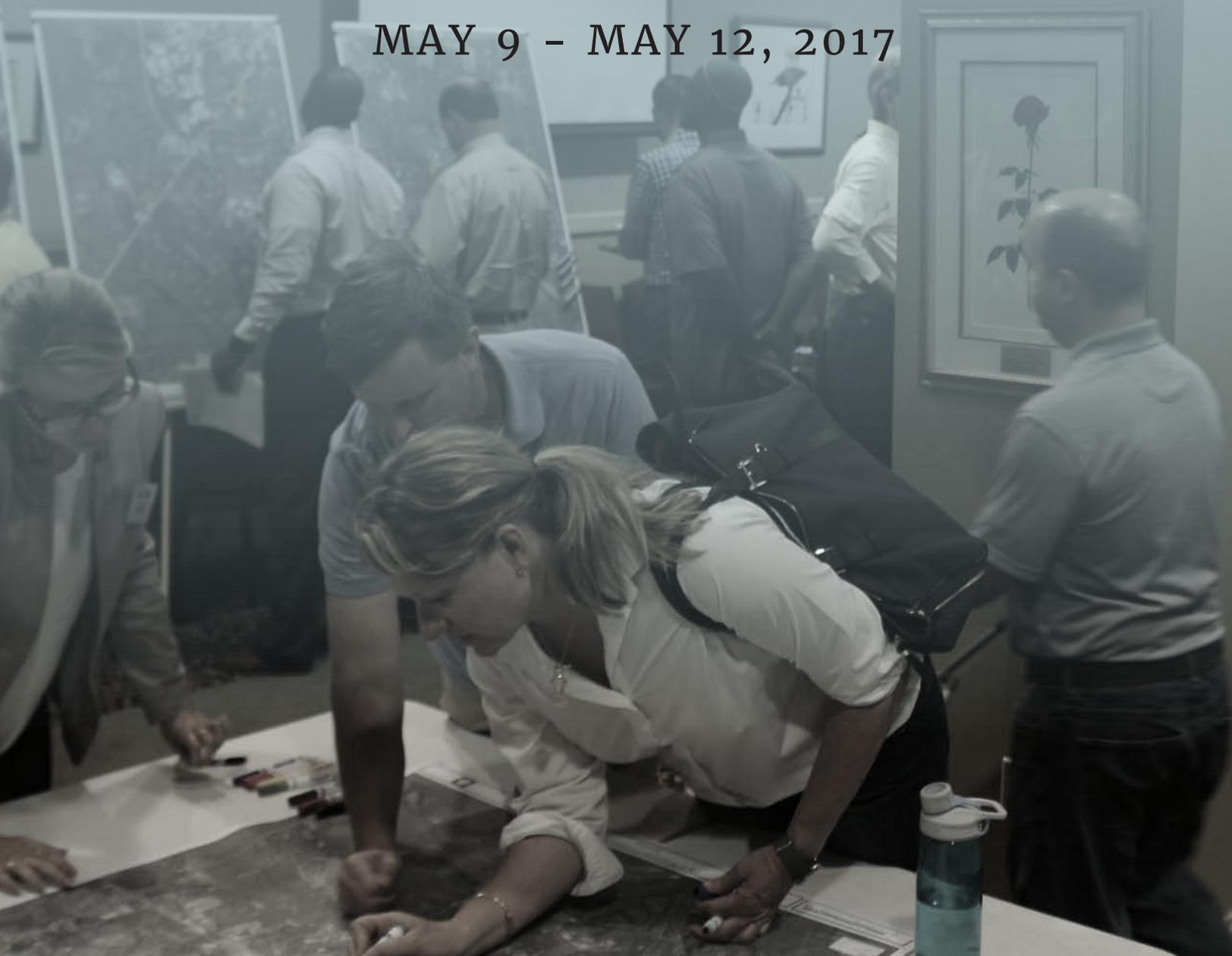# THOMASVILLE: BLUEPRINT 2028

TRAVELING WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT

MAY 9 – MAY 12, 2017

ESTABLISHING A COMMON VISION

What is Thomasville: Blueprint 2028?

Thomasville is looking into the future to diversify its economy, celebrate its history and unique culture, improve the health of its residents, improve affordability, and upgrade the City's quality of life. Once complete, *Thomasville: Blueprint 2028* will describe public policy in terms of multiple elements that include: Land Use, Community Design, Mobility, Housing & Health, Natural & Cultural Resources, Community Facilities, and Economic Development. This Comprehensive Plan will encompass the entire City, study a broad range of topics, and cover both short- and long-term time horizons.
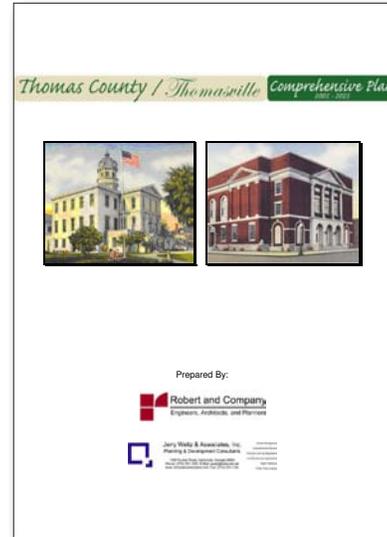
Previous Comprehensive Plan

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document to direct capital improvements, evaluate development projects, guide public policy, and ensure that Thomasville is the City its residents want it to be. A Comprehensive Plan sets the tone of a city's growth and development from now and into the future.

The City of Thomasville's previous comprehensive plan was a joint plan with the County and was adopted in 2005. The City decided it was time to update the plan to respond to a changing economic climate and to focus on how to better capitalize on the City's inherent economic advantage.

Through a competitive Request for Proposals, the City decided to work with a diverse team of consultants led by town planning firm Dover, Kohl & Partners. The team includes Daedalus Capital, LLC (economic development); Hall, Planning & Engineering (mobility and transportation planning); Architect Bruce Tolar

(architecture); Gallinar Planning & Development (housing and health); Linkscape360 (public process); Fontaine Maury (branding); and Urban Advantage (visualizations). Each firm brings an expertise that makes them uniquely qualified to address citywide concerns specific to Thomasville while also helping to draft the vision and policies.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: TRAVELING WORKSHOPS

Why Plan in Public?

A comprehensive plan plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the City and as such, Thomasville seeks maximum public involvement in order to create the plan. Planning in public is a vital component to the long-term success of any plan, including an entire comprehensive plan for the city. Having the community help create the plan ensures support long after the planners are gone. An active group of people will also help to implement the plan's concepts and strategies that they themselves help to shape. By gathering a wide range of ideas and visions for the future, the plan becomes more nuanced and specific to the community.

Innovative Plan with Community Support

As the guiding document for the City of Thomasville, it was important that the comprehensive plan be created with the input and collaboration of the citizens of Thomasville, public officials, and staff members. To achieve this goal, *Thomasville: Blueprint 2028* is being created using an open planning process that will include numerous opportunities and ways for people to participate and add their ideas,

concepts, and priorities to the development of the plan.

The first opportunity for people to participate, and for the planning team to get to know the City better, was through a series of Traveling Workshops held from May 9 through May 12. Each of the four days began with a tour of a focus area and was followed by an evening open house for the public.

The following is a summary of the events and information gathered during the Traveling Workshops. This is just the start of the public planning process and lays the groundwork for plan goals and plan development to come.

