County Cooperative Group (WCCG), whose mission would be to create a network of worker-owned businesses that provide high-quality job opportunities to underemployed and unemployed residents. These cooperatives would have the strategic objectives of supplying goods and services that serve the needs of the anchor institutions.

WHAT IS A WORKER COOPERATIVE?

A worker cooperative is a values-driven business that puts worker and community benefit at the core of its purpose. Although businesses usually require outside support for funding and capital, workers own the business and they participate in its financial success based on their labor contribution to the cooperative. Cooperatives benefit local communities by strengthening the local economy and supplying quality jobs for its members.

BENEFITS OF A COOPERATIVE MODEL:

➤ Supplies living wage jobs and employee training

➤ Leverages existing anchor institutions in the community

➤ Encourages residency and employment in Walton County

➤ Increases local economic revenue because most of the money generated by these businesses is spent locally due to local ownership

➤ Increases median wages in Walton County

➤ Employees are invested in their companies and in the community

➤ Addresses underemployment and provides part-time opportunities

WHAT IS AN ANCHOR INSTITUTION?

Anchor institutions are long standing organizations that play a vital role in their local communities and economies. They tend to remain in their geographical settings, even as conditions change around them. Therefore, they are vital assets to their neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions.

ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS

Takeda · facebook · TUCKER DOOR & TRIM · Walmart · HITACHI · Piedmont · Cooperative Board · THE CITY OF Monroe

Transportation   Mobile Services   Child Care

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Based on the interviews conducted with proposed anchor institutions, the Meet Me in Monroe team suggests creating three different worker cooperatives underneath the WCCG. These three worker cooperatives would provide solutions for existing anchor institution challenges including: transportation, child and aging adult care, and services to improve work-life balance.

TRANSPORTATION

The transportation worker cooperative would have a fleet of vehicles including 15 passenger vans, luxury vehicles, and minivans. The 15 passenger vans would be used to create vanpools that would bring employees from surrounding counties as far as Atlanta and Augusta to work at Social Circle and Piedmont Regional Industrial Park. These vans could also bring students to classes at Walton County Campus of Athens Technical College and Athens Technical College in Athens. The vans' ability to service multiple anchor institutions allows for reduced cost to the anchor institutions and their employees, while increasing the number of individuals traveling to Walton County for work or school.

The luxury vehicles would be used to transfer the guests of anchor institutions from the local airports to their meetings and accommodations. The minivans would be used to transfer individuals who are being released from the hospital and lack alternative transportation, take individuals to doctor appointments, and transport medical equipment to and from Piedmont Walton Hospital. All employees of the transportation worker cooperative would be trained in First Aid and CPR as well as the support services needed to aid hospital patients in and out of the vehicles.

The transportation worker cooperative would only provide service for the anchor institutions. Each of the anchor institutions would be charged for their usage or their employees' usage of the vehicles or vanpool. For example, typical vanpool riders share the fee that covers the overhead

of the vehicle (payment, maintenance, license, insurance etc.) and the fuel consumed each month. Costs are calculated by the number of miles that each person rides, so the cost to use the vanpool would vary by individual. In many cases, switching to vanpooling can cut an individual's commuting costs in half. Other services provided by luxury vehicles to transport clients, owners, and patrons or deliver materials would be charged a fee for service plus mileage.

Example of Transportation Cooperatives
MODO was the first car share in British Columbia and the second in North America. The goal was to provide members with great service and best value while reducing the need for private vehicle ownership. With 20,000 members, businesses, developers, and municipal partners, MODO's two-way care share service continues to have an impact. MODO has a specific offering to businesses including access to a fleet of vehicles, gas, insurance, cleaning, parking privileges, and perks.

CHILD CARE AND AGING ADULT CARE
The childcare and aging adult care worker cooperative would be built out in three phases to provide different levels of care. The first would be the creation of two high-quality, 24/7 childcare centers located near Social Circle and Monroe's industrial parks. Each of these anchor institutions offer shift work at different hours and the need for childcare available at various times of day is in high demand. For the childcare center found in Monroe's industrial Park, there is an opportunity to use a wing of the Walton County Campus of Athens Technical College and potentially in 1-2 years to purchase that building for $1. However, anchor institutions might want the childcare centers located on property adjacent to their buildings. In this case, the Development Authority of Walton County could provision land for the centers.

The next level of childcare would serve for students K-5th grade and would operate during the summer, winter, and spring breaks. Two of

the industry partners mentioned that they experience an increase of absenteeism when school is on break.

The third level would include on-demand care that could cover occasional child or adult care needs. Currently, this is an offering that Piedmont Walton offers its employees. The childcare cooperative would allow for trained caretakers to support employees when their child or parent is ill. This allows employees to come to work with peace of mind knowing that their child or parent is cared for by a trained professional.

Both Athens Technical College and the Career Technical and Agricultural Education at Walton County High Schools provide students with an opportunity to receive training and certification in early childhood education. This cooperative would provide job opportunities for individuals who have received those certifications and would also serve as an internship location for students at Athens Technical College. This would expand employment opportunities for Walton County citizens looking to work in the community.

The childcare and adult care services would allow for payment based on a sliding pay scale; therefore, the highest paid employee and the lowest paid employee could afford to have their child(ren) attend these centers. This also allows anchor institutions to offer childcare benefits to their employees and ensure the quality of the childcare and adult care provided.

Examples of Child Care Cooperatives
Business communities are increasingly coming together to offer childcare services in industrial parks and commercial developments for the benefit of those employed there. The "consortium model" of cooperative childcare where a group of employers or organizations form a childcare cooperative to be owned by their combined employee groups is increasingly demonstrating its benefits to both parents and employers. Sponsoring organizations typically provide start-up capital

for the venture, donate space for the center, and hire management. As with all cooperatives, this cooperative is governed by a board of directors selected from the membership and with the employee or consortium model representatives from participating employers.

Energy Capital Cooperative is a non-profit, employer-assisted parent cooperative dedicated to providing full- and part-time childcare that meets the needs of families in our community. Founding partners include: Bain Electrical Power Cooperative, Sakakawea Medical Center, North American Coal Corporation, Union State Bank, Knife River Care Center, Coal Country Community Health Centers, and Hazen Public Schools.

Parent Cooperative Preschools represents more than 50,000 families and teachers, providing ongoing support to families, educators, and social agencies who recognize the value of parents as teachers of their children and the necessity of educating parents to meet the developmental needs of their children. Membership is open to schools, councils, libraries, and individuals.

SERVICES TO IMPROVE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Many of the interviewed anchor institutions mentioned that they would be interested in services to support their employees' work-life balance. For instance, the ability for their employees to get their oil changed or their car washed while at work. To solve this challenge, we suggest creating a worker co-operative that completes maintenance on vehicles, starting with a mobile unit and transitioning to two auto repair shops; one near Piedmont Regional Industrial Park and the other near Social Circle. Once a physical location is acquired, both shops would offer vehicle pick-up and delivery to give convenience to the employees at the anchor institutions.

Another service mentioned that could improve anchor institution employees' work-life balance would be a Mobile Occupational Benefit Service.

This service would allow for new employees to complete their drug testing at the employer site and provide annual screening services (blood panel, cancer screenings, mammograms, weight etc.). The payment for these services could be covered through employee medical insurance packages.

Athens Technical College offers an Automotive Technology Program that would help to ensure the pipeline of workers for the automotive services worker cooperative. For the Mobile Occupational Benefit Services, the cooperative would rely on the knowledge and resources of Piedmont Walton for training services.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM (6-12 MONTHS)

> Identify 5 Anchor Institutions

> Creation of the advisory board (anchor institutions that want to receive services from the employee cooperatives)

> Hire a cooperative project manager

> Conduct a feasibility study to better understand the needs of the employees at each anchor institution

> Identify funding mechanisms

> Select first employee cooperative business opportunity

MEDIUM TERM (1-2 YEARS)

> Develop business plan

> Invite additional anchor institutions to join

> Launch business

> Identify training/workforce pipeline needs for employees

> Develop business plan and launch of second worker cooperative

LONG TERM (3+ YEARS)

> Recruit and hire employees

> Onboard/train cooperative employees

> Identify other employee cooperative opportunities

BUDGET

Item	Startup Costs	2-3 years	3+ years
Walton County Cooperative Group (WCCG)			
Cooperative Coordinator	$60,000	$63,000	$65,000
Feasibility Study	$50,000	--	--
WCCG Total	$110,000	$63,000	$65,000
Transportation			
Inventory	$150,000	$20,000	$10,000
Insurance	$25,000	$23,000	$20,000
Operations	$20,000	$30,000	$35,000
Marketing	$10,000	$8,000	$6,000
Transportation Total	$205,000	$81,000	$71,000
Child Care			
Staffing	$250,000	$275,000	$300,000
Insurance	$25,000	$20,000	$20,000
Space Rental (x2)	In-kind/$20,000	In-kind/$22,000	In-kind/$25,000
Operations	$50,000	$60,000	$70,000
Marketing	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Child Care Total	$355,000	$387,000	$425,000
Services to Improve Work-Life Balance			
Mobile Van	$30,000	$30,000 (add'l van)	--
Insurance	$5,000	$10,000	$10,000
Operations	$10,000	$20,000	$23,000
Marketing	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000
Services for Work-Life Balance Total	$55,000	$70,000	$43,000

POSSIBLE FUNDING OPTIONS

> HUD (Section 108 Loan Guarantee program where cities borrow from the federal government and pass the loans on to the borrower. HUD can grant a Waiver of Public Benefit since the cooperatives, as start-ups, are unable to receive traditional bank funding.)

> A percentage of 0.05-1% of all Economic Development Deals go to the Walton County Workers Cooperative Fund

> Grants and donations made to the Walton Economic Development Authority

> Anchor Institution

> Walton County Health Care Foundation

> Rural Economic Loan Grant program

> Fund for Democratic Communities

> The Southern Reparations Loan Fund

> Tax benefits for childcare and transportation offered to employees

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

> Hitachi Automotive Systems Americas, Inc.

> Takeda

> Walmart Distribution Center 6055

> Leggett & Platt

> Standridge Color Corporation

> Elite Storage

> Tucker Door & Trim

> General Mills

> Goodyear Tire & Rubber

> Walton Press

> Piedmont Walton

> Development Authority of Walton County

> City of Monroe

> Walton County

> Athens Technical College

> Walton County Campus of Athens Technical College

IMPACT TO THE COMMUNITY

The WCCG brings together Walton County's largest employers to collectively solve existing workforce pipeline challenges. One of the most unique qualities of worker-owned cooperatives is the ability to adapt the services offered to meet the ever-changing needs of anchor institutions. Additionally, the WCCG will have an element of quality control for services offered. For example, research demonstrates the importance of creating high quality early learning environments for young children. The WCCG can ensure that cooperative childcare facilities operate with best practices for early childhood development at a price that all employees can afford.

The WCCG model not only benefits the anchor institutions and their employees, but also the employees of the worker cooperatives and the local economy. Residents employed by the cooperatives will benefit from shared ownership and decision-making. In addition, jobs at worker cooperatives often tend to be longer-term, offer skill training, and provide better wages and benefits than similar jobs.

Lastly, the WCCG will strengthen the local economy as business profits generated will not go to investors, but directly to workers. Thus, the money stays grounded in the local economy and helps to build community wealth. Services provided by the cooperatives can also entice additional businesses to locate to Walton County.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Potential measures of success for the Walton County Cooperative Group could include:

➤ Number of cooperative businesses developed

➤ Total utilization of services

➤ Reduced anchor institution job vacancies

➤ Increased employee retention

➤ Increased employee attendance

➤ Number of residents employed by cooperative(s)

➤ Total revenue generated by cooperative(s)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SECTION

2

MONROE MAKERS

CHALLENGE QUESTION

IN WHAT WAYS CAN MONROE ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENTREPRENEURS WHO WANT TO MAKE IT IN MONROE?

THE TEAM

Femke Côté (Editor)
Associate Head of School
George Walton Academy
Monroe, GA

Raphael Crutchfield
Freight Handler
Walmart Distribution Center
Monroe, GA

Jessica Flood
Analyst
Greenfield Advisors
Rome, GA

Lindsey Hickman
Business Development
Carmichael's
Monroe, GA

Christopher Jones (Editor)
Consulting Team Leader
Secure Records Solutions
Thomasville, GA

Jonathan Leon
Director
Georgia Impact
Leadership for Educational Equity
Atlanta, GA

Maggie Mcdaniel (Organizer)
Senior Account Manager
Communications 21
Atlanta, GA

Charlie Moseley (Project Manager)
Business Recruitment Director
Georgia Power
Atlanta, GA

Rachel Raines
Operations Analyst
Coca-Cola
Atlanta, GA

Wes Sorrells
Assistant Pastor/Youth Pastor
First United Methodist Church of Monroe
Monroe, GA

Phillip Vera
Chief Executive Officer
Auben Realty
Augusta, GA

Lauren Williams
Assistant Director of Admissions
Athens Technical College
Athens, GA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Entrepreneurs are the visionary risk takers who see what could be and use their creativity, hard work, and money to make it so. Monroe/Walton County has been shaped by such entrepreneurs, like the textile mills that brought the first industry to this farming community in 1895. Decades after the closing of Avondale Mills, the mills' legacy continues to shape Monroe/Walton County's residential and commercial development. As the community expands its vision for growth, it must attract and retain the next generation of entrepreneurs to the effort. Our team has developed three strategies for accomplishing this by lowering barriers to entry, providing ongoing support, and building a pipeline to attract and retain entrepreneurs.

Attracting a business and the entrepreneur who owns it is an investment years in the making. We have developed a plan for launching school partnerships to identify and cultivate future entrepreneurs in local high schools to build a pipeline of new businesses.

Once an entrepreneur has taken the leap of faith to start their business, the excitement fades and tactical challenges often slow or even stop their momentum. We've imagined a start-up incubator to help new and existing businesses with common resources and one-on-one consulting to get them through the most difficult stages of scaling a small business.

The "moat," or barrier to entry, for any given industry is one of the steepest hurdles to entrepreneurship. In the food service business, that is driven by real estate. Buying or leasing expensive space before proving the concept of the restaurant simply isn't an option for many talented chefs. We have designed a food hall to incubate new restaurant concepts and program space at one of the old mills that will offer dining options to satisfy demand at times when other local restaurants aren't serving.

INTRODUCTION

We are the Monroe Makers. Our team is from Monroe, Metro Atlanta, Augusta, Athens, Rome, and Thomasville, Georgia. We share a passion for the mission of Georgia Forward that has brought us together to help solve persistent challenges of one Georgia community – your hometown.

We bring a diverse background of education, industry, and culture to our insights. The process began with a thorough tour of the community and several days of interviews with community leaders. Over the course of several visits, we've eaten at many of your downtown restaurants, competed in trivia at Amici, and read books at The Story Shop with a pour over from Coffee Camper. We set up follow-up interviews with members of the community to better understand the issues that prevent or slow progress and resources the community could benefit from. We've focused on developing ideas that organize existing resources at relatively low cost, program underused spaces, and develop community resources accessible to all. As we've developed our insights, we've interviewed people around the country who are subject matter experts to refine these recommendations based on their experiences.

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS - ENTREPRENEUR U

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

As the City of Monroe grapples with its challenge to attract and retain the next generation of entrepreneurs who want to "Make it Monroe," it's clear that education will play a critical role in moving the city forward. The skills involved with developing entrepreneurs not only cover business practices but skills critical to 21st Century learners and leaders. Critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity are some of the crucial skills needed to thrive in the globalized economy. An ecosystem which breeds entrepreneurs must teach it as a skill, developing oncoming entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, and mindsets to be successful. Public-private partnerships and other collaborative regimes which partner with education systems to teach these skills are effective and scalable methods for teaching the skills of entrepreneurship. These programs not only inspire students to jump into the field but offer ongoing development while they learn and establish ventures. This makes students more effective given their access to these developmental resources.

