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1. PROMOTION
PROMOTION AND MARKETING

Summary of Observations and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION
Promotion and Marketing focuses on positioning downtown as a positive and proactive center of activity through special events, retail events and image building campaigns/initiatives. Promotion takes many forms, but the goal is to create a positive image that will renew community pride and tell your downtown's story. The techniques we teach, and the variety of tools at your disposal, will help to rekindle the vitality of your community. Promotions communicate your commercial district's unique characteristics, its cultural traditions, architecture, and history and activities to shoppers, investors, potential businesses and property owners, and visitors.

Special Events are designed specifically to build on community strengths and to help bring people to the district. They are intended to be fun and focus on non-commercial aspects, therefore they may not ring cash registers on the day of the event but, over time, they should build customer awareness and support for the district.

Retail/business generating activities should result in increased sales for the district by bringing people directly into businesses. Sidewalk sales are popular sales events because of their visibility. Today, we often need to look at alternatives because of the changing mix of businesses in many commercial cores, with less retail and more service businesses. Activities can include quality marketing, events, contests and specialty events (i.e. Chocolate Walk during the month of February).

Image building activities help to reinforce positive perceptions of the district and minimize negative perceptions. They help support overall revitalization efforts by communicating the message that there is a reason for coming downtown to experience both the commercial and non-commercial aspects of the district. Image activities tend to focus on printed materials (banners, coozies, hats, shirts) or marketing campaigns, but they can also include events or special projects.

OBSERVATIONS
1) Staffing:
The City has hired a Main Street program director. The location of the program director's office is currently within the Economic Development and Tourism Development Departments. While this is an ideal location while the Main Street position and responsibilities are being firmly established, as a medium term strategy, we recommend that the office of the Main Street program director be located in the downtown district. This will allow the director to have eyes on the street and easy access to downtown businesses and offices. This location will also build a strong relationship between the director, business owners and downtown workers.

Students from local high schools can serve as excellent interns and volunteers for the Main Street Program. Not only do they provide a different perspective during a planning process (i.e. a special event), they are also exposed to the efforts of the City and other organizations and this can serve as a valuable learning opportunity for them.
PROMOTION AND MARKETING

Professional development is key for all Main Street staff and partner organizations. If you are not already, we recommend becoming a member of the South Carolina Festival and Events Association. Many of the Main Street South Carolina programs are members of this association. The goals of the Association include improving the quality of festivals and events held throughout South Carolina, assisting individual festivals in all manners possible, especially in efforts to develop and promote appreciation for the visual and performing arts and to attract in and out-of-state visitors to their communities and acting as a clearinghouse for information and supply sources for festivals and events. Visit their website at scfnea.com.

Main Street South Carolina provides specific Promotions and Marketing training for our members. It is highly recommended that staff, especially those directly involved in the planning of special events, festivals, retail promotions and communications attend these trainings.

The National Main Street Center has valuable on-line learning but there is no substitute for attending the Main Street NOW, the premiere conference on downtown revitalization.

2) Communications:
Communication can always be improved. Work with the local media outlets to get expanded coverage of downtown activities, especially those that are not highly visible to the public. For example, if the team tasked with economic development is distributing a survey, send a press release to the media and offer a photo opportunity. If Main Street has submitted a grant proposal on behalf of the City, make sure people know about it. And if the grant is awarded, celebrate it! At the same time, make sure that Main Street is recognizing all of its partners.

The relationship between City staff and other departments is important, especially because the Downtown Camden office is not currently located within city hall or the downtown core. Websites associated with the City of Camden are sophisticated, easy to navigate and appear to be thorough and regularly maintained. A social media search reveals a site sponsored by The City of Camden – Downtown Camden. This page will be managed by the Main Street program director.

The City Economic Development and Tourism Development staff also play a vital role in promoting the City of Camden. It was obvious to the team that these roles work closely together and support one another in marketing Camden. City staff regularly conduct team meetings.

Write a regular (monthly) newspaper column and send timely press releases. It is important to demonstrate to the community that the staff and volunteers are meeting goals and project deadlines even if it is not as exciting or visible as a special event. The director and other city staff members can rotate writing a monthly column for the local paper. Some Main Street programs have been successful recruiting retired newspaper reporters and interns to help with this task. Utilize YouTube and social media to expand the coverage.

Organize regular joint meetings with other organizations. The cooperative working relationship that Main Street can have with partner organizations can be further enhanced by better communication. The Chamber, municipal staff, non-profit boards and commissions may be able to be more supportive if they are included in regular planning and project development updates. If they know what your mission is they may be able to help you achieve it by working with you.
3) Retail and Business Generating Activities:

Retail promotions are important to help your businesses make more money, highlight the variety of businesses, develop new or strengthen connections to customers and encourage coordination among your business owners. The best retail promotions are planned by the business owners (retail and service) and employees of downtown businesses in partnership with the local Main Street program director. In the “Main Street World”, we often borrow successful ideas from other communities. Wednesdays have historically been a slow time in many downtown centers. Wednesday-Friendsday Business Expo was created in Cocoa Beach, Florida to encourage networking between businesses on the first Wednesday of each month; each event has a different host. The Main Street program in Cocoa Beach hosts one Wednesday each year to expose community and business leaders to Cocoa Village. This is a low impact table top expo which includes a competition among Cocoa Beach restaurants for “best food” and among businesses and candidates for “best merchandising” of their business or campaign. Entertainment included a Barbershop Quartet and a walking tour of historic sites. Participating businesses paid a $45 fee per table; food providers exhibited for free. This is a fairly easy retail promotion that can be duplicated in Camden.