Members from the community participated in several exercises to inform the future of Thomasville.
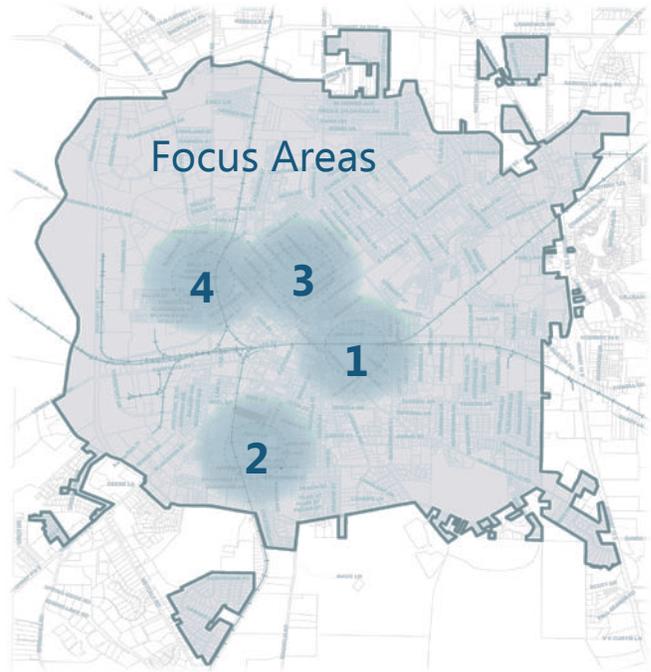
Focus Areas

Recognizing the City's diverse nature, four Focus Areas were selected to capture what makes different parts of the City unique and to engage a variety of people. Each day the project team began with a tour of the designated Focus Area, guided by City staff, City representatives, and members of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

Focus Areas

1. Citywide/Downtown/Paradise Park
2. Theodore Heights/Normal Park
3. Flipper Park/Dawson Street/ MacIntyre Park
4. Dewey City/Carroll Hill

Touring Thomasville

FOCUS AREA TOURS

Day 1 Tour: Citywide/Downtown/Paradise Park

Public Spaces

The vibrant, walkable downtown sidewalks contrast with the auto-oriented style of development just outside of the downtown core.

Broad Street in Downtown

West Jackson Street

Commercial Architecture

Downtown Thomasville exhibits both urban, sidewalk fronting retail as well as auto-oriented development.

Broad Street in Downtown

North Madison Street

Streets

Large Live Oak trees between the roadway and sidewalk create a sense of enclosure, slow traffic, shade pedestrians walking on the sidewalk and create a more beautiful scene. Other thoroughfares, such as West Jackson Street, prioritize moving automobiles at the expense of other modes of travel.
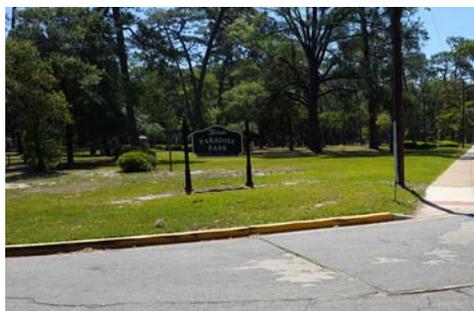

Broad Street next to Paradise Park

West Jackson Street

Parks

The City's new Amphitheater is well integrated into its surroundings. Paradise Park is also.

Paradise Park

Amphitheater

Day 2 Tour: Theodore Heights/Normal Park

Front Porch Community

Front porches are common throughout this area, attesting to the neighborhoods' strong social ties.

Home with front porch

Home with front porch

Churches

Neighborhood churches play an important role in community life.

Providence Missionary Baptist Church

Homes

This area contains many examples of vernacular style homes. However, there are also numerous vacant and abandoned lots and buildings detracting from the neighborhoods' character.

Pleasant home with porch

Abandoned home

Bethany Congregational Church

Sidewalks

There is a lack of comfortable pedestrian facilities, such as sidewalks and street trees, along many streets in these neighborhoods.

Forced to walk with cars

No sidewalk or shade

First Unity M B Church

A Mix of Uses

Residential and local commercial uses coexist in this area. Small shops and businesses have long been community institutions fulfilling important roles beyond their commercial functions.

Neighborhood salon

Neighborhood shops

Day 3 Tour: Flipper Park/Dawson Street/MacIntyre Park

Diversity of Housing Types

A mix of housing types can be seen throughout this area including single family residences of all sizes and attached multifamily buildings.

Large single family home

Multifamily apartments

Modest single family home

Historic Preservation

The City of Thomasville prizes its cultural and historic character. This area contains designated historic districts, the Lapham-Patterson House, and the Thomas County Museum of History.

Thomas County Museum of History

Lapham-Patterson House

Dawson Street Historic District

Civic Buildings

The historic Thomas County Courthouse, built in 1858, is one of the finest examples of courthouse square in the South.

Thomas County Courthouse

Parks

Flipper Park and MacIntyre Park are located in this area. It has been noted that flooding and drainage issues can be problematic near these parks.

Flipper Park

Day 4 Tour: Dewey City/Carroll Hill

Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers consisting of small retail businesses are common in this area. However, many of the commercial buildings are now vacant.

Vacant commercial building

Neighborhood convenience store

Recreational Facilities

Major recreational facilities in this area include the Francis Weston YMCA and Francis Weston Park, the latter of which has recently undergone a public charrette design process to improve the park.

Francis Weston YMCA

Francis Weston Park

Civic Buildings

Douglass School has been a community institution for many years. It currently houses an active community center and the Jack Hadley Black History Museum which documents both Thomasville's and national events and people.

Douglass School Complex and The Jack Hadley Black History Museum

Opportunities

Vacant homes and lots provide opportunities for infill development.

Vacant homes with potential

Industry

Balfour Lumber was the reason for Dewey City's development. The historic neighborhood remains a more rural community within the City even though it is one mile from the center of town.

Balfour Lumber

Community

Churches serve important social and community center functions, such as at the Oak Street Community Garden.

Oak Street Community Garden

Open Houses

Open House Locations

May 9th – Council Chambers
May 10th – Thomasville Community Resource Center
May 11th – First Missionary Baptist Church
Mary 12th – Douglass School Complex Cafeteria

Each evening an Open House was held within the Focus Area that was toured in the morning in order to bring the event to the community and encourage participation by a wider segment of the population. At each of the Open House events, community members were invited to participate in five different interactive exercises. Working with town planners, City officials, and other members of the community, this was a unique opportunity for residents and stakeholders to give their input, discuss initial concerns, learn about the process, and help develop plan goals.

Interactive Exercises

• City Goals and Priorities Survey
• Mobility Improvements
• Community Preference Surveys
• Right Tree, Right Place
• Topic Areas

A presentation was given each evening at 6:00. The presentations were begun with remarks by City representatives. On the first night, May 9th, Councilmember Jay Flowers introduced *Thomasville: Blueprint 2028* and the project team. The second night introductory remarks were made by Councilmember Terry Scott. Pastor Rich began the third night's presentation and Councilmember Max Beverly began the presentation on the final night.

Jason King, principal from Dover, Kohl & Partners, then spoke about what a Comprehensive Plan is and the public planning process that the City and project team will use to create *Thomasville: Blueprint 2028*. Mr. King then described what was learned from that day's Focus Area tour, and the next steps for the project. Shaun Bourgeois, principal from Daedalus Advisory Services, discussed economic development and some initial economics data for Thomasville and what that may mean for the City. Richard Hall, principal of Hall Planning & Engineering, presented multi-modal transportation planning and the importance of designing streets to match their context. On some evenings Mr. Hall also discussed some possible options for West Jackson Street. A question-and-answer session followed the presentation each night, after which attendees could complete the exercises.