Our recommendation is the establishment of a public-private partnership titled "Entrepreneur U." Entrepreneur U is a partnership of high schools, local businesses, and colleges/universities supporting high school students to learn the skills of entrepreneurship and support student-led ventures.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

GOALS
- Promote Entrepreneurship
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- College Access
- Retain Students as Future Entrepreneurs

TARGET POPULATION: High School Students in Monroe

PROGRAM SCOPE
- Entrepreneurship and Business Development Curriculum Aligned to State Standards
- Wrap Around Mentorship
  - *Students in cohorts at schools; peer mentors*
  - *Mentorship with UGA business students*
  - *Small business owners mentoring cohorts of college students and high school students*
- Dual Enrollment with Athens Technical College
  - *Business Management Certification*

- Hackathon
  - *Solutions for public problems (Social Impact Entrepreneurship)*
- Shark Tank
  - *Student-led businesses compete for real dollar investments in their businesses (Traditional Entrepreneurship)*

While students are immersed in the program, the learning is holistic from teachers and school leaders. Students are learning and applying a standards-based curriculum across course content. Through mentorship, students are getting real insight from students to support their studies but knowledge and best practices from successful small business owners. Utilizing the state's dual enrollment programming, students leave this experience with college credit and invaluable learning.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM
- Establish steering committee/advisory board to oversee the planning and implementation of Entrepreneur U. This group should include student(s) from the local school system, member(s) from the local government, member(s) from the business community, local community members, and representatives from institutions of higher education.
- Determine the location for events to take place (partner with local school district, Athens Technical College, or incubator spaces).
- Continue and expand partnership with Athens Technical College for students to be able to participate in classes to enhance their business acumen.

MID TERM
- Begin advertising events and recruiting students to participate through an application process. Partner with the UGA Entrepreneurship Program to facilitate mentors for students entering the programs.
- Secure sponsorships to fund the Shark Tank event and provide seed/prize money for the Shark Tank event. Locate potential investors for business ideas pitched.
- For the Hackathon, reach out to the local community members to determine local issues that could be addressed during the event.

LONG TERM
- Establish a pathway within the local school system for students to participate in Entrepreneur U.
- Create an alumni network to mentor incoming students.
- Follow up with former participants to document their success/failures (additional data to be determined) after completing the program.

BUDGET

Item	Cost
Hackathon Event Costs	$ 3,000
Shark Tank	$ 15,000
Supplies	$ 2,000
Training Program Fees	$ 3,000
Marketing Promotions	$ 500
Transportation	$ 5000

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- Walton County Safe Kids
- Leadership Walton Alumni Association
- The Partnership for Families, Children & Youth
- Rotary Club of Monroe
- Faith In Serving Humanity, Inc.
- Team Up Mentoring
- ACTION Inc. Walton Community Services Center
- Boys & Girls Clubs of North Central Georgia
- Communities in Schools of Walton County
- On Stage, Inc.
- Athens Technical College
- UGA Entrepreneurship Program
- Local Government/Economic Development

EXPECTED IMPACT

Many students have the mindset that to thrive they must leave their hometown. Through our proposed programs, there is real potential to help alleviate this stigma. As stated earlier, Entrepreneur U is all encompassing and involves mentorships, dual enrollment, and Hackathon sessions. Students will be challenged to think creatively, identify problems in their neighborhoods and think of solutions that could influence their community. This will impact the level of engagement from not only Monroe's youth but also the Monroe community.

The university/college mentorship program will increase awareness of secondary education and generate interest in continued education. Engagement with college students may further encourage scholastic confidence and academic performance among Monroe students. By partnering with small business owners, their mentorship will provide supplementary exposure for Monroe students by empowering them to learn more about entrepreneurship.

By partnering with Athens Technical College, students will have the opportunity for dual enrollment where they could participate in work/study programs. Providing students access to skill-based programs and mentors at an early age will provide more options and doors for students. These doors could lead to apprenticeships, internships, higher education, and more.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- Success will be measured by the number of participating small business owners and the involvement of local schools in Monroe in the first year.
- The overall success of the Shark Tank competition. The level of interest in the competition and the involvement of sponsors and investors. Additionally, the likeliness that the winning team's idea will be implemented.
- Surveys will be conducted towards the beginning, middle, and end of the program to obtain qualitative data. The survey would measure the engagement and commitment of employees, mentors, and students.
- Participation requirements being met by all parties involved: this includes students and mentors logging hours for meeting requirements and submitting timely assignments for Shark Tank and Hackathon.
- Reported post-graduation plans among students including trade school, college/university acceptance, etc.

MONROE MAKERSPACE (ENTREPRENEURSHIP CORE)

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

The Monroe Entrepreneurship Core will be the catalyst for developing an ecosystem to attract and grow the community's next generation of entrepreneurs. The Core is designed to support future and current businesses by providing resources and training, and expert help to solve problems. The Core will specifically encourage participation from underserved demographics including women, people of color, low-to-moderate income residents, and youth to inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Note: The Core will begin without a physical space, proving its concept with programming resources and mentors. There is no need for a building during the first phases of the Core. Studies support this strategy, suggesting that incubators or innovation hubs should start with a focus on programs before building a physical space.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Establishing Monroe as a small-town startup incubator will encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs to move to and/or begin their next business in the community, while helping existing entrepreneurs be more competitive.

PROJECTS WILL INCLUDE:

➤ Creating a nonprofit to develop the Entrepreneurship Core, likely out of an existing organization such as the chamber of commerce. Upon incorporation, a board of advisors should be built out of local stakeholders, who can then make decisions and hire a director to manage the program.

➤ Hiring Innovation Ecosystems at Georgia Tech to complete a feasibility study that will define the Core's needs and phases to implement it. The organization helps to launch, operate and sustain successful entrepreneurship and innovation programs. They offer customization, confidentiality, and objective evaluation

➤ Once the Core's needs are defined, the nonprofit will create a program with the help of current business owners and neighboring resources that provides training and funding resources to future and existing entrepreneurs.

➤ Developing a marketing plan with the help of a UGA graduate student that markets the Entrepreneurship Core and Monroe as a City of innovation and growth.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM
➤ October 2019
  a. *Create a strategic plan to serve the Entrepreneurship Core.*
    i. **Develop a nonprofit and board that will support the Entrepreneurship Core as a public-private venture**
    ii. **Determine funding opportunities for a feasibility study (see budget for more information)**

➤ November 2019
  a. *Apply for grants that will fund the feasibility study.*
  b. *Once all grants are submitted, the process can take 3-6 months (depending on when the grant is due).*
  c. *Distribute a survey to the community to see who would be interested in an Entrepreneurship Core.*

➤ December 2019
  a. *Collect survey results.*

MID TERM
➤ May 2020
  a. *If funding is complete then apply for a feasibility study with Innovation Ecosystems at Georgia Tech (this process can take 6-12 months).*

LONG TERM
➤ January 2021
  a. *Identify a nonprofit advisory board and director to create a plan to implement the Core.*
  b. *Work with Innovation Ecosystems or use their recommendations to design an accelerator program to cater to the needs of new, current, and future entrepreneurs. Programs will include digital marketing, business planning, access to capital, logistics, current productivity software, and their benefits,* along with legal and accounting assistance.
  c. *Recommendations could look something like this:*
    i. **New Entrepreneurs' Needs**
      1. Business plan development
      2. Financial coaching and support
      3. Legal advocacy
      4. One-on-one coaching with current business owners or SCORE representatives – meeting location can be at a local coffee shop, restaurant, or brewery
    ii. **Current Entrepreneurs' Needs**
      1. Partner with the local hub (JT) and work with them on programming and their needs. Host sessions where they share their successes and failures.
      2. Distribute a survey to local DDA businesses and others to see what types of programs they recommend helping them grow their business. Those programs could be:
        a. *Expanding your business*
        b. *Moving your business*
        c. *Legal help*
        d. *Social media 101*
        e. *Marketing plans and campaigns*
        f. *Collaboration MeetUps – businesses come together and help each other with challenges*
    iii. **Future Entrepreneurs' Needs: Youth programs that create energy and excitement around entrepreneurship.**
      1. Kids Shark Tank
      2. Community VC Fund can invest $100 seed per business and let kids start their own businesses. Initial investment + 10% of profits go back into the fund for the next group.

3. Collaborate with the partnership with schools to start student-operated enterprises. Provide students with an entrepreneurship 'laboratory' to run small businesses as if they own them.

d. *Develop a capital ecosystem to provide access to funding. Seek state and federal grant funding, along with funding from foundations, venture capital, angel funds, local nonprofits and other organizations to help support the Core's programs.*

> February 2021

a. *Identify and obtain local and regional partnerships with organizations to run programs for the Core [see partnerships for more information].*

b. *Have each business owner commit to 2-3 programs or mentoring sessions.*

c. *Arrange dates and times for the programs at local spots.*

> May 2021

a. *Implement programming.*

b. *3-5 programs per week.*

> June 2021

a. *Measure success of programs through surveys and focus groups.*

b. *If there is success from the surveys, then reach out to the University of Georgia and request a graduate student to create a campaign to market the program in the fall.*

> August 2021

a. *UGA Graduate student to develop a marketing campaign to attract local and regional entrepreneurs to not only participate in the Core, but to start their business in Monroe. Another option is to use an employee or volunteer who is working at Grow Monroe.*

i. **Create a slogan to market Monroe's innovation and growth for businesses**

1. Develop collateral pieces with stats and incentives

b. *Social Media*

i. **Facebook ads**

ii. **Hashtag to market the area and ask**

current businesses to use

iii. **Create videos and other pieces with current business members' testimonials**

c. *Website Development*

i. **Create a user-friendly and innovative website**

d. *Email Marketing*

i. **Collect emails and distribute to potential entrepreneurs or other hubs**

> July-December 2021

a. *Continue programming.*

> December 2021

a. *Review the surveys and feedback from participants.*

b. *Host a focus group to determine the Core's success.*

> January 2022

a. *If the Core programming is successful and growing, look into purchasing or using an existing space for entrepreneurs to gather:*

i. **GrowMonroe Building (created by RUSH Forward Group)**

1. GrowMonroe's main second floor (directly accessed from Broad Street) would feature two entrances: one opening into the small business incubator and the other into the workforce cultivation space. Additionally, the first floor would house two conference rooms, a workspace/design center, dedicated and as-needed offices, open air workstations, and a lecture hall space for classes and engagements in the existing courtroom. Featuring full connectivity, the space would host both private and public Wi-Fi and office spaces would be outfitted for immediate usage.

b. *Continue building the program and adding new support for clients.*

BUDGET

Item	Cost (annually)
Director of Programming	$30,000-45,000
Feasibility Study	$30,000 plus travel fee
Program Teachers or Supporters (start with 3-5)	$144,000-150,000; Many teachers or mentors can be asked to mentor or teach for free, but if a payment is required then $500 per class or session will be paid ($4,500 per week if paying 3 teachers, totals to $144,000 per year)
Marketing Plan and Items	$40,000 (Includes Facebook ads, printing collateral materials, purchasing an email marketing system, advertising, etc. This does not include a salary for the person who will execute the plan.)
Renting Spaces for Programming	$20,000-30,000 ($200 per session, 3 sessions per week)

POSSIBLE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Local supporters or donors
2. Ask for local coffee shops, restaurants, breweries, and other locations to host events or offer a discount
3. Higher education: Georgia Tech, Athens Tech, University of Georgia
4. Development Authority of Walton County
5. Community venture fund:
   a. *Economic Development Administration*
   b. *Rural Innovation Stronger Economy (RISE)*
   c. *USDA Rural Business Development grant*
   d. *Encourage angel groups to develop*
   e. *Proactively develop relationships with debt and equity investors to have a directory of options*

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- Innovation Ecosystems at Georgia Tech (Lynne Henkiel)
- Monroe Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Development Authority
- Development Authority of Walton County, Monroe Economic Development
- Higher education: Georgia Tech, Athens Technical College, University of Georgia
- Lower education: Walton County School District
- Local businesses for training and mentoring
- Preston & Malcom – legal sponsor
- Accounting sponsor who can help with mentorship/resources on financial issues
- Manufacturing sponsor who can help with workflow/process
- Local law firm for legal support
- Bioscience Training Center – tech sponsor who can help with software development and implementation
- UGA SBDC

- ATDC for remote and online programming and classes
- SCORE – An Atlanta organization with volunteers who help thousands of entrepreneurs start small businesses and achieve new levels of success in their existing businesses
- Entrepreneurship Program at UGA
- Local Incubators
  - *Berson Center (Donna Lackey) – located in Carrollton, Georgia*
  - *The Innovation Factory – located in Duluth, Georgia*
  - *Augusta-Richmond County Small Business Incubator*

EXPECTED IMPACT

The Entrepreneurship Core would start as a program with supporters and a small staff and develop into a location where members of the community and neighboring communities can go to start a business. Not only will the Core offer programs to help grow new and existing businesses, but it will display Monroe as a leader in the innovation ecosystem.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

Success can be measured by program participation along with the surveys that will be distributed within the first year of the Core. If the Core is successful and flourishes with participants and good feedback then there will be a need for a building or location, along with a staff. Ultimately, the number of businesses and average income in Monroe will grow.

RESTAURANT INCUBATOR/ FOOD HALL

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

CREATING & SUSTAINING A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY FOOD & DRINK ENVIRONMENT

What attracts entrepreneurs to rural communities across Georgia is the low cost of living and doing business, unwavering community support, and each community's undeniable charm – Monroe is no different.

This plan will strategically improve the perception and accessibility of Monroe for food and drink entrepreneurs by offering a lower-risk, lower-cost startup environment, local foodie events, and educational opportunities, all in a collaborative community environment for residents and visitors to work, eat, drink, and socialize together.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

The City of Monroe is developing a vibrant, rural food and drink community that has attracted entrepreneurs to the area. The community needs to offer a variety of opportunities to create a pipeline for the creation of new and unique eateries and beverage options.

- **Food Hall/Incubator:** We recommend partnering with other community groups and investors to create a Food Hall/Incubator in downtown Monroe. Walton Mill has a mixed-use development plan that will utilize the existing historic mill buildings as an anchor for a walkable neighborhood featuring housing options, retail/office space, and restaurant space. This restaurant space is a 6,000 sq. ft. building with space to accommodate a commercial shared kitchen and between four and six individual restaurant stalls. The Food Hall will provide a unique dining experience for community members and visitors while also offering a platform for new restaurant concepts to open in a lower-risk, lower-cost environment. The Monroe Food Hall will serve as a catalyst for developing a restaurant entrepreneurship ecosystem to innovate and launch the community's next generation of successful restaurateurs.

  The cost of a general contractor, architect, designer, and other upfront costs to locate in a premier location in Monroe keeps many new restaurants from opening a location or getting started in Monroe. The Food Hall will allow these restaurants to focus only on their own specialty equipment, labor, cost of food, and reduced rent.

- **Partnership with Athens Technical College Culinary Program:** We recommend creating a partnership with Athens Technical College's Culinary Arts program to lease one vendor stall in the food hall for a student-led venture.

- **Local Events:** In partnership with the Food Hall and community groups, develop additional food-related or ancillary events that will promote the idea of Monroe as a "foodie" community.

- **Business Incubation:** Within Monroe Makerspace, the Entrepreneurship Core, offer business coaching and support to help these food and drink startups grow to the point that a standalone restaurant is viable. Foster the creation of a restaurant mentorship group to bring in best practices from successful ideas while encouraging new ideas from startups.

- **Mobile Food Options:** The city should streamline the process to establish food trucks/food carts in the community. In order to reach everyone in the community, access should be online through the city website, pre-printed packets in local office spaces, and outreach should be made to local community centers and places of worship to ensure that the correct referrals can be given to entrepreneurial community members.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM
➤ Develop an advisory committee that reflects the entire community to determine appropriate events to showcase the musical, artistic, food and drink talents of all sectors of the community.

➤ Offer an online and paper packet one-stop-shop for food entrepreneurs to access the resources necessary to establish a food truck/food cart.

➤ Outreach to local community centers and places of worship to share the resources available.

MID TERM
➤ Business Incubation Services
➤ Restaurateur Mentorship

LONG TERM
➤ Work with community members and investors to develop a Food Hall/Incubator in or near downtown Monroe. Interest has already been expressed from Walton Mill to house the facility.

➤ Partnership with Athens Technical College Culinary Program

BUDGET

Item	Cost
Local Food-Related Events	$3,000-30,000/per event
Online Mobile Food Start Up Portal	$0-3,000
Food Hall	$250,000+

POSSIBLE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
➤ USDA Rural Development loans and/or grants
➤ Monroe Downtown Development Authority
➤ Georgia Cities Foundation Revolving Loan Fund
➤ Athens Technical College
➤ Community Development Block Grant
➤ Robert W. Woodruff Foundation
➤ Tax Increment Financing (TIF)/Tax Allocation Districts (TAD)
➤ National Main Street Program grants

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

- ➤ Local places of worship and other nonprofits with access to commercial kitchens
- ➤ Athens Tech
- ➤ Walton Mill
- ➤ Monroe Downtown Development Authority
- ➤ City of Monroe
- ➤ Chamber and Development Authority
- ➤ Flavors of Georgia
- ➤ Food Product Innovation and Commercialization Center
- ➤ Models to consider:
  - ▪ *Sweet Auburn Curb Market (Atlanta, GA)*
    - ➤ https://municipalmarketatl.com/
  - ▪ *Mae's Food Hall (Cullman, AL)*
    - ➤ https://maesfoodhall.com/
  - ▪ *Krog Street Market*
    - ➤ http://krogstreetmarket.com/

EXPECTED IMPACT

Downtown Monroe has a distinct advantage due to its eclectic, homegrown restaurants and small businesses already developed. However, rising costs due to lack of available space in the community has pushed out potential restaurants seeking to locate in Monroe or discouraged local restaurateurs from starting their business. The purpose of the Food Hall within the downtown community is to attract and accelerate new to the community and homegrown food options. With affordable startup costs for restaurants or existing restaurants looking to test a new market, this concept will allow for a more diverse set of business owners.