Another way to help your retail/service sector is to make it easy for them to tie into major special events. Special events are designed to create a sense of liveliness in the district, build community, de-emphasize commercial aspects, and provide a safe, inviting atmosphere for people to have fun. With large events, however, Main Street needs to work with downtown businesses to help them tap into the buying potential created by attracting larger crowds to the district. One way is to help businesses spotlight their products or services in a manner compatible with the event. For example, if there is a music and audio equipment store in an area of the district where musical entertainment is not scheduled, ask the owner to set up speakers outside and play music that reflects the event’s theme. Or get the owner of a bookstore to have costumed characters of popular children’s stories on hand—guaranteed to bring parents and kids into the store! Ask businesses to provide refreshments or open their restrooms. While some folks may just pass through, others might take the opportunity to shop and visit with store owners.

Rather than discounts or sales, have your retailers consider “value-added” promotions. While sales are valid promotional activities for a Main Street district, consider limiting the number to two or three per year so that the district’s image does not become synonymous with “bargain basement” prices. Instead, promote a quality image by developing “value-added” activities. Think of the way cosmetics areas in department stores seasonally distribute “gifts” with a purchase. In Main Street districts, it might mean organizing a bulk purchase of inexpensive, custom ornaments to distribute with purchases during a merchant’s Holiday Open House or perhaps giving out flowers on Mother’s Day.

Work with staff to develop a strong campaign for shopping local year round, encouraging residents to shop in the City, and particularly downtown. Camden residents spend a lot of money outside of the community so a campaign to show how shopping local can greatly improve the economy is always needed. There are many such initiatives that communities have used. The City will need to show the opportunities, choices and value of shopping locally. A complete business inventory and listing of products and services will be needed to inform
residents of the many ways they can support local businesses. The easiest and least expensive way is to promote this through social media but it will be stronger if marketing dollars are available for strategic marketing. “Walkable, shopping, and dining” are all great traits to be included in a positive campaign for downtown. Form a task force of local business owners to develop this campaign with you. A “Downtown Dollars” program is another good opportunity to encourage local shopping and should be marketed heavily to the community and local industries.

Downtown Camden has several restaurants that can potentially promote a niche-building opportunity. Public input attendees expressed a desire for additional dining options — sidewalk dining and late night options. Fast and casual family restaurants serve the local market outside of downtown. The Camden — Classically Carolina magazine showcases local restaurants and businesses. Tallied together, existing restaurants are likely the number one traffic generators to downtown. Business promotions — those that ring the cash registers — can promote specific business niches. For Camden, promoting the restaurants on Broad Street and surrounding area might be a worthy opportunity to promote what downtown has to offer at this time. “Restaurant Week” events can be expanded to Restaurant Holi“DAY”s or Restaurants are Makin’ Camden, for example. Restaurant Week events invite people to try many places that offer exceptional values during the week. You can include progressive dinners at participating restaurants (this is particularly good when restaurants experience a slow time of the year), or simply producing a restaurant “passport” guide. You fill your passport with stamps from all of the participating restaurants and you are entered to win a prize. There are so many ideas that can implemented to include restaurant and food events.

A very positive and in many ways necessary role for the Main Street program is to become a clearing house for information and activities happening downtown.

4) Image Promotions

We recommend that the MS director work closely with other city departments and organizations to explore ways to expand image promotion. The City’s “Classically Carolina™” brand imagery is featured prominently throughout the region on banners and billboards and in publications.

Create opportunities to educate customers about goods and services available downtown. Main Street programs tend to rely on business directories or web site listings to inform people about the range of goods and services available in the commercial district. While both are important, useful tools, other opportunities need to be explored. Both in-store and coordinated district-wide activities can educate customers about the range of goods available as well as provide ideas on how to use specific products. For example, cooking supply stores frequently offer recipes or tips on how to use specialty products or provide in-store cooking demonstrations; bookstores often put together “staff recommendations” or organize reading groups; and floral shops give flower arranging or gift basket demonstrations.

Complementary business clusters—businesses that sell related products and services—can work together to create promotions. Typical of this type of cross-promotion would be a spring bridal fair that coordinates a fashion show of bridal wear and displays from bakeries, jew-
5) Special Events

Events, Festivals and Venues:
The Camden Town Green combined the rehabilitation of a blighted parking lot and the creation of a new greenspace in the core of downtown Camden. Once an aging, damaged parking lot with serious storm water issues, the area was transformed into a beautiful park surrounded by pervious concrete parking areas and event space pre-wired to accommodate performance acts. The Town Green is home to two bronze statues of King Hagler of the Catawba tribe and Col. Joseph Kershaw, one of the founders of present day Camden, gifted by John A. “Johnny” Hagins, Jr. in honor of his father, the late John Argis Hagins, Sr. This history is an opportunity to build a celebratory event focused on the lives of these men and their contributions.

The Camden Town Green and the connecting alley are positioned in the core of downtown. The area is large enough to accommodate events of all sizes. Its connection to Broad and Market Streets allows for several access points. The alley between Broad and the Town Green is an opportunity to expand the venue by creating an inviting entry point by adding tables, chairs, benches, lighting, plantings and art. The alley also provides a safe access point for pedestrians attending events and festivals. For larger events, Broad Street and/or Market Street could be temporarily closed to vehicular traffic.

Evaluate current festivals and special events. And before planning additional events, it is important to know attendee’s evaluation of entertainment, food and beverage, costs, parking and directions, facility/venue, least favorite part of event and favorite part of the event. Each evaluation can be customized by event. The Main Street program will also want to perform an internal evaluation which should include questions about attendance, safety issues, vendor management, volunteer management, venue, scheduling, and participation by businesses and time of event, pedestrian management and measurable outcomes. Vendors should also be given an opportunity to evaluate their experience at your events.

Once events have been completed, survey businesses and other partners to determine if their goals were met. Ask them a few quick questions: What was the best thing about the event and the one thing they would change? Did they see an increase in the number of people walking past or coming into their business? Did they experience a sales increase over the same day last year? This will help determine changes or adjustments such as new marketing tactics, renaming an event, adding new activities or partners, or even dropping the event if it is no longer effective and not worth the time and resources of the organization. If businesses have great success or people tell you that they had an incredible time in downtown, capture their testimonial to help promote future events and to recruit sponsors.