CITY GOALS AND PRIORITIES SURVEY

Ranking Priorities

When people arrived at the Open House they received a City Goals and Priorities Survey which asked participants to rank a list of twelve priorities from the most important to the least important to them. The following are the tallied results.
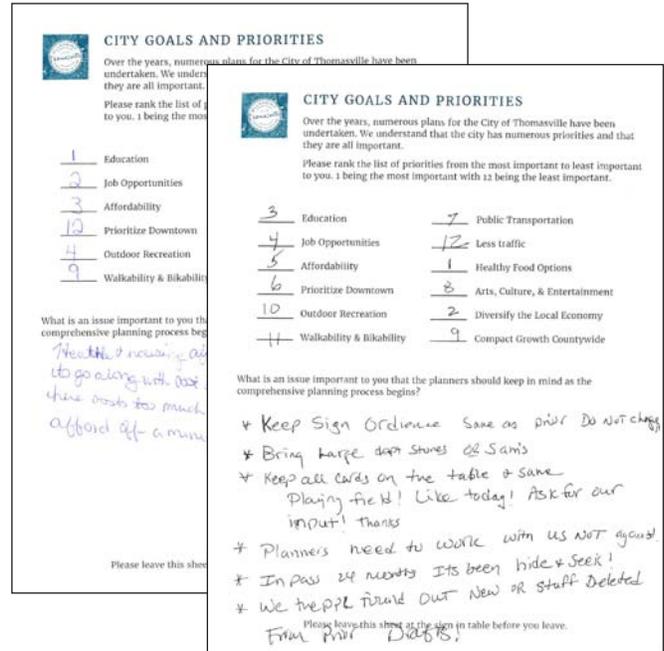
What is Most Important to You?

EDUCATION

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

WALKABILITY & BIKABILITY

DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY

AFFORDABILITY

ARTS, CULTURE, & ENTERTAINMENT

OUTDOOR RECREATION

PRIORITIZE DOWNTOWN

COMPACT GROWTH COUNTYWIDE

HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

LESS TRAFFIC
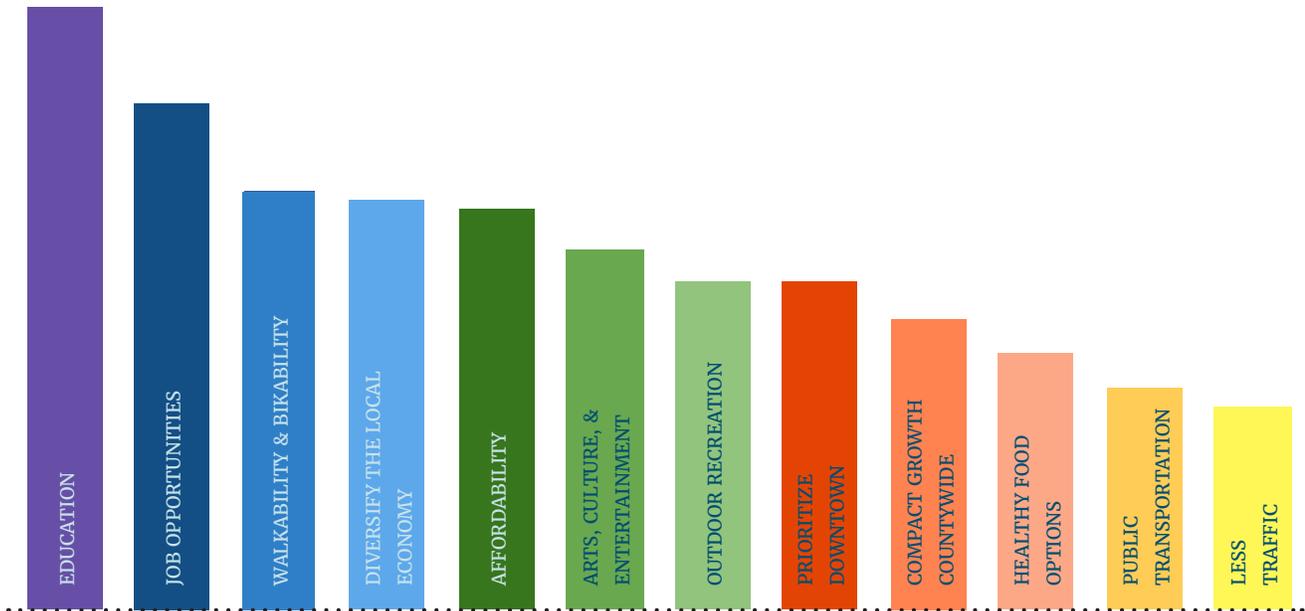
City Goals and Priorities

Participant Feedback Form

On the survey form, participants were also asked:

"What is an issue important to you that the planners should keep in mind as the comprehensive planning process begins?"

The graphics below summarize some of the feedback into common themes and ideas in response to this question. All responses received are included in the appendix.

Vibrant Downtown with Local Shopping

"I moved to Thomasville for its vibrant downtown and for walkability...diversify downtown...keep downtown similar."

Affordable Housing

"Houses around here cost too much for the upcoming generations to afford off a minimum wage job."

Open and Inclusive Planning Process

"Inclusivity is always a priority... Planners need to work with us not against us."

Historic & Unique Small Town Character

"help preserve the distinctive aspects of the community and enhance areas of the community that have lagged behind...fold in history appropriately...keep the historic, cultural, 'natural' setting intact."

MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

Participants were asked to provide their input on what mobility improvements they would like to see throughout the City. Stickers representing various pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, and transit improvements and infrastructure were provided to be placed by participants on maps of the City indicating where each type of improvement was needed. In addition, markers were available for people to note important connections and other concerns. The following maps are a tabulation of the results for all four Open Houses with the City divided into four quarters and the Downtown as a separate map.

Pedestrian Improvements
- reduce speed limit
- shade
- bulb-out
- stop sign
- sidewalks
- speed table
- crosswalks

Bicycle Infrastructure
- bike connection
- bike share
- bike lane
- bike repair station
- bike parking
- bike blvd

Automobile Infrastructure
- car share
- roundabout
- road diet
- electric charging station
- on-street parking
- traffic diverter
- one way
- median
- two way

Transit Infrastructure
- streetcar
- Bus Rapid Transit
- trolley
- transit shelter

