THANK YOU SPONSORS!

METRA

GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Columbus Civic Center — The center of it all.

COLUMBUS GEORGIA — We do amazing.

St.Francis — EMORY HEALTHCARE

SCOFFLAW

ULI

VisitColumbusGA

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE — COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

Fetch Park

HISTORIC IRON WORKS 1853

MIDCITY MY YARDS

StartUP COLUMBUS

Georgia EMC

GEORGIA CEO

Young Gamechangers
a GeorgiaForward program

1 Communicate. Connect. Columbus

2 Silicon River

3 Fountain of Youth

4 South Columbus Soul

1

COMMUNICATE. CONNECT. COLUMBUS.

CHALLENGE QUESTION

How can Columbus/Muscogee County help all residents feel like a valued part of the community where they know what's going on, can connect with others, and contribute to the decision-making process for our collective future?

THE TEAM

Victor Aguilar

City Clerk

City of Morrow

Dr. Keon Berry

Director of Parent Services, Quality Care for Children

Atlanta, GA

Kristen Gorham

Deputy City Manager

City of Chamblee

Adrienne Hundley

Head of Service Development and Delivery, Art Pharmacy

Sharpsburg, GA

Kristen Holt

Stakeholder Engagement Team Lead, Georgia Power

Columbus, GA

Gabrielle Nelson

Councilmember

City of Port Wentworth

Dr. Tiffany McBride

Assistant Professor, Columbus State University

Columbus, GA

Brantley Pittman

Client Consultant, TSYS, A Global Payments Company

Columbus, GA

Abigail Strickland

Main Street Manager

City of Newnan

Coty Thigpen

Assistant City Manager

City of Woodstock

Cortney Wilson

Director of the Center for Servant Leadership

Columbus, GA

THREE BIG IDEAS

1 Communicate Columbus.

2 Connect Columbus.

3 Experience Columbus 360.

MEETINGS WITH KEY LEADERS

- Mayor Skip Henderson

- Isaiah Hugley, City Manager, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Lisa Goodwin, Deputy City Manager, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Teasha Johnson, Director of Communications and Community Affairs, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Zoe Hightower, Director of Family Engagement, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Robert Scott, Director of Community Reinvestment and Real Estate, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Holli Browder, Director of Parks and Recreation, Columbus Consolidated Government

- Peter Bowden and Ashley Woitena, Visit Columbus

- Lisa Thomas-Cutts, Keep Columbus Beautiful

- CSU Communication Department

BIG IDEA #1

Communicate Columbus

Strengthen the Columbus Consolidated Government Communication and Community Affairs Department

1. Conduct a Communications Audit and Needs Assessment
2. Establish Relationship with Columbus State University of Create Talent Pipeline
3. Implement a Cohesive Communication Strategy

ACTION STEPS

Short-Term

- Hire a firm to conduct external communications audit.
- Hire a public relations agency/consultant with defined objectives through a competitive bid process based on audit/needs assessment.

Medium-Term

- Hold a government retreat with elected officials and CCG department heads to facilitate a SWOT analysis and discuss goals and priorities.
- Establish a partnership with Columbus State University to create a talent pipeline of interns and work with students/faculty to develop a communications strategy for CCG.

Long-Term

- Leverage foundational work to roll out a comprehensive communication strategy for entire consolidated government.
- Increase personnel within the Office of Communications and Community Affairs to meet the increased role the department plays in CCG's strategic community engagement and outreach efforts.
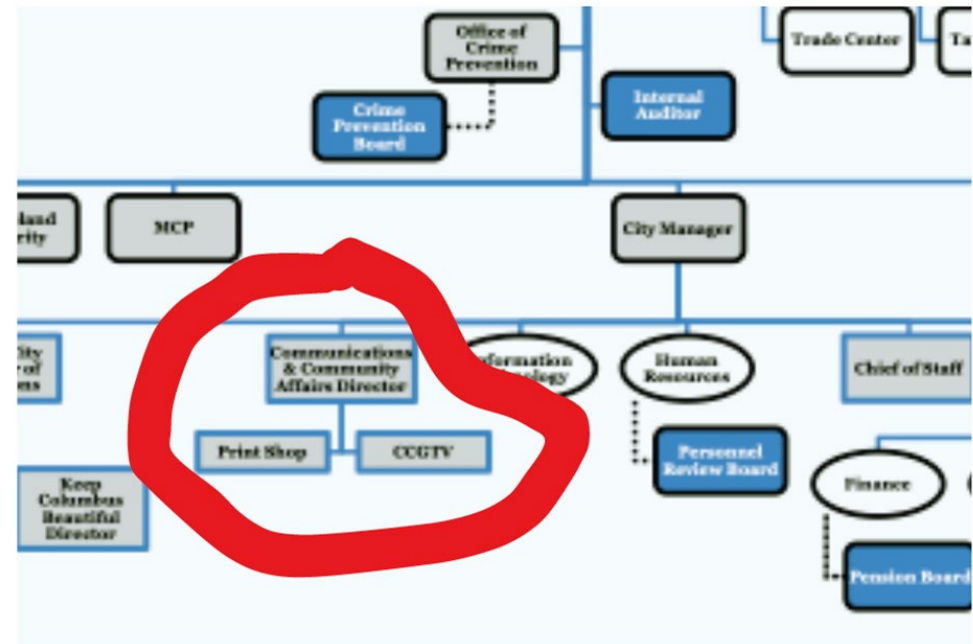
GOVERNMENT RETREAT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS AND KEY STAFF
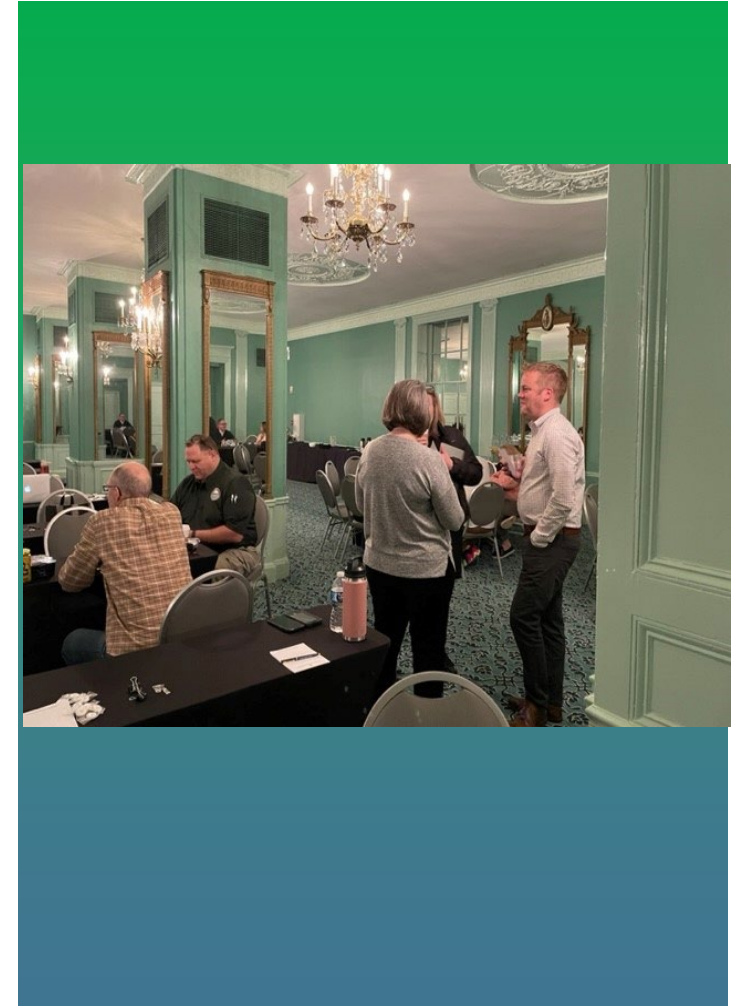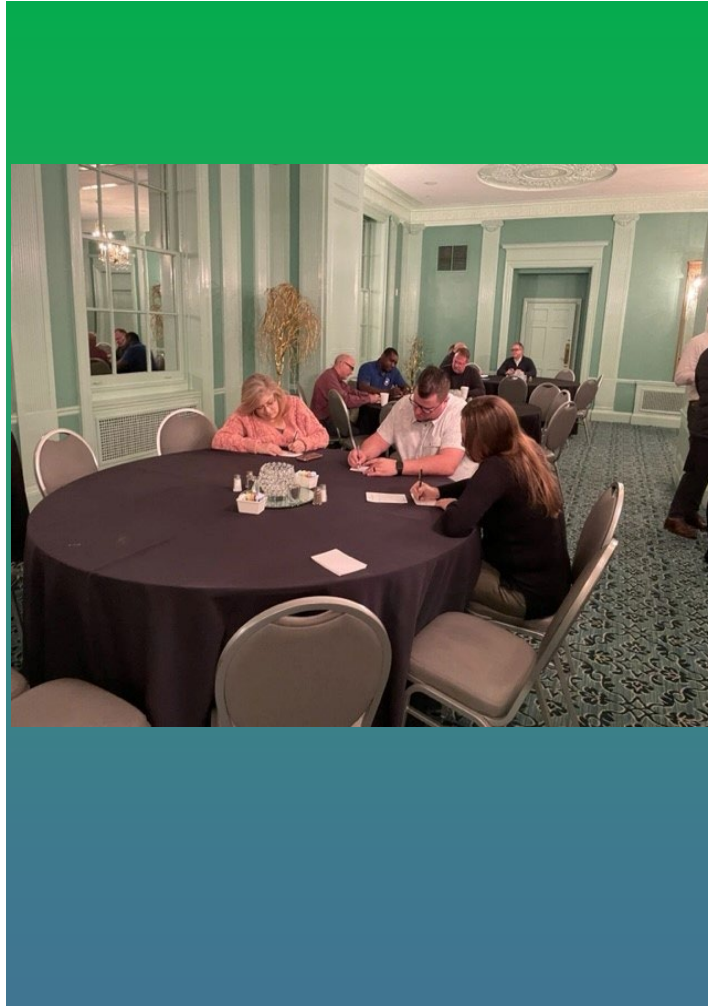
Comparison of Communication Dept. Org Charts
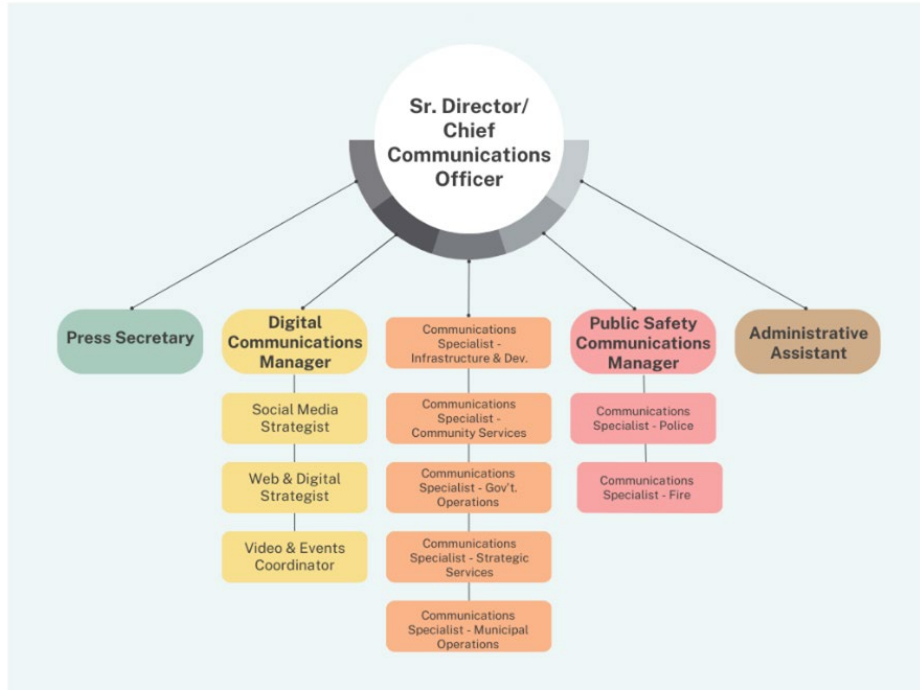
City of Savannah, GA
Population 147,088 (2021)
Marketing and Communications Dept.

City of Columbus, GA
Population 206,922 (2020)
Communications and Community Affairs Dept.

ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIP WITH CSU

Due to its proximity to Columbus State University, CCG could utilize the university's resources to close disparities in communication within the Columbus, GA community.

Collaborative strategies, such as customized coursework and apprenticeship pipelines, can help CCG achieve its goals by generating human capital and other resources.

CCG should consider the following action items:
1. Establish a partnership with Columbus State University to create a pipeline of interns and have students/faculty help develop a Communication Strategy for CCG.
2. Connect with Communication Department Faculty.

COLUMBUS STATE
UNIVERSITY

88.5FM
WCUG
COUGAR RADIO

BIG IDEA #2

Connect Columbus

Empowering Columbus through Dynamic Engagement

1. Identify the assets and gaps to lay foundation for responsive, inclusive community engagement plans through participatory process.

2. Increase capacity of Columbus Consolidated Government to make meaningful connections and create momentum within community.

3. Implement vision outlined in Community Engagement Plan and produce city-led events to fill gaps.

ACTION STEPS

Short-Term

- Develop steering committee of internal staff and local organizations with aligned missions.
- Build partnerships with regional and national organizations.
- Hire a firm to conduct a community survey with residents, community associations, CCG staff, and service providers
- Create job description for Community Engagement Manager

Medium-Term

- Hire a full-time Community Engagement Manager within the Columbus Consolidated Government.
- Develop a Community Engagement Strategic Plan based on results of community surveys.
- Create a pool of funds and process for community groups to apply for resources to produce engagement events.
- Build a comprehensive calendar of events produced by city, arts & culture organizations, and community groups and incorporate strategic marketing efforts.

Long-Term

- Empower Communications and Community Affairs Department to consolidate efforts of partnerships to a specialized team.
- Produce signature events that promote connections between neighborhoods.