In its effort to promote downtown as a center of activity for the community, the Main Street Program does not need to and should not organize every event happening downtown. Camden has several entities sponsoring events and Main Street should partner, when appropriate.
PROMOTION AND MARKETING

ate, with these organizations especially when the events are in the downtown district. Sharing promotion of events in the program’s communication tools help reach a wider audience. Main Street should also promote quality and well-organized downtown events, encouraging groups to carefully plan each event. The promotion team should partner with downtown businesses to maximize the impact of each event and strive to get attendees to visit and support downtown businesses during the events. Use each event to promote the next scheduled event. Display posters and/or banners around the grounds inviting everyone to come back again for the next great event.
2. ECONOMIC VITALITY
ECONOMIC VITALITY

Economic Development Opportunities

Current Physical and Economic Conditions

The Camden Main Street District is an area containing approximately 36 blocks centered on the intersection of Broad (U.S. Highway 521) and DeKalb Streets (U.S. Highway 1). The district extends parallel to Broad Street for roughly six blocks to the north and south of the intersection and approximately three blocks wide on either side.

The District contains 357 buildings with an absentee ownership rate of approximately 45 percent. City records indicate that 223 retail, service-oriented, and professional businesses operate in the District. The service and professional businesses outnumber retail uses three to one. The center of the district along Broad Street features a mix of attached one and two story buildings. Single story buildings and scattered undeveloped lots are most common as you move east and west of Broad Street. Estimated building vacancy rates are sixteen percent for first floor spaces and twenty-five percent for second floors. While vacancy estimates are relatively low, many buildings appear to be underutilized.

The entire Main Street District falls within the boundaries of the Camden Historic District which is a National Register District. More than sixty-five percent of the Buildings in the Main Street District are fifty years or older. Forty-one of the buildings have historic designations made by City Council and fall under the jurisdiction and architectural review of the Historic Landmarks Commission. Renovation and repair of the remaining Main Street District properties are subject to minimal design review conducted by city staff. City officials report that many downtown buildings suffer from deferred maintenance and are in need of structural repair, classifying building conditions as 25 percent good, 45 percent fair and 30 percent poor.

Adequate on-street and off-street parking is in place to satisfy average daily demand but may require expansion to accommodate future development activity. The City has built landscaped surface parking lots less than a block east and west of Broad Street between Rutledge and Dekalb Streets to supplement on-street parking. Commercial truck traffic on Broad and Dekalb Streets is heavy and a significant challenge for redevelopment. A truck route and new streetscape design are planned to address this issue. However, a funding source for the streetscape remains unidentified.

Findings from Baseline Assessment Visit

The level of existing economic activity and reasonably sound buildings in Camden’s downtown provide a solid base for redevelopment. Efforts to build on this foundation are underway. Recent city initiatives including the adoption of a Comprehensive Vision Plan; a Tourism, Market Assessment and Branding Plan; and design guidelines which demonstrate the city’s commitment to expanded economic development and in particular downtown revitalization. These planning documents have guided recent city investments in streetscape improvements, off street parking, way-finding signage and the construction of the Town Green event space. The city has also effectively marketed Camden as a tourism destination by assertively implementing Tourism, Market Assessment and Branding Plan recommendations using a $150,000 city budget appropriation.
ECONOMIC VITALITY

City council has also strengthened economic development policies to support and jump-start new investment. Actions include adopting ordinances authorizing a special tax assessment for rehabilitation of historic properties (commonly referred to as the Bailey Bill) and local performance-based economic development incentives which rebate a portion of local fees and taxes to development projects that meet defined eligibility criteria and attain specified goals or performance thresholds set by city council.

Council also adopted policy statements approving the availability, on a case by case basis, of the Abandoned Building, Textile Revitalization, and Retail Facilities tax credits offered by the State.

Economic Development Recommendations

Concentrate Economic Development Effort

Critical mass and synergy are essential for successful revitalization efforts. The city’s 36 block Main Street District covers over 450 acres. A redevelopment effort in an area this large runs the risk of defusing investment, reducing visible signs of progress, and limiting the catalytic effect that encourages additional investment and redevelopment to feed off of success. The City should consider focusing new retail, and second-floor housing development within a smaller area, such as the area bounded on the north by Dekalb Street, on the south by Clyburn Lane and the east and west by Market and Church Streets. This area contains a concentration of historically and architecturally significant buildings, the highest existing business activity, the Town Green and surface parking improvements within a much smaller and manageable area of approximately 16 acres.

A slightly larger area may be appropriate for the development of infill housing on the vacant, or underutilized property provided the area is within a short walking distance of the core redevelopment area.

Identify and Expand Market Opportunities

The City should continue efforts to reduce retail leakage and recruit underrepresented business types identified in the Tourism, Market Assessment and Branding Plan completed in 2014. Updating the analysis on a regular basis is essential. The results of the study should be shared with existing businesses to allow them to consider diversifying or expanding their product lines to meet the identified needs. The existing retail recruitment efforts should continue to attract new business activity not satisfied by existing businesses. Another effective strategy may include the use of targeted marketing directed at portions of surrounding counties where income and population demographics demonstrate a market capable of supplementing local demand for higher end restaurants and specialty stores.

Develop Downtown Housing

Expanded downtown housing options, including market rate apartments, condos, townhomes, and clustered cottages, increase a downtown’s resident population, diversify the customer base, create new energy, and extend the hours of activity later into the evening. These new market opportunities allow existing businesses and restaurants to expand their product lines and encourage new businesses to open. The city should ensure the availability
of incentives for the development of downtown housing. The first step is to review the city’s existing incentive programs to determine if development of housing is a business activity that qualifies for incentives. The second step is to amend the incentive ordinances, if necessary, to qualify residential development for incentives. A review of zoning and development regulations should follow to ensure that all of the housing options described above are permissible uses for vacant and underdeveloped property or within existing buildings in the District. The final step involves assertive education on and promotion of available incentives as an economic development tool.