Downtown Thomasville

More transit options

Walk/Bike connection into Carroll Hill

Fix pot holes

Sidewalk

Great interior loop

Bike Lanes

Make the area around the Big Oak pedestrian only

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

*Traffic Light

8' Trails

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

Interior Loop Could be a Great Street

Slow Down

No Big Trucks

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

LEGEND
City Limits
Parcels
* Data from City of Thomasville

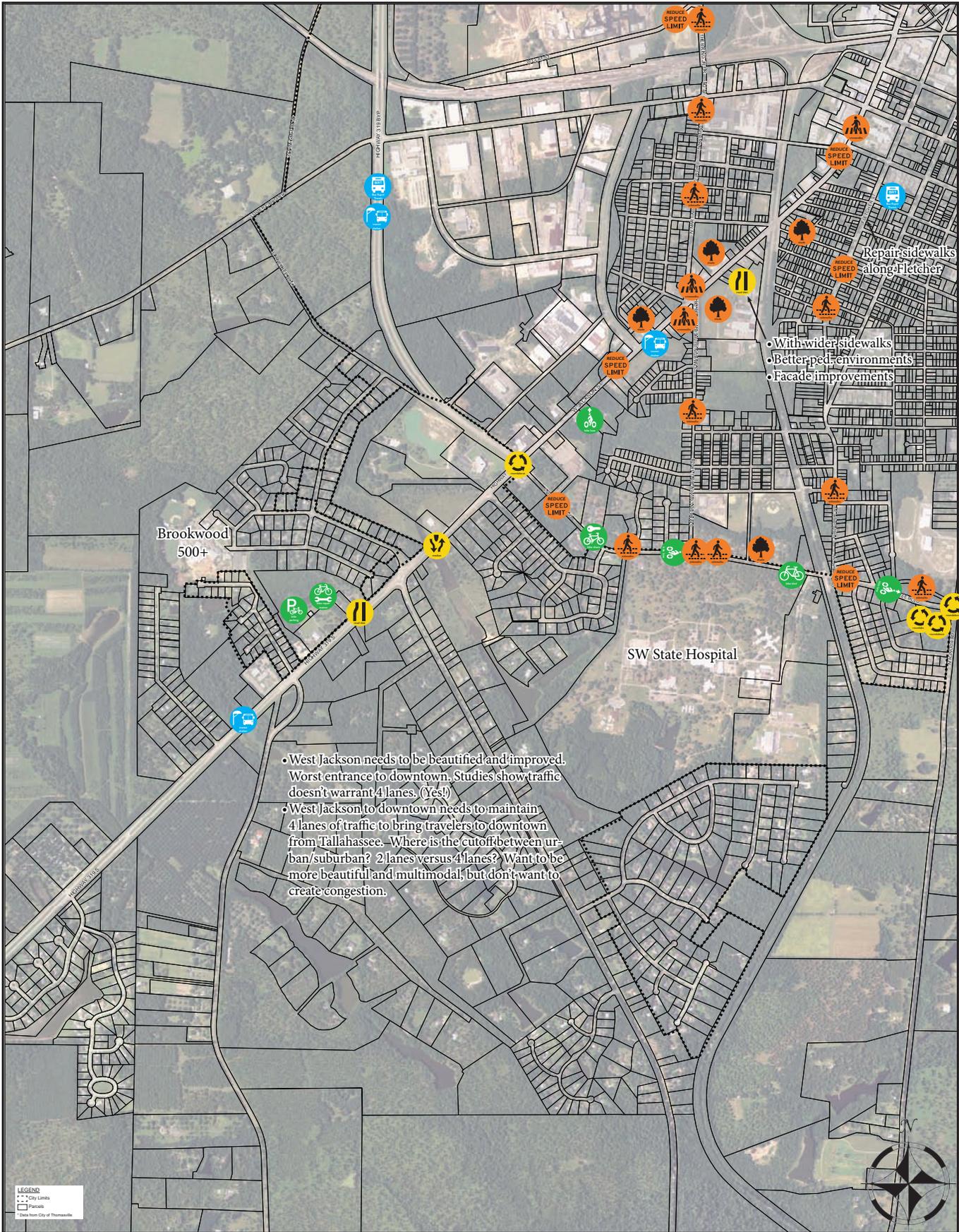0   200'   400'   600'   800'   1,000'
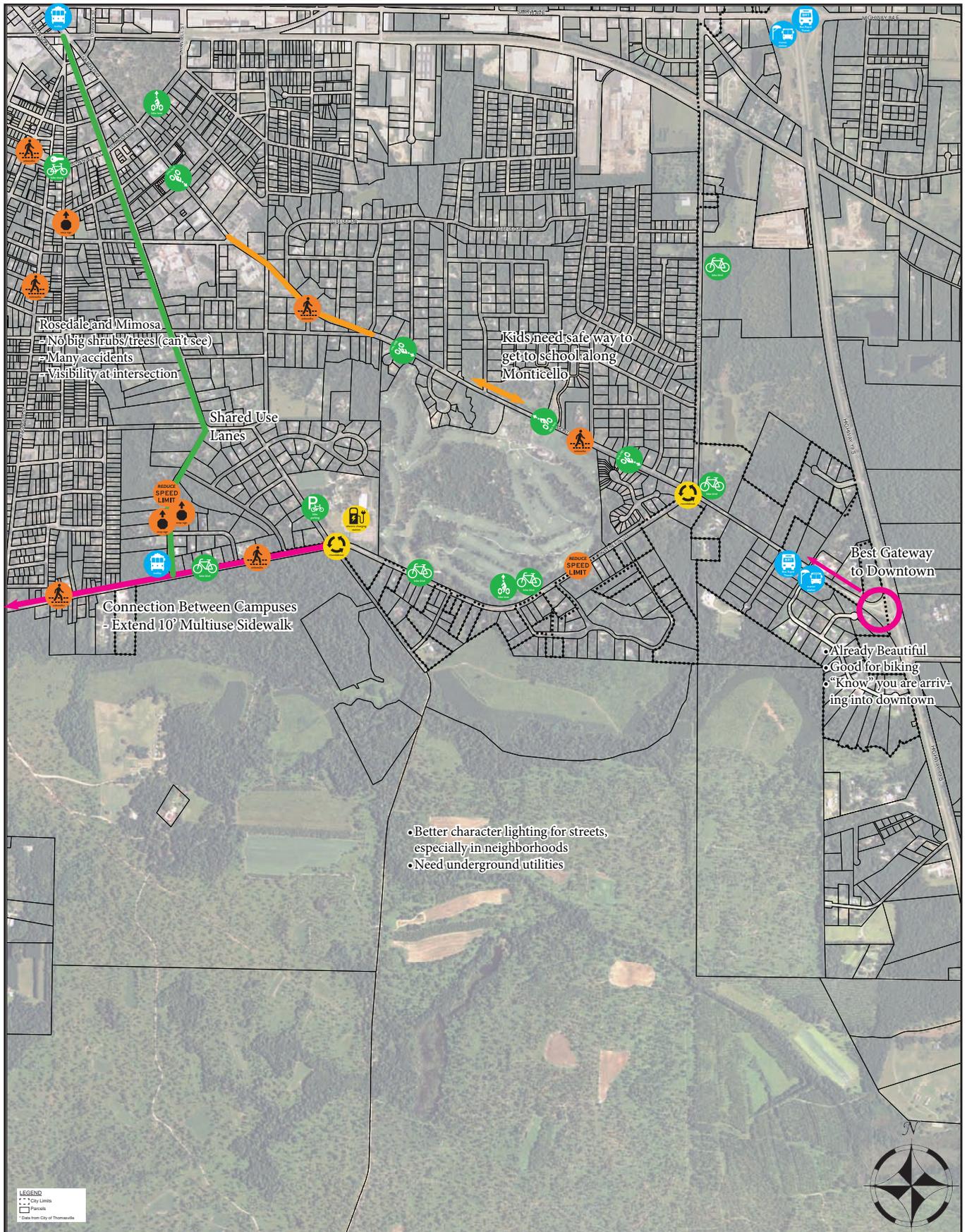
Northwest Thomasville

- Difficult for seniors to get downtown - no taxis or transit on southside (but throughout town)
- More streetlights in residential areas (pedestrian-scaled lighting, like on Dawson)

Please finish trail

Bike/Walk Trail

Bike/Walk Trail 8' Wide

State Preserve Wildlife Management 2 miles

8' Trail on both sides

*Multiuse Trail

Maintain pedestrian access

Beautiful dirt road Walking trail

N. Dawson St

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

LEGEND
City Limits
Parcels
* Data from City of Thomasville

0   200' 400' 600' 800' 1,000'

Northeast Thomasville

• Do not reduce lanes anywhere

• More bike trails throughout city
• Trolley Downtown

Original Loop Road

Complete Sidewalks

30 mph max and signal at lights

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

45 mph

LEGEND
City Limits
Parcels
* Data from City of Thomasville

0   200'   400'   600'   800'   1,000'

Southwest Thomasville

Repair sidewalks along Fletcher

• With wider sidewalks
• Better ped. environments
• Facade improvements

Brookwood 500+

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

SW State Hospital

• West Jackson needs to be beautified and improved. Worst entrance to downtown. Studies show traffic doesn't warrant 4 lanes. (Yes!)
• West Jackson to downtown needs to maintain 4 lanes of traffic to bring travelers to downtown from Tallahassee. Where is the cutoff between urban/suburban? 2 lanes versus 4 lanes? Want to be more beautiful and multimodal, but don't want to create congestion.

LEGEND
City Limits
Parcels
* Data from City of Thomasville

0 200' 400' 600' 800' 1,000'

Southeast Thomasville

Rosedale and Mimosa
- No big shrubs/trees (can't see)
- Many accidents
- Visibility at intersection

Kids need safe way to get to school along Monticello

Shared Use Lanes

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

REDUCE SPEED LIMIT

Best Gateway to Downtown

Connection Between Campuses
- Extend 10' Multiuse Sidewalk

• Already Beautiful
• Good for biking
• "Know" you are arriving into downtown

• Better character lighting for streets, especially in neighborhoods
• Need underground utilities

LEGEND
City Limits
Parcels
* Data from City of Thomasville

0   200'   400'   600'   800'   1,000'

COMMUNITY PREFERENCE SURVEYS

This Community Preference Survey helps to identify the types of development and urban design that are most appropriate for the City. Seven boards, each with a different focus, were presented:

- Streets;
- Civic Buildings;
- Open Space;
- Residential – Single Family;
- Residential – Other than Single Family;
- Commercial Addresses; and,
- Signage.