The impact of this project includes repositioning Monroe in the minds of locals and visitors as a vibrant, rural community that is supportive of startup food and drink concepts.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ➤ How can the new restaurants match the demographic in the community so more of the community feels comfortable visiting?
- ➤ How can the Food Hall bring in new, unique flavors and food concepts?
- ➤ How can the city encourage Monroe or Walton County grown produce and products to be used in the Food Hall?

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ➤ Increased diversity of small business owners
- ➤ Reduced turnover in stand-alone restaurants
- ➤ Increased food and entertainment offerings to community and visitors that may better reflect the demographics of the community
- ➤ Increased traffic and time spent at neighboring attractions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SECTION

3

RUSH FORWARD

CHALLENGE QUESTION

HOW CAN THE CITY OF MONROE BECOME A "LIFETIME COMMUNITY" THAT ENCOMPASSES EVERY GENERATION AND MAKES THEM WANT TO CALL MONROE HOME?

THE TEAM

Rashaad Ansley
Deputy Coroner,
Rockdale County Government
Conyers, GA

Yterenickia Bell
City Council Member, City of Clarkston
Clarkston, GA

George Best
Part-owner/Realtor,
Premier Properties of Dublin
Dublin, GA

Daphne Bond-Godfrey
Director, Urban Land Institute (ULI Atlanta)
Atlanta, GA

Lindsay Herring
Owner, SweetE's Dance, and Dance and
Drama Teacher, Brooks County High School
Quitman, GA

Amy Hunnewell
Director of Development, Team Up
Mentoring, Program Specialist, GUIDE, Inc.
Monroe, GA

Mary Long
Senior Community Relations Coordinator,
Oglethorpe Power Corporation
Tucker, GA

Jamie Nichols
Assistant Principal,
Walton County School District
Monroe, GA

Dontravious Simmons
Youth Development Coordinator,
Boys & Girls Club of Albany
Albany, GA

Chris Stallings
Wealth Advisor, Abundance
Monroe, GA

Abby Turano
Deputy Commissioner for International
Relations, Georgia Department of Economic
Development
Atlanta, GA

Taylor Walden
Rural Georgia Initiatives Project Manager,
Georgia Department of Economic
Development
Atlanta, GA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Graced with the charm of a small town with the infrastructure and opportunities of a larger community, Monroe and Walton County are perfectly located between two of Georgia's most prominent cities. However, even with the recent blossoming economy, there are still some shortcomings. After several tours, panel discussions, and private meetings, the echoing problem seemed to be an abundance of "bright flight" coupled with inadequate or unaffordable housing.

The Rush Monroe Forward group's mission was to develop a strategy to help Monroe and Walton County become a lifetime community. At its very core, a lifetime community is one that promotes the creation of home and sense of belonging, enabling mobility, building health and wellness, and fostering creative expression and lifelong learning. Through our three big ideas, we hope that by incentivizing development that promotes physical, social, mental, and economic wellbeing for people of all origins and abilities across the entire lifespan, that Monroe and Walton County can continue to see the growth and revitalization witnessed in recent years.

While programs and services exist in Monroe to begin fostering a lifetime community population, it is our recommendation that local government leaders empower their constituents to help them become engaged in the hard work of equitable community revitalization. Monroe needs to strive for an economy where all residents can reach their full potential through access to good schools, jobs, and housing options that are affordable to all while maintaining a high quality of life.

For Rush Forward's three big ideas, we start with community engagement as a cornerstone of building the future of Monroe; growing Monroe through quality of life initiatives like enhancing a walkable downtown district with fitness, art, and commerce; and finally, special attention was given to housing and how changing demographics can create demand and opportunity for diversified stock within multi-use neighborhoods and spurring density in Monroe's downtown core.

INTRODUCTION

Rush Forward has been challenged to come up with three big ideas to help the City of Monroe improve its quality of life. At a basic level, we are trying to tease out what impacts people's desire to live in Monroe and how the city can become a "lifetime community."

Demographically, Monroe faces the same challenges that rural communities across the country are facing – a fundamental shift in how we live, work, and play. Today, people crave the ability to walk to a vibrant downtown, local brewery, or park – and they will pay a premium to have those amenities. Unfortunately, individuals are hard-pressed to find these types of amenities in small-town America – and these towns have struggled to retain and attract new talent, businesses, and offer alternative types of housing options that are both more desirable and more affordable.

We propose to leverage the vision laid out in the city's most recent comprehensive development plan: "Monroe envisions a thriving community with a vibrant downtown at its center and revitalized neighborhoods connected to a variety of businesses via a network of greenspace and safe places for walking and bicycling."[1] It is Rush Forward's desire to make this vision a reality as we offer 3 big ideas:

1. **Engage Monroe** through a comprehensive community engagement plan that specifically targets young people as well as the diverse populations in the city, amplifying and empowering underrepresented voices on the future of Monroe.
2. **Grow Monroe** by making downtown Monroe the epicenter for business creativity, activism, entrepreneurship, and diversity, as well as an attraction for visitors and a home for residents.
3. **House Monroe** by creating the foundation of housing choice options for Monroe's long-term residents, workforce, and returning college graduates and talent seeking to call Monroe home.

Engage Monroe   **Grow Monroe**   **House Monroe**

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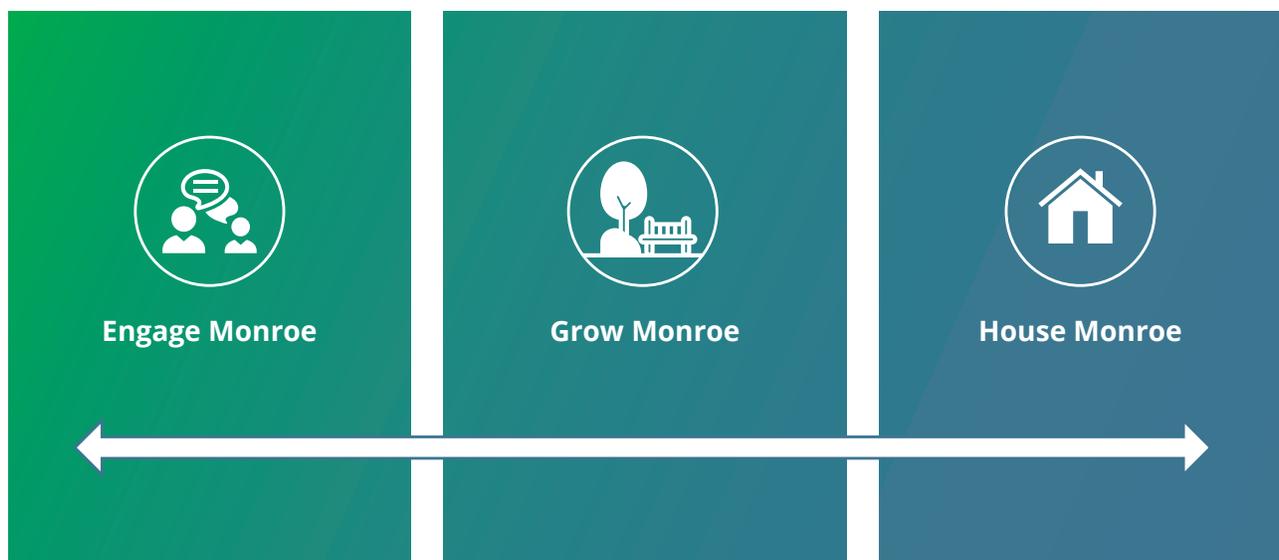
[1] *City of Monroe Comprehensive Development Plan (2017 Update). https://www.monroega.com/sites/default/files/fileattachments/code_department/page/1381/monroe_final_comprehensive_plan_2017.pdf*

ENGAGE MONROE

DESCRIPTION

A healthy and successful community is one with leaders who understand the priorities of all its citizens and craft policy that is supportive and reflective of their values. As Monroe continues to move forward, seizing opportunities that will allow it to become more successful while retaining its small-town charm, we believe leadership would benefit from an ongoing dialogue that includes more racially and economically diverse members of the community.

Interviewing dozens of community members representing a wide swathe of Monroe, from business owners and clergy to students and future business leaders, we heard a common theme of wanting to be more involved and wanting opportunities to serve and play a part in the future of Monroe.

It is projected that the U.S. population will continue to grow, age, and become more racially and ethnically diverse[2]. For Monroe to be considered a desirable community by future generations, the city should take proactive measures to be inclusive of its racial and ethnic communities. We propose a series of steps that will help reframe and reposition Monroe as a vibrant, welcoming home for all the populations and generations that make up this small community. With these recommendations, we hope that Monroe can demonstrate a dedication to evolving perceptions and engaging young people, which will strengthen the community's appeal across generations.

The Engage Monroe portion of our recommendation centers around the idea of Civic Engagement, giving a strategic voice, plus the tools and resources to become actively involved, to several diverse and representative groups of citizens.

Our recommendation is to first reinstitute an Office of Community Engagement in the city government in order to foster engagement and collaboration with all citizens. Phase II is the creation of four organizations that would be overseen by this office:
➤ Diversity Advisory Board
➤ Youth Council
➤ Young Professionals Program
➤ Walton County Citizens Academy

We believe that giving a diverse and representative group of citizens access, agency, structure, and resources allows individuals to not only learn more about their community, but also to have a strategic hand in shaping its future. These civic engagement programs naturally build community and encourage inclusion as members seek to address the needs of their peer group in the community.

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[2] *U.S. Census https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2018/demo/P25_1144.pdf*

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

PHASE 1: OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The cornerstone of this recommendation is the reinstatement of an Office of Community Engagement through the City of Monroe. This office would serve as a liaison between the broader community, the city administrator, the city departments, and the city council, and should be specifically dedicated to strengthening the culture of citizen engagement by finding meaningful ways for the community to help shape the city's priorities and decision making. Part of that work is finding and engaging pockets of the population that are not currently part of the decision-making processes.

As a strategy to foster engagement and collaboration, the Office of Community Engagement will oversee two citizen boards and two programs which will help to impact and inform future decisions by the City of Monroe and improve the quality and quantity of citizen participation opportunities.

DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD

"Leave the past in the past, and let's move towards a better future for Monroe" are words from Reverend Jerome Smith, an African American longtime business owner in Monroe. In the past, many have felt that the community voice was not successfully tuned in regard to the different cultures that can be found within it. The voices of minorities are often simply not as amplified as others due to a variety of challenges and traditions. It is vital to a community's growth and vitality to have all parties working together to find a common ground for conversation and to set common priorities for policies, programs, and growth. In order to address the issue, Monroe's leadership and the community at large must be able to hear these quiet voices.

Our country is increasingly multicultural and multiracial – in 1980, 80% of the population was white, but by 2044, it is projected that a majority of Americans will be people of color[3]. In Monroe, census estimates place the white population at 55%, the black population at 43%, and the remainder Hispanic/Latino or Asian[4]. Walton County is 77% white, 18% black, 4% Hispanic/Latino, and less than 2% Asian[5]. We can expect these communities to continue to grow in diversity, and Monroe/Walton County can stand to benefit in population growth as people in Atlanta look for nearby options without the stresses of city life.

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[3] *National Equity Atlas, http://nationalequityatlas.org/data-summaries*

[4] *U.S. Census*
   https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/monroecitygeorgia/PST045218#qf-flag-X

[5] *Walton Chamber of Commerce, http://www.waltonchamber.org/our-community/demographics.html*

Establishing a Diversity Advisory Board, comprised of community members representing a variety of populations within Monroe (race, gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, etc.) would sit everyone down at a table focusing on the future of Monroe. A seven-member board, overseen by the Office of Engagement, would be a voice to help set community values and priorities, recommending equity and inclusion strategies that strengthen connections among diverse communities living in Monroe. The seven individuals would be appointed by the Office of Engagement, including input from the City Council of Monroe and a formal application and nomination process. The group will focus on establishing and organizing activities and policies that would make Monroe a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable place to live.

YOUTH COUNCIL

This program will provide a voice for youth in the community by giving them an avenue to develop community programs and make recommendations to the city council. As an Advisory Board for the City of Monroe, this youth program would allow young people to work closely with the city council, mayor, City of Monroe employees, and other stakeholders to gain an understanding of how their local government functions, learn best practices in leadership and community engagement as well as represent their peers as youth representatives to the Council. Activities of the Youth Council would center around addressing the needs of young people in the City of Monroe while also providing more opportunities for their peers to become involved in and feel reflected in the growth of the city over time.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

In addition to fostering a healthy and active youth council, the city could attract and support young professionals by creating a Young Professionals Program. Participants in a Young Professionals Program would be connected to career opportunities in the area, grow their potential and visibility in the business community, hear from community business leaders, and find training and networking opportunities. Mirroring programs like the Columbus Young Professionals Club, the program would also provide local businesses with a pool of connected young people to consider for future employment and partnership. This program would be supported by local Young Gamechangers and the Walton Chamber of Commerce.

Young Professionals Club networking event in Columbus, Georgia

WALTON COUNTY CITIZENS ACADEMY

The Walton County Citizens Academy aims to develop and nurture informed and engaged residents, students, and business owners in Walton County. Participants will get a behind-the-scenes look at how Walton County government, businesses, and nonprofits provide necessary, high-quality services in the community. Participants will have the opportunity to interact with leaders in county and city government, visit local businesses to get a first-hand glimpse of how business impacts our county, spend time with nonprofits serving our community, and build a network with others who live, work, and play in Walton County.

Gwinnett 101 Citizens Academy - Gwinnett County, GA program

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
➤ Determine office location (Potentially housed in the proposed Grow Monroe Building)
➤ Determine supervising person(s) for Community Engagement Staff as well as how Community Engagement staff will formally report activities
➤ Create budgets for the Office of Community Engagement and each advisory board/program
➤ Hire necessary personnel:
  ▪ *Full-time Director of Community Engagement*
  ▪ *Part-time Community Engagement Coordinator*

DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD
➤ Office of Community Engagement will:
  ▪ *Conduct a needs assessment, starting with demographics and gaps in community engagement, including a focus group of underrepresented populations*
  ▪ *Work with city administrator and city council members to determine the voice and position the board will have with city council*
  ▪ *Assemble a recruitment committee comprised of community officials and other vested individuals, which will:*
    • Establish parameters, including nomination and application process for board members, regular meeting dates and locations, term lengths;
    • Develop a marketing strategy to advertise the board opportunity to the community, focusing on underrepresented population segments;
    • Reach out through churches, minority-owned businesses, non-profit groups, influential individuals, schools, and social media.
  ▪ *The Diversity Advisory Board will:*
    • Include a liaison position for city council members to rotate through so each member will have the opportunity to work closely with the board;
    • Make quarterly reports at city council meetings;
    • Create, publish, and promote an annual calendar including public events from across all communities;

• Develop a training program targeting young professionals;
• Partner with local schools to collaborate on educational programming, consider creating a "Big Brother/Big Sister" program;
• Develop a plan to help improve communication across all communities in Monroe.