The city and the business community should also explore opportunities to increase public activities and events in the evening and on weekends that cater to families and begin to develop a perception that Camden’s downtown is a family friendly place to go for an enjoyable experience and a viable option for housing.

Maximize Benefit of Existing Economic Development Incentives

The renovation of existing buildings and infill construction is essential to achieve a successful level of downtown revitalization. Because renovating existing buildings and constructing new buildings in the downtown district have an increased potential for risk and higher costs compared to the same type of activity in other locations, the availability of incentives is critical.

The special assessment for historic properties (Bailey Bill) and Abandoned Building, Textile Revitalization, and Retail Facilities (Big Box) tax credits offer a maximum benefit when both the city and county authorize their use. A healthy and vibrant downtown in Camden, the county seat of Kershaw County, is essential for the city and county. The city should request Kershaw County to consider authorizing the use of these incentives. Neither the city nor county have anything to lose. Approving availability of these incentives cost the city and county nothing unless new development activity occurs. Even then only a portion of the new revenue is rebated as an incentive. Accelerating redevelopment activity through performance-based incentives allows both entities to benefit, both short and long term.

Encourage Use of Federal and State Historic Preservation Income Tax Credits

Eligible buildings owners in downtown Camden currently have access to Federal and State Historic Preservation Income Tax Credits as a result of the downtown National Register District. Use of these credits should continue to be encouraged. The combined value of the credits can range from 30 to 45 percent of eligible building rehabilitation expenses which can be a tremendous incentive to assist costly projects.

Both the federal government and state of South Carolina offer income tax credits for eligible historic preservation projects. The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows a federal income tax credit for developers rehabilitating buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places or contributing to an NRHP historic district. The federal income tax credit is equal to 20 percent of eligible rehabilitation expenses. The property's use is limited to income-producing purposes, and the rehabilitation investment must exceed the adjusted basis of the building. The adjusted basis is the net cost of the building after adjusting
for various tax-related items and is calculated based on the length of ownership. In South Carolina, developers who receive federal tax credit approval automatically qualify for a 10 percent state income tax credit. In 2015, the State credit was amended to allow a taxpayer option to elect a 25 percent historic tax credit instead of the 10 percent credit, not to exceed one million dollars for each certified historic structure.

The credit is claimed in equal amounts over a five-year period following occupancy. Any unused credit may be carried forward for the next five years. Distribution of the credits varies based on the legal structure of the business. Like most tax credits, this credit can be either used to offset the building owner/investor’s state and federal tax liability or transferred through syndication to a corporate investor in exchange for cash invested in the project.

Eligible projects can often combine Federal and State Historic Preservation Income Tax Credits with one or more of the other incentives approved for use in Camden including the Bailey Bill, Camden’s local incentives, and State tax credits resulting in even greater benefit.

Build a Tax Credit and Incentive Consulting Team
Dealing with special tax assessments, historic preservation and abandoned building tax credits and other complex incentives can be tricky for city council, city staff, and building owners or developers, especially when incentive are combined or layered. Building a team of outside consultants with past incentive/tax credit experience, including a historic preservation architect, a tax attorney with incentive experience and municipal bond attorney, can be an invaluable resource to guide both the city and the developer through the process. Access to a knowledgeable architect specializing in historic preservation can also prove helpful in evaluating options to achieve building code compliance, in the least expensive and time-consuming method, and to make suggestions to streamline the review/approval process. For larger tax credit projects, the involvement of a tax attorney with experience syndicating or selling the tax credits to infuse equity into a project is extremely helpful.

Promote Economic Development Incentives
A comprehensive incentive package is already in place in Camden. The next step is to ensure the incentives are well publicized, understood and effectively used to promote redevelopment. The city should develop a database of buildings in the District indicating the eligibility of each building for the previously identified incentives. The building database provides a quick reference resource to help determine the level of available incentives.

Next, the city should consider conducting a series of meetings with property owners, real estate professionals, bankers, and developers to promote the benefits of each incentive and the power of combining or layering incentives. Finally, the city should develop a list of developers who have successful completed building renovations in other locations in South Carolina using tax credits and incentives and encourage them to consider downtown Camden for their next project.
3. DESIGN
Baseline Assessment: Design

Design is the Main Street program area that concentrates on improving the appearance and function of everything that is visual in downtown such as building storefronts, windows, sidewalks, lighting, landscape, signs and streets. The primary goal of Main Street's design component is to encourage comprehensive visual improvements through good design that are compatible with historic features, and, therefore, maintain the integrity of the downtown. Said most simply, design strives to preserve and enhance the physical characteristics that make Camden unique so that it can look its best and function at the highest level.

Why are design and preservation important?

Design improvements are important to economic revitalization for several reasons. The appearance of the downtown is the first visual impression visitors get—and that visual impression shapes visitor perceptions and experiences. Commercial district design affects buying decisions as well—just as the packaging of consumer products affects buying decisions. Design of public spaces affects mobility and safety. And design improvements—whether to public spaces or private buildings—show new investment and provide tangible evidence that revitalization is happening and the Main Street program is leading the charge.

Good Main Street design should be paired with good historic preservation practices because it will help retain the authentic character of your community. Preservation, in practical terms, is often cheaper than building new. And most importantly, Camden’s historical architectural assets are the primary characteristic that distinguishes your community from another as many cities have the same retail stores, restaurant types, etc., but none share the exact same historic buildings.

Executive Summary

Camden boasts some of the best Revolutionary War period sites and buildings anywhere. The downtown district is located a short distance off of Interstate 20 where several Revolutionary War battleground sites are located. The downtown area features a good stock of historic architectural resources and is located adjacent to several residential historic districts that feature some of the most gorgeous homes to be found anywhere. In recent years, excellent treatments such as gateway signs at the interstate and downtown district have been installed. The downtown area also boasts a new wayfinding sign system as well as well-designed and distinctive banners. A new parking resource anchored by a town green/plaza area is accessed via an alley just off of Broad Street. However, in several instances, the buildings in the core downtown area have received very inappropriate gestures that are threatening the architectural character of the overall district as a whole.