For each category, participants were asked to identify those images that they believed were appropriate or inappropriate for Thomasville by placing up to four green stickers and one red sticker on each board.

The following are a summary of the images that received the three most positive reactions and three most negative reactions for each category.

Members from the community participating in the Community Preference Survey.

Streets

Most Appropriate

Least Appropriate

48

0

1

27
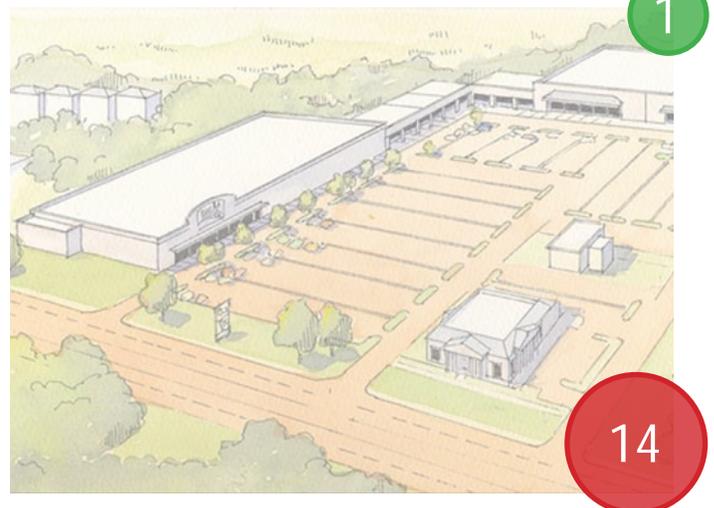

45

1

2

16

42

2

22

12
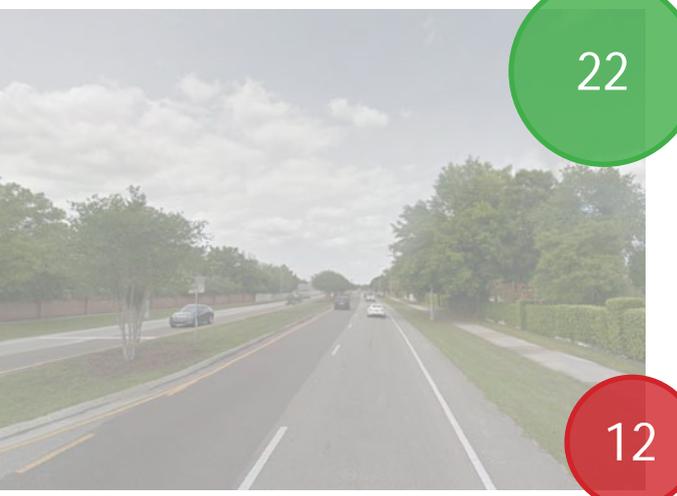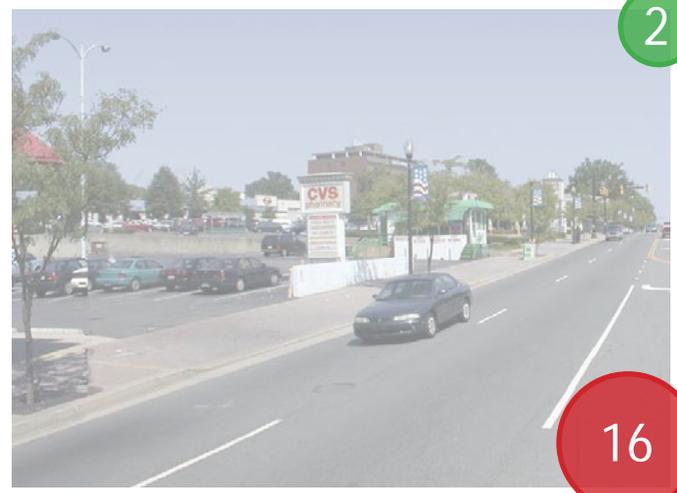
Civic Buildings

Most Appropriate

Least Appropriate

53

1

2

20

30

5

1

14

30

5

8

20
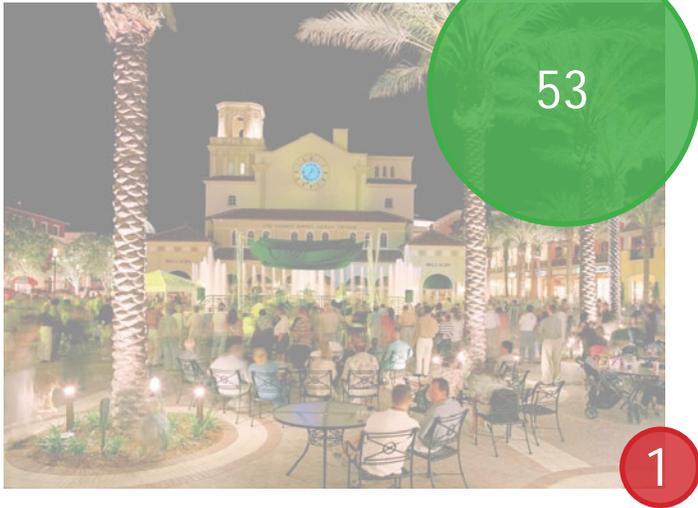
Open Spaces

Most Appropriate

Least Appropriate

64

0

8

13

63

0

15

9

57

2

15

5
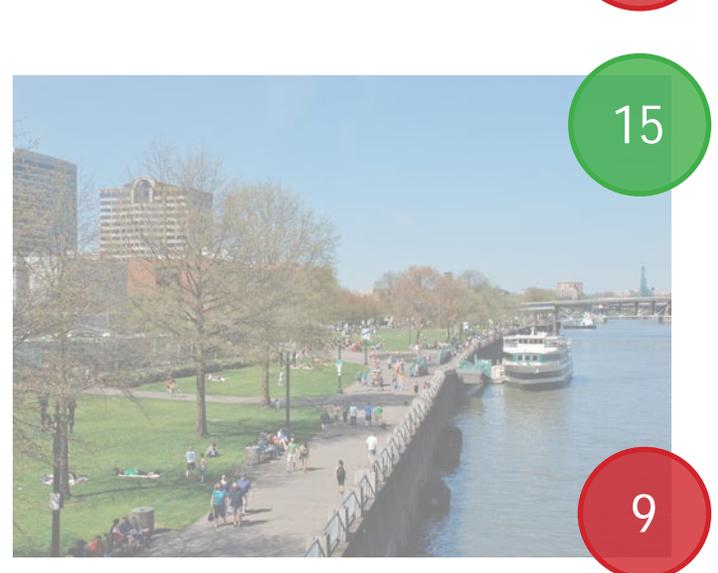
Residential – Single Family

Most Appropriate

55

1

38

0

27

0

Least Appropriate

13

24

4

13

12

12
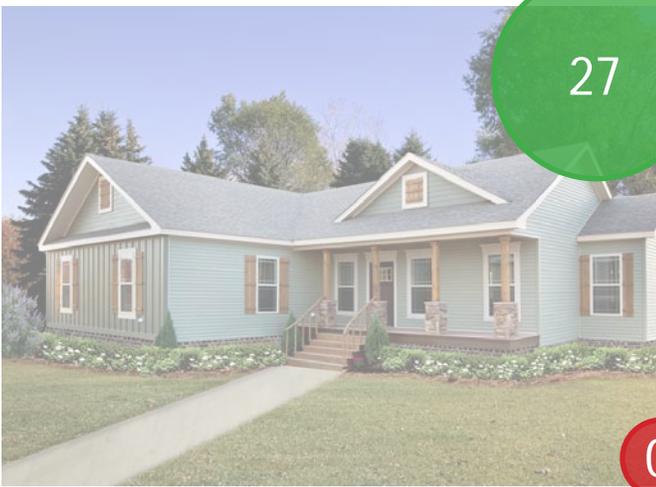
Residential – Other Than Single Family