"Better Together" Advisory Board in Decatur, Georgia

YOUTH COUNCIL
➤ Office of Community Engagement will:
  ▪ *Conduct a needs assessment; meet with local youth programs like Youth Leadership Walton, Youth Advocacy Board, and the Boys and Girls Club to determine areas of most need and likeliest involvement*
  ▪ *Survey community youth to determine the capacity of their desired involvement with city matters*
  ▪ *Assemble a steering committee including teachers/counselors or school administrators representing all area middle and high schools, which will:*
    • Establish parameters, including number of board members, regular meeting dates and locations, reporting methods, and term lengths;
    • Secure either city council funds or community sponsorship funds to launch programs through local grants and sponsorships;

- Develop a training program for participants addressing local government, meeting procedures, leadership, and team building;
- Determine projects or events where youth voice could be helpful.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

➤ Office of Community Engagement will work closely with the Walton Chamber of Commerce to:

- *Host focus groups with young professionals, local entrepreneurs and chamber to gather input and ideas for establishing a Young Professionals Program;*
- *Create a recruitment process for new members as well as determine the cost of dues;*
- *Develop a mission and vision for the Young Professional Program;*
- *Draft and finalize the setup of the Young Professionals Program including budget and development projects plan;*
- *Create and finalize a schedule of events and event sponsors/speakers. Schedule meetups, social events, and professional learning events for the group while utilizing the different venues in downtown Monroe (i.e.: Breweries, Town Green, Wayfarer Hotel, Your Pie, Cotton Cafe, Engine Room).*

WALTON CITIZEN'S ACADEMY

➤ Office of Community Outreach will:

- *Meet with City of Monroe and county officials to determine interest, including whether they would consider including an initiative in budget;*
- *Conduct community focus group to find out about what areas of city government and other city entities the community members most want or need to learn about;*
- *Recruit stakeholders from government, business, and non-profit sectors to build and support program;*
- *Determine transportation source;*
- *Jointly apply for Community Foundation grant;*
- *Determine participant qualifications and recruitment process;*
- *Plan program schedule with help of stakeholder;*
- *Promote program through media blitz as part of the recruitment process;*
- *Open the application process and select class participants.*

Youth Leadership Augusta

BUDGET

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
> One full time and one part-time staff person ($65,000/yr)

> Office supplies and equipment ($6,000)

Total Budget: $71,000

DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD
> Recruitment ($200)

> Training/Retreat ($1,500)

> 6 Meetings/Year (materials, meals, etc.), 15 members ($300)

> Initiatives Budget ($3,000)

Total Budget: $5,000

YOUTH COUNCIL
> Program Supplies (notebooks, nametags, pens, bags, etc.) ($300)

> Programmatic Meals ($10/person, per day; 10 people in a class at 6 sessions) ($1,000/year)

> Youth Council Training Opportunity ($2,000)

> Program or Event Materials ($3,000)

Total Budget: $6,300

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM
> Recruitment ($200)

> Program Supplies (notebooks, nametags, pens, bags, etc.) ($500)

> Programs or event materials ($1,000)

> Website/Social Media budget (Private business <$1,000)

> Light Appetizers and Drinks ($5/person, per day. 20 people in a class at 6 sessions) ($720/year)

> Youth Council Training Opportunity ($2,000)

Total Budget: $5,220

WALTON CITIZEN'S ACADEMY
> Bus Rental and Gas (in kind, potentially donated by community partner) ($2,000/year)

> Programmatic Meals ($15/person, per day; 20 people in a class at 6 sessions) ($2,400/year)

> Program Supplies (notebooks, nametags, pens, bags, etc.) ($300)

Total Budget: $4,700

EXPECTED IMPACT

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
> Engage and empower all residents to be more informed and involved.

> Increase access to city information and services by diverse communities.

> Increase opportunities for people to serve and contribute to life in Monroe.

> People of all backgrounds will have equitable access to opportunities to live, work and play.

> All residents will have access to meaningfully engage in their city throughout their life journeys, from school-age to seniors.

DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD
> Maintain, encourage, and reflect the diversity of race, ethnicity, income, culture, age, family type, etc. present in the City of Monroe while also promoting a culture of inclusion and diversity throughout the community.

> Strengthen communication and involvement in and among neighborhoods, city government, volunteer boards and commissions, community organizations, local businesses, and Monroe as a whole.

> By welcoming and encouraging diversity and inclusion, Monroe will be more likely to attract businesses that specifically value these qualities and set it apart from other equally sized and situated cities.

YOUTH COUNCIL
> Allow City of Monroe to gain insight regarding the community's "young" dynamic and forward-thinking perspective.

> Enable young people to build leadership skills and learn about civic responsibility.

> Local leaders will begin to envision youth in a meaningful, visible, and advisory role.

> To prepare youth for a lifetime of public and community service and understanding of municipal government.

> Young people will begin to impact how the City of Monroe serves young people – making the city overall a more youth-friendly space.

> As young people are given the opportunity to shape the community in which they live, they will begin to see it more as "theirs" and be more likely to call Monroe their home in the future.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM
> Fill Monroe with gifted young professionals that feel connected to their town and help the city build an exceptional place to live.
> Give local businesses a pipeline of young talent.
> Help young professionals improve their networking skills, expand contact bases, and advance careers, acquiring knowledge of businesses across Monroe and Walton County without the financial burden and restrictions of belonging to the chamber of commerce.
> Enhance the quality of life for the community.

WALTON CITIZEN'S ACADEMY
> Participants will have the knowledge to become more involved and engaged in their community while learning more about community issues and concerns. Involvement and engagement could include volunteering at local nonprofits, joining the local chamber of commerce, participating in community events or serving on local advisory boards.
> Improve the quality and quantity of citizen participation with an emphasis on underrepresented communities in local government.
> Improve the lines of communication and relationship between residents, business owners, and their local government.

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES
> Fundraising and Development: Youth-led fundraiser, small business sponsors
> Private Funding: Walmart Distribution, Takeda (formerly Shire), Walton EMC
> Public Funding: Walton County Board of Commissioners, Monroe City Council
> Grant Funding: Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta – Civil Engagement Fund Grant
> Potential Partnership: Walton County Chamber of Commerce, Walton County Board of Commissioners, City of Monroe, City of

Loganville, City of Social Circle, City of Walnut Grove, Municipal Association, Walton County Development Authority, UGA Fanning Institute for Leadership Development

MEASURES OF SUCCESS
DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD
> Community Survey questions with demographic data communicate that "minority" and underrepresented populations feel they have an increased role in their community, participate in downtown events, and feel reflected in their city government

YOUTH COUNCIL
> In post-session evaluations, Youth Council Members report a higher likeliness of moving back to Monroe following graduation
> In post-session evaluations, Youth Council Members report feeling that their community values them
> Success stories of youth participants
> Increased volunteer hours

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
> A regular membership of 30+ members of the Young Professionals program within the first year
> Increased volunteer hours reported by members
> Success stories of young professionals

WALTON CITIZEN'S ACADEMY
> Participants reporting in a post-training evaluation that they feel more connected to the city in which they live
> Participants reporting in a post-training evaluation that they are more likely to volunteer, serve, or participate in city government or with community partners after the training
> The number of Walton Citizen's Academy graduates who volunteer, serve or participate in city government or community partners

GROW MONROE

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

A city's downtown is its most influential portrait. Downtown is home to a city's most prominent landmarks, distinctive characteristics, and unique neighborhoods, offering extraordinary insights into its storied past, present, and future. Revitalizing a downtown may be a challenge, but a thoughtful approach can lead to a vibrant epicenter for business creativity, activism, entrepreneurship, diversity, an attraction for visitors, as well as a home for residents.

Despite their small footprint (average 3% of citywide land), downtown areas are economically in-demand, accounting for 11% of assessed land value, 30% of citywide employment, 40% of citywide office space, and a disproportionately large percentage of citywide tax revenue.

Monroe's Downtown Development Authority and its Board have done outstanding work pursuing their vision to showcase the city's rich history, celebrate local entrepreneurship, and encourage downtown living while preserving its small-town charm. We hope to further this work with four proposed phases of downtown development.

Monroe's downtown has an important and unique role in economic and social development. This 1 square mile district houses several service and governmental entities in buildings better suited for new retail and restaurants. By broadening the scope of the downtown experience, Monroe can better serve as the engine for the local economy, but will be poised to act as much more. The Grow Monroe plan will strategically improve the downtown's image and character represented to the rest of the world, while becoming a more exceptional neighborhood that belongs to and is shared by all citizens.

GROW MONROE – PHASE I
### GROW MONROE MIXED-USE SPACE

Grow Monroe is a multi-use space proposed in the current home of the Monroe Police Precinct. Based on the tenets of collaborative workspaces with open floor plans and located at 116 South Broad Street, the proposed site would bring more people to Monroe's downtown and would improve and enhance the current entrepreneurial landscape.

Grow Monroe's main second floor, directly accessed from Broad Street, would feature two entrances: one opening into a small business incubator and the other into a workforce cultivation space (both programs proposed the Young Gamechangers). Additionally, the first floor would house two conference rooms, a workspace/ design center, dedicated and as-needed offices, open air workstations, and a lecture hall space for classes and engagements in the existing courtroom. The space would host both private and public Wi-Fi and office spaces would be outfitted for immediate use.

With direct access from the Wayne Street side, the first floor would house the visitor's center, public restrooms, and the parking/storage/rental of bikes and materials for the parks department. By moving the visitor's center to a more central location, it can better engage local tourism suppliers and the greater community.

To increase the salability of the space, the Grow Monroe building would feature the addition of a third story, complete with a rooftop outdoor classroom. Indoors, the third floor would largely be a multipurpose space, with tasteful aesthetics and technology capability that make it flexible enough to host a business conference or a family gathering, adding to the profitability of the space. The outdoor classroom would feature shallow amphitheater seating, perfect for class trips or lectures. Solar canopies would cover the amphitheater space, adding to the green aspect of the building. Rental of telescopes would be available at the first-floor visitor's center for use in the parks or on the rooftop.

The outdoor façade and alleyway would mirror the classic decor and style found throughout the rest of Monroe's downtown district. Digital signage would be found near the second-floor entrance at the corner of the alleyway (Broad Street) and first floor entrance (Wayne Street). By engaging a company such as Soofa Signs, the visitor's center would be able to generate revenue while engaging more visitors and citizens. Outdoor staircases would allow patrons to access upper levels of the building uninterrupted while benches, fitness equipment, art, and bike racks in the alleyway would encourage locals and visitors alike to continue exploring the walkable business district and connected parks.
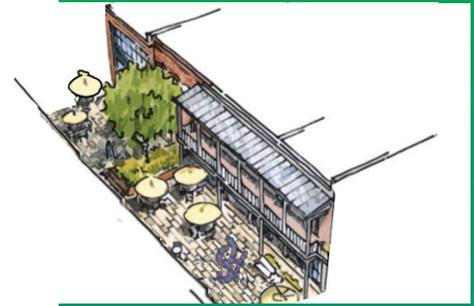
Alley Rendering of Grow Monroe by Lindsay Herring

Incubator Shared Space
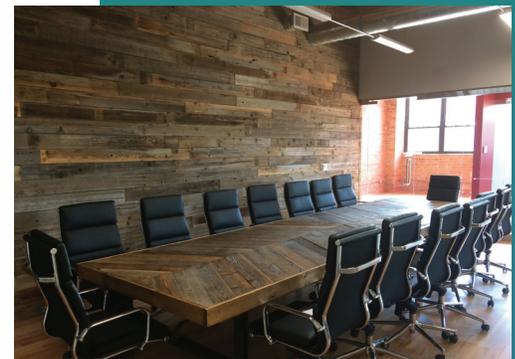
Sample Conference Room Space

Sample Office Space

Widened Brick Sidewalks

Art/Sculpture Walk

GROW MONROE – PHASE II
WALKABLE AND CONNECTED BUSINESS DISTRICT

A major factor in small business success, specifically within a downtown district, is walkability, which according to Strong Towns, "can create fertile soil for entrepreneurship to thrive." The City of Monroe has already done a remarkable job of adding sidewalks down Spring Street and updating existing ones down Broad Street. In order to increase local traffic to the retail sections of downtown and connect downtown to current and future parks and trails, we recommend that the city continue these investments in expanding and enhancing their walkable business district.

Outdoor Stationary Fitness Equipment

To strengthen Monroe's walkable business district, we recommend widening more sidewalks connecting into the Broad Street section of downtown. By adding updated public benches and planters, shoppers and visitors to the downtown areas would be encouraged to stay longer. An increase in appropriate signage and the addition of more trash and recycling receptacles throughout downtown would ease congestion and help with area maintenance. To encourage residents to return to their downtown, trails and parks should be better connected to downtown – we recommend the use of stationary fitness equipment, sculptures and art installations, and child-friendly outdoor instruments. Finally, walking maps and audio walking tours, available at the visitor's center, would highlight historic landmarks and local lore, promote local businesses, and embrace the community's diversity.
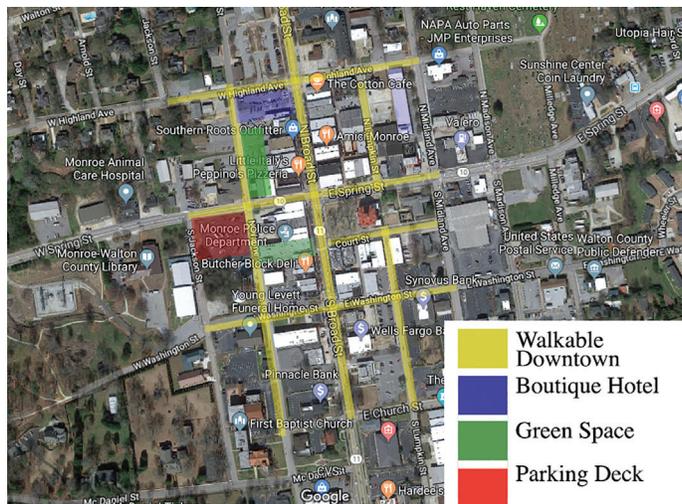

Trash and Recycling Bins with Signage

Downtown Wayfinding Signage and Lighting

Decorative Planters

Walkable Downtown Area

Decorative Benches with Logo

PARKING DECK AND PEDESTRIAN CROSSWALK

While Monroe's growing downtown may not have the imminent need for more or better parking, we recommend considering the future need and importance of a parking structure. By adding a three-story, 300-spot parking garage as Phase III of the Grow Monroe Strategic Plan, the City of Monroe will be aligning itself to leverage future growth. As flexibility is key in the rapidly changing technological times we live in, we envision a parking garage as a universal structure that can easily adapt to future commercial or residential uses on the same footprint if parking requirements change in future decades.

The first floor of the parking deck would be dedicated, free parking for downtown shoppers or local festival goers. Floors two and three would be designated parking for retailers or downtown employees until the completion of Phase IV of the Grow Monroe Strategic Plan, when there would be dedicated parking for the proposed boutique hotel. To keep the aesthetic integrity of downtown Monroe, the parking garage would feature a brick façade with dedicated mural space on the western and southern walls. The parking deck would also feature rooftop level solar canopies to source electrical needs throughout the deck, including six electric car charging stations. A covered crosswalk would usher people directly into the Grow Monroe visitors' center and provide a shady space during festivals and events.

GROW MONROE – PHASE IV

BOUTIQUE HOTEL

One distinct area of need in Monroe is the lack of hotel space for visitors. Quality options in town are limited to small B&Bs and higher-capacity hotels ten miles away. This city is a booming wedding destination with a growing industry and tourism base, and Monroe and Walton County are losing out on a hugely valuable tax base. We recommend building a boutique hotel in downtown Monroe.

With a Wayne Street Parking Deck replacing the need for the parking lot at Spring and Broad Streets, downtown Monroe now has the ideal location for a 25-room boutique hotel, complete with infill retail space on the bottom level. The addition of a boutique hotel would change the landscape of downtown Monroe, by spurring the location of more upscale dining options, higher local retail sales, and sustained entry and mid-level jobs for local residents. We believe the opening of a small, high-quality hotel would help solidify Monroe as a tourism destination.

Boutique Hotel
Rendering by
Lindsay Herring

BUDGET

Item	Costs
Phase I: Grow Monroe	
Purchase and expansion	Estimate: $900,000
Renovation, design, outfitting	Estimate: $500,000
Utilities, maintenance	Estimate: $25,000/year
	Total Estimate: $1,425,000
Phase II: Walkable Business District	
Sidewalks, trail connections, lighting and trees	Estimate: $2,400,000
Signage for 10	Estimate: >$30,000
20 each of trash cans, planters, and benches; 10 bike racks	Estimate: $77,290
Art installations 10 on a 3-year rotation	Estimate: >$50,000/3 yrs
Map and Audio Guide	Estimate: >$1,000
Fitness equipment (21 units)	Estimate: $90,000
Maintenance (salary and materials for downtown)	Estimate: $30,000/yearly
	Total Estimate: $2,678,290
Phase III: Parking Deck and Pedestrian Crosswalk	
300 parking spots at $50/sq ft	Estimate: $4,500,000
6 electric charging stations w/installation	Estimate: $25,000
Covered pedestrian crosswalk	Estimate: $500,000
	Total Estimate: $5,025,000
Phase IV: Boutique Hotel	
25 rooms (using the national average)	Estimate: $4,633,043
	Total Estimate: $4,633,043
	Total Budget: $13,761,333

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

PRE-PLANNING
- Research comparable community projects in similar sized communities throughout Georgia and surrounding states
- Meet with local entrepreneurs to assess needs and receive initial feedback
- Meet with local business-centric organizations (i.e. Chamber of Commerce, Development Authority) to discuss viable options and plans for implementation and refinement
- Meet with youth groups (i.e. School FBLA) to discuss student-driven invention and entrepreneurship campaigns
- Meet with local leadership and entrepreneurs to gather ideas for funding and development
- Create and design the space and refine initial plans for Grow Monroe

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

- Present the location for Grow Monroe during community meetings
- Develop more in-depth sketches of the walkable business district and connecting trails and determine the scope of the project
- Establish a steering committee to determine a desired plan of action and monitor progress
- Create a planning and implementation committee made up of all partnership members to develop and implement the project
- Create, draft, and finalize the Grow Monroe Strategic Implementation Plan including budget and development projects

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE I

- Secure funds to purchase and renovate 116 South Broad Street
- Accept bids from local contractors to handle the scope of work

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

LOCAL FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT

Local sponsorship through "in-kind" donations (i.e. tables, computers, networking set up), prepaid membership dues, non-dues revenue (i.e. walking map ad space, multipurpose room rental, personalized stamped bricks for sidewalk expansion, individual sponsorship of benches, planters, fitness equipment, musical instruments), and partnerships with area cities on sculpture sharing on a 5-7 year rotation.