The recommendations that follow herein are presented as a means to enhance downtown Camden’s positive aspects while addressing its shortcomings. They are intended to address many of the design and planning-related issues facing downtown Camden.
GOOD-TO-GREAT TWEAKS: Taking design to the next level

Background:
It is a supreme compliment to a community and its municipal leadership that recommendations such as these are even mentioned in a report such as this. Camden has done an excellent job of constructing gateway signage treatments at the interstate and downtown district. Additionally, there is a strong arts community in Camden and a burgeoning desire to see greater evidence of this in the public realm. Finally, Camden has developed a high-quality parking resource anchored by a small town green just off of Broad Street.

Sign Enhancements:
As noted previously, Camden has constructed attractive gateway signs that feature their branded logo type. However, the stylized “Camden” is difficult to read and if one did not know where they were and the name of the city, they would be hard-pressed to be able to read the copy. Therefore, in an effort to take these gateways from good to great, it is recommended that an opaque background so that the “Camden” is legible. Additionally, the downtown is the crossroads of several main roadways. Necessarily there needs to be highway signage to give directional information to the motorist. However, the presence of so many signs appears chaotic and confusing. Therefore, in an effort to take roadway signs from good to great, it is recommended that Camden appeal to SCDOT to see if congregating those signs onto a common panel as is often done in Virginia (see photo at right) is possible.

Public Art Placement Plan:
As noted previously, Camden has a strong arts community. There should be a physical evidence of this quality of life indicator in the public realm in the form of public art. Therefore, it is recommended that a ‘Public Art Placeholder Plan’ be developed for the downtown area. In absence of such a plan, public art such as sculpture, memorials, and interactive art installations tend to end up in ‘leftover’ pieces of property that might not be ideal or make the greatest visual impact.

Alley Treatments:
As noted previously, Camden has developed an extremely attractive parking resource anchored by a small town green. However, the alley that connects to it from Broad Street bears no resemblance to the quality development on the interior of the block. To take the parking resource and town green from good to great, the connecting alley needs to be enhanced so that it foreshadows the quality development that exists at its terminus.
Vacant Buildings: Temporary treatments to put downtown’s best foot forward

Temporary Visual Treatment Strategies for Vacant Buildings

Use visual enhancement treatments as a temporary means of improving the appearance of a building while it is being prepared for occupancy or sale.

For a variety of reasons there are a number of vacant buildings in downtown Camden. No matter the reason, the result is the same: vacant and decrepit buildings send a message that is perceived as “downtown is in decline.” Since this is patently false in the case of Camden --but occasionally perception trumps reality-- the strategies noted in this section are designed to mitigate the effects of vacant buildings so they can be saved and restored.

The appearance of vacancies in the downtown area can send a negative message and create the perception of a lack of retail vibrancy. To combat those perceptions and “buy time” until a building becomes occupied, any of the approaches noted below should be considered.

Place artwork in vacant display windows if the interior space appearance is satisfactory. If the interior space is in detrimental condition, consider masking the windows from the interior with butcher paper or from the exterior with vinyl cling wraps. The masks can feature nostalgic photos or historic postcards of the community or images such as a map of downtown highlighting shopping and dining destinations. Place “community hero” posters in the windows to build community pride and draw attention away from the vacant building. These ideas and more are described and illustrated below.

Key Benefits

Inexpensive

The above-noted and below-illustrated techniques are inexpensive yet can reap significant visual rewards and temper perception of the district while buildings are being rehabilitated, leased or sold.

Grandmont, MI: (right) A variety of art forms occupy the storefront windows of these vacant buildings. Consider featuring work by local artists or art students.

Camden, AL: Excellent example of using local art to create a ‘Pop Up Art Gallery’ in a lobby of a downtown building in Camden.
**Vacant Buildings: Temporary treatments to put downtown’s best foot forward**

**Peoria, IL:** By placing historic images on butcher paper affixed to the storefront window, the focus is drawn to nostalgic images of the downtown as opposed to the fact that this particular building is currently vacant.

**Arkadelphia, AR:** Due to the sensitive nature of the work conducted within this building, transparent windows were not an option. However, blank windows promoted a perception of an empty building lacking retail vitality. By placing historic post card imagery on vinyl clings on the windows, the building becomes a virtual museum featuring unique stories from the past.
Vacant Buildings: Temporary treatments to put downtown’s best foot forward

Paragould, AR: When the Main Street director in Paragould learned that a movie scene would be shot in her downtown she rushed to conceal the vacant and dilapidated appearance of this building. Using a quart of green paint and three vinyl window clings totaling less than $100 she transformed this storefront into a downtown directory of businesses akin to an informational kiosk traditionally found in malls.
Vacant Buildings: Temporary treatments to put downtown’s best foot forward

Barre, VT: Barre represents one of the nation’s foremost leaders in the granite industry. This vacant storefront was effectively turned into a historical museum that documented the development of the granite industry in Barre. Additionally, one storefront display window featured a plethora of historic post cards and photographs that captured the history and memories of this industry within this Vermont community.
**Vacant Buildings**: Temporary treatments to put downtown’s best foot forward

Conway, SC: The “I am Conway” campaign utilized 11x17 posters featuring statements from local citizens about what makes Conway, SC special. The posters distract from the fact that the building itself is vacant. Moreover, the stories captured in each poster build community pride.
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

Public-Private Incentives
The next body of recommendations include public-private incentives that will require participation by both the City (public sector) and individual property owners (private sector). These public-private initiatives could include, but would in no way be limited to, facade component grants with a particular emphasis on components that would have specific benefit in downtown Camden such as awnings, signs, or amenities grants among several others.

Two types of grants should be considered for downtown Camden that include, but are not limited to: Component Facade Grants and Vibrancy Grants.