El Departamento de Policia de Chamblee Presenta

Fiesta
del Bloque de
Halloween
Octubre 29
11am-2pm

musica- juegos- fiesta

Parque Village
3397 Chamblee Dunwoody Rd, Chamblee, GA 30341

Neighborhood Engagement Program Events

City of Chamblee

Freedom Fest and International Night Market

City of Morrow

Sample Job Description: Community Engagement Manager

City of Chamblee, GA

CITY OF CHAMBLEE *Georgia*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR | JOB DESCRIPTION

Reports To	Deputy City Manager	FLSA Classification	Full Time, Exempt
Date Revised	March 2022	Department	Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Director will be responsible for the management and implementation of Chamblee's community communications and engagement program with a primary mission to provide meaningful opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to provide input to shape the City. Additionally, they will provide timely, transparent, and proactive information to the public; enhance the visibility of the City Council's strategic initiatives, key messages, and programs; establish and promote the City of Chamblee and enable meaningful community engagement in the public process.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

- Serve as an ambassador and primary point of contact for the Chamblee community outreach and engagement, helping to disseminate information about the City's goals, impact, and investment to community members and other key stakeholders.
- Develop strategies, best practices, and standards for a range of quality outreach and engagement efforts and activities
- Oversee and execute community engagement activities.
- Manage all aspects of Community Engagement consultant contracts, including scope creation, invoicing, and budget controls.
- Provide strategic direction to consultant teams executing community engagement tasks on behalf of the City.
- Coordinate and schedule meetings with community members and other stakeholders.
- Coordinate and carry out outreach for City events, community meetings, etc.
- Represent Chamblee at various events, as needed
- Lead the City's social media efforts and cross departmental social media team.
- Develop and coordinate implementation of the City's social media strategy, policies
- and presence and monitor the City's online reputation
- Develop and implement an integrated strategic communication plan to advance the City's brand identity and broaden awareness of its programs, priorities, and accomplishments; Ensure communication strategies are consistent with the City's strategic plan and vision.
- Anticipate and identify challenges and emerging issues faced by the organization; Work with the senior management team and staff to recognize communications opportunities and design and execute appropriate strategies to address them.
- Develop and oversee mechanisms to measure the success and continuously improve the quality of the City's communications.
- Oversee development and dissemination of print communications (including the annual report, marketing collateral materials) and electronic communications (including the City's website, social media, and new media) and manage relationships with associated vendors.
- Serve as a spokesperson and lead contact on media interactions; build and manage press relationships to achieve accurate coverage of City events, public announcements, projects, and programs.
- Prepare talking points, presentations, speeches, and other supporting material as needed.
- Manage the City's website, including content strategy, integrated messaging, creative direction, and analytics.
- Develop specific outreach strategies to reach population groups that may need assistance in connecting with City services and programs.
- Coordinate internal communication efforts to ensure consistent framing of messages.

ADDITIONAL JOB FUNCTIONS

- Other duties as assigned.

BIG IDEA #3

Columbus 360

A Revolutionary Approach to Community Engagement

1. Discover what information residents need to know, how they would like to access information, and revitalize channels of communication and participation.
2. Increase public knowledge and capacity by establishing several experiential education programs.
3. Define citizen contributions to the decision-making process in the community and within the government.

ACTION STEPS

Short-Term

- Leverage information collected through Community Needs Assessment and Survey.
- Revitalize the Youth Advisory Council.

Medium-Term

- Implement Citizen's Academy.
- Grow team of Neighborhood Navigators.
- Bring City Council to the community.

Long-Term

- Implement Neighborhood Planning Units.
- Establish channels of communication from NPUs to City Council and Mayor's Office.
- Provide resources to facilitate Neighborhood Navigators and NPUs to host community events within their districts.

COBB
101
COBB COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA
1832

THE CITIZENS
GOVERNMENT
ACADEMY

Get to know *your* Cobb County

CITY QUADRANTS*
ROUGHLY GROUPED BY NPU

NORTHWEST GROUP
NPU-A, NPU-C, NPU-D, NPU-G,
NPU-J, NPU-K, NPU-L,

NORTHEAST GROUP
NPU-B, NPU-E, NPU-F,
NPU-M, NPU-N, NPU-O

SOUTHWEST GROUP
NPU-H, NPU-I, NPU-P,
NPU-Q, NPU-R, NPU-S,
NPU-T, NPU-V, NPU-X

SOUTHEAST GROUP
NPU-W, NPU-Y, NPU-Z

*From the 2016 City of Atlanta
Comprehensive Development Plan

NEW AT 11
WRBL.COM | YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL SPONSORS FORUM WITH MAYOR
COLUMBUS
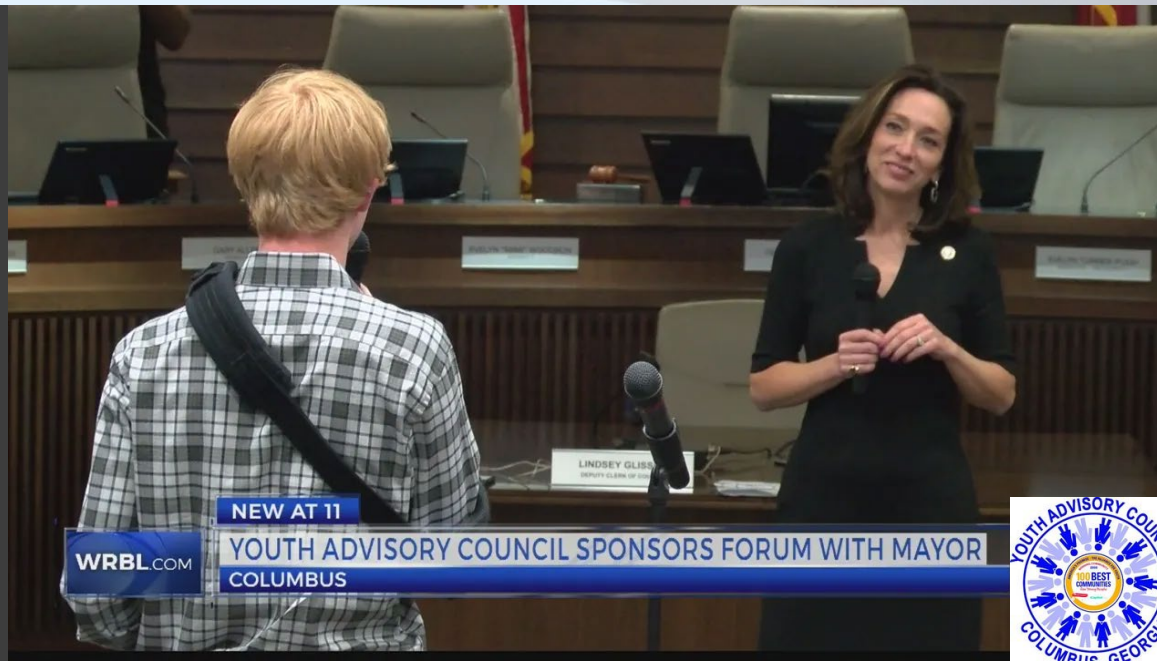
EXPECTED IMPACT

Leveraging Partnerships

Embracing Innovation

Prioritizing Community Needs

QUESTIONS

2

SILICON RIVER

CHALLENGE QUESTION

How can Columbus/Muscogee County leverage our existing assets in order to develop innovative approaches that inspire local entrepreneurship and attract investment from diverse types of industry that fit our community?

THE TEAM
Silicon River

Chelsea Bohannon

Maranie Brown

Ashley Ginn

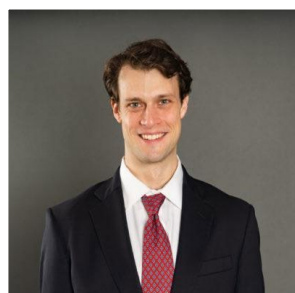Oscar Guzman

Earnest Johnson

Haley Lyman

Ben MacMinn

Sam Gurkski

Scott Sullivan

Richard Taylor

DJ Waller

Collectively, Columbus has the assets for a thriving business community. With updated strategic plans, it has the potential to attract investment that will create major change in the community.
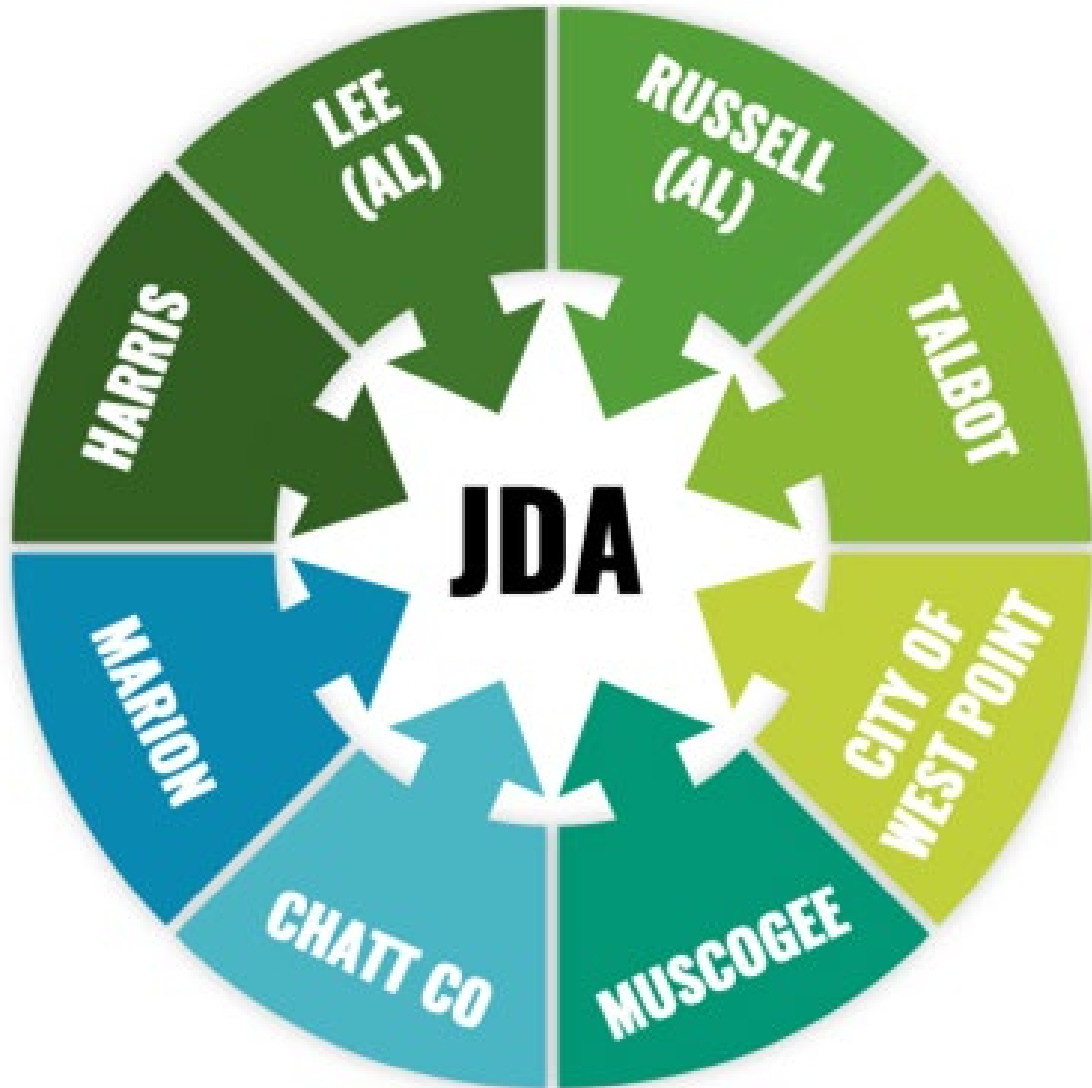
THREE BIG IDEAS

1 River Valley JDA

2 Regional Workforce Coalition

3 The Silicon River Fund

RIVER VALLEY JDA

An improved redirection and rebranding of the Joint Development Authority incorporating the City of West Point, Talbot, Harris, Muscogee, Chattahoochee, Lee (AL), Russell (AL), and Marion Counties will attract new diverse business and industry to the region.

Retooling Economic Development

Current State

- The Valley Partnership JDA & the Development Authority of Columbus contract with the Chamber of Commerce for economic development services.
- The Valley Partnership JDA functions as a marketing tool for the partners.

Gaps

- Vacancy of a Director of Economic Development at the Chamber of Commerce.
- Lack of collaboration between neighboring counties to work together to bring in diverse types of industry.

Recommendations

- Hire an Economic Development Director and additional support team.
- Restructure and rebrand the regional JDA organization.

