Georgia’s Downtown Conference  
August 22-25, 2017  
Columbus Trade and Convention Center

Preliminary Program

Tuesday, August 22  
8:30 am – 3:30 pm

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION TRAINING:  
The Historic Preservation Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources will offer a one-day educational training for HPC members, staff, local government officials, and preservationists. Topics include preservation law, historic district design guidelines, architectural types & styles, and more. Please note, HPC members who serve on commissions in Certified Local Governments (CLG) communities are required to attend training every three years.

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES: (This session runs until 4:30pm)  
An informational session directed at those who serve on Downtown Development Authorities, their board of directors, and elected officials. Topics include downtown management as a valuable resource; roles of the authority, board members and staff; DDA laws; and day-to-day operations.

CREATING A DOWNTOWN RENAISSANCE: ADVANCED DDA TRAINING (6 hour class)  
This class builds on the Basic Downtown Development Authority training class with an emphasis on applying downtown development tools. The importance of developing a downtown vision and a plan are discussed. Attendees also hear the basics of navigating Business Improvement Districts, Community Improvement Districts, Tax Allocation Districts, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, the Redevelopment Powers Act and Urban Redevelopment Law. Best practice examples of utilizing federal, state and local partnerships, programs and incentives are shared. Class participants are given an opportunity to immediately apply the tools and programs highlighted in the classes through a case study exercise. Basic Downtown Development Authority training is a pre-requisite.

4:30 pm – 6:00 pm  
Welcome Reception-

Wednesday, August 23  
8:00 am – 9:00 am  
Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:00 am – 9:00 am  
Mentoring Assistance for Managers-New and Vintage

8:00 am – 9:00 am  
First Time Attendee Session

If this is your first Georgia Downtown Conference, we invite you to participate in this session where GDA board members will explain the benefits of belonging to YOUR professional organization. Find out more about our mentor program and our Downtown Professional Certification Program.
9:00 am – 10:30 am  
Opening General Session:
Presiding: Amanda Glover, 2017 GDA President
Keynote Speaker: Jason Broadwater
“A connected village is the heart of the new economy,” Jason Broadwater said. “The defining characteristic of millennials is digital and social connectivity. Millennials are digital natives. They don’t know a world without it.” About 72.2 million millennials live in the United States. Millennials see themselves as being part of a local culture and a global citizen at the same time. They are collaborators who share information and resources. They don’t buy into institutionalized hierarchy.

This also ties into their work lives where many are entrepreneurs and not part of the traditional 9 to 5, Monday-Friday world.

Connectivity is their motto – in terms of work, play and travel. Make sure your city is ready to attract this next generation.

Broadwater is founder and president of the Internet marketing company RevenFlo, which is based in Rock Hill, S.C.

10:30 am – 10:45 am  
Break

10:45 am – 12:00 pm  
Exhibitor Setup

10:45 am – 12:15 pm  
Concurrent Sessions-Deep Dive

Get on Your Bike and Ride
This session will explore how two cities have encouraged bike riding in their cities. Two of the keys to success are providing safe riding environments through collaboration with city departments and community groups. The other is enticing your community to ride.

Speakers:
Cheryl Burnette, Decatur Active Living
Alex Morrison, Executive Director, Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority
Josh Rogers, President and CEO, NewTown Macon
Racheel Hollar, Executive Director, Bike Walk Macon

Event Essentials for the Memory Making Business! The Big Three: Volunteers, Sponsors and (FUN) Creative Ideas!
Let’s get creative and talk about new event ideas, fun ways to partner with sponsors, and how to recruit and train great volunteers for your events! We are in the memory making business so let’s create fun – not just for attendees but sponsors and volunteers, too! This session will be FULL of CREATIVE ideas to add to events you already plan and host as well as help you to be creative with revenue generating ideas, too! We will discuss how to cover cost by trading instead of paying, selling all aspects of your event and getting your sponsors to activate and participate in your event. What do you have to sell to bring in more sponsor dollars? What could you charge for that you currently do not charge? Are you charging enough? How do you report back to your sponsors? Do your volunteers know what to do and are you keeping good volunteers with your training, recognition, and awesome offerings? Come get creative and let’s re-think the way we plan local events!

Speaker: Amy Doherty, TMP, Events and Outreach Manager, Suwanee
Kick-starting Downtown Living
Downtown managers in cities of all sizes know that downtown living is important to building and sustaining a successful downtown revitalization program. Empty upper floors in commercial buildings and vacant lots could be occupied and contributing to downtown vitality and increased foot traffic. In this session you will hear from four downtown managers who have successfully added downtown housing to their mix and the tools they used to overcome obstacles and uncertainties that often delay progress.