Component Facade Grants
Since many building owners are intimidated by overall façade renovations coupled with a grant process, the Main Street program might consider simplifying the initial phases of the façade grant program and focusing on individual façade elements --or components-- instead of expensive, overall façade improvement approaches. In other words, consider conducting an annual façade component grant program such as an awning grant program, or a slipcover removal program, or a signage grant program. Once property owners become familiar with individual façade component programs and the process of improving one’s building is demystified, then consider moving on to entire-façade-based grant programs if needed or desired.

Inappropriate Storefront Retrofit: As noted previously, downtown Camden boasts some extremely attractive historic buildings. However, a great many of them have received inappropriate treatments like this building. Historically, the storefront would have never been constructed of solid brick with residential doors and windows. Moreover, the awning is the wrong application and the windows are the wrong style. This kind of renovation must not be allowed to happen in downtown if Camden hopes to maintain its historic architecture integrity.

Local Facade Grant Recipient: This building received a local facade grant and executed a very attractive rehabilitation. The stamped metal upper façade and pilaster have been saved and repainted appropriately. The signage is appropriately scaled and attractive. The awning correctly spans between the storefront pilaster and conceals the transom area. The new storefront system, while utilizing contemporary aluminum storefront materials, satisfies the historic storefront composition.
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

Beaufort, SC: Main Street Beaufort initiated a component grant program featuring awnings.

Searcy, Arkansas: Main Street Searcy initiated a component facade grant program featuring building rear treatments.
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

Conway, SC: This furniture company removed the metal slipcover from their building to expose a beautiful building underneath.

Conway, SC: The local government, in association with the Main Street program, realized the positive impact slipcover removal made. Therefore, they enacted a component facade grant program for slipcover removal and five other buildings in downtown removed their slipcovers. The visual improvement to their main street was remarkable!
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

Vibrancy Grants

In the case of Camden, an additional “component” grant type should be considered: Vibrancy! It is recommended that a non-traditional component grant program be considered that populates the downtown area with myriad elements that animate downtown with splashes of color and interactive features. These elements, such as bistro tables, colorful umbrellas, parklets, public art, etc. not only create a visually appealing downtown, but are often implemented at far less cost than expensive streetscape projects or facade grants. Similarly, other vibrancy grants such as interactive art and games placed in public/green spaces have the affect of making downtown “sticky.” Stickiness refers to the quality of a downtown whereby there is something of interest from multiple generations to do, enjoy, see, and interact with. Similar to a sum of matching money going towards awnings, signs, etc. in the ‘Component Facade Grant’ approach, in this instance a sum of match money would go toward the infusion of color, furnishings, art, etc. on the building and in the downtown environment. Creative vibrancy grant ideas could include, but would not be limited to: flower baskets, umbrellas, sculpture, sun sails (shade devices), chairs, flags and banners, giant Jenga, parklets, public art, bistro tables and umbrellas, etc.
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

**Making Downtown “Sticky”:** The photographs below illustrate various approaches other communities have utilized to create “stickiness” within their downtowns. These various interactive games provide activities for people of all ages to enjoy while they are downtown. Downtown Camden’s parks, pocket parks, parklets, open spaces, and green spaces should be populated with similar activity-generating elements.
Norfolk, VA: One of the more successful Main Street programs that has administered a vibrancy grant approach is Norfolk, Virginia’s ‘Vibrant Spaces’ initiative.

Norfolk, Virginia: The “Vibrant Spaces” grant program administered by the Main Street program in Norfolk, VA provided matching funds to downtown property owners that represent upgrades to their buildings and the downtown environment. Please visit their web site for additional information at: http://vibrantspaces.com
Facade & Vibrancy Grants: Incentives to animate downtown

Overall Facade Grants
Once the methodology for applying for component facade grants is established and the Main Street program has a proven track record for administering them, consider ‘graduating’ up to overall facade grants that address the entire face of a building. This approach would be reserved for more ‘troublesome’ buildings that require far more physical enhancement than a singular component approach could provide. However, this approach requires far more financial capital and administrative oversight to execute than a component grant approach.

Facade Master Plan
At some point, a more ambitious approach to enhancing multiple façade in a relatively short time period might be warranted. In this case, the Façade Master Plan approach as developed by Community Design Solutions and other communities across America might be appropriate. Unlike a traditional façade improvement program, the Façade Master Plan is a comprehensive rehabilitation of many downtown buildings at once. The instrument that makes this new approach to building enhancement possible is an easement. The property owner gives the City, or local non-profit administering agent, a temporary easement on the facade of their building allowing the local government to spend funds on its improvement. In exchange for this temporary easement, the grant funds pay for the facade improvements. The advantages of this type of façade program are that it allows for a single source of project management, a single source of design, and a single source for construction.

Benefits: The single source of project management streamlines the project and removes the burden of façade enhancement from each individual property owner. The single source of design, used in conjunction with the Main Street Program’s Design Committee or a set of quality design guidelines, ensures that all façade enhancements are sympathetic to the historic architectural heritage of their place. The single source of construction allows for dramatic cost savings since the contractor purchases all construction supplies for the entire enhancement project, rather than each property owner having to buy their own sign, door, windows, paint, awnings, etc. However, the biggest advantage to this approach is the ability for a downtown district to receive an overall appearance facelift in a remarkably short amount of time. Moreover, when used in conjunction with a grant source like federal CDBG funds, an individual state’s department of commerce grant, or other federal, state, or local funding sources, the façade enhancements are realized with no costs to the building owner or tenant. If the funding and/or grant source requires a match from the property owner, the enhancements are still realized with nominal investment on their part that is far less than if they improved their façade on their own using solely private sector funds.