SPLOST

Local tax to fund future special projects.

BOOTS TO BUSINESS (B2B) FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

This funding opportunity is addressed exclusively to Boots to Business (B2B) grantees. Through this program, the SBA supports your organization for a period of 5 years.

FEDERAL AND STATE TECHNOLOGY (FAST) PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

This is a one-year funding opportunity for organizations to execute state/regional programs that increase the number of SBIR (innovation)/STTR (research and development) proposals; increase the number of SBIR/STTR awards; and better prepare SBIR/STTR awardees for commercial success.

VETERANS BUSINESS OUTREACH CENTERS

The Veterans Business Outreach Centers Cooperative Agreement provides quality counseling assistance and training events, particularly B2B events to transitioning service personnel and spouses of veterans, veteran and service-disabled small business owners and entrepreneurs.

GEORGIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

$1,000-7,000 dollar-for-dollar matching grants available for projects which enhance or establish the arts in Georgia.

OUR TOWN

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' creative placemaking grants program. These grants support projects that integrate the arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities by advancing local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes. Successful Our Town projects ultimately lay the groundwork for systemic changes that sustain the integration of arts, culture, and design into strategies for strengthening communities.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Development Authority
- Downtown Business Owners Group
- Kiwanis Club
- Rotary Club
- FBLA
- Local businesses for donations of skills/training and goods/materials
- Existing Incubators: e.g. Valdosta
- University of Georgia

EXPECTED IMPACT

The Grow Monroe project has the potential for sweeping economic impact. By promoting and driving customers to downtown businesses adding to job creation and a higher standard of living; by enhancing the community's use of the downtown area through the walkable business district, complete with a culturally diverse art walk, varied entertainment, and exercise equipment; by engaging citizens and visitors by highlighting the city's rich and diverse history; by connecting the downtown business district with trails and parks and the historic walking tours; by attracting and retaining more tourists and visitors with the addition of a boutique hotel space, the Grow Monroe plan will attract new residents and encourage existing residents to make Monroe and Walton County a lifelong community. The impact on the business sector and tourism industry would be substantial, and by adding to the overall quality of life, we believe many more people would be more likely to choose Monroe and Walton County as their home, now and forever.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

While downtown sales and traffic are not measured now by the Downtown Development Association, some data has been solicited by private retail credit card sales, so there is a partial baseline. It is expected that the implementation of each of the four phases of Grow Monroe would have a significant increase on the daily number of visitors to downtown Monroe. Once outfitted to track the number of locals and tourists visiting the walkable downtown district each day, the visitor's center will be a viable entity for research and measurement.

BUILD MONROE'S HOUSING CHOICE AND HOUSING OPTIONS

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

How will the community create housing opportunities that ensure Monroe is a lifetime, multigenerational community for residents across the socioeconomic spectrum? It needs to start with a housing strategy and plan that enables production and preservation for a mix of housing stocks, types, and densities. Affordable housing is a major challenge for communities across the country and Monroe is no exception. There are several types of housing options that Monroe lacks that would help to spur density in the downtown core – possibilities like infill mixed-use development, triplexes, duplexes, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). A creative approach to housing options would also provide quality affordable housing options for Monroe's lowest-income renters. These housing types would blend into the character of the community and underscore the vision for making Monroe a more livable, multigenerational, "lifetime community."

In order for Monroe's community vision to come to life to meet the needs of residents and attract newcomers, two major themes need to be addressed by a variety of public and private sector actors:

1. Address the substandard housing options
2. Increase quality rental options and housing choice for both renters and homeowners

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

1) ADDRESS THE SUBSTANDARD HOUSING

In 2014, Harvard researchers published a study[7] about an individual's zip code being a better predictor of life expectancy than their own genetic code[8]. Why? Because they found a strong correlation between where you live and your access to opportunity, jobs, quality housing, transportation, and health outcomes[9]. The CDC took these findings and ran a similar study in Atlanta in 2018 which measured life expectancy outcomes for individuals living in Bankhead, a predominantly African American, low-income neighborhood on the westside of Atlanta and Buckhead, a largely white, affluent one only 10 miles away. The results were astounding. Residents living in Buckhead had a life expectancy that was 25 years higher than those residents living in Bankhead.

"These differences are not only related to individual behaviors, but, more importantly, the political investments, or lack thereof, in communities that result in poorer housing, lower community economic and workforce development and educational achievement. All of these issues result in the connection between where people live and how healthy they are." [10]

This is an especially acute finding for a small town like Monroe, which struggles with quality housing options and housing choice for residents across the socioeconomic spectrum. Our group saw and heard some alarming housing anecdotes in Monroe:

- During the community tour, it was cited several times that a few individuals own approximately ~1,300 units in Monroe/Walton County that are considered substandard, with significant maintenance issues. Even if the families who occupy these units qualify for public assistance, the housing stock does not meet the minimum criteria for section 8 or voucher eligibility.
- We heard that families who live in these rentals fear retribution for reporting on the maintenance issues – things like broken windows or holes in the roof, lack of insulation, or broken plumbing – and because of them, they often pay up to the equivalent of a month's rent in utility cost – an indicator that would make these families utility-cost burdened[11].
- We learned about a family who had raw sewage leaking into their kitchen sink but were afraid to report this to the landlord due to fear of being evicted.
- We heard that families who endure these living conditions are afraid to find better quality housing because they are so utility-cost burdened that they don't understand that moving to an energy-efficient unit would dramatically decrease those utility cost.

Unfortunately, the entire state of Georgia lags behind the rest of the country in providing basic tenant-based protections essential to maintaining healthy housing. According to Elizabeth Appley, an attorney with Georgia Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, "Georgia is the only state [in the country] that does not provide a warranty of habitability,"[12] meaning rental property meets basic living standards like those needed to qualify for subsidies under the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

At the heart of addressing the substandard housing issue is that Monroe has an unusually high poverty rate, which outpaces both Walton County and the State of Georgia, according to Monroe's Comprehensive Development Plan using U.S. Census Data[13]. Housing is foundational to breaking the cycle of poverty that is often multigenerational. By taking measures to improve the quality of Monroe's substandard housing stock, the city would send a message that it doesn't want this type of housing in this community, paving the way for more significant private investment and development. We believe these actions will increase the overall quality of life, housing choice, economic opportunity, and livability in Monroe.

Homes from a community tour of Monroe on June 7, 2019. Photo Credit: Daphne Bond-Godfrey.

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[7] *Where is the Land of Opportunity? The Geography of Intergenerational Mobility in the United States. https://www.nber.org/papers/w19843*

[8] *America's Zip Code Inequality. Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/americas-zip-code-inequality/*

[9] *This research is part of Harvard University's Opportunity Insights Project on Social Mobility.*

[10] *Between Buckhead and Bankhead, life expectancy has a 25-year gap. Reporter Newspapers. October 6, 2018. https://www.reporternewspapers.net/2018/10/06/between-buckhead-and-bankhead-life-expectancy-has-a-25-year-gap/*

[11] *Explaining the unique energy burden of low-income households. https://aceee.org/blog/2016/05/explaining-unique-energy-burden-low*

[12] *Bill would protect tenants facing unhealthy living conditions. Marietta Daily Journal. March 5, 2019. https://www.mdjonline.com/news/bill-would-protect-tenants-facing-unhealthy-living-conditions/article_bda0822a-3f84-11e9-b3f0-571793f06596.html*

[13] *City of Monroe Comprehensive Development Plan (2017 Update). https://www.monroega.com/sites/default/files/fileattachments/code_department/page/1381/monroe_final_comprehensive_plan_2017.pdf*

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase quality housing, code enforcement, and reporting measures

Implement a **Quality Housing Ordinance** for the city and county that creates a tax for landowners (set by the Monroe City Council/City Administrator) who don't maintain the quality of their properties to the Housing Quality Standards[14] required by HUD and/or the Atlanta Housing Code[15]. Both of these examples address habitability issues (decaying or leaking roofs, holes in the floor, broken windows, sewage issues, rodent infestation, or other unsanitary living conditions as a result of deferred/no maintenance).

- *For blighted and abandoned properties, city/county staff would leverage membership within the Georgia Municipal Association to utilize the Blight Reduction and Redevelopment Toolkit[16] and case studies that would be beneficial to Monroe/Walton County on how to redevelop and what tools and strategies would be good for Monroe to employ.*

> The city and county should implement a **rental registry** that mandates that all landlords register properties to ensure adequate inspection by a city/county staffer before they can rent. The rental registry would be tied to the housing standards set in the Quality Housing Ordinance and begin to chip away at dilapidated and hazardous housing options for residents. If a property owner fails to register, they can be fined at the current monthly market-rate rent of the property and in perpetuity until the property is properly registered. This fine would need to be approved by the Monroe City Council/County Administrator. Case studies of rental registries can be found in Louisville, Kentucky; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Austin, Texas.

- *In the Raleigh, North Carolina example, the city passed a Rental Dwelling Registration Ordinance to ensure minimum housing standards in tenant-occupied properties and made it "unlawful to rent, receive rental income from or offer to rent a dwelling within the City's limits without first registering the property. This registration created a database of the location and the ownership of Raleigh's residential rental properties. The City can use this database as an effective resource to promote responsible management, provide a safe habitat for residents, safeguard property values, expedite housing repairs and provide a tool for prompt contact with the owners or managers from Police, Fire, Emergency and the Inspections Departments when issues or emergencies develop."[17]*

- *Best practices for rental registration systems can be found through the Center for Community Progress and include:*
  1. Making the system cost effective for the city but not a revenue source. Ensure fees cover operating costs;
  2. Automate the system;
  3. Ensure the registration system is not burdensome to property owners, with minimal fees and paperwork.

Elevate renters' rights programs

> Launch a **renters' rights education campaign** that will help Monroe's renters understand their basic rights outlined in recently passed state law HB 346[18] which protects renters reporting maintenance issues and punishes landlords who try to evict them or unnecessarily raise rents. To remain neutral, this campaign should be led by Monroe's housing coalition which is laid out in the next section with representation from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors.

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[14] *Housing Quality Standards FAQ. https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_9143.PDF*

[15] *Atlanta Housing Code Enforcement Section. http://www.atlantapd.org/services/community-services/office-of-code-enforcement*

[16] *Georgia Municipal Association Blight and Redevelopment Toolkit. https://www.gmanet.com/Advice-Knowledge/Blight-Redevelopment-Toolkit.aspx*

[17] *City of Raleigh North Carolina Rental Dwelling Registration. https://www.communityprogress.net/filebin/pdf/toolkit/CITY_OF_RALEIGH_rental_registration.pdf*

[18] *Renter Protections Signed Into Georgia Law. https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/renter-protections-signed-into-georgia-law/gMrsQyM555UaRQyGP9R7LJ/*

Explore a land bank model and programs that encourage homeownership for those with limited means

> City of Monroe to explore the feasibility of a **Land Bank Authority** which would have the ability to acquire, manage, and sell vacant and abandoned properties. Land banks allow the restoration of properties that have code violations, title complications, or have been foreclosed on. Typical reasons to create a land bank include large inventories of abandoned/vacant property with little market value, chronic code violations, title problems, and the need for more local control.

> Direct more resources toward the frequency of the **Housing Expo in Monroe** (to be quarterly) which currently happens on an annual basis to have more regular programming that helps Monroe's low-income population understand the basics of homeownership, budgeting, foreclosure prevention, and first-time homebuyer assistance programs. The city could partner with UGA Extension and local banks for additional coordinated programming.

> **Support and expand homeownership programs** – a key goal of Monroe's Comprehensive Development Plan and ARC's LCI reports is to increase homeownership rates.

  ▪ *Explore homeownership program through USDA's Single-Family Housing Direct Program[19] which is the only federal program targeted toward low-income rural families. Many parts of Monroe's downtown core are eligible (i.e. Monroe's City Hall and the surrounding neighborhood is designated as an eligible area);*

  ▪ *The city could provide an incentive such as waived property taxes for builders or developers (like Hope Monroe) purchasing blighted, abandoned, and foreclosed properties in exchange for maintaining affordability;*

  ▪ *Monroe residents to support the statewide ballot measure (HB 344) in November 2020 to approve a tax exemption for nonprofits like Habitat for Humanity from paying taxes on property being used to build, repair, or lease single-family homes to further the organization's charitable mission;*

  ▪ *To keep homes affordable, non-profit builders could utilize volunteer labor (possibly through partnership with students at Athens Tech or local high schools in exchange for course credits in construction, architecture, and design).*

2) INCREASE QUALITY HOUSING FOR ALL MONROE RESIDENTS

One major theme that ran through Rush Forward's initial site visits was the lack of quality housing to attract and retain talent. Monroe desperately needs housing options that offer a wider array of amenities closer to the downtown core – including 'missing middle' product types that diversify the current housing stock. The new Madison Davis neighborhood is the only development of this kind currently underway in downtown Monroe. Continuing on that momentum, Rush Forward wants to reiterate that any new housing strategies need to diversify the current housing stock and align with the goals of Monroe's Comprehensive Development Plan and the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) update to increase walkability and vibrancy of Monroe's downtown.

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[19] *Single Family Housing Direct HomeLoans. USDA. https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-direct-home-loans*

City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan

It is Rush Forward's belief that increasing quality housing in Monroe should focus on:

1. Long-term members of the community
2. Monroe's workforce (teachers, fire, police, city staff)
3. Young families and those purchasing their first homes
4. College graduates returning to Monroe and talent recruitment
5. Senior housing options – including those who want to age in place

A community vision is instrumental to spurring local housing production – we want to get all the right actors on the same page with a shared goal and aspirational "north star." Look to examples of this being done across the region like OneHall[20] – a coalition of 40+ partners in Gainesville/Hall County who meet to create solutions that support adequate, affordable, and available housing for those making up to 250% of the federal poverty line (in Hall County/Gainesville is $60,000 for a family of 4 and below) with housing options that cannot exceed $892/month. Another outstanding example in the region is HouseATL[21] – a public, private, and philanthropic collaborative of 80+ partners working together for a housing affordability action plan for the City of Atlanta, with a substantial matched investment between the public and private sectors. Today, the city is already implementing several pieces of HouseATL's 23 recommendations.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS
Create a community vision and evaluate incentives that align with housing goals

➤ Monroe to create a community vision for affordable housing through a 'coalition of the willing.' This coalition would need community champions and include representatives from the public, private, and philanthropic sectors. Look to HouseATL and OneHall as examples of communities which have successfully done this and to see why a shared vision is important to help crystallize an execution plan and priorities.

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[20] OneHall. United Against Poverty. https://www.unitedwayhallcounty.org/one-hall/

[21] HouseATL. https://houseatl.org/

- Hire a consulting firm to do a study to understand the pent-up demand for workforce housing and at what product types. According to an Atlanta-based consulting firm, a study like this might cost between $20,000-25,000. This study could examine area median income levels (Monroe is part of the Atlanta MSA which doesn't translate), salaries by occupation, and housing costs throughout the City/County in order to determine how many residents struggle with housing affordability. A market study of possible sites for workforce/affordable housing could also be undertaken, as well as a review of local incentives and financial tools and map those to housing needs.

Craft a plan to produce 'missing middle' housing

- Through the recently passed ADU ordinance in Monroe – the City Planning Department could pre-approve four to five ADU designs that comply with zoning and market to homeowners and builders to create more 'missing middle' housing. Because the ordinance requires one of the two properties to be owner-occupied, there is a built-in incentive for the ADUs to be maintained alongside the existing property. Use Encinitas, CA as a case study where they recently passed the Permit Ready ADU program[22] that expedites permits and waives all development fees associated with the pre-approved ADU, saving the homeowner thousands of dollars in pre-construction cost.