ACTION STEPS

Short-Term
- Develop a cohesive map of business development resources and assets.
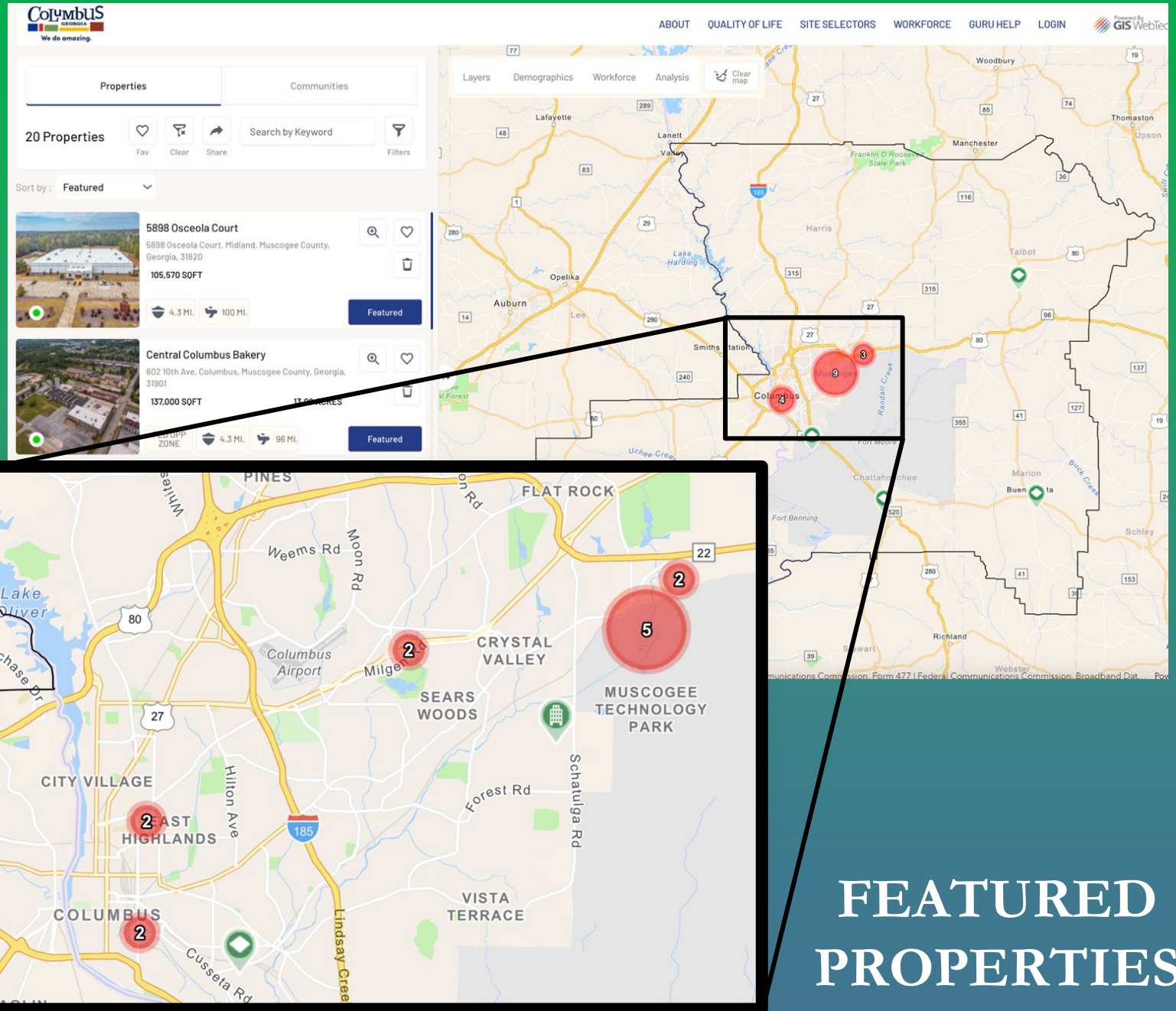
Medium-Term
- Hire an Economic Development director and additional support staff for the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce.

Long-Term
- Restructure and rebrand the existing JDA to have targeted growth utilizing the assets that each respective partner brings to the table.

DEVELOP A COHESIVE MAP

- Expand/update the ChooseColumbusGA website in order to keep the information current for potential site selectors

- Expand availability of sites outside of Muscogee County

- Identify associated organizations and their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

- Identify opportunities through parcel/site analyses for industrial, commercial, and residential development and retention

FEATURED PROPERTIES

HIRE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM

- The region is not realizing its full potential due to the current economic development structure.

- The Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce currently has a vacancy in the position of Director of Economic Development.

- The Development Authority of Columbus contracts out with the Chamber of Commerce to be the staff.

- The counties in the Valley Partnership pay dues ($1 per capita) to the Chamber of Commerce for economic marketing services.

REIMAGINE THE EXISTING JDA

Restructure and rebrand the existing JDA to have targeted growth utilizing the assets that each respective partner brings to the table. The collective investment options are the following:

- *A megasite (500+ acres)*

- *A speculative building (300,000-1,000,000 SF)*

- *Railroads*

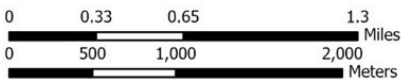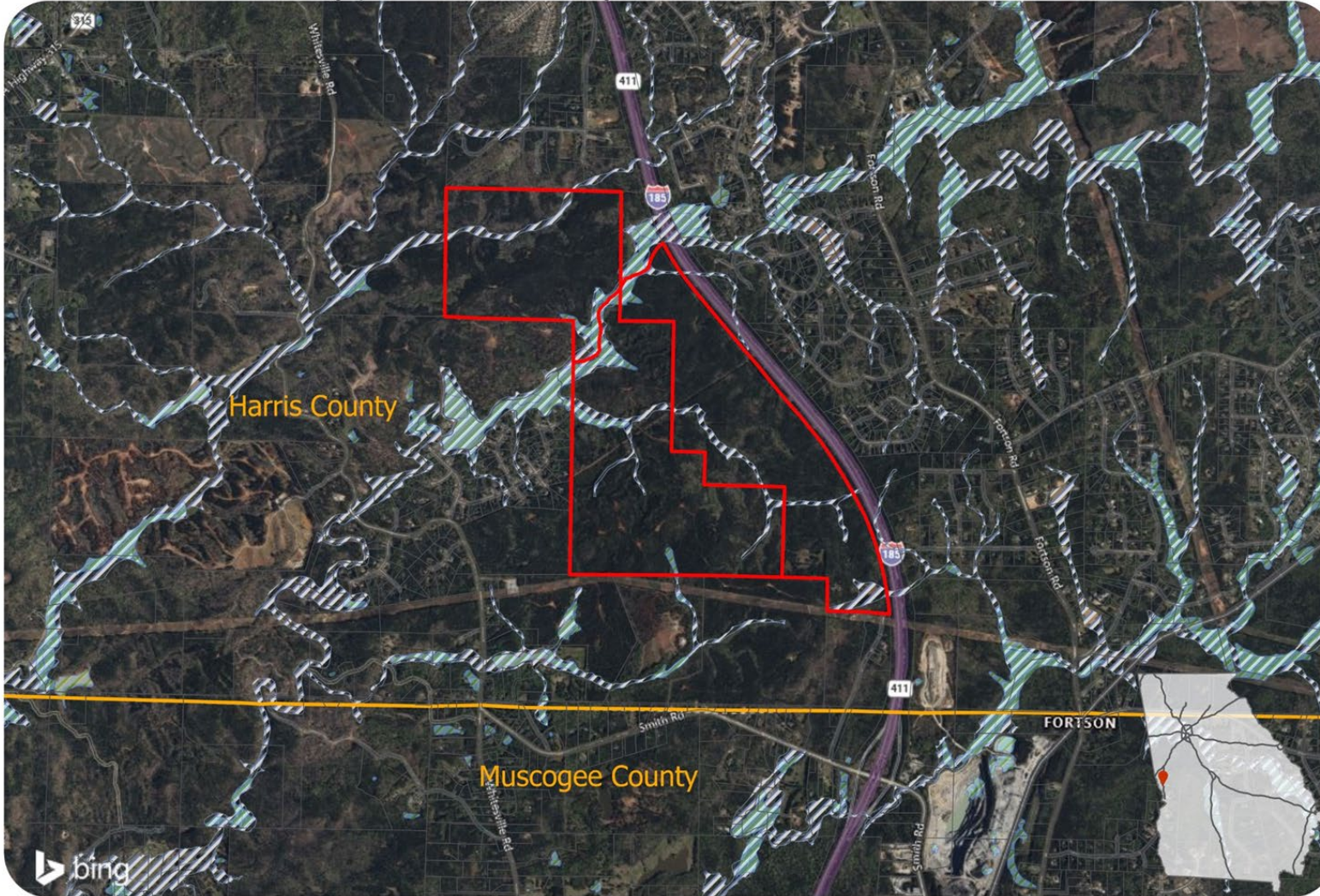- *Transportation issues*

River Valley JDA

EXISTING VALLEY PARTNERSHIP

PROPOSED JDA
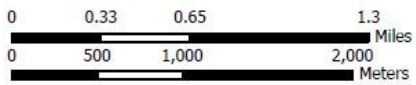
MEGASITE OPTION 1 (1,106 usable acres)

Harris County, GA

Harris County

Muscogee County

FORTSON
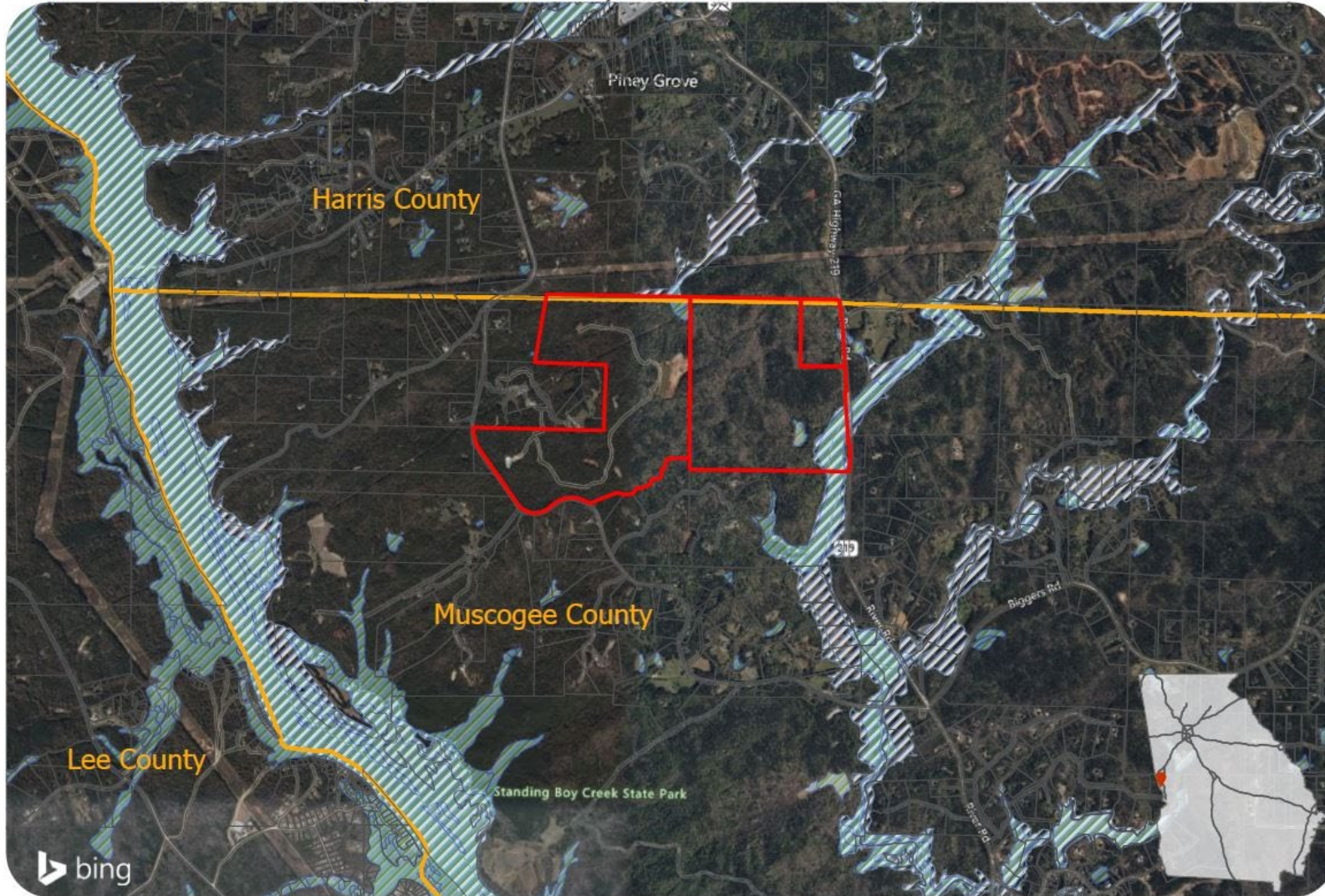
| | Site | | | County Line | | | 100 Yr Flood Hazard Zone per F.I.R.M. |
| | Parcels | | | Wetlands Inventory per N.W.I. | | | |

This information is provided "as is" without warranty of any kind either express or implied.

0   0.33   0.65   1.3
                              Miles
0   500   1,000   2,000
                              Meters

MEGASITE EXAMPLE

MEGASITE EXAMPLE

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

OneGeorgia Grant

SPLOST

GDOT Grant

GEFA Loan

REBA

Water Sewer

Authorities

Harris County Georgia

Talbot County Chamber of Commerce

Cusseta-Chattahoochee County

Georgia Power

Lee County Alabama

Russell County Alabama

Columbus Georgia — We do amazing.

Columbus Water Works — Serving our Community Protecting the Environment

Buena Vista • Georgia — A GREAT PLACE TO CALL HOME — Marion County — County Established 1828

City of West Point

Liberty

BIG IDEA 2

REGIONAL WORKFORCE COALITION

With a new regional education/workforce coalition, Columbus can identify current educational resources, as well as opportunities and needs across the region to create and retain living-wage jobs. Additional programs including guaranteed free educational opportunities for Muscogee county grads and access to affordable housing, make it easy for Columbus residents to follow through with education and training to be ready to get to work.

Developing a Sustainable Ecosystem

Current State

- The region offers high-quality education and resources for residents.
- Columbus is being positioned for an increase in jobs that will require new skills.

Gaps

- Barriers and silos between institutions create challenges.
- A large amount of workforce leaves Columbus after training / education.
- Many residents are currently unemployed or underemployed.

Recommendations

- Increase connectivity between its various providers and programs.
- Invest in affordable housing initiatives for current and future residents to retain trained workforce.

CREATE A CONNECTED COALITION FOR GROWTH

- Create Prospective Employees by connecting them to: mentors, training, services, programs, networks, and employers.

- Create Flourishing Employers by connecting them to: qualified employees, retention supports (education, community resources, etc.) for existing employees.

- Create Effective, Impactful Institutions by connecting them to: research, data, process improvement recommendations, advisors, funding, and ways to highlight their impact.

- Create a Thriving Community by Connecting these key areas, heightening awareness of barriers, and working together to create solutions.