The author of this report is pleased to offer all the documentation necessary to promote and execute such a plan to Camden. A synopsis of this approach is described herein. Additionally, a download link to these documents is available at the following link: http://www.communitydesignsolutions.com/public/FacadeMasterPlanDocs.zip

Pascagoula, MS: The owner of this former office supply and paper store took advantage of an overall façade grant from Main Street Pascagoula to retrofit the building to a restaurant and exposed its historic storefront.
A PLACE TO CALL HOME: Recommendations for housing in the downtown area

Housing

Every input session --regardless of focus group-- noted the need for housing in downtown. To convince developers that there is pent-up demand for a variety of housing products downtown, it is recommended that the City recruit smaller housing developments first, then when positive and streamlined development occur, undertake more ambitious housing approaches later. Therefore, in the meantime, the suggested approach toward meeting housing demand in the downtown area is an incremental one starting with upper-floor housing (the infrastructure is already there), mixed-use development, and “Pocket Neighborhoods” (small, single-family homes (cottage scaled) that face a common/shared green space).

Upper Floor Housing: New York “loft” style apartments in the upper floors of historic downtown buildings are all the rage these days. Anniston has several buildings that are prime candidates for this approach.

Mixed-Use Development: This is the type of building that is being recommended for downtown to define the street edge and introduce housing options as well as introduce higher density to the downtown.

Pocket Neighborhoods: Many people are preferring smaller, single-family homes these days. The ‘pocket neighborhood’ housing development approach utilizes smaller, single-family homes --almost cottage scaled-- arranged around a common green space to maximize density on a small lot. Moreover, this development model is an ideal approach to test the veracity of the stated pent-up market demand for housing before a more ambitious housing development is undertaken.
SAFEGUARDING INVESTMENT: Illustrative design guidelines

Illustrative Design Guidelines

When it comes to grants there is a ‘golden rule:’ “He who has the gold gets to make the rules!” Since many of these recommendations will require a public sector incentive, the City should require that all improvements achieve design standards that honor Camden’s architectural heritage. One of the best ways to do that is through a set of illustrative design guidelines.

Description: As momentum builds for rehabilitating Camden’s downtown buildings, the work should be guided in a manner that honors the existing architectural precedent downtown. Architectural design guidelines, when developed and used properly, simultaneously honor the architectural character of a community while safeguarding subsequent development investment. However, in many instances design guidelines have been written in such a way as to be difficult to understand and interpret and, therefore, have been viewed as an impediment to redevelopment, or worse still, merely a local government telling the property owner what they cannot do.

Distinctions: Illustrative design guidelines vary from those forms of design guidelines in two distinct ways. The first distinction of illustrative design guidelines is how they are developed. In the traditional way, a design professional would simply write the guidelines -- often using highbrow design and planning language that the common citizen cannot understand -- and they are adopted by the local government and subsequently enforced by a design review board. In the illustrative design guideline approach the guidelines are actually developed with input from the property owners that will be affected by them. The design professional shows participants photographs of buildings from their downtown and asks a series of questions that unveil an understanding of the design and planning characteristics of the community itself. These characteristics, such as, but not limited to, building height, dominant building materials, levels of detail, degree of ornament, kinds of doors and windows, etc. establish the baseline of architectural character for the guidelines. Said simply, the goal of the guidelines is to simply safeguard the architectural character that already exists within a place, NOT to impose an external style or standard of care beyond what is already there.

The second distinction is that illustrative design guidelines feature copious photographs and minimal text. People intuitively understand photographs, while trying to use words to describe design criteria can lead to misunderstanding and multiple interpretations. Therefore, with illustrative design guidelines, the topic of windows be handled in this manner: a simple statement of intent would be crafted that articulates key goals pertaining to windows...perhaps limited to the desire to use windows that are to scale and in a style that is compatible with the dominant window forms in the downtown. Thereafter, dozens of photos of acceptable windows would be featured. If necessary, a few photos of inappropriate windows might also be featured to highlight the contrast between the two types of appropriate and inappropriate windows.

Aiken, SC: (below, top) Conducting property owner workshop to determine the architectural characteristics of downtown Aiken before drafting the guidelines. (below, bottom) Photo-montages of typical blocks in downtown Aiken that became the objective standard for typical design issues such as building height, setback, massing, materials, etc.
SAFEGUARDING INVESTMENT: Illustrative design guidelines

Benefits: Illustrative design guidelines have two significant benefits. The first is that the resultant document features hundreds of “can do” solutions to common design issues facing a property owner. The tone of the document turns on its head the sentiment that design guidelines tell a property owner what they cannot do to their buildings to an educational document that portrays hundreds, if not thousands, of appropriate things that can do with their building. Moreover, given the fact that the property owners had a voice in their formation, they do not feel like an external standard is being imposed upon them from without, but rather a self-imposed standard to ensure the architectural character of their place has been maintained and their investment in their building is safeguarded. Their investment in their building is safeguarded by the understanding that there is an agreed-upon standard of design care that all property owners now share. Said simply, an investor has no fear that his neighbor can do the wrong thing an adjacent property and thereby adversely affect the value of their property.

The final benefit of illustrative design guidelines is that they are good for business. Study after study has demonstrated that properties within areas that are governed by design review and objective design criteria such as illustrative design guidelines appreciate at a rate significantly higher than their non-regulated counterparts. The study illustrated by the image below was performed in South Carolina and revealed that neighborhoods that had design review and design guidelines appreciated at a rate between 16-26% higher than non-regulated neighborhoods.
SAFEGUARDING INVESTMENT: Illustrative design guidelines

Aiken, SC (left): A sample page from the Aiken design guidelines illustrating acceptable balcony solutions for buildings in the downtown area.

Hartsville, SC (below): A sample page from the Hartsville design guidelines illustrating acceptable storefront solutions for buildings in the downtown area.

**Guidelines**
- Integrate the balcony into the structure either by setting it into the building or by incorporating a self-contained supporting bracket system.
- Introduce ornament and detailing in balcony railings to add character and visual interest to the building.
- Use appropriately scaled and detailed materials or supports.