- Utilize the Infill Overlay District to build 'missing middle' options and mixed-use housing. The city could mock-up or demonstrate what types of housing and uses could go there through a lunch and learn series to educate developers and homebuilders on the benefits and incentives available to develop/redevelop.

- One demonstration project for the Infill Overlay District could be the public housing properties on East Washington Street. A key recommendation from Monroe's LCI in 2008 was to find ways to support the Housing Authority in redeveloping the Washington Street property into a mixed-income, higher-density housing option adjacent to downtown Monroe.

MID-LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS
Housing coalition along with city staff explore how public-private partnerships can be structured/leveraged to build inclusive communities through Opportunity Zone Funds[23], Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)[24], or Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)[25]. Look to other communities in Georgia that have utilized these incentives to build mixed-income communities (like Gainesville, GA). Two projects in Gainesville could act as excellent success stories:

- *Walton Summit, a 252-unit apartment community was built with a mix of public housing funds, LIHTC, and CDBG funds. About 80% of the units meet various affordability requirements and 20% are market-rate. Please note the Monroe Housing Authority has an incredible opportunity to use this as a case study to redevelop existing, older stock of housing authority properties and to spur density close to the city center – aligning with a key goal in Monroe's Comprehensive Development Plan for a walkable, downtown district.*

- *The Enclave, Gainesville's first development in a Tax Allocation District (TAD) which was previously 13 abandoned homes, is now 45 townhomes renting for $1,200/per month and are fully booked – another demonstration of the high demand.*

- *Because Monroe is already a GICH community – LIHTC deals could be more attractive to developers since it helps with the 9% scoring.*

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[22] *Encinitas Offers Pre-Approved Granny Flats to Save on Permit Fees. NBC San Diego. January 21, 2019. https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Encinitas-to-Offer-Homeowners-a-504658272.html*

[23] *City of Monroe Opportunity Zone Application Map. Georgia DCA. https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/monroeoz.pdf*

[24] *What is a Tax Allocation District? Invest Atlanta. https://www.investatlanta.com/developers/opportunities-incentives/tax-allocation-district-financing*

[25] *Housing Tax Credit Program. Georgia DCA. https://www.dca.ga.gov/safe-affordable-housing/rental-housing-development/housing-tax-credit-program-lihtc*

➤ The city to facilitate a public-private partnership to spur development of a demonstration project in the heart of downtown Monroe. The city would contribute the land or defer payment of the land until after development – potentially saving the project 20-30% on overall cost/initial capital outlay. The city would need to assess the feasibility of this project on the property behind the Community Building on Davis street – land is roughly 1 acre and could share parking with the adjacent community building. Rush Forward proposes the demonstration project as a cottage court development (as seen below) which would utilize four 50 x 150 parcels (~30,000 sq ft or ¾ of an acre). These types of communities are being built all over Georgia (currently in the City of Decatur[26], and being proposed in Clarkston, GA[27], Thomasville, GA[28], and Madison, GA[29]).

- *Funding source could be a CHIP grant for new construction (up to $600,000).*
- *The smaller footprint of the cottage court development would conform to Monroe's existing zoning codes in the Infill Overlay District. A potential variance would be needed to allow the units to utilize more shared parking options with the community center and reducing the parking count from 1.5 to 1 space per unit.*
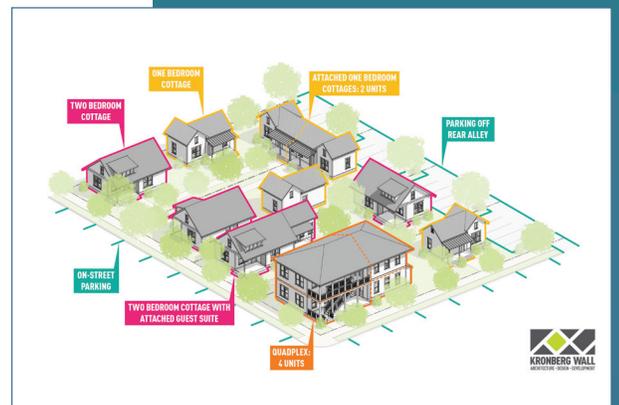

Walton Summit

Credit: Project rendering for City of Clarkston. From Microlife Institute.

Credit: Image from Kronberg Wall Prototype Pilot Project Rendering

[26] *Decatur Cottage Court. https://www.skcollaborative.com/case-study/decatur-cottage-court*

[27] *This "pocket neighborhood" has 8 houses on a lot, instead of one McMansion. Fast Company. May 14, 2019. https://www.fastcompany.com/90348777/this-pocket-neighborhood-has-8-houses-on-a-lot-instead-of-one-mcmansion*

[28] *'Cottage Court' housing idea proposed in Thomasville. WALB News. February 22, 2018. https://www.walb.com/story/37570550/cottage-court-housing-idea-proposed-in-thomasville/*

[29] *Jefferson Street Cottage. https://www.madisonga.com/580/Jefferson-Street-Cottages*

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

PRE-PLANNING

➤ Review the city's budget and indicate programs and initiatives that the city could invest in (or direct funds toward from the above list) that would be viable and beneficial for residents to understand the need for housing and options for implementation.

➤ Discuss and create a phased timeline for housing development in Monroe and options based on current and future zoning maps that align with established plans.

➤ Schedule meetings with key stakeholders in the community to obtain information, understand willingness from the city and public/private investors to proceed with development, and become educated on any limitations to the recommendations that we have provided (this may require the city to hire consultants/housing experts).

➤ Help prepare the framework for citizen input and visioning sessions that will be beneficial to illustrate the commitment from the city of hearing from all residents on the issue.

➤ Work with planning director to identify a key site where the city has control of the land near some kinds of amenities (i.e. the proposed rail-trail or land behind the community center). A key site could be a great demonstration project. If necessary, get the mayor to call a special meeting to discuss the map/key site with the residents to gain input and make changes before aligning with partners.

➤ Hire a consultant to do a study/high-level strategy for the land/key site prior to implementation for housing developments to be provided additional recommendations for types of developments, uses, and housing that can be implemented.

➤ Work with the mayor/city council to find a consultant to conduct a housing inventory and provide strategic recommendations, including the ones listed above, and develop a legislative packet to include ordinance to prepare for the housing changes – ordinances should include but are not limited to: Amend the Code of Ordinances of the City of Monroe by adding an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and zoning reform ordinances, including zoning updates.

➤ Amendments to the ordinances about or related to housing should begin within the next 3-6 months to increase development and provide rationale for strategic partnerships with private-public partnerships that can see the vision that the zoning and housing will have on any foreseeable projects.

PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

➤ Conduct a community assessment with the assistance from city staff and local GICH team. This assessment may disclose additional needs and partnerships to improve housing options.

➤ Identify existing resources and funders that have existed in the community prior to the project. Use the community assessment to develop heat maps for low-, mid-, and high-income housing that exists and create a contrast for the needs and desires based on developer and constituent input.

➤ Monroe's housing coalition to lead the development of a brief housing plan for the City of Monroe based on recommendations to use as a guide to address a need that includes vision, goals (short to long term), potential partners, maps, and perceived budget necessary to ensure staff capacity is increased to maintain quality housing in Monroe.

➤ Develop a housing campaign/initiative to intrigue and engage constituents to increase buy-in and bring awareness, illustrate the importance of housing for the overall well-being of an individual, illustrate the importance of things like renters' rights, and expand awareness of HB 346, which became Georgia Law on May 9, 2019.

BUDGET

- Explore federal and state grants (like HOME or CDBG funds), as well as tax incentives (like Opportunity Zone Funds) that will get the ball rolling.
  - *Explore the possibility of creating a tax allocation district*
  - *Take an assessment of utilized and underutilized tools and incentives (i.e. CHIP, CDBG funds, Opportunity Zones, LIHTC, and/or Housing Trust Funds)*

- Begin the grant writing process.

- Partner with Habitat for Humanity and/or Hope Monroe to do local fundraising, as well as to help with production. Local high schools and technical colleges might partner to provide labor force too.

- Make sure the city is onboard and taking the proper steps to include the political will, has the ability to acquire land, and has the dedicated staff hours necessary for this project. They will have to make adjustments in the operating budget, general budget and put ordinances into place for code enforcement and inspection.

Item/Activity	Cost
Rental registry	$60,000/once
This includes staff time to implement the new rental registry, creation of a website where the registry lives, printing new forms, and doing a marketing campaign. Yearly cost includes maintenance and technology (including staff time to update registry on website and perform other administrative tasks)	$8,000/year
Hire a consultant to perform a housing study	$25,000/once
City to partner with a developer to build a demonstration project on a city-owned parcel in downtown Monroe *A cottage court development of 12 small footprint units of ~1,200 sq. ft. or less (with shared common space) at roughly $110/psf construction cost minus the cost of land.*	$1.2M - 1.4M NOTE: This is NOT the city's cost – it would be in-kind donation of land only.
	Total Budget: ~$1.4M

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

PRIVATE FUNDING

- Social impact funds (via the HouseATL, GoATL, and Funders for Housing Opportunity models)
- Philanthropic grants
- Creating a CID/BID (Community/Business Improvement District)

PUBLIC FUNDING

- Local general obligation bond (a bond passed by the voters at the municipal or county level to fund local infrastructure needs, including affordable housing)
- Dedicated revenue source for affordable housing funded by real estate transfer taxes, linkage fees, property tax levies, or document recording fees
- Referendums (i.e. SPLOST for housing)
- State/local housing trust funds
- Neighborhood Stabilization Funds (NSF)
- Special purposes districts (i.e. Tax Allocation Districts and Opportunity Zones)

- Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)
- Federal block grants – HOME or CDBG funds
- USDA funds
- CHIP funds

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS
- City of Monroe
- Monroe Housing Authority
- Monroe Downtown Development Authority
- Local Monroe GICH team
- Development Authority of Walton County
- Walton County Chamber of Commerce
- Walton County Economic Development Alliance
- Walton County Board of Commissioners
- Businesses from industrial park that may want to invest
- Monroe-Walton Center for the Arts
- Nonprofits in the community that offer or want to offer housing to clients
- Hope Monroe
- Walton Wellness
- Walton County Healthcare Foundation
- UGA Cooperative Extensions – 4H workshops/recruitment/outreach
- Athens Technical College
- Center for Community Progress (National)
- Liberty First (OZ funds)
- Hope Monroe
- Arnold Properties – major landowner
- Greeley and Williamson LLC – major landowner
- JEC Development LLC – Residential Developer

EXPECTED IMPACT
- Reduce blighted and substandard housing while increasing quality, affordable housing options for all residents (new and old) who want to call Monroe home.
- Provide resources for Monroe's low to moderate income earners the opportunity to realize homeownership as a wealth building mechanism, helping to break the cycle of poverty.
- A strategic housing plan would enable the

community to align resources, ensure a unified direction, and facilitate necessary partnerships to achieve a shared vision of affordable housing.
- A demonstration project would show Monroe residents what more affordable housing can look like through a smaller footprint and a different product type that blends seamlessly with the community and creates a sense of place in downtown neighborhoods.
- Finally, continue to leverage and call-out recommendations in Monroe's Comprehensive Development Plan, the ARC's recent LCI update, and Monroe's GICH teams' recommendations – to make these visions come to reality.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS
In order for Monroe to successfully become a lifetime community, addressing the longstanding housing issues around both substandard housing and 'missing middle' housing is at the crux of the issue for 1) Long-term members of the community; 2) Monroe's workforce (teachers, fire, police, city staff; 3) Young families and those purchasing their first starter home; 4) College graduates returning to Monroe and talent recruitment and; 5) Senior housing options, including those who want to age in place. Additionally, the housing plan will help Monroe:
- Increase economic impact for the city by aligning with ongoing infill overlay zoning plans, and existing infrastructure and sidewalk improvements that allow for increased connectivity of downtown neighborhoods and promoting a more walkable and connected lifestyle where residents can live, work, and play.
- Create a sense of place, pride, and responsibility and attract new residents and industries, while encouraging current residents to make Monroe their forever home.
- Increase multi-use and commercial development demand and patronage due to increased housing for growing workforce developments.

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SECTION

4

THE MONROE CONNECTION

CHALLENGE QUESTION

WITH HEALTHY LIVING AS A GOAL, HOW CAN MONROE UTILIZE ITS NATURAL RESOURCES, TRAIL SYSTEM, AND GREEN SPACE TO CONNECT ALL WALKS OF LIFE?

THE TEAM

Joel Burnsed
Agricultural & Natural Resources Agent
Monroe, GA

Brittany Etheredge
Teacher
Monroe, GA

Kelly Griendling
Senior Project Manager
Tucker, GA

Ayaan Harper
International Trade Analyst
Atlanta, GA

Tiffany Holmes
Director
Quitman, GA

Donald Johnson
Corporate Controller
Macon, GA

Jessica Keys
Membership Coordinator
Atlanta, GA

Rebecca Vassy
Product and Category Manager
Monroe, GA

Hurst Williamson
Business Development Manager
Atlanta, GA

Brent Youngblood
President
Monroe, GA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Monroe Connection was challenged to explore how the City of Monroe could utilize its natural resources, trail system, and greenspaces to create a connected community that encourages healthy living. The current park maintenance agreement between the city and the county, while appropriate at the time it was made, is in need of some upgrades and refinements in order to be better utilized by the city's residents. The Monroe Connection believes the time is right to revitalize and upgrade Monroe's existing resources to create the backbone for a healthy and connected community.

Monroe currently has energetic and forward-looking city officials with the vision and desire to implement improvements in the parks and recreation system. Furthermore, there is a clear desire in the community for an improved parks system that is demonstrated by the activities of numerous community groups, the recent development of Childers Park, an ongoing effort to obtain play structures that are appropriate for children of all abilities, and the efforts of groups to maintain and conserve the biodiversity of Monroe.

A key consideration in our development of our following recommendation was the importance of providing the citizens of Monroe with a series of experiences that can appeal to all walks of life. Based on community interviews and extensive research of successful parks systems elsewhere in the state and across the country, the Monroe Connection proposes a three-tiered approach to create a modern parks and recreation system:

1. Create a Friends of the Monroe Parks Organization to support, improve, sustain, and provide programming for the existing and future parks system.
2. Upgrade existing parks to create experiential destinations for citizens of all ages to enjoy.
3. Develop new infrastructure to create a new destination experience along the Alcovy River and construct a connected greenway to link citizens across the city with key community destinations including the parks, downtown, schools, breweries, and shopping.

Our team believes that these proposed recommendations can build on the hard work that is already being put in by the city, citizens, and businesses to create a vibrant community.

INTRODUCTION

Historically known for is antiques, the City of Monroe and its small business owners have worked hard over the past several years to revitalize and expand its downtown and improve overall quality of life. In addition to streetscaping, the city is offering development programs and incentives for businesses in downtown and is in the process of developing a downtown greenspace for community events. Two breweries are in the works, conveniently located near to the main street and the antique mills. These efforts have already done much to transform the face of Monroe into a vibrant and charming community.

With the downtown development efforts well underway, upgrading the parks and recreation is a logical next step to making Monroe a destination for healthy living. Currently, the majority of the parks are maintained by Walton County as part of a lease agreement between the city and the county. While the county has done the maintenance for the park, this arrangement has led to a void in responsibility with regard to upgrades and improvements. The result is a parks system that has been maintained at only a basic level and is an underutilized resource for the city.

As part of our recommendations, we want to ensure that we highlight the importance of presenting the City of Monroe with an experience, rather than simply an itemized "wish list." We have chosen to explore recommendations that use the city's natural resources to physically connect Monroe, while promoting an experience of wellness that appeals to all walks of life.

Our recommendations are based in research on the ways in which similar towns have utilized a greenspace, park, river, or rail line to create a shared sense of communal identity through a connected public space (Fayetteville, AR's "Ale Trail", Macon, GA's Amerson River Park, etc.). Our recommendations are presented as three stepping stones, each of which will individually make an impact, but also build on each other to reach toward a vision of fully united greenway whose physical trails can connect each part of the city to the heart of downtown, the antique mills, the parks, and the schools, and whose presence can promote a sense of healthy living, community-wide access to safe and enjoyable public space, and a deeper sense of shared pride in Monroe's natural resources.

It has been an honor to get to know and explore Monroe's community, and we would be remiss not to thank Monroe's citizens, its businesses, and its officials for welcoming us and assisting us in putting forth these recommendations.