Georgia's Cyber Institutes
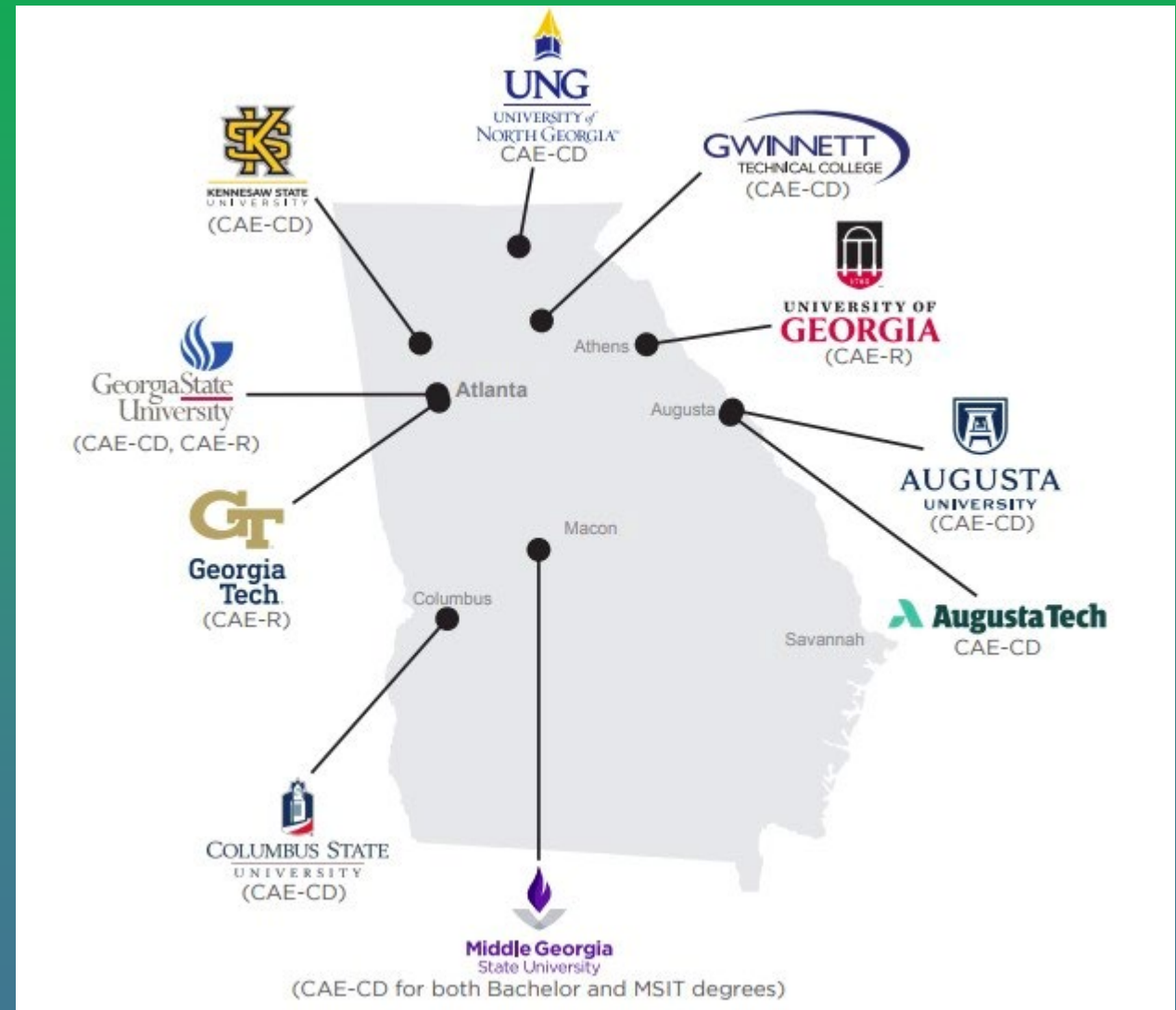
INVEST IN RESIDENTS NOW

- Columbus can spur workforce development and educational attainment quickly by guaranteeing free education for qualified Muscogee county residents.
- In addition to federal and state financial aid, many cities offer tuition assistance for its residents.
- Columbus can create its own model leveraging its many high-quality educational institutions and proven success establishing public-private partnerships.
- By creating The Rising River Valley Fund, Columbus will demonstrate investment in its community in addition to deep collaboration.

TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE AFTER FINANCIAL AID AT COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

	Residency	Freshmen	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	4 Years Total
Class of 2027 (Admission Fall 2023)	In-State	$16,627	$16,790	$16,931	$17,080	$67,513
	Out-of-State	$27,681	$27,842	$28,009	$28,181	$111,713
Class of 2028 (Admission Fall 2024)	In-State	$16,790	$16,960	$17,108	$17,263	$68,209
	Out-of-State	$27,842	$28,009	$28,181	$28,359	$112,391
Class of 2029 (Admission Fall 2025)	In-State	$16,960	$17,137	$17,292	$17,454	$68,933
	Out-of-State	$28,009	$28,181	$28,359	$28,543	$113,092
Class of 2030 (Admission Fall 2026)	In-State	$17,137	$17,322	$17,484	$17,652	$69,686
	Out-of-State	$28,181	$28,359	$28,543	$28,733	$113,816

FOCUS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Build affordable housing units or renovate existing structures in mixed-use neighborhoods

- Track and enforce municipally mandated affordable units in order to preserve existing units and effectively create new ones.

- Expand the Moving to Work Program to provide more flexibility of how federal funds are used and help increase housing choices for residents and families

THE SILICON RIVER FUND

A new venture-capital-driven residential start-up program will encourage tech founders to start their businesses and create a community in Columbus.

Build a Thriving Startup Ecosystem

Current State

- Columbus currently has a stagnating population growth rate
- Stagnating growth is driven by an exodus of the millennial cohort

Gaps

- Lack of amenities attractive to young people
- Civic support exists; however, it's unfocused
- Overall dearth of opportunity

Recommendations

- Create a venture capital fund founded by high-net-worth community stakeholders with funding conditional of residency in Columbus
- Repurpose existing building into a vibrant live-in coworking space

ACTION STEPS

Short-Term

- Establish fund structure
- Raise capital
- Begin national marketing campaign
- Locate live-in coworking site and begin construction

Medium-Term

- Make initial investments
- Deploy at least 50% of capital
- Construction nearly complete (Note: Fund I cohort might not have structure in place)

Long-Term

- Begin returning capital from Fund I
- Raise Fund II
- Cement thriving ecosystem by hosting annual conference

Raise Fund I

Identify initial investors and begin securities filing paperwork

Select management team, Board of Directors and site for development

Deploying capital will require a national marketing campaign to promote visibility

Model will closely mirror the "Brickyard" in Chattanooga, TN

Locate site of live-in structure and begin pre-construction work

Job Growth Index
(VC Backed Jobs vs. Total Private Sector Employment)

Index = 100

- VC-Backed Jobs Project Index 1059.9
- BLS Total Private Sector Employment Index 139.1
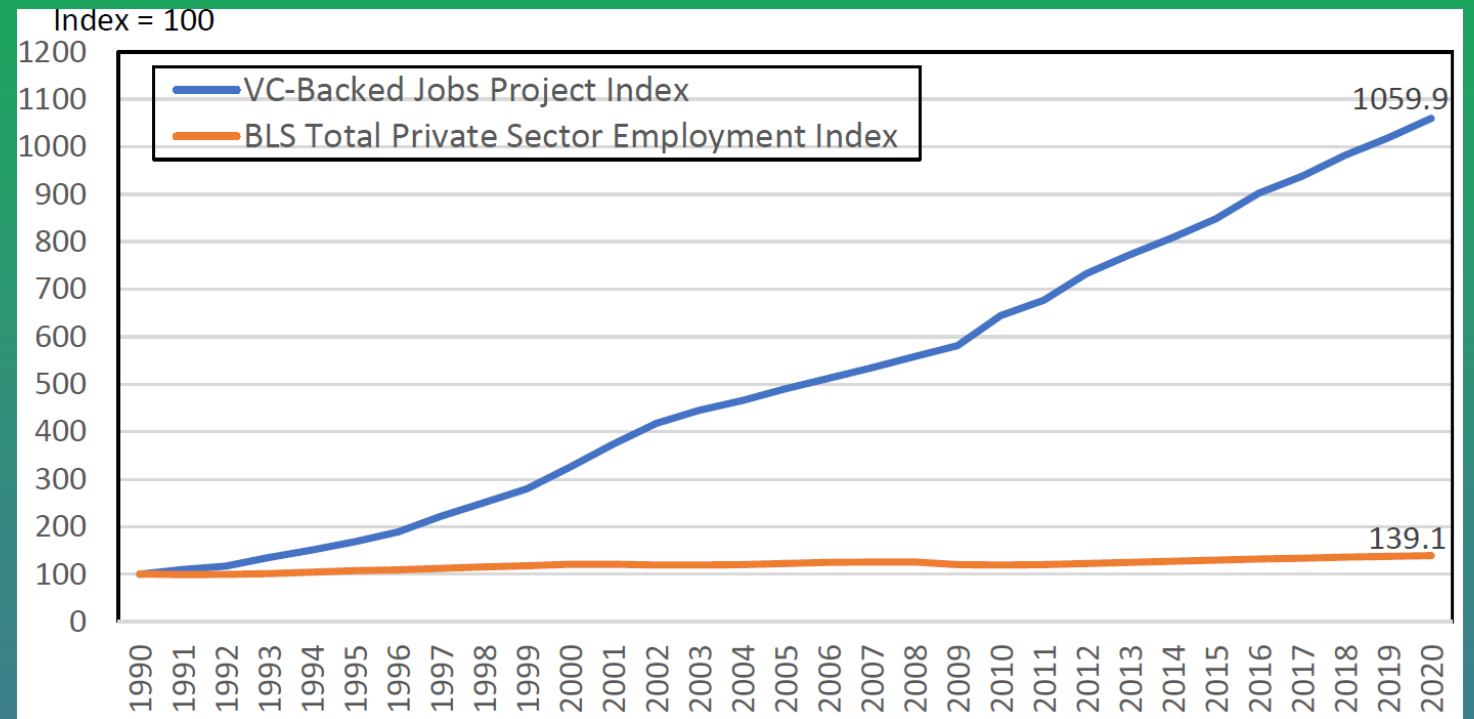
Beginning with an index value of 100 over 30 years, employment at VC-backed companies grew 8.2% annually versus total private sector employment of 1.1% annually.

Source: An Analysis of Employment Dynamics at Venture-Backed Companies Between 1990 and 2020
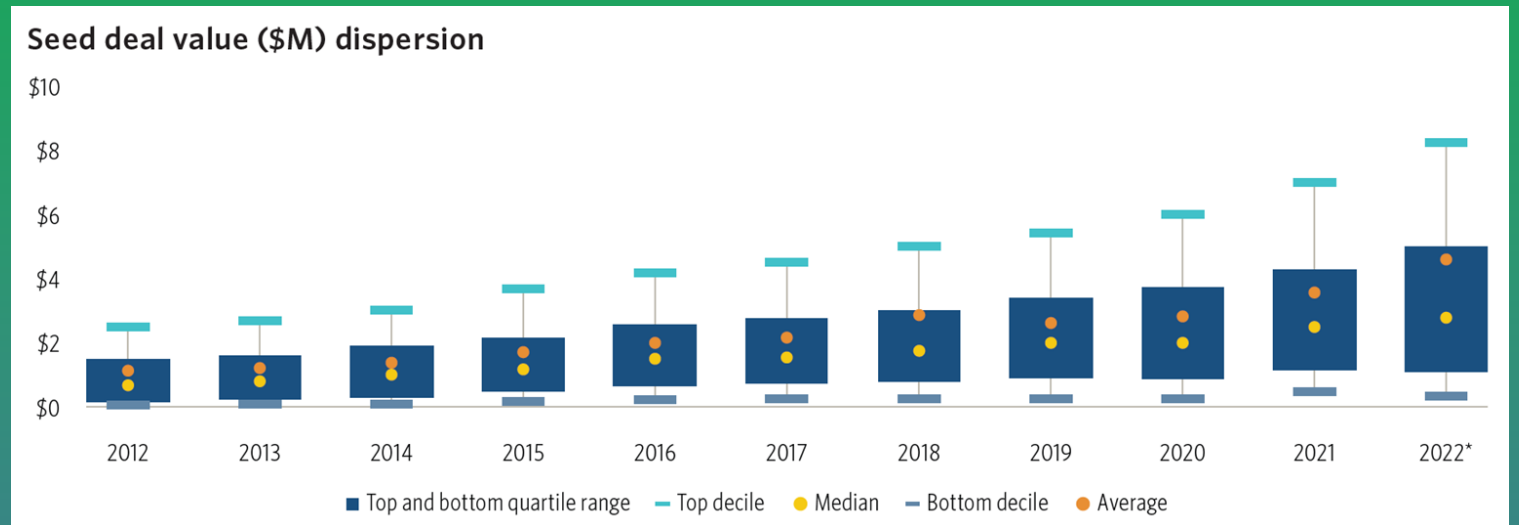
Ramp Operations

With team selected and in place, initial investments can begin

Initial investments might necessitate co-investment with other established venture capital operators—represents an opportunity to learn 'best practices'

Assuming a 10-year fund life, deploy 50% of capital

Completion should be nearing on live-in structure, but construction is not worth delaying the fund

Investment Stage Deal Value (seed)

Seed deal value ($M) dispersion

Legend: Top and bottom quartile range · Top decile · Median · Bottom decile · Average

Despite upward trajectory, modest capital raise should be more than sufficient to support investment in bottom decile companies