**Hartsville Design Guidelines**

**EXISTING COMMERCIAL-TYPE BUILDINGS**

**Storefront Renovation and Replacement**

For most traditional buildings, large pavers of glass at the display window level with solid kick plates below are appropriate. Multi-pane designs that divide the storefront window into small components should only be used if they restore proven historic elements and original openings. Preserve the original kick plate, or bulkhead, whenever possible. For buildings with historic significance, restore the original bulkhead from documentary evidence. If original information is not available, develop a new simplified design that retains the original character and dimensions of the bulkhead that would most likely have been on the building. For renovations where there is no documentary evidence, appropriate bulkhead materials are: brick, painted wood panels, stone, and glazed tile or painted metal in muted tones. Align the bulkhead with those of other traditional buildings in the block.

The use of a clear glass transom over doors within the upper part of the display window area is most appropriate. Retain the original materials and proportions of the transom opening. If the framing that defines the transom has been removed, re-establish it in a new design. If the interior ceiling is lower than the transom line due to later renovation, raise the dropped ceiling up from the window to maintain its traditional dimensions. Align transom frames with adjacent buildings to maintain a clear line along the block face. The area above the transom or storefront cornice has traditionally been used for a sign or decorative element.

**Guidelines**
- Maintain traditional recessed entries where they exist.
- Maintain the original size, shape and proportions of storefronts and openings to retain the historic scale and character.
- Maintain the bulkhead or kick plate, below the storefront display window element.
- Preserve the transom and sign board area features.
4. Record of Public Input
What would you like to be able to do/get in downtown Camden that you cannot currently?

- Downtown hotel/motel
- Department store
- Grocery store
- Hardware store
- Apartments – different offerings
- Restaurant
- Outdoor venue
- Family gatherings
- Bike access
- Practical daily needs
- Christian bookstore
- *No turn signal at back of post office
- *Festivals with no tickets/free
- *Microbrewery
- Larger theatre
- Opera house

What do we need to see, do eat, etc. before we leave Camden?

- Equine industry
- History of Revolutionary War
- Walk trail
- Historical Camden/archives
- Sam Kendells
- BSL-Broad Street Luncheon
- Bloomsburg B&B.
- Larry Doby-Red baseball field
- Bernard Baruch
- Mary Boykin (Chestnut Cottage)
- Parks

What would you do to improve look, feel & function of downtown Camden?

- Less antique shops
- Different parking on Broad/fix roads
- Tax incentives for buildings improvements
- No adr for festivals, etc
- Apartments on 2nd floor
- Buy anything I want w/o going to Walmart
- Back of buildings – more parking/rear entrances for those outside of city limits to accessibility through public transportation
Qualities and characteristics of case study communities for Camden?

- Greenville – More restaurants/diversity
- College
- Servers at restaurants and other places who know what is going on in the downtown and community
- Charleston – Tourism services (downtown and other places).
- Travelers Rest – Swamp rabbit trail
- Amphitheatre or similar at farmers market
- Aiken – kiosks (outdoor dining)
- Columbia – Edventure
- Hartsville – Youthful Spirit
- Charlotte – Bike/ped/trolleys/greenways

THE FAMILY GAME

Camden – Woman – not very athletic – yes they are (bikers, runners, swimmers, hiking, tennis)

Camden Community Input Session [Morning of 4/18/17]

What would you like to be able to do/get in downtown Camden that you cannot currently?

- Men’s clothing
- Nice theatre
- Diversity in restaurant (price point & cuisine)
  - Outdoor seating space
  - Rooftop dining
  - Ocala
- Food shop (small grocer)
- Small hotel (ex: Hartsville)
- Recreation opportunities for young people after school
- Scale bowling alley
- More event spaces in different scales
- Office supply store
- Living space
- High tech jobs for millennials
- Fewer trucks (truck routes in the works)
RECORD OF PUBLIC INPUT

- Bike for sale/repair
- Outdoor

What do we need to see, do eat, etc. before we leave Camden?
- Colonial Cup/Carolina Cup Combined
- Little theatre – Eques’s
- Blue Barn – training center
- Carriage ride through homes
- See how dead it is
- Books on Broad
- Parks/Saluda/Galleria
- Archives & Museum/Steeplechase Museum
- Overall History
- Everyday Grill
- Russ Davis Guitar Shop
- Frank Goodall Jewelers
- Nascar Show Car
- Actor Sam Wright – Academy Award Winner (first black grape in Fruit of the Loom commercial)
- BSL
- Hermitage
- Mulberry Bakery
- Promote Equine
- WWII
- Woodward Air Field (City gave to county) (potential for events)

What would you do to improve look, feel & function of downtown Camden?
- Break up blocks to slow traffic
- Painted crosswalks
- Twin lanes (Dekalb/Rutledge)
- Time lights – video training
- Pedestrian walkways
- More art – color – sculpture, etc.
- Outdoor music venue
- Splash pad
- Kite festival (Spartanburg) – Drone Racing
- Archery festival
- Brighter colors
- Tag sale
Qualities and characteristics of case study communities for Camden?

- Syracuse: Every weekend there are family activities
- Ocala: Environment for event spaces
- Become sister city for another community
- Lancaster: Arts/sculpture
- Colorado: Outline downtown buildings in small white lights

THE FAMILY GAME

Florence – Man: Unkept (where is the beginning and end) — sloppy (confused/does not know how to get around- $$$ - business – medical community – fly - industry

Sumter – Man
- Patriotic
- Medical improving
- Disoriented
- Gardner
- Workup our core
- Collaboration
- Athletic/facilities

Hartsville - Woman
- Well educated
- Athletic
- Industrious
- Family atmosphere
- Committed to citizens
- Hospitable
- Night life
- Sugar Daddy
- Phoenix
- Cool vibe

Camden – Woman (older, distinguished)
- Needs to move on and make room for younger
- Family oriented
- Honor past and traditions but make opportunities for new people
- Cosmopolitan
- Horse community (economy)
- Leadership (has a desire)
- Resources
- Overlooking demographic (short sighted)

*Used to have a lot of old but not anymore

*Number of 501c3s – need to find new revenue streams - Recreational