CREATING A MONROE FRIENDS-OF-THE-PARKS ORGANIZATION

Friends of Monroe Parks

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

We recommend the formation of a tax-exempt "Friends-of-the-Parks" organization separate from the City of Monroe municipal government. This organization will be eligible for funds from partnering foundations, and we believe it will be an attractive partner to individual donors. This organization will serve to articulate concrete, visible park needs and goals throughout Monroe's continued development of its natural resources. In addition to increased fundraising capacity, a non-profit oversight organization can engage in outreach and marketing efforts, organize volunteers, build community stewardship, and conduct remedial maintenance.

The most ideal organization structures available are the 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4). The best fit option depends heavily upon community buy-in and level of commitment of volunteers.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

The "Friends-of-the-Parks" organization will be tasked with oversight of park management and delivery of quality park services and sustainable infrastructure. These duties will support the city in its basic maintenance duties of the parks, but also engage in marketing, outreach, and programming. Essentially, this organization will act as a community convener by bringing together city, county, and local park stakeholders.

The Monroe Connection "Friends-of-the-Park" Organization

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION OPTIONS

501(c)(3)   501(c)(4)   501(c)(6)

BENEFITS
- Federal tax-exempt status
- Eligible for grant funding
- Tax-deductible contributions
- Eligible to engage in lobbying activities pursuant to organization purpose (501(c)(6) only)

LIMITATIONS
- Group must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes.
- 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) structures cannot function as action organizations (i.e. influence legislation).
- 501(c)(6) must be established according to specific criteria.

GENERAL REQUIREMENT
- Complete and file appropriate Federal IRS form.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

Incorporating can take anywhere from 5-12 business days, while forming any 501(c) can take 2 weeks to 3 months. We strongly recommend Monroe incorporates a separate 501(c) so that it exists as a separate organization in order to a) own its own property and its own bank account; b) ensure the nonprofit can continue on its own; and c) protect itself personally from liability from operations of the nonprofit. Below are fast facts of the paperwork, cost, and time to start a Georgia nonprofit:

- Paperwork:
  - *GA Articles of Incorporation*
  - *GA Data Transmittal Form 227*
  - *GA Notice of Incorporation*
  - *GA Initial "Annual" Registration*
  - *Bylaws*
  - *IRS Form SS-4: Obtain an EIN*
  - *IRS Form 1023: 501(c) Tax Exempt Application*
  - *IRS Determination Letter*
  - *Form 3605: Application for Recognition of Exemption (optional)*
  - *URS Charitable Registration, If Applicable*
  - *Form C-100: Charitable Organization Registration*
- Cost:
  - *GA Articles of Incorporation: $100*
  - *GA Notice of Incorporation: $40*
  - *GA Initial "Annual" Registration: $50*
  - *501(c): $275 or $600 IRS fee*
  - *Georgia Charitable registration: $35*
- Timeline:
  - *Incorporation: ~5-12 business days*
  - *501(c): 2 weeks to 3 months*

A comprehensive overview of establishing a nonprofit in Georgia has been outlined by Harbor Compliance and can be found here: https://www.harborcompliance.com/information/how-to-start-a-non-profit-organization-in-georgia

BUDGET

Our recommendation to incorporate as a 501(c) means it would be beneficial to have at least one full-time, paid staff person to organize meetings of the board and implement projects and oversight. The salary and fringe benefits may start at **$60k per year**. As the organization grows, additional staff may be added. Other costs associated with incorporation are listed above. We believe that the city should provide maintenance duties as a basic service.

EXPECTED IMPACT

> Overall Benefits: Overall benefits include the ability to dedicate funds directly to park projects, supplement existing public operating budgets, implement and manage capital projects, and establish an endowment to ensure ongoing park maintenance, restoration, and management.

> Measures of Success: A successful park can positively influence quality of life, economic development, and public health while providing environmental benefits. If this organization is successful, it will revitalize and grow Monroe's parks system and result in increased use of the parks and improved overall health and quality of life for the community. This foundational step will enable the community to be able to pursue the following two recommendations in this proposal.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESOURCES

In order for the Monroe Connection Greenway to thrive, we recommend that the City of Monroe create a chartered citizen committee that advises the city government in greenway planning, implementation, funding opportunities, and future visions for the greenway. It is also our vision that this advisory committee will lead the search for potential funding opportunities through partnerships and grants. The benefit of creating an advisory committee is creating a sense of community buy in and ownership of the Monroe Connection Greenway. While membership dues and fundraising events by the organization can be used to cover basic operational costs, this organization will be responsible for the fundraising necessary to implement desired improvements. Potential funding opportunities tied to specific recommended upgrades can be found in the two recommendations specifically tied to park improvements.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

> Campaigns and Donations – This is a funding source that the advisory committee can create themselves. For example, the advisory committee could create "Friends of the Monroe Connection" memberships that could serve as an alternative source of funding.

> Note that this organization will pursue funding tied to specific projects on behalf of the community, which is detailed in later sections of this document associated with the recommended upgrades.

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

> Hands of Hope

> Walton County Soil & Water Conservation

> Walton Wellness

> Walton EMC

> University of Georgia Extension – Walton County

> Monroe Downtown Development Authority

> City of Monroe – Parks Department

> United Way – Walton County

> Keep Walton Beautiful

> Local Businesses

UPGRADE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

We recommend upgrading the infrastructure of Monroe's existing parks and adding appropriate programming to support specific park use throughout the city. By introducing specialized attractions or themes, we believe Monroe can both highlight its natural resources and widen the appeal of the parks to more of the community. Our recommendation is to introduce new and creative additions to Monroe's parks system while continuing to support the most popular existing elements.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

With a goal of healthy living in mind, improvements to existing park infrastructure as well as appropriate programming are needed to increase park usage. Many of the passive parks naturally lend themselves to specific theming, which can be improved upon to create a fun and interactive outdoor environment. This initiative will attempt to make suggestions for potential updates and theming, as well as programming and events for each park. However, our group believes it is important to keep in mind the needs and desires of the community in which these parks exist, and we believe public input will be required in determining the future use of each.

CHILDERS PARK:
- Theme: Passive Downtown/Dog Park/Energy Education
- Suggested Improvements:
  - *Add to the existing signage explaining energy use/production in the existing power station. Paint parts of the station in bright colors to coordinate with color coded signs that explain equipment functions.*
- Suggested Programming:
  - *Yoga in the Park – downtown yoga studio could be a partner here*
  - *School field trips*
  - *Resources: https://www.westarenergy.com/kanza-education-and-science-park-education-station*

DOWNTOWN GREEN:
- Theme: Urban
- Suggested Improvements:
  - *Improvements consistent with planned infrastructure build by the City of Monroe to include a splash pad and amphitheater.*
- Suggested Programming: Art in the Park, community arts projects.

HAMMOND PARK:

- ➤ Theme: All Inclusive
- ➤ Suggested Improvements:
  - ▪ *Improvements include the upgrade to existing infrastructure to provide an all-inclusive flight play experience. This will require a complete overhaul of all existing facilities. An example of a similar facility can be found here: https://vlpra.com/184/Miracle-Field-Complex.*
  - ▪ *This is currently a passive park and the amenities are in need of repair and are currently not being utilized. The space here could be better used as a skate park. There are several groups of kids in Monroe who already skate in the downtown area. Hammond would provide a safe place to skate within close proximity of downtown.*
- ➤ Collaborate with Hands of Hope to implement their planned inclusive playground.
- ➤ Upgrade restroom facilities.

MATHEWS PARK:

- ➤ Theme: Environmental Learning Park
- ➤ Suggested Improvements:
  - ▪ *Create a dedicated wildlife learning zone with a learning theme of natural resources. Add interpretive signage explaining the native species and natural resources. Create a butterfly garden, also with signage.*
  - ▪ *Refurbish the existing pond into a family-friendly aquatic zone that incorporates paddle boating, fishing, etc.*
  - ▪ *Clean up existing trails and expand trail system to include a path around the lake. A notional trail system with a lake loop (1,850 ft) and a forest trail (2,000 ft) totaling 3,850 ft of trail is shown to the right.*
- ➤ Suggested Programming:
  - ▪ *Fishing tournaments*
  - ▪ *School field trips*
  - ▪ *Resources: http://depts.washington.edu/open2100/pdf/2_OpenSpaceTypes/Open_Space_Types/environmental_learning_parks.pdf*
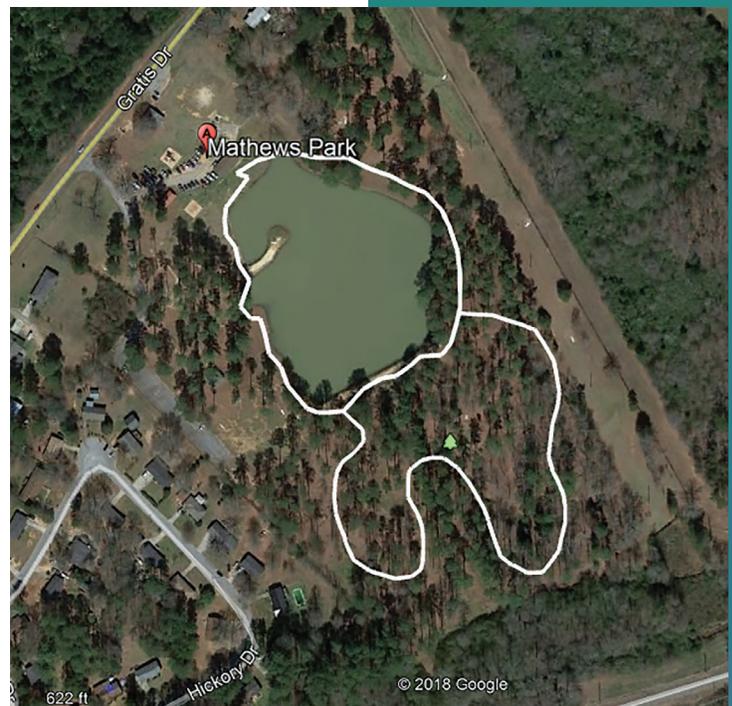
PILOT PARK:

➤ Theme: Young Families

➤ Suggested Improvements:

- *Establish community garden. This community garden would be governed by a committee of 5 to 7 Monroe community members with an ad hoc member from the City of Monroe.*

- *The current playground equipment is wooden and fairly outdated. This playground needs to be updated with more durable materials. Inclusion of an urban climbing structure would be great here. https://www.kompan.us/play/urban-climbing*

➤ Suggested Programming:

- *Earth Day celebration*
- *Gardening classes*

	Childers Park	Downtown Green	Hammond Park	Mathews Park	Pilot Park
Theme	Dog Park/Energy Education	Urban Vibe	All Inclusive	Environmental Learning	Young Families
Ugrades	Additional signage; Bright paint for substation to match informational signs	Execute existing plan for splash pad and amphitheater	Overhaul play structure to create an ADA-approved inclusive play experince; convert tennis area into skate park; upgrade restrooms	Improve lake trails and add forest trail; Add signage explaining native species; Refurbish pond for paddle boating, fishing; Add butterfly garden	Improve/upgrade community garden; Upgrade to urban play structure
Programming	Yoga; Field Trips	Art in the Park; community art dispalys; concerts;movies	Autism Awareness week events and similar; Skate nights	Fishing tournaments; Wildlife walks; Field trips	Earth Day celebration; Garden classes
Timeline	6 mo-1yr	6 mo-1 yr	1-2 yrs playground, 3-5 yrs skate park	1 yr for trail clean up, 2 yrs for new trails, 3-5 for water activities	1 yr for garden improvements, 3-5 yrs for playground upgrade
Budget	$3k for signs and paint	Already budgeted	Playground: $100k; Skate Park: $360k, Restroom: $180k	Wildlife signs: $3k; New and Improved Trails: $730k; Butterfly Garden: $600; Dock Construction: $5k	Playground Equipment: $25k

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

SHORT TERM
- 6 months-1 year
- Conduct community input meetings on park themes/updates
- Childers Park interpretive signage and paint power station
- Clean up existing trails at Mathews Park

MID TERM
- 1-2 years
- Establish community garden
- Expand trail system at Mathews Park and create a dedicated wildlife learning zone with interpretive signage (note that lake loop and forest trail can be implemented separately to spread out funding needs)
- Inclusive playground at Hammond Park

LONG TERM
- 3-5 years
- Update Pilot Park playground equipment
- Implement water-based activities at Mathews Park lake
- Install skate park at Hammond Park

ESTIMATED BUDGET
- Overall Safety Equipment for all parks (assumes a budget of ~$10,000/park to include police response phone boxes as well as improved lighting): ~$40,000
- Overall New Signage for all parks (assumes estimate of three signs/park): $2,800-4,000
  - *Childers Park*
    - Interpretive signs, $700-1,000 per sign and base times 3 signs: $3,000 https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3819434.pdf
    - **Total for Childers Park: $3,000**

- *Hammond Park*
  - Inclusive playground equipment: ~$100,000
  - Skate Park, ~$45/sq. ft assumes 8,000 sq. ft park: $360,000
  - Upgrade restroom facilities: ~$180,000
  - **Total for Hammond Park: $640,000**
- *Mathews Park*
  - Interpretive signs, $700-1,000 per sign and base times 3 signs: $3,000 https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3819434.pdf
  - Expand trail system, $189/1f (see Alcovy River construction below for reference) times 3,850 lf. of trail: ~$730,000
  - Construction of a dock for Mathews Park lake: ~$5,000
  - Development of butterfly garden, including construction and plant costs: ~$600/9x6 ft plot
  - **Total for Matthews Park: $738,600**
- *Pilot Park*
  - Playground equipment: $25,000
  - Total for Pilot Park: $25,000
  - **Total for all upgrades at all parks: $1,406,600**

EXPECTED IMPACT
- Overall Benefits: After several discussions with community members, we realized that the parks in Monroe seem to be underutilized, with the exception of the established sports fields at Felker Park. Our goal is to attract more of Monroe's population from all walks of life by updating the other parks. An improved parks system will encourage people from all walks of life to maintain a healthy lifestyle, provide inclusive playgrounds to make the parks more accessible to all families in the community, and highlight Monroe's natural resources with dedicated learning spaces.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

This initiative will be successful if we see increased traffic to Monroe's parks, resulting in greater community involvement and enthusiasm for the parks system's upkeep and success.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESOURCES:

- SPLOST Funds: Some money is earmarked for parks and recreation.
- Georgia Power Grant: $25,000 – Strong preference is given to Georgia-based organizations and programs that seek to improve the quality of life for the state's residents. Online applications accepted year-round. https://www.georgiapower.com/community/apply-grant.html
- KaBOOM: Variety of grants available, online applications. https://kaboom.org/grants
- Tony Hawk Skateparks: Grants up to $25,000 are available to support the design, development, and construction of quality new skateparks on public property that will be available for free. https://tonyhawkfoundation.org/skatepark-grants/
- USDA: USDA has a rural improvement grant program. The amounts are unclear, but among other things, the grants can be used for public safety enhancement and community gardens. Monroe would be eligible for grants ranging from 15-35% of the project value based on their population size. https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program
- Looking Out Foundation: Provides grants for programming that targets disadvantaged youth, with particular interest in arts and music, up to $5,000. https://www.lookingoutfoundation.org/grant_applications
- Conservation Alliance: Provides grants with a focus on habitat conservation and recreation.
  - *Likely Partnerships and Resources*
    - Hands of Hope: This group currently has a plan for an inclusive playground for Hammond Park. Collaborate with them for planning and to expand funding opportunities.
    - Walton County Extension and Walton County Master Gardener Volunteers – both organizations are already involved in the community garden.

DEVELOP AND CONSTRUCT NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

DESCRIPTION

We recommend the City of Monroe work with local property owners and developers to gain use of land easements that, when combined with property currently under city control, would allow for a modern greenway to be built that the entirety of Monroe's population can access in a short distance from their homes and work. A unified trail system connecting the public parks, schools, businesses, and cultural centers to the city's residential neighborhoods will promote healthy living and connectivity between neighbors. The trail system should be made of quality materials to last including concrete pathways due to the ease of maintenance with concrete vs. asphalt. Additionally, watercraft launch points along the Alcovy River connected by additional greenway should be built to promote use of the river for family friendly outdoor events.

In order to foster community involvement and excitement for this initiative, we believe the scope of the program should have an established, memorable brand that will promote connectivity and wellness for all walks of life. In keeping with the theme of our challenge question, we recommend that the greenway series be called the Monroe Connection (or The MC for short). As we've researched successful projects in the state of Georgia and across the country, we've found that where there is a repeatable brand to help foster community engagement with a greenway plan, the brand begins to work its way into the community's vernacular and further encourages active participation and daily, recreational use.