Source: Pitchbook; 2023 US Venture Capital Outlook

Establish Ecosystem
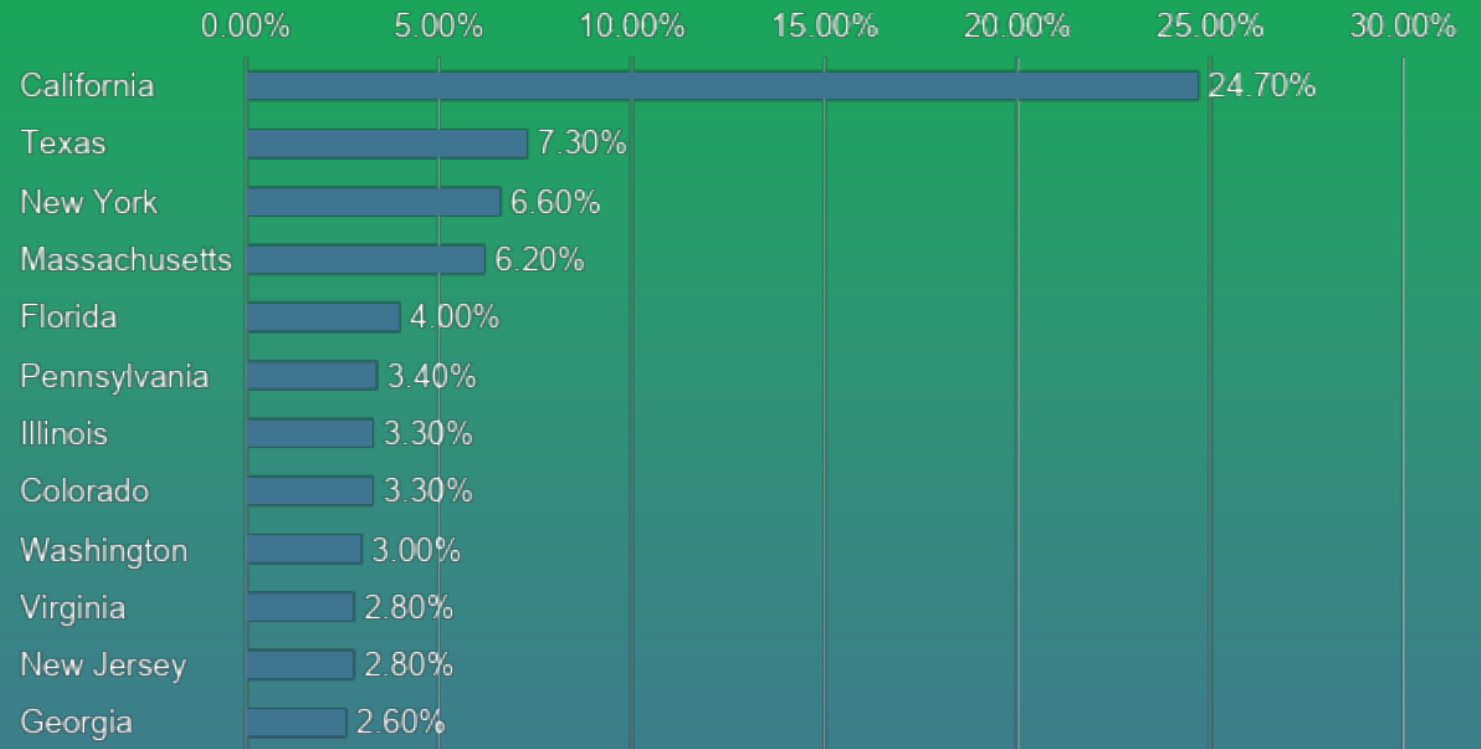
Fund I should be making cash returns to investors

Optimal time to begin marketing for Fund II

Construction of live-in structure is complete and cohort from Fund II should have optimal amenities to succeed

Influx of millennials will spur development of cohort-centric amenities

Create an annual conference that will solidify Columbus' place a thriving startup ecosystem

State Percent of VC-Backed Jobs (2020)

	Percent
California	24.70%
Texas	7.30%
New York	6.60%
Massachusetts	6.20%
Florida	4.00%
Pennsylvania	3.40%
Illinois	3.30%
Colorado	3.30%
Washington	3.00%
Virginia	2.80%
New Jersey	2.80%
Georgia	2.60%

Georgia ranks 12th in VC-backed jobs at 2.6%, indicating significant white space exists to expand; Georgia ranked 21st in VC-backed job growth from 2015 – 2020 at 4.1%.

Source: An Analysis of Employment Dynamics at Venture-Backed Companies Between 1990 and 2020

QUESTIONS

3

FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

CHALLENGE QUESTION

How can Columbus engage and retain talent under the age of 40 so that they plant long-term roots in Columbus/Muscogee County?

Fountain of Youth Members

Christopher Bass (Douglasville)
Olivia Cervi (Kennesaw)
Rebecca Covington (Columbus)
Dr. Aaron R. Gierhart (Columbus)
Martin Huff (Columbus)
Juan Mejia (Atlanta)
Keona Swindler (Columbus)
Emily Sullens (Cornelia)
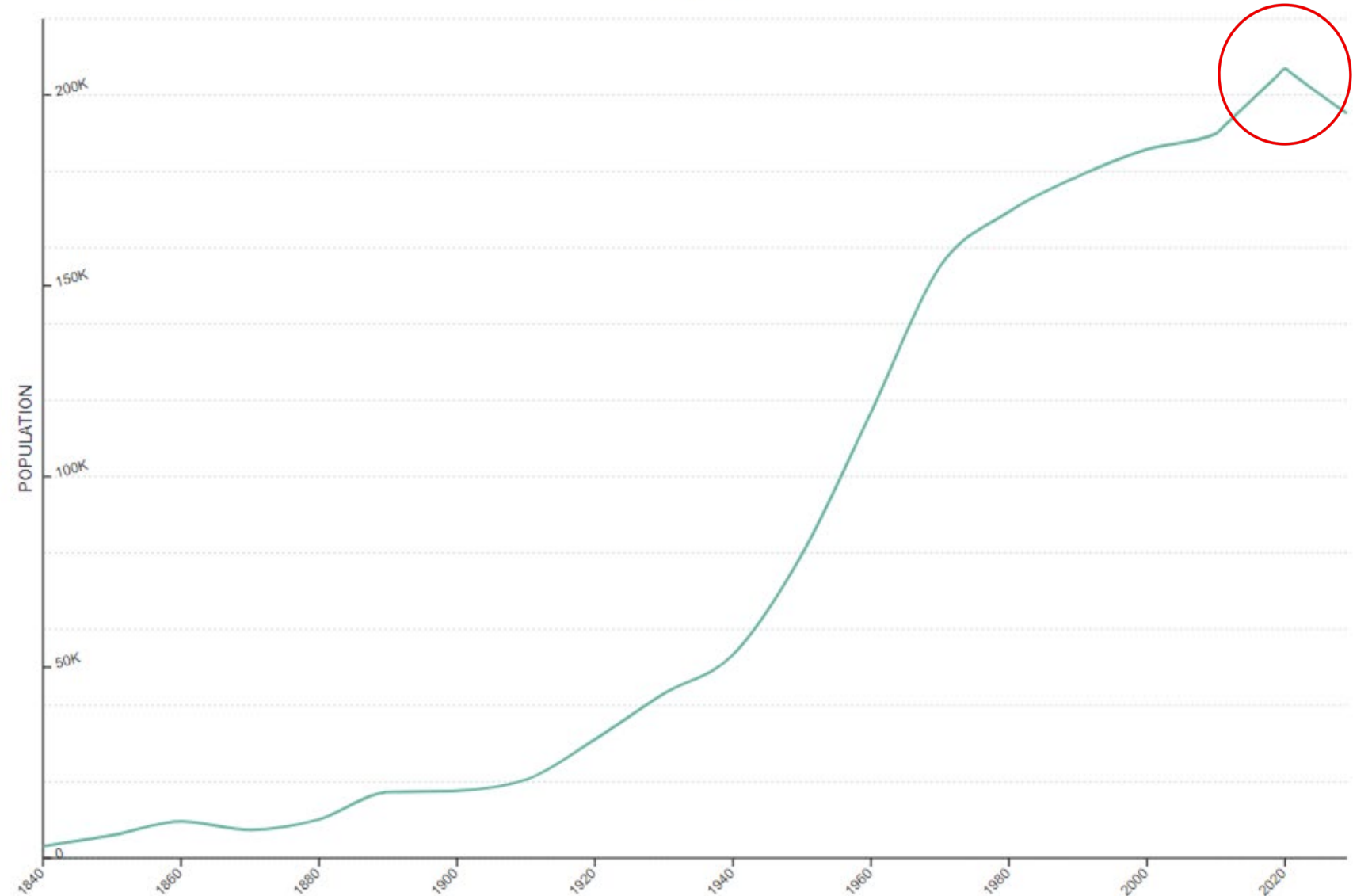**Dr. Jessica VanValkenburgh (Hamilton)**
Nia Williams (Fayetteville)

Background

- Expected Population Changes in Georgia's Major Cities by 2050
  - Metro Atlanta area: Expected growth of 2.9 million by 2050.
  - Columbus: Expected decline of 41,000 people by 2050

Columbus, Georgia Population 2023
202,957

Background

- Importance of Young Talent for Chattahoochee Valley Region:
  - Drives growth, development, and innovation.
  - Attracts employers seeking skilled workforce.

- Key Factors for Young Talent Choosing a City:

  Demographics

  Social Recreation

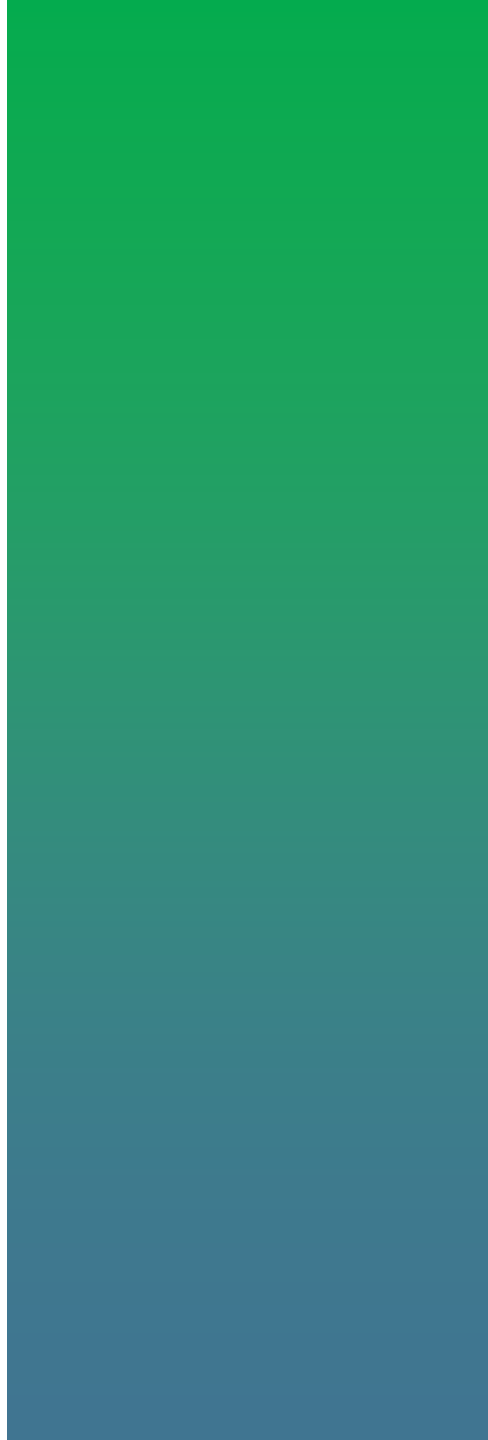 Job opportunities

  Cost of living

THREE BIG IDEAS

1
Columbus Made

2
Plant Your Roots

3
Connect Columbus

COLUMBUS MADE

COLUMBUS MADE is a twelve-week leadership development program geared towards young professionals getting started on their career path.

Current State: Columbus has Young Professional groups and Leadership Columbus housed within the Chamber of Commerce

Gaps: Quite a few community members were unaware of the YP group, and really want more than a space to just network, and Leadership Columbus is geared more towards those already in leadership positions

Recommendations:COLUMBUS MADE can bridge the gap by providing true leadership learning opportunities to those who want to learn how to lead where they are and can funnel members into existing community groups
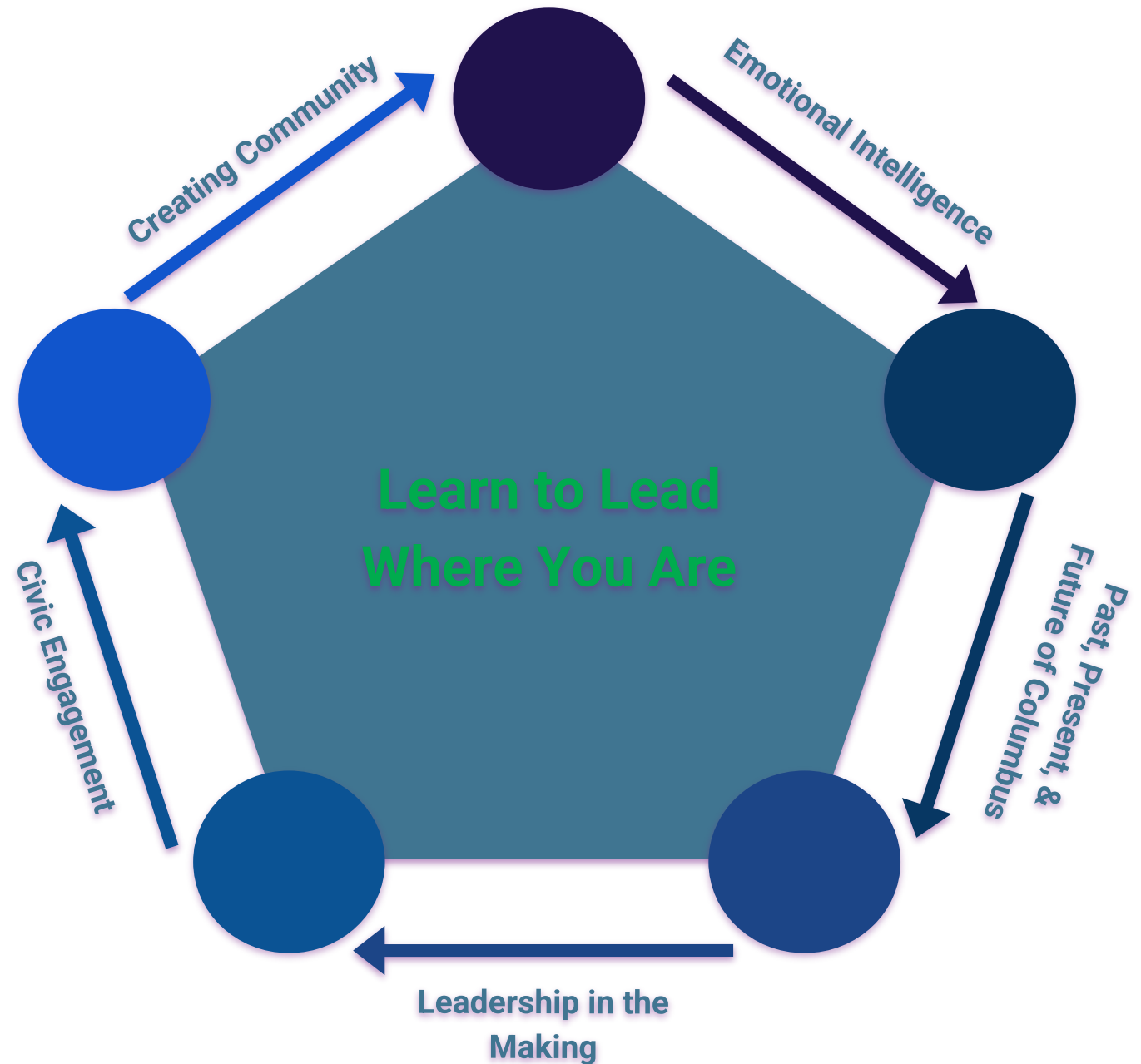
COLUMBUS MADE: Timeline