Most Appropriate

Least Appropriate

39

2

4

23

38

3

4

18

30

2

1

16

Commercial Addresses

Most Appropriate

44

0

30

0

30

5

Least Appropriate

0

36

0

23

12

14

Signage

Most Appropriate | Least Appropriate

50

1

0

46

32

4

9

25

22

1

5

11
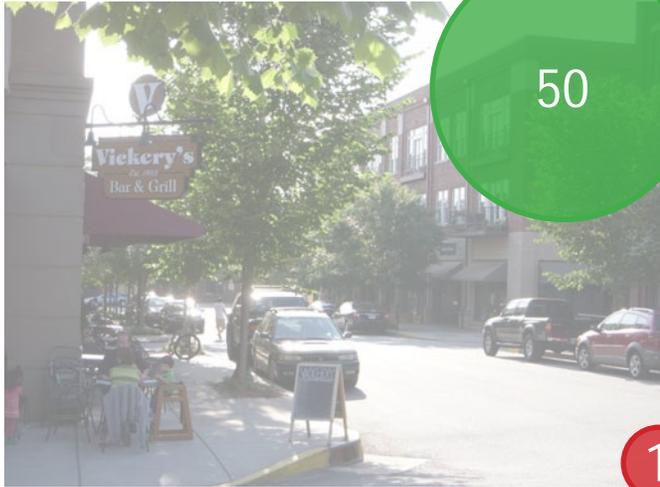
RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE

Similar to the Community Preference Survey, the "Right Tree, Right Place" exercise involved community members identifying the trees and bushes they would like to see more or less of by placing green and red dots by what they liked or did not like. By categorizing the trees and bushes into three types, street trees, yard trees, and buffer trees, community members were also able to indicate where the trees and bushes are most appropriate.

Below are the trees that received the most positive and the most negative reactions from all the evenings.   Complete results are included in the Appendix.

Street Trees provide shade and beauty to streets and are located within the public realm.
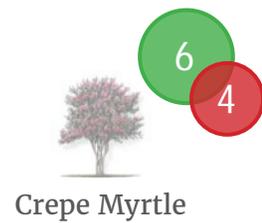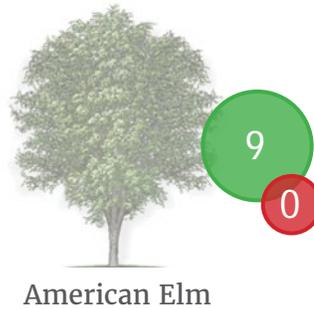

Yard Trees are located on private lots and are privately maintained.

Buffer Trees are often required by businesses adjacent to residences.
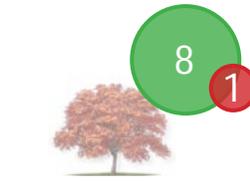
Which is your favorite STREET tree?

Most Favored

16 / 0
Live Oak

9 / 0
American Elm

6 / 4
Crepe Myrtle

Least Favored

7 / 1
Silver Date Palm

5 / 5
Date Palm

5 / 2
Spruce Pine

Which is your favorite YARD tree?

Most Favored

Live Oak — 8 / 0

Japanese Maple — 8 / 1

Southern Evergreen or Bull Bay Magnolia — 7 / 2

Least Favored

Canary Island Palm — 4 / 1

Which is your favorite BUFFER tree?

Most Favored

Live Oak — 8 / 0

Foster Holly — 5 / 0

Southern Evergreen or Bull Bay Magnolia — 5 / 0

Least Favored

Canary Island Palm — 7 / 0
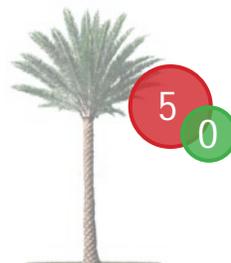
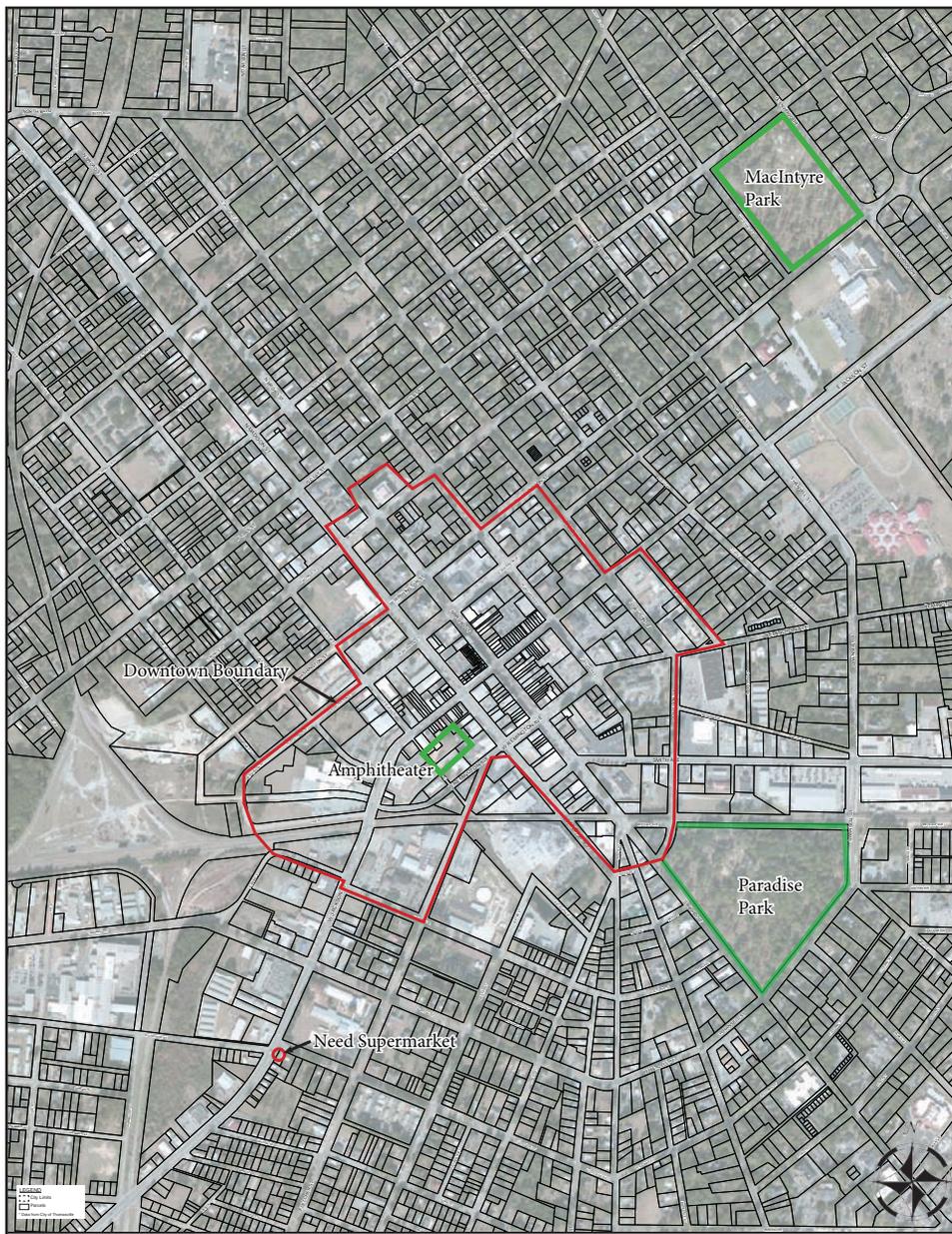Silver Date Palm — 5 / 0

Date Palm — 6 / 4

TOPIC AREAS

Community members and stakeholders had the opportunity to provide input, ask questions, and address concerns related to four topic areas critical to the Comprehensive Plan. A map was provided to mark ideas and a flipchart was used to record comments.