SCOPE OF INITIATIVE

Develop and construct The MC through a series of multi-use trails to connect Monroe's seven major parks (Mathews Park – Northeast; Hammond Park and Pilot Park – East; Childers Park – West; Coker Park, Kidd Park, and Felker Park – South), Monroe's schools and colleges, and cultural centers to the downtown area (see proposed rendering on the next page).

The MC should be fully developed for walking and biking traffic with safety towers, lighting, benches, and space for public art. We also recommend creating one-way streets where our proposed route extends through the city to allow for more walkability, to help direct flow of traffic to main routes, and to emphasize pedestrian routes over vehicle routes in city neighborhoods by city center.

In keeping with our recommendation of branding for the greenway, we also believe that giving each section of The MC its own unique trail name will add additional, community interest in the greenway as well as provide a unique opportunity to showcase Monroe's history, natural resources, and community values. Each of these seven smaller trails could be branded by its own signage, color, artwork, etc., and could physically be connected to the heart of downtown.

THE MC'S SEVEN TRAILS:
- Mathews Park Leg – "Lakeside Trail"
- Hammond Park Leg – "Crepe Myrtle Trail"
- Pilot Park Leg – "Farmer's Bend Trail"
- Childers Park – "Fallen Log Trail"
- Coker Park – "Daniel Coker Skyway"
- Kidd Park – "Daniel Coker Skyway"
- Felker Park – "Felker Fairway"

Entire Greenway System in Monroe – Trails Indicated by Color in Key

- 🟩 City/County Parks
- 🟥 Private Points of Interest
- 🟦 Schools- Public Points of Interest
- 🟥 Lakeside Trail
- 🟪 Fallen Log Trail
- 🟪 Crepe Myrtle Trail
- 🟪 Rail Trail
- 🟨 Daniel Coker Skyway Upper
- 🟦 Daniel Coker Skyway Lower
- ⬜ Alcovy Riverfront Trail
- 🟧 Mountain Creek Trail
- 🟨 Alcovy River/Mountain Creek Pass
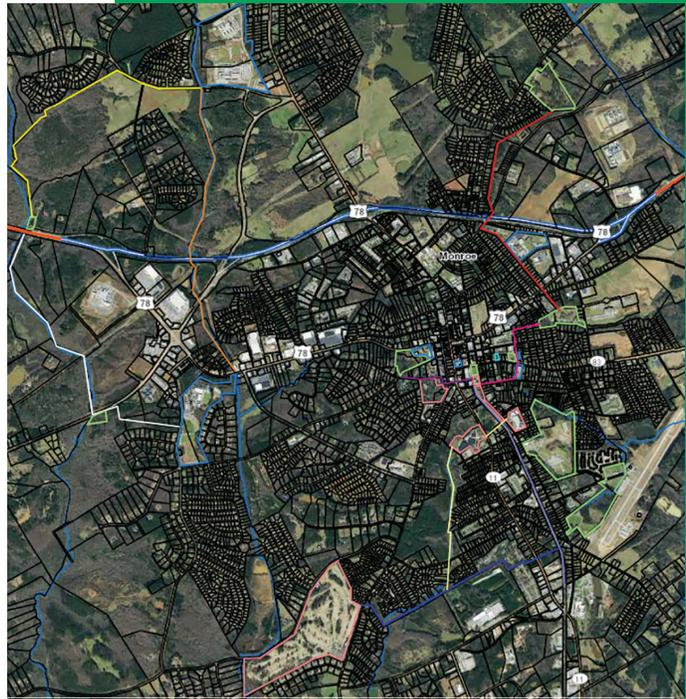
Entire Monroe Connection

- 🟥 Greenway
- 🟦 Public Points of Interest
- 🟩 Private Points of Interest
- 🟥 City/Council Parks
- 🟨 Sidewalk
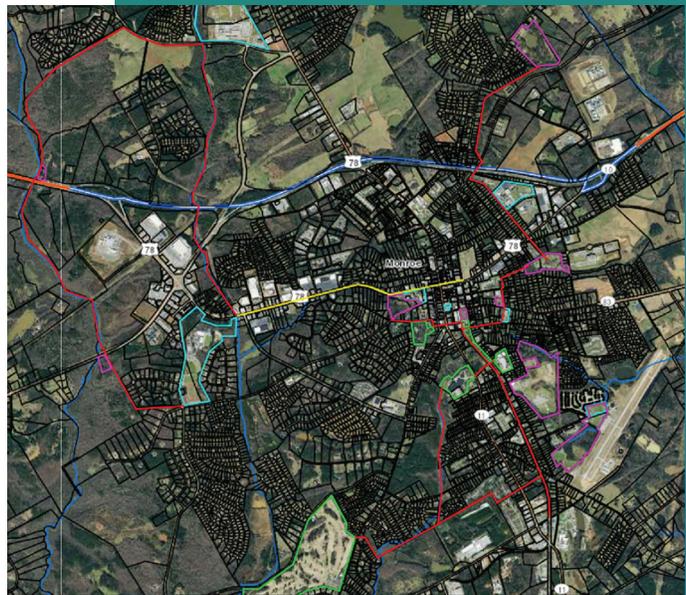
Monroe Connection Southern Routes

We also recommend developing an extended greenway along the Alcovy Riverfront and connect to Mountain Creek Trail to form a loop between Monroe Area High School and George Walton Academy that could be utilized by the community for physical activity (walking, jogging, biking) and connecting with nature.

We believe that a Riverfront portion of this greenway loop between Hwy 78 and Hwy 138 would offer safe, family-friendly access to users of all ages and abilities, and provide a safe place to explore the natural world and connect with one another. Creating launch and retrieval locations for tubing and kayaking at each end of the greenway will result in greater use of the river by locals as well as a boost to the local economy by attracting tourists.
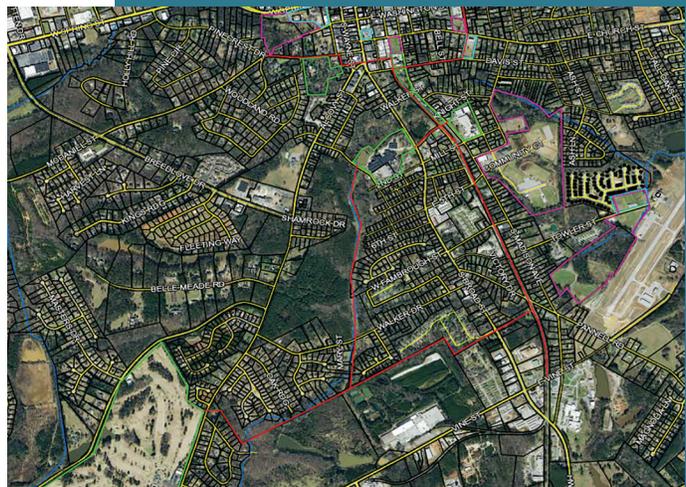
Most of the riverfront is owned by one development company. A possible public-private partnership with this company and the few others along the river could open the possibility to a developed riverfront with not only a greenway and a float or tubing business operating along the river, but also businesses overlooking the river that could be a nice setting for retail or restaurants. Farther down the line, the Alcovy Riverfront could potentially be linked with The MC to become a pedestrian day destination.

Monroe Connection Northern/Eastern Route

Monroe Connection Downtown Routes

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS & TIMELINE

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MC GREENWAY
- Determine best route for multi-use trails: 1 month
- Contact landowners who own property along proposed trail and request easement approval for use of land for greenway: 6 months-3 years
- Preliminary engineering: 1-3 months
- Finalized greenway route for approval by city council and mayor once a unanimous agreement to easement by landowners is obtained: 1-2 months
- Hire civil engineering firm to create final building plans per section: 4-6 months per section
- Once finalized engineering is obtained, place greenway project up for public bid: 1-2 months
- Complete construction section by section: 4-6 months per mile
- Total length of proposed greenway: 6.92 miles
- **Total estimated time: 3.5-7.67 years**

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALCOVY RIVERFRONT:
- Determine best route for riverfront and creekfront trails, utilize existing passthrough point along Mountain Creek under Hwy 138 and Hwy 78 for trail path: 1 month
- Determine best locations for launch and reception ramps and parking lots
- Contact landowners who own property along proposed trail and launch locations and request easement approval for use of land for greenway: 6 months-3 years
- Preliminary engineering: 1-3 month
- Finalize greenway route for approval by city council and mayor once a unanimous agreement to easement by landowners is obtained: 1-2 months
- Hire civil engineering firm to create final building plans per section: 4-6 months per section
- Once finalized engineering is obtained, place greenway project up for public bid: 1-2 months
- Complete construction section by section: 4-6 months per mile
- Total length of proposed river/creekfront greenways: 5.80 miles
- **Total estimated time: 3-7 years**

BUDGET

GREENWAY

For the construction of the greenway, we anticipate the following costs: Easement purchasing, concrete path 12-14 lf wide 6 inch thick 3000 psi w/ fiber able to support a dump truck's weight (for repairs when needed), bridges where needed, abutments, entry columns to trail, signage, kiosks, benches, dog stations, bike racks, bike repair stations, surveying, engineering, clearing, and grading. We estimate the cost of full construction between $189-$284/lf.

Rail Trail	
E. Vine St to City Center:	7,139 lf
Total cost of E. Vine St to City Center @ $236/lf:	$1,684,804.00
Daniel Cocker Skyway Trail (Lower)	
Golf Course Southern Route	6,336 lf
Total cost of Golf Course Southern Route @ $236/lf	$1,495,296.00
Daniel Cocker Skyway Trail (Upper)	
Golf Course Northern Route	7,668 lf
Total Golf Course Northern Route @ $236/lf	$1,809,648.00
Subtotal	21,143 lf
Lakeside Trail	
Matthews Park to Hammond Park	9,140 lf
Total cost of Lakeside Trail @ $236/lf	$2,157,040.00
Crepe Myrtle Trail	
From Hammond Park to City Center	3,721 lf
Total cost of Crepe Myrtle Trail @ $236/lf	$878,156.00
Fallen Log Trail	
From Childers Park to City Center	2,512 lf
Total cost of Fallen Log Trail @ $236/lf:	$592,832.00
Total distance of non-riverfront greenway	**36,516 lf**
Total cost @ $236/lf	**$8,617,776.00**

BUDGET

RIVERFRONT LOOP

For the construction of the riverfront loop, we anticipate the following costs: Easement purchasing, concrete path 12-14 linear feet wide, 6 inch thick 3,000 psi with fiber able to support a dump truck's weight (for repairs when needed), bridges if needed, abutments, entry columns to trail, signage, kiosks, benches, dog stations, bike racks, bike repair stations, surveying, engineering, clearing, and grading. We estimate the cost of full construction between $189-$284/lf.

Each end of the riverfront will need a launch and reception site for the tubing and kayaks. For a gravel parking lot, grading, 2 restrooms, and a concrete boat launch ramp the approximate cost will be $186,000 per site not including power and water. Dredging and Channel Rehabilitation cost is approximately $16/linear foot.

Alcovy River Front Trail	
Linear Feet	7,160 lf
Total cost of Alcovy River Front Trail @ $236/lf:	$1,689,760.00
Alcovy River/Mountain Creek Pass	
Linear Feet	9,991 lf
Total cost of Alcovy River/ MCP@ $236/lf	$2,357,876.00
Mountain Creek Trail	
Linear Feet	9,818 lf
Total cost of Mountain Creek Trail @ $236/lf	$2,317,048.00

Total Riverfront Greenway Loop distance	26,969 lf
Cost of Riverfront Loop @ $236/lf	$6,364,684.00

Tubing and Kayak Drop Off and Put-In Locations; 2 locations	
➤ 7,169 lf of usable river between input and extract locations	
➤ River Dredging and Channel Rehabilitation;	
➤ 2 boat launches x $186,000/each:	$372,000
➤ River Cleaning 7,160 lf x $16/lf:	$114,560
Total Cost of Tubing and Kayak Launch Locations:	$486,560
Total estimated cost of Riverfront Project	$6,851,244.00
Total Distance of Greenway for all projects	12.72 miles

Total Estimated Cost of Greenway and River Improvements	
Total Estimated Cost is Heavily Dependent on the cost of easement access to the property that the greenway path will cross.	$15,469,020.00

EXPECTED IMPACT

Overall Benefits: In speaking with members of the community, we know that there is a desire for expanded greenspace. With the creation of the Riverfront and Greenway, we expect to see a diversity of expanded exploration of the city from Monroe's residents. We also believe that investment in these projects will create a tourism draw to the city from all walks of life and foster a connected view of Monroe as an experience rather than just a destination.

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

The measure of success for this phase of our recommendation will be in the number of citizens from all walks of life who utilize connected infrastructure to explore and interact with the full extent of the City of Monroe. Additionally, the creation of new homes, businesses, and public works along the Riverfront and Greenway will be added indicators of the community's engagement and the health of the connected projects.

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESOURCES

During our initial research we have found several state and federal grants, as well as endowments, foundation grants, and local initiatives that the City of Monroe could apply for to help subsidize the construction of this greenway. These opportunities include, but are not limited to the following:

> Georgia Transportation Alternatives Program (GDOT): This grant provides an opportunity for local governments to pursue non-traditional transportation related activities such as pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian streetscaping projects. Applications for 2019 are due on June 15, 2019, so this would have to be a 2020 application. $1,000,000 minimum application.

> SPLOST: $3,000,000 that can be allocated for various development projects over the next few years.

> Georgia Recreational Trails Program (RTP): The RTP is a grant program which provides funding for trail construction, trail maintenance, and trail education. The RTP awards grants to city governments as well as other governments and state/federal agencies. The Recreational Trails

Program is an 80/20 matching reimbursement grant. The Recreational Trails Program grant will reimburse 80% of the project cost and the grant recipient must provide the other 20% of the project costs.

> Urban and Community Forestry (UCF): A program of the U.S. Forest Service that is administered in partnership with the states, UCF is both a potential partner and a potential funding source. They work with state partners to provide information, tools, and financial resources to maintain, restore, and improve community forest land.

> Private Investments

> Local Businesses

- *Provide funding in exchange for advertising opportunities along the trail (for example on the signs) or, for more sizable donations, naming rights to trail segments.*

- *Local businesses could also sponsor features like a history or art walk along the trail (the business would fund the creation of signs at key points, then the history walk would be "brought to you by local business X").*

> Polaris Trails Grant: Up to $10,000 for trail development and maintenance projects, safety and education initiatives, lobbying, and other projects to increase and maintain land access. https://www.polaris.com/en-us/trails-application/

> Kodak American Greenways Grant: The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program, a partnership project of the Eastman Kodak Company, the Conservation Fund, and the National Geographic Society, provides small grants to stimulate the planning and design of greenways in communities throughout America. In general, grants can be used for all appropriate expenses needed to complete a greenway project, including planning, technical assistance, legal, and other costs. This grant gives up to $2,500. http://rlch.org/funding/kodak-american-greenways-grants

> PeopleForBikes: This organization provides annual grants for bike infrastructure. While the Fall 2019 funding cycle is focused on bike park and pump track projects, the 2020 funding cycles will likely include greenway and multi-

use trail opportunities. While there is no published funding limit, grants seem to be awarded in the range of $10,000 or less. https://peopleforbikes.org/our-work/community-grants/

> Transportation Alternatives: This is a federal program that covers a range of trail funding opportunities, including Rails to Trails and a program called Safe Routes to School. Projects are federally funded but are coordinated through each state's DOT. These funds are provided as reimbursements, meaning that the community would bear the cost initially and then be reimbursed for up to 80% of the project cost. The community is expected pay the remaining 20%, although it can be done with in-kind support and donations. https://trade.railstotrails.org/funding

> Recreational Trails Program: This is a program of the DOT's Federal Highway Administration, but uses the same money in the set-aside for the Transportation Alternatives fund above. The funding is federal but is administered by the state's RTP administrator. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

- *GEORGIA*
  - Jodie Gardner, Grants Coordinator
    Department of Natural Resources
    2 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. SE, Suite 1370 East
    2600 Hwy. 155 SW, Suite C
    Atlanta, GA 30334
    404-463-1779
    jodie.gardner@dnr.ga.gov

> Land and Water Conservation Fund: This grant has a 50/50 match, and is administered by state agencies in cooperation with the National Park Service. Trails and greenspaces are priorities. Funding limits are not immediately clear, but they have given more than 40,000 grants. https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/index.htm

LIKELY PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA): This is a technical service arm of the National Park Service dedicated to helping local groups and communities preserve and develop open space, trails and greenways. While RTCA does not give out grants or loans, the program "supplies a staff person with experience in community-based outdoor recreation and conservation to work with partners" on the ground. http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/contactus/cu_apply.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CITATIONS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

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