SHORT TERM	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Gain community support and hire a part-time program director	**Finalize the outline, tuition and structure of the program**	**Select and graduate the first cohort**	**See the positive impact of the program through leadership opportunities**
Program director can begin initial communications with potential sponsors and line up financial backing	Curriculum details, order, and presenters should be lined up so marketing of the program can begin	The first cohort should have a fully-structured program, but feedback from this first group will help make future programs even better	Developing leadership skills in young professionals early in their career will help them lead from the position they have and ultimately better the community

COLUMBUS MADE: Structure & Programming

- 12 Week program: 11 learning modules and a graduation celebration
- Cohort of 30 members aged 25-35
- Diverse cohort members representative of the population of Columbus
- Tuition cost is $650 per member
- Weekly programming would consist of a presentation, facilitated discussion, and an activity

Creating Community

Emotional Intelligence

Learn to Lead Where You Are

Past, Present, & Future of Columbus

Civic Engagement

Leadership in the Making

Plant Your Roots

Plant Your Roots is an initiative dedicated to pinpointing an ideal community specifically for young professionals under the age of 40, offering a combination of living, working, and recreational opportunities.

Current State: Columbus has pockets of communities spread throughout the community e.g. Downtown Columbus, North Columbus, Midtown

Gaps: An absence of communities that provide essential elements in a centralized for young talent to establish roots and build a sense of belonging and a lack of recreational offerings.

Recommendations: Offer a sense of belong by identifying a community for development to potentially craft a comprehensive revitalization strategy to actively retain talent to plant their roots.
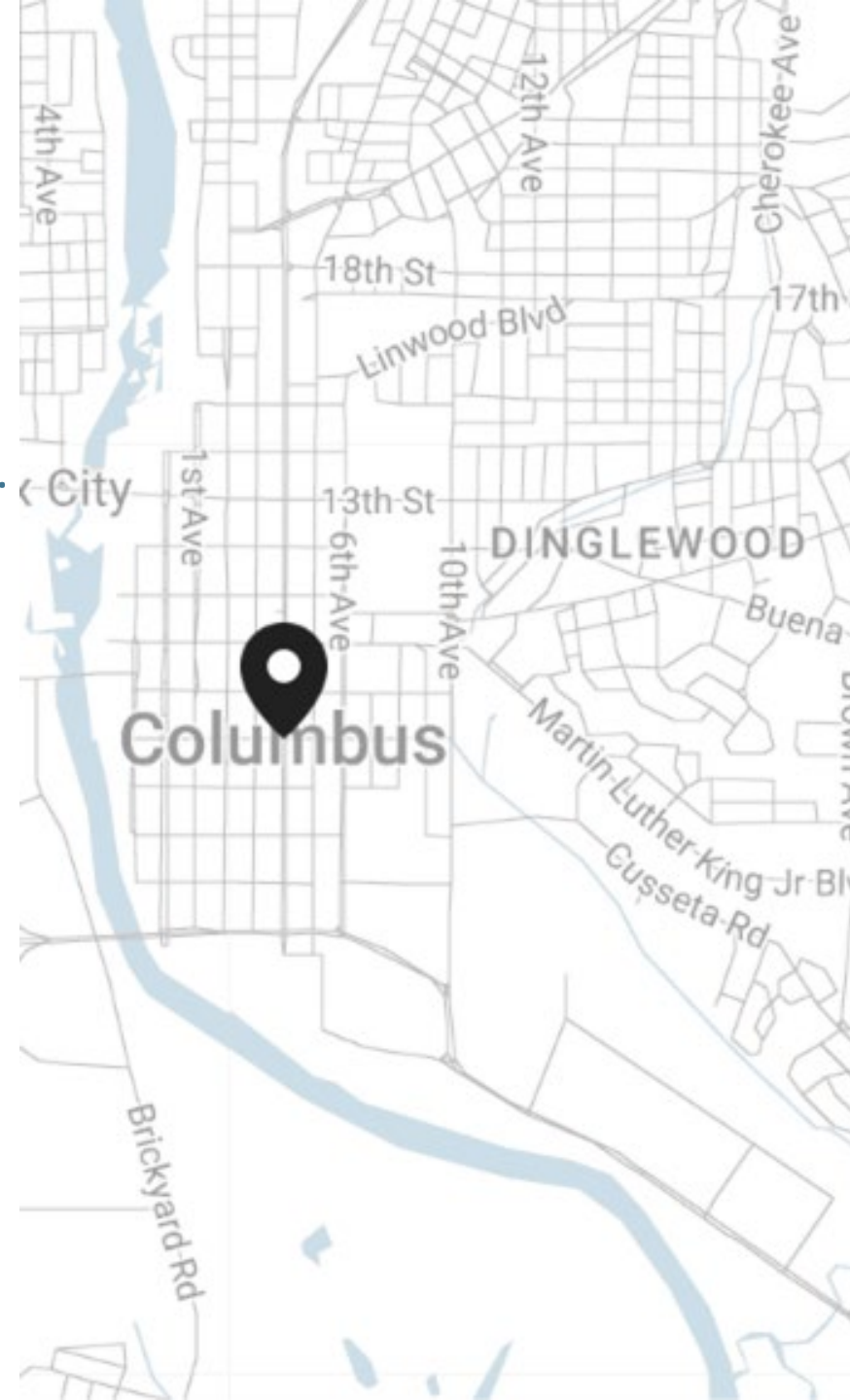
Plant Your Roots: Potential Communities

Anderson Village

Midcity Yards

Liberty District

Plant Your Roots: Timeline

SHORT TERM	SHORT TERM	MEDIUM TERM	LONG TERM
Hire a project manager to begin surveying and identifying communities Program director will also begin establishing a steering committee comprised of neighborhood stakeholders and conduct community surveys	**Revisit previously commissioned project plans** Examine past project documents, blueprints, feasibility studies, and cost estimates to assess their alignment with current goals and identify areas for improvement.	**Choose a neighborhood district and begin the development of a plan** Begin presenting to community through Town Halls. Revisit zoning laws to designate entertainment districts that attract young talent, while prioritizing economic development	**Solicit bids from neighborhood developers to execute the ideal master plan** Work with the City to provide incentives for developers to build or update properties in a way that will decrease blight and increase community activity

Connect Columbus

The *Fountain of Youth* proposes a high speed rail between Atlanta and Columbus be reconsidered.
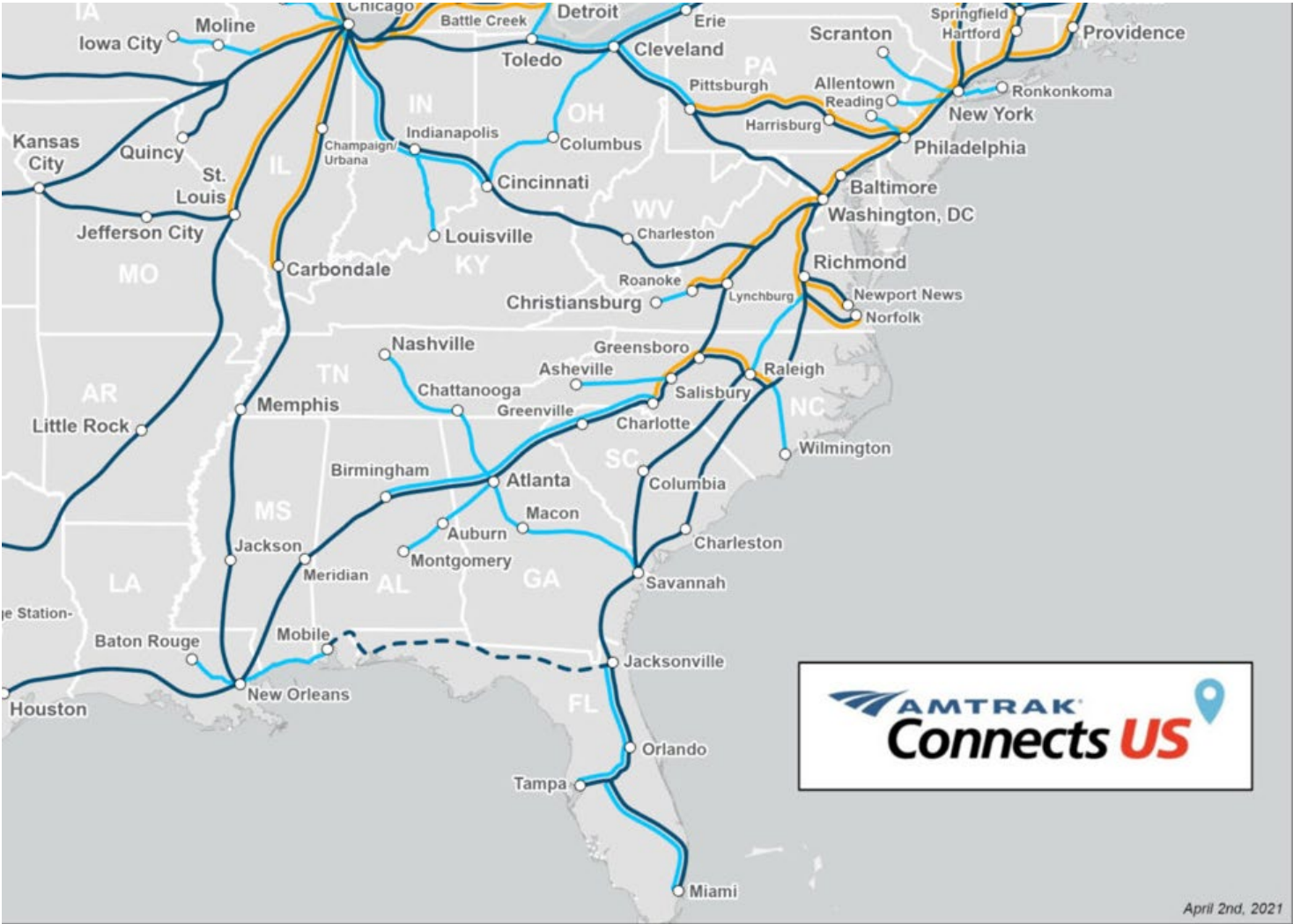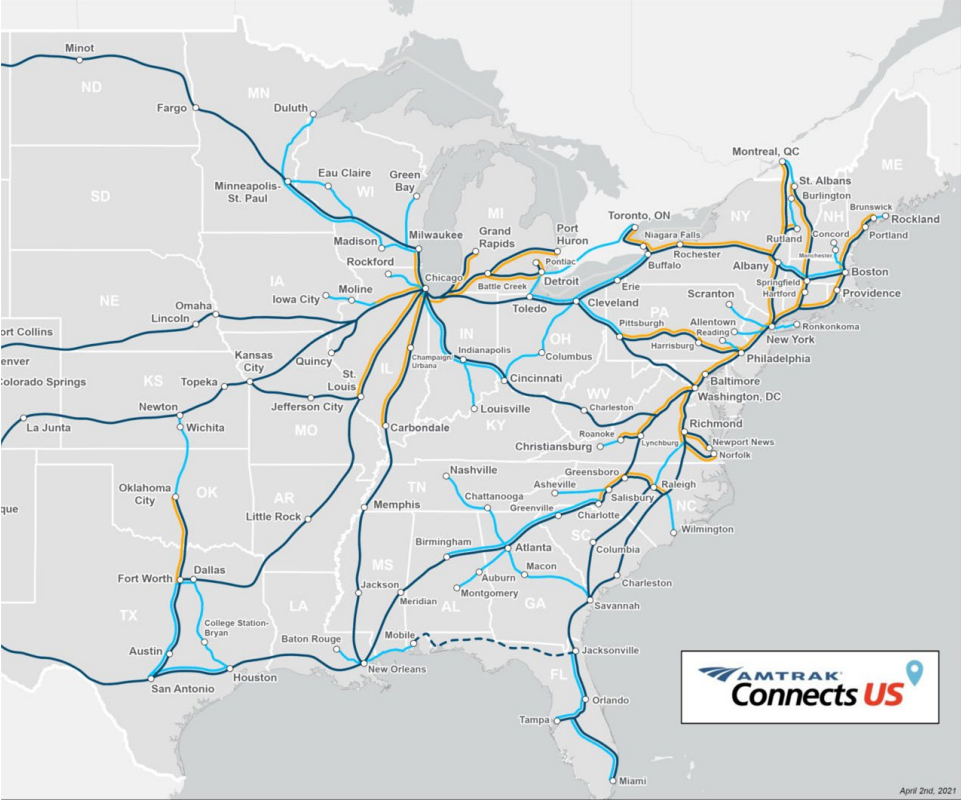
Connect Columbus

Current State: There is no high speed rail between Georgia's 2 most populated cities, and current travel time from Columbus to Atlanta is close to 2 hours or more.

Gaps: Young Professionals in Columbus are looking for higher-paying salaries and are having to commute to Atlanta multiple days a week or move from the community.

Recommendations: Revisit the high speed rail feasibility study completed in 2014 to build a rail to help commuters and drive tourism and business growth to Columbus.