Downtown

The following is a summary of what we learned about the **Downtown**.

The complete list of comments is included in the appendix.

What You Said

More and Better Signed Parking	6
More Attractions & Activities	6
More Food & Dining	6
Facilitate Walking & Biking	6
More Lighting & Buried Utilities	5
Reduce Empty Storefronts	4
Increase Aesthetics & Design	4

May need to get creative for using storefronts beyond retail

Underground utilities

Better neighborhood lighting

Historical, period sensitive design for lighting

Attention needed to dilapidated house abutting commercial districts

Downtown Food Trucks

More variety for dining options

Bartow – Hansell: Multimodal interior loop

Better signage for parking

Make Jackson Street Gateway more aesthetically improved

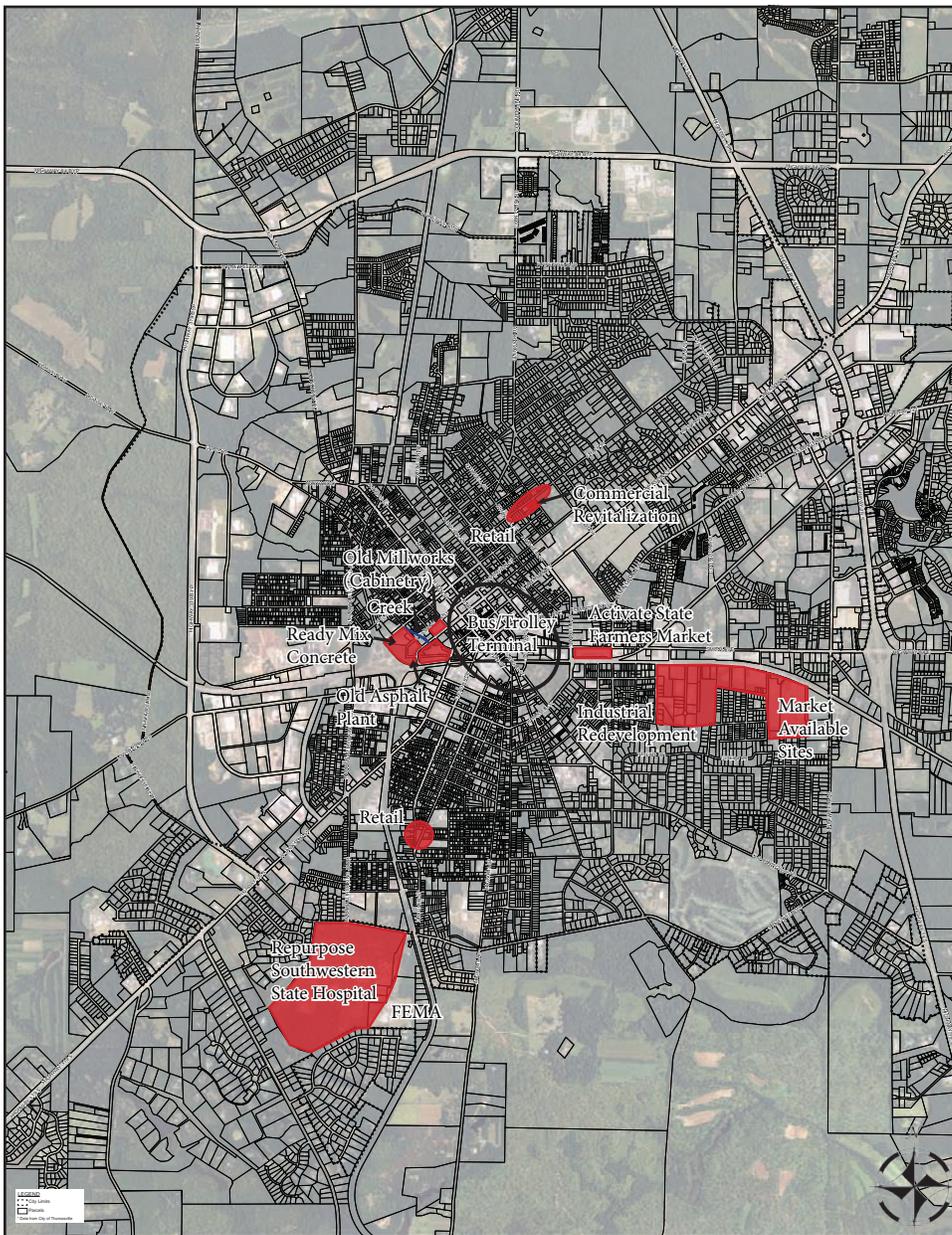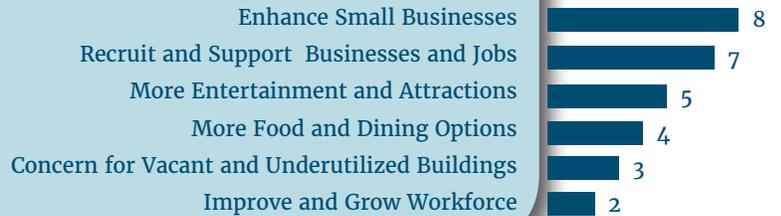Walkability in Downtown is very important

Synthesis Map of Results

Economic Development

The following is a summary of what we learned about **Economic Development** from the four Open Houses.

The complete list of comments is included in the Appendix.

What You Said

Enhance Small Businesses	8
Recruit and Support Businesses and Jobs	7
More Entertainment and Attractions	5
More Food and Dining Options	4
Concern for Vacant and Underutilized Buildings	3
Improve and Grow Workforce	2

Synthesis Map of Results

Attract/enable small size entrepreneurs

Creek shoring – Clay MacIntyre Park

Starter spaces like food trucks and small shops

"Raise" workforce through local industry, resources

Ethnic Food Fair

Mom and Pop Stores – Maintain

Entrepreneur support – support, who can help you, connections

An entity to concierge incremental/small businesses

Accessory units

WAWA and Royal Farms – Add to restaurant options

Arts inclusion

Improve small (side street) business zones

Natural & Cultural Resources

The following is a summary of what we learned about **Natural and Cultural Resources** from the four Open Houses.

The complete list of comments is included in the appendix.

What You Said

Better Park Facilities	10
Address Stormwater and Creeks	4
More Arts and Education	4
More Historic Markers and Wayfinding	2