AMTRAK Proposed Routes (2021)

Connect Columbus Financial Results

Year		2030	2040	2050
		Annual Operating Ratio		
Express	Total Revenue	$23.6 million	$25.8 million	$28.4 million
	Total Cost	$19.5 million	$19.3 million	$18.9 million
	Operating Ratio	**1.21**	**1.34**	**1.50**

* Notes: FRA seeks Operation Ratio > 1.0
    Revenue surplus can be used to help pay capital bonds

Columbus to Atlanta High Speed Rail

Things to Consider:

- What do young professionals want?

- 2014 study

- Has high speed transportation become less feasible in the last 20 years?

- Has Columbus become a more desirable community in the last 20 years?

Express Option

Express lines provides frequent service between main population centers with few stops. This rail option is run by electric locomotives with top speeds of 150-220 mph. Because of the high speed and design, they must be built on new tracks

Connect Columbus Goals

Short-Term: Designate a City official to keep the high speed rail conversation going at both the local and state level. We will need to revisit the feasibility study to ensure key points still stand as well as commission a grant writer to apply for funding.

Mid-Term: Ensure that Columbus is an appealing community for young professionals through other Young Gamechanger suggestions and community initiatives. Additionally, continue to work with state and local governments and private industry to develop a project plan.

Long-Term: Receive project clearance from governing bodies, create and design a site in Columbus for the station and begin construction on the high speed rail project.

Fountain of Youth

1. **Columbus Made**

2. **Plant Your Roots**

3. **Connect Columbus**

Columbus, Georgia Population 2023
202,957
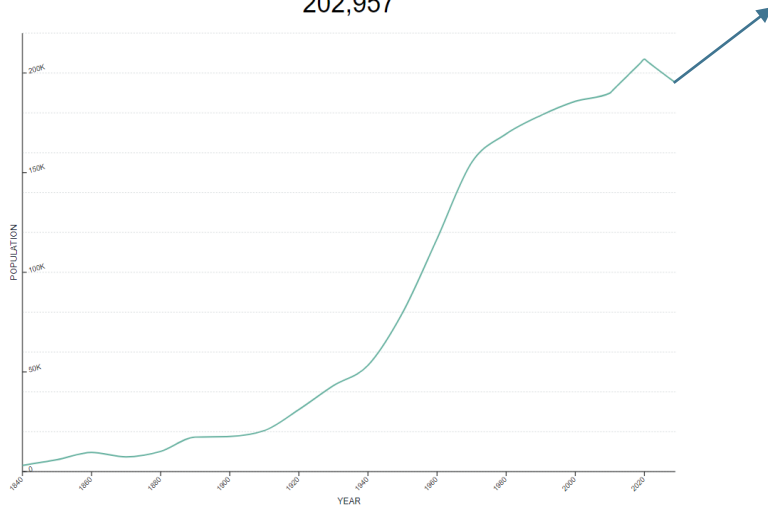
QUESTIONS

4

SOUTH COLUMBUS SOUL

CHALLENGE QUESTION

According to 2020 US Census data, 20% of people in Muscogee County live in poverty, and our most impoverished areas are centered in South Columbus. In light of this, how can we effectively address income disparity in South Columbus and increase economic mobility in our community?

THE TEAM

- **Elizabeth Banks**, Chief Programs Officer of HOPE Atlanta, Atlanta, GA
- **Divisha Bradley**, City of Albany Accounting Manager, Albany, GA
- **Maegan Day**, Assistant Principal, Glanton-Hindsman Elementary School, Villa Rica, GA
- **Kelsie Kruskol**, Research Analyst at Georgia Department of Economic Development, Atlanta, GA
- **Rachael Lambert**, Client Service Analyst, TSYS, Columbus, GA
- **Ashley Nealy**, Assistant Director, Support Services at US Treasury, Atlanta, GA
- **Will Newton**, Business Development Manager, Norcross, GA
- **Tavari Turner**, Senior Director of Strategic Development, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Chattahoochee Valley, Columbus, GA
- **Patrick Rodriguez**, Co-Executive Director of the Georgia Coalition for Higher Education in Prison, Atlanta, GA
- **Erica Walker**, Director of Tocqueville and Legacy Giving, United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley, Cataula, GA
- **Rebecca Zajac**, Executive Director, Dragonfly Trails, Columbus, GA

THE TEAM

Poverty in South Columbus

- Poverty:
  - Not earning enough money before taxes without counting extras like increases in property value or help received in the form of housing, health care, or food from the government (US Census Bureau, 2023).

- 20% of the population in Muscogee County, is living in poverty (US Census Bureau, 2020)

- Significant racial disparity in poverty in Columbus, GA:

  - Predominantly white neighborhoods, poverty rate is ~10%

  - Predominantly black neighborhoods poverty rate is ~33.8%

(US Census Bureau, 2020; Data USA, 2020)
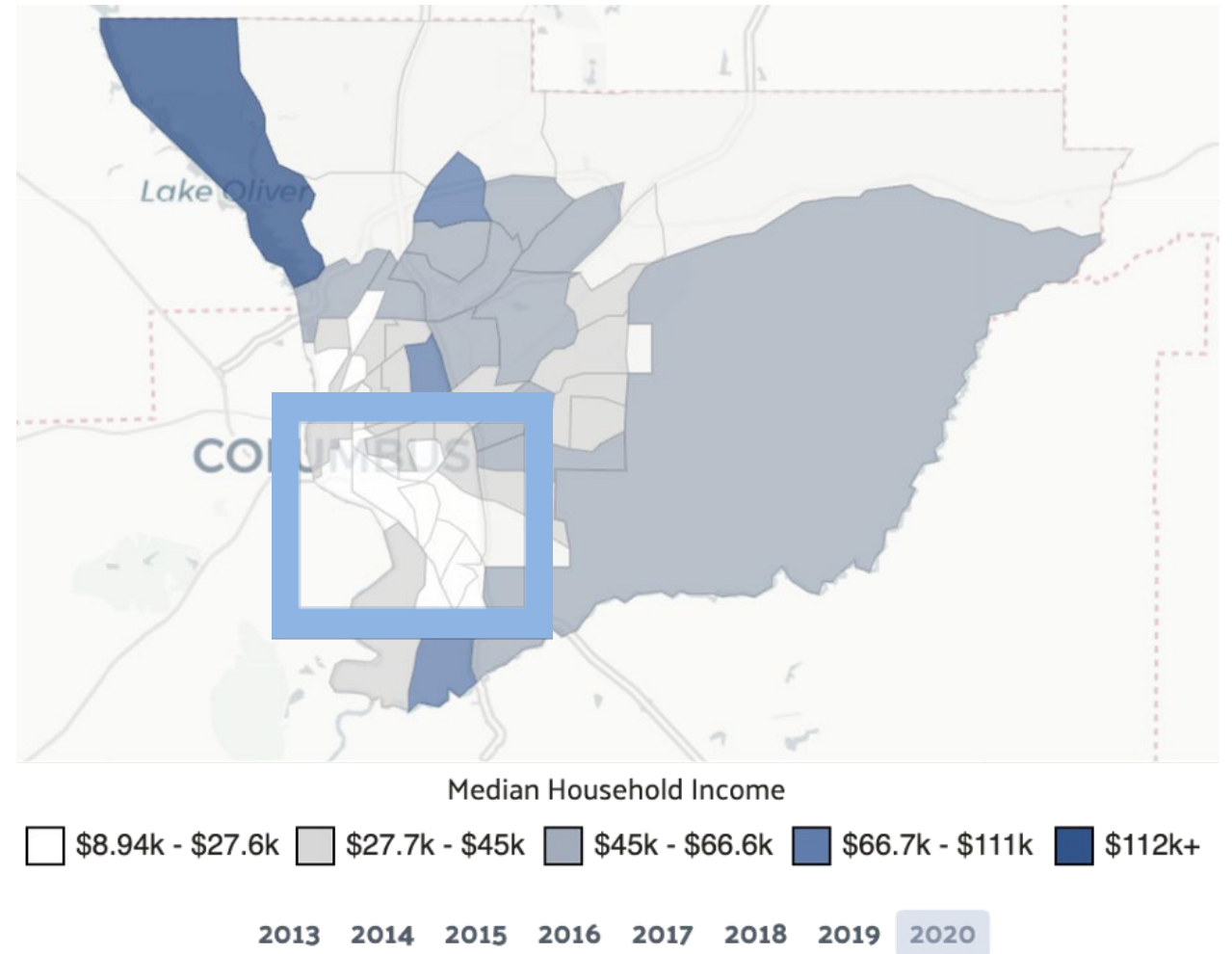

Median Household Income

☐ $8.94k - $27.6k   ☐ $27.7k - $45k   ☐ $45k - $66.6k   ☐ $66.7k - $111k   ☐ $112k+

2013   2014   2015   2016   2017   2018   2019   2020

Figure 1: Income by location for Columbus, GA (Data USA, 2020)
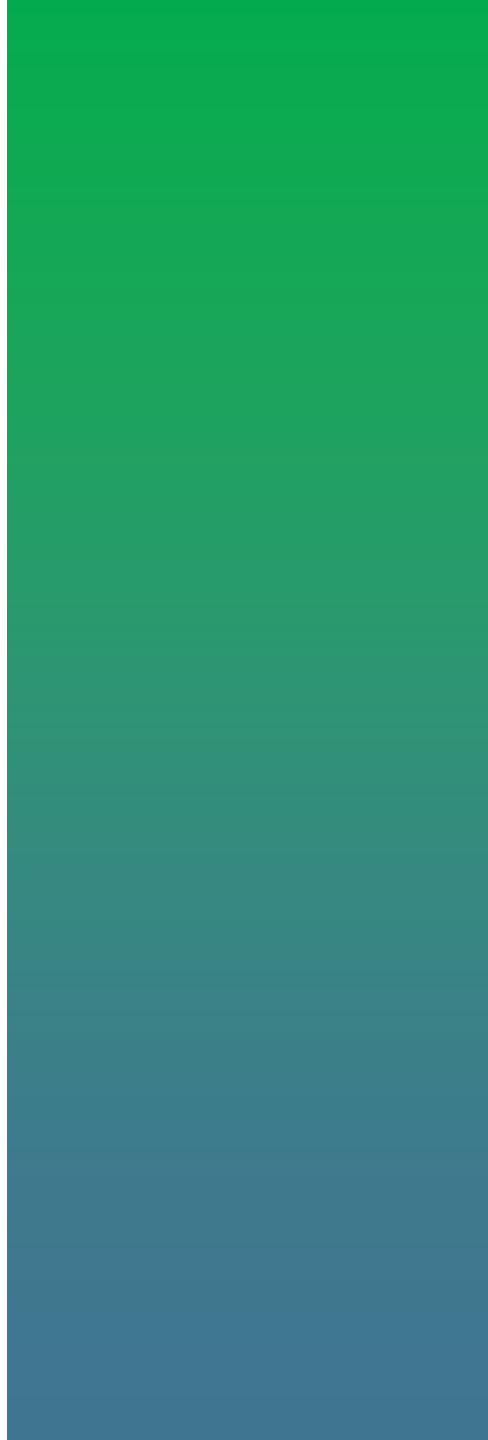
THREE BIG IDEAS

1

Cyber Soul

2

House of Soul

3

Soul Support

BIG IDEA 1

CYBER SOUL

A comprehensive solution consisting of four components to address the broadband and internet challenges in the South Columbus region

BIG IDEA #1 - Cyber Soul

Current State

- All public facilities currently have broadband access
- Wifi Hotspots provided for Children in the County Education System

Gaps

- Low internet and digital literacy
- Awareness and Availability of Technology Certification Opportunities
- Future Tech Job Readiness Opportunities

Recommendations

- Make Columbus a Broadband Ready Community
- Create digital literacy and web safety education programs
- Increase awareness of the Affordable Connectivity Program
- Youth tech prep programs

Goals/Timeline

- **Short-Term**
  - Receive Broadband Ready designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs
  - **Create digital literacy/internet safety education**
  - Youth Tech Program Development
  - **Launch a steering committee**

- **Medium-Term**
  - **Create online job fairs and job posting boards to the South Columbus community.**
  - **Create Tech job training and work from home training**
  - Youth Tech Certification
  - Ensure Affordable Connectivity Program signage and sign-up information is available at all public spaces.
  - Include information about signing up on public hotspot splash pages

- **Long-Term**
  - Continue youth certification programs provided in the medium terms with an emphasis on providing certifications for adult and family members. Certifications provided via similar delivery methods.
  - **Automatic enrollment when a qualifying individual interacts with the city of Columbus on a qualifying eligibility event (such as applying for SNAP, driver's license, school enrollment)**

Big Idea 1: Cyber Soul - Budget

- Short-Term

ITEM	COST	FREQUENCY
Contractor to support buildout of Tech Education Program and Community Broadband Application	$10,000	One-Time
Grant to Educational Entity to "house" program	$10,000	Annually
Sub-Total	**$20,000**	

- Mid-Term

ITEM	COST	FREQUENCY
CompTIA IT Fundamental + Certification	$134 x 15 = $2,010	Annually (per cohort)
CompTIA Network+ Certification	$358 x 15 = $5,370	Annually (per cohort)
Apple Certified Support Professional	$250 x 5 = $1,250	Annually (per cohort)
Cisco Certified Network Associate	$300 x 5 = 1,500	Annually (per cohort)
Computers for Pop-Up Certification Courses	$250 x15 = $3,750	Annually (per cohort)
Sub-Total	**$13,880**	

- Long-Term

ITEM	COST	FREQUENCY
Materials for Pop-Up Family Tech Camps	$5,000	Annually (per cohort)
Another Round of Certifications for Additional Participants	$10,130	Annually (per cohort)
Sub-Total	**$15,130**	
TOTAL PROJECT COST	**$49,010**	

Funding Sources and Partnerships

Possible Funding Sources

- United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley
- Federal Funding
  - USDA Rural Development
  - Southeast Crescent Regional Commission
- Appropriations in partnership with HR – GA001
- Georgia Technology Authority
- Grants
  - Department of Energy: EECBG Grant
  - Foundations specializing in Technology Infrastructure
  - Workforce Opportunity for Rural Communities through the Department of Labor
- Utility Companies i.e. Liberty Utilities and/or Georgia Power

Possible Partnerships

- Muscogee County School District
- City of Columbus
- Georgia Technology Authority (GTA)
- Department of Community Affairs (DCA)
- United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley
- The Urban League of the River Valley, Inc.
- Boys & Girls Clubs of Chattahoochee Valley (BGCCV)
- YMCA
- Girls, Inc.
- Broadband Service Providers i.e. AT&T, Spectrum, Wow!, Verizon, TMobile, Starlink

BIG IDEA 2

HOUSE OF SOUL

House of Soul is a neighborhood rejuvenation initiative that aims to raise property values in South Columbus.

BIG IDEA #2 - House of Soul

Current State

- Existing 2021 Redevelopment Plan for South Columbus
- 311 call center and app
- Newly created Neighborhood Navigators

Gaps

- Lack of knowledge and accessibility to necessary resources, as well as funding for home improvements
- Implementation of a blight reduction plan
- Grassroots initiatives

Recommendations

- Expand Inspections and Code Division
- Implement blight tax
- Develop a Neighborhood Planning Unit
- Create Blight Task Force
- Construct a Homeless Navigation Center

Example of Code Enforcement Guide

Suwanee, Georgia

SUWANEE'S PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

This brochure highlights some of the major provisions of the City of Suwanee's property maintenance codes in order to enhance understanding and cooperation between the code enforcement division and Suwanee citizens and businesses. Please use this guide to ensure compliance with city codes and to help preserve property values in your neighborhood and throughout Suwanee.

INOPERABLE VEHICLES
All vehicles must be operable and currently licensed or kept in an enclosed garage. No vehicle may be stored outside in a state of disrepair.

VEHICLE PARKING
Vehicles may not be parked on any lawn/yard area. All vehicle parking areas and driveways shall be paved with concrete or asphalt.

TRASH AND DEBRIS
Any worn out, broken, or worthless item, garbage, waste, trash, or other similar debris may not be thrown, deposited, or allowed to accumulate on any property. Dead, broken, or fallen limbs must also be removed from property.
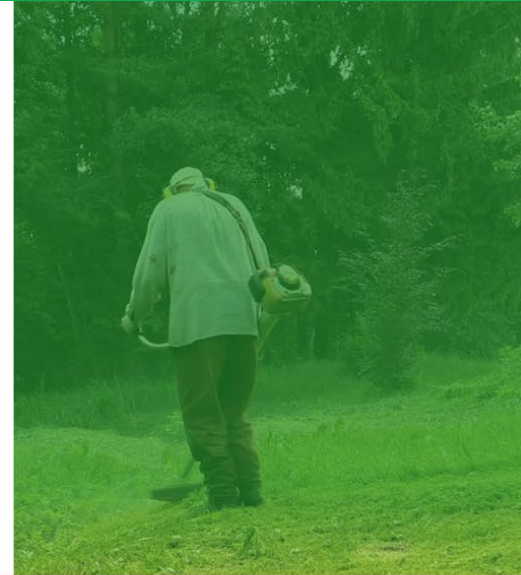
EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE
Exterior property areas must be weathertight and rodent-proof. They must be maintained free of rotted wood, holes, peeling paint, broken windows or doors, and be kept in safe and sanitary condition.

SIGNS
Signs are not allowed in or on any city right-of-way, utility pole, or traffic device. Signs placed on rights-of-way will be removed without warning or notice.

BUILDING PERMITS
Building permits are required for additions, sheds over 120 sq. ft., and most decks, as well as electrical, plumbing, structural, demolition and mechanical work.

Please check with the city's inspections department at 770-945-8996 before doing any work to see if a permit is required.

GRASS AND WEEDS
Overgrown weeds and grass provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes and rodents and negatively influence property values. In addition, noxious weeds such as poison ivy can cause health problems. Grass and weeds must be maintained at a height of 12" or less, and noxious weeds must be removed.

OUTSIDE STORAGE
Miscellaneous items stored outside must be fully screened from view from any adjacent property by a wall, fence, or landscaping. Screening must be constructed and maintained within applicable city codes. Exempt items include patio furniture, swing sets and similar equipment, as well as neatly stacked firewood.

POOLS OF WATER
Standing water is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Ponds, swimming pools, gutters, buckets, or other receptacles must be maintained free of trash and debris, and must be kept free of standing water.

STORM WATER POLLUTION PREVENTION
No person shall discharge, leave deposit, or allow the accumulation of any substance into any drainage or storm water sewer system. Remember, if it's not rain, it shouldn't go in the storm drain.

For any questions, contact:

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER
770-904-2126
CodeEnforcement@suwanee.com

Example of Sprung Structure

Examples of Dilapidated Properties

Revitalized historical housing Macon, GA

Reinvestment opportunity in South Columbus

Big Idea 2: House of Soul

- **Short Term Goals**
  - **Create a resource on Inspections & Code website outlining compliance requirements**
  - Increase awareness of 311 services, particularly the app
  - Create homeowner educational materials and launch multi-channel campaign
  - **Establish Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU)**
  - Host neighborhood cleanup days

- **Medium Term Goals**
  - **Develop Columbus Blight Removal Task Force**
  - Create low-interest rehabilitation loan program
  - Expand Inspections & Code staffing

- **Long Term Goals**
  - **Implement blight tax**
  - Implement city-wide blight reduction strategic plan
  - Utilize vacant land to develop alternative housing

Big Idea 2: House of Soul - Budget

ITEM	COST	FREQUENCY
Neighborhood Clean-Up Services	$2,500	Quarterly
(3) New Fulltime Inspections & Code Staff Positions	$214,500	Annually
Revolving Loan Fund Start-Up Costs	$20,000	One-Time
Homeowner Education Marketing Campaign	$50,000	One-time
Homeowner Education Materials	$1,000	Quarterly
Blight Task Force	Consultant: $500,000 Implementation: $2,000,000	Consultant: One-Time Implementation: Ongoing
Homeless Navigation Center	Capital: $3,000,000 Operating: $1,000,000	Capital: One-Time Operating: Annually
Blight Tax Legal Consulting Fees	$50,000	One-Time
TOTAL PROJECT COST	**$6,838,000**	

Funding Sources and Partnerships

Possible Funding Sources

- Blight Tax
- South Columbus TAD
- CDBG Entitlement Funds
- Existing/Future Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST)
- Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFIs)
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
- Private Donations
- Foundations/Corporations (similar to Detroit, MI model)

Potential Partnerships

- CCG: Community Reinvestment
- CCG: Inspections & Code
- CCG: 311
- CCG: Keep Columbus Beautiful
- CCG: IT Services
- Columbus 2025
- NeighborWorks
- Columbus Housing Authority
- Columbus State University
- Columbus Technical College
- Dragonfly Trails
- Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley
- Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- Turn Around Columbus
- Faith-based entities
- Media: Eco Courier Latino, WRBL, WTVM, Ledger Enquirer

SOUL SUPPORT

A multifaceted pilot program to tackle the basic needs of South Columbus residents, eliminating common obstacles to employment and creating a pathway to economic mobility

BIG IDEA #3 – Soul Support

Current State
- Circles of Columbus
- Workforce Development

Gaps
- Eliminating barriers
- Direct assistance
- Temporary Child Credit Expansion Expiration

Recommendations
- Guaranteed Basic Income Program
- Workforce development and entrepreneurial empowerment
- Barrier reduction subsidy

SOUTH COLUMBUS

SouL

securing our universal livelihood

a guaranteed income initiative

7,533

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS WITH SPENDING DATA

The largest share of expenditures went to retail sales and services, at 40%. Food and groceries were the second highest at around 28%. Transport and housing/utilities were next, at 9% and 9% respectively, followed by financial transactions at 7% and travel/leisure/entertainment at 3%. Healthcare, education, and miscellaneous expenses made up the final 4%.
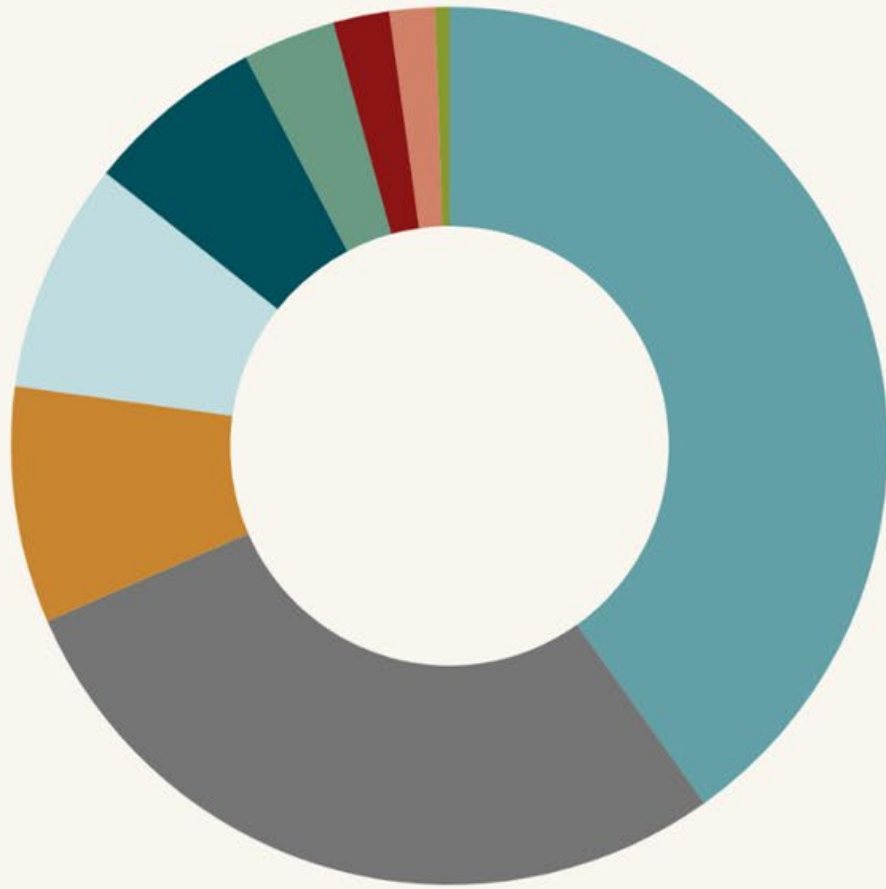
- RETAIL SALES AND SERVICES: 40.13%
- FOOD AND GROCERIES: 28.36%
- TRANSPORT RELATED EXPENSES: 8.68%
- HOUSING & UTILITIES: 8.51%
- FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS: 6.64%
- TRAVEL/LEISURE/ENTERTAINMENT: 3.42%
- HEALTHCARE/MEDICAL EXPENSES: 2.07%
- MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES: 1.67%
- EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES: 0.53%

Source: Guaranteed Income Pilots Dashboard

Big Idea 3: Soul Support

- **Short-Term Goals**
  - Form an exploratory committee to champion a program in South Columbus.
  - **Become the the next city in Georgia to join the Mayors for a Guaranteed Income network.**
  - Launch the Neighborhood Navigator program and develop integration strategy for S.O.U.L participants

- **Medium-Term Goals**
  - Finalize partnership model, execution strategy, and media plan.
  - **Identify host nonprofit to implement the S.O.U.L Program including spend tracking and subsidy disbursement**
  - **Initiate partnership referral and client enrollment in workforce training, education, and job placement services.**
  - Ensure at least 50% of S.O.U.L. pilot recipients are actively engaged in the workforce development & entrepreneurship programs.

- **Long-Term Goals**
  - Evaluate and expand the subsidy program based on uptake and effectiveness.
  - **Scale program and fine-tune phase 2 to adapt solutions for real-world barriers**
  - Reduce dependency on direct cash assistance as recipients gain sustainable employment or start their businesses.
  - Create a replicable model that can showcase the success of the Soul Support initiative in South Columbus, GA.

Big Idea 3: Soul Support - Budget

ITEM	COST	FREQUENCY
S.O.U.L. Pilot Funding	$600,000 (50 people x $500 per month x 24 months)	One-Time
Workforce Development Pilot	$75,000 ($3,000 x 25 people)	One-Time
Barrier Reduction Stipend Pilot	$45,000 (25 people x $150 per month x 12 months)	One-Time
S.O.U.L. Phase 2 Funding	$1,200,000 (100 people x $500 per month x 24 months)	Every Two Years
Workforce Development Phase 2	$150,000 ($3,000 x 50 people)	Every Two Years
Phase 2 Barrier Reduction Stipend	$90,000 (50 people x $150 per month x 12 months)	Every Two Years
Program Administrator (x1)	$60,000	Annually
TOTAL PROJECT COST	$2,220,000	

Funding Sources and Partnerships

Possible Funding Sources

- Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley Community Impact Grant
- American Rescue Plan
- City of Columbus
- Georgia Resilience and Opportunity Fund
- Foundations, Corporate and Private Donors
  - Community Foundation, BlackRock, Chick-fil-A, Arthur Blank Foundation

Possible Partnerships

- Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley
- United Way of Chattahoochee Valley
- Urban League of the River Valley
- Circles Columbus
- Columbus 2025
- Georgia Center for Opportunity
- Columbus Tech
- Goodwill
- StartUp Columbus

IN HER HANDS

Kyonna

"I am extremely blessed to be a witness of a movement so great. In Her Hands has provided much needed financial assistance. I was working 40+ hours a week and being paid every two weeks; however, my obligations outweighed my income. Imagine being a part of an initiative that provides financial support for a 2-year timespan that allows you to work toward financial freedom and enjoy life. The funds received have helped me overcome some financial barriers. I was able to pay off loans and relieve stress caused by worrying about paying my bills. I have set personal goals and Thanks to In Her Hands I will succeed!"

QUESTIONS

BECOME A YOUNG GAMECHANGER

georgiaforward.org/apply

We are excited to invite you to the highly anticipated return of our GeorgiaForward Forum. This one-day event is designed to bring together academics, entrepreneurs, and next-generation leaders from all corners of Georgia, creating a powerful network to shape our state's future.

Learn More

Join us for the

2023
Georgia*Forward*
Forum

Oct. 20, 2023

8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. ET

Columbus Convention and Trade Center

Young
Gamechangers
a GeorgiaForward program

THANK YOU!