Synthesis Map of Results
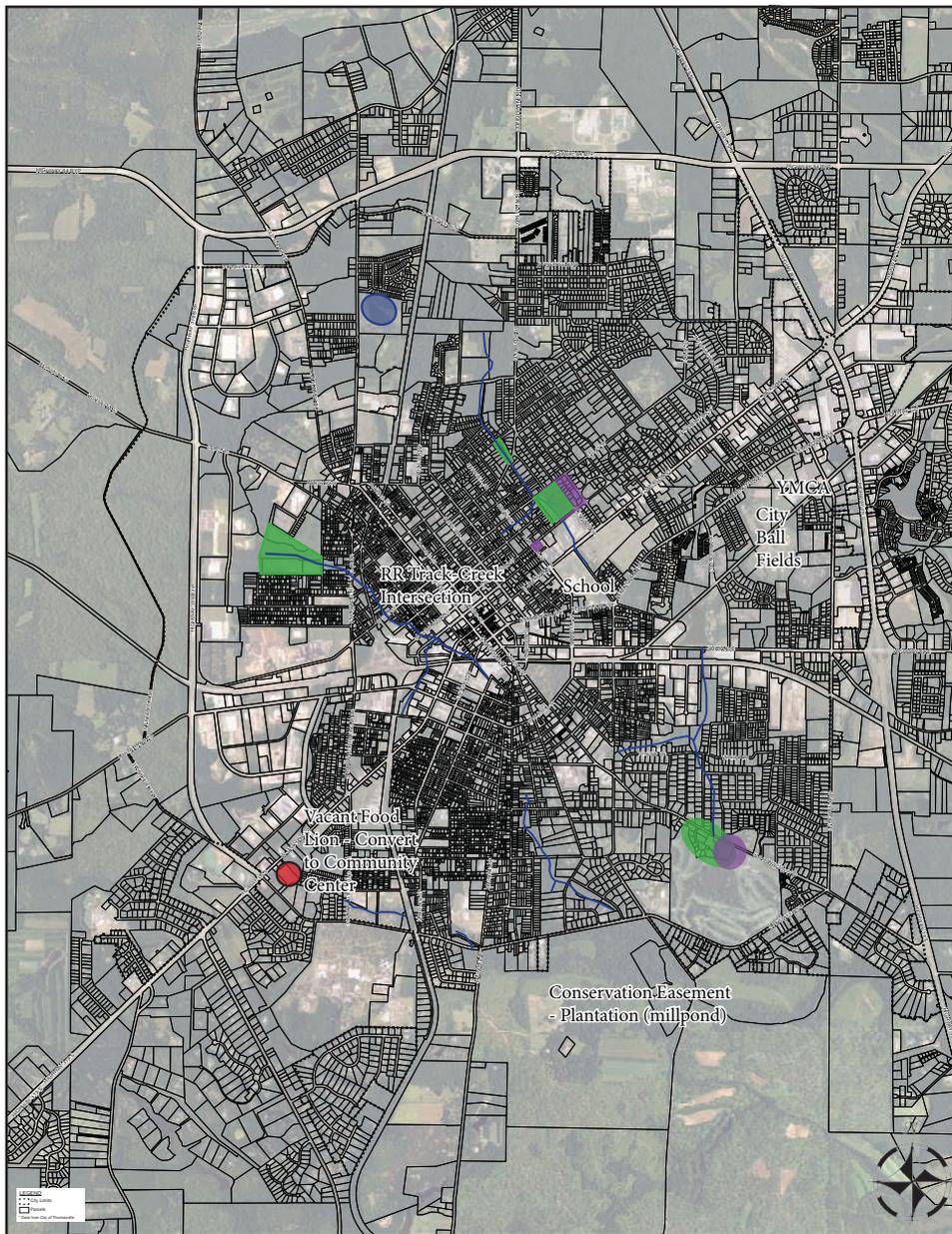
More public outdoor recreation (Camping, horseback riding trails, etc.)

Regional stormwater facilities as amenities

More activities and equipment in parks (for kids and adults)

Historic markers for Historic Business Districts – In The Bottom especially

Murals – City and County

Regulations for storm water management aimed at redevelopment and reduction not just greenfield sites

Cassidy Road Park – more kid friendly, more trails

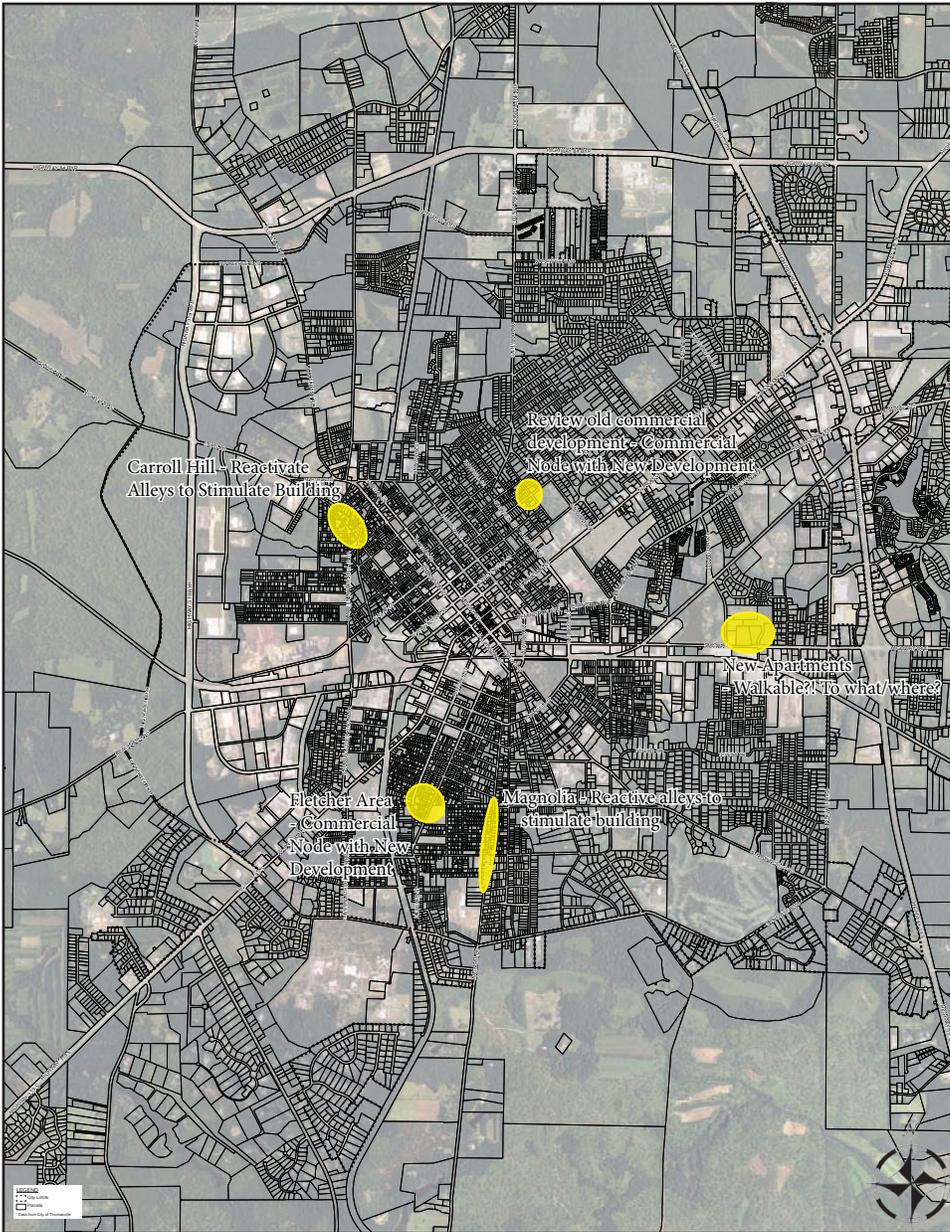Make sure the arts are accessible to all

Housing & Health

This following is a summary of what we learned about **Housing & Health** from the four Open Houses.

The complete list of comments is included in the appendix.

What You Said

More Housing Options	10
Concern About Abandoned / Not Well Maintained Properties	8
More Affordability	5
Concern About Homelessness / Group Homes	4
Promote Commercial and Civic Redevelopment	4
Better Connectivity and Transportation Options	3
More Senior Living Options	3

Carroll Hill – Reactivate Alleys to Stimulate Building

Review old commercial development – Commercial Node with New Development

New Apartments – Walkable?! To what/where?

Fletcher Area – Commercial Node with New Development

Magnolia – Reactive alleys to stimulate building

Affordable Intown Housing

Elevate responsibility of land bank

Walk to work housing

Abandoned houses – dilapidated (some over 15 years)

Affordable rental property in safe areas

More housing options for Seniors

Improve quality of substandard housing

Nice apartments/condos for young professionals

Existing housing that is not being used/not up to code

Bike lanes and sidewalks connected to housing

Group Homes – Special Populations

Synthesis Map of Results