*Moderator: Joel Cordle, Consultant, Georgia Downtowns*

*Speakers:*
- Carlee Schulte, Director, Main Street/DDA
- Ellen Hill, Director, Valdosta Main Street Program
- Monica Callahan, Planning & Development Director, Madison
- Lyn Menne, Director, Community Development, Decatur

Walking Tour-Using Your Natural Resources to Bring Visitors to Your Downtown—limited to 25 people
The walking tour will begin at the Columbus Convention Center and proceed down the River Walk. Participants will hear great stories concerning the dam removal, development of the whitewater course, and the current recreational opportunities that were created by Columbus leaders. Of course, one of the impacts of recreation is the economic impact recreation users have had on the historic district. We will end the tour at the 14th Street pedestrian bridge.

*Tour Guide: Dan Gilbert, Whitewater Express*

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm Lunch on your own
1:15 pm – 1:45 pm Connections Hall Open (visit with exhibitors)
1:45 pm – 2:30 pm Crash Courses

Celebrating Local Retail
This session is for anyone looking for ways to promote their local shops—whether their main street has five shops or fifty. Learn what the City of Decatur does to support its independent businesses and how it relies on providing experiences to stay relevant in an Amazon-dominated world. This interactive and engaging session will include audience input and group brainstorming to come up with new and unique ideas that celebrate local retailers.

*Speaker: Catherine Lee, Downtown Development Manager, Decatur*

Concierge Business Service
The City of Powder Springs has developed a One-Stop-Shop for business recruitment and expansion. During this session you will learn best practices for streamlining the business recruitment and licensing processes by putting some innovative tools in your business development toolbox. Learn how to implement concierge business services to better assist your entrepreneurs and developers by eliminating redundancy and capitalizing on resources.

*Speakers:*
- Stephanie Aylworth, Economic Development Director, Powder Springs
- Tina Garver, Community Development Director, Powder Springs
Downtown Living-Mobile Workshop
During this tour, participants will tour the Eagle & Phenix Condominiums and Apartments which are located in an old mill building. Then the tour will stop at the The Rapids, a new $52mil mixed-use project under construction to be completed by late 2018. This project will include 226 apartments with on-site garage, pool and gardens. It will also include approximately 16,000sf of retail, including a riverfront restaurant and boutique retail shops. A windshield tour of uptown housing will include the 11th Street Lofts, the Empire Building, Flowers Lofts and the Swift Mill, all with loft apartments and ground floor restaurants and retail. The return trip will include a windshield tour of the 2nd Avenue Historic District homes.
*Tour Guide, Leah Braxton, WC Bradley Real Estate*

2:30 pm - 2:45 pm  Refreshment Break with exhibitors

2:45 pm – 3:30 pm  Crash Courses

Fresh Perspectives: Connecting Student Designers with Downtowns
Brimming with technical skills, technological know-how, new ideas, creative energy and enthusiasm for community service, Georgia’s emerging design professionals remain an untapped and affordable resource for communities looking to pursue the revitalization of downtown areas. Facilitated by a former Downtown Renaissance Fellow, this interactive roundtable features representatives of two partner communities who worked directly with Downtown Fellows to help address challenges within their respective downtowns.
*Speakers:*
T. Clark Stancil, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Planning and Environmental Services Unit
Connie Tabor, Community Development Director, Toccoa
Maika Kicklighter-Weathers, Executive Director, Jesup Downtown Development Authority

Richland, Rum and Renaissance
In the mid-2000s, Richland had become a largely declining and empty downtown. The railroad depot had been converted into city hall, but little investment had followed. The prospects for improvement in Richland was bleak at best. The renaissance started with the purchase and renovation of the old Richland Hotel by the Downtown Development Authority. After converting that space into a community center for residents, the DDA then purchased several other blighted or abandoned building, securing them and waiting for the right user to come along. Richland Rum purchased one of those buildings and began their distilling operations. As they grew, so did their need for space. The DDA purchased more buildings with the help of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and CDBG funds and the distillery continued to expand and so did other public investment.

This panel discussion will outline the process from very modest and targeted public investments to one of the most transformative downtown changes in west Georgia over the past five years.
*Speakers:*
Jim Livingston, Community and Economic Development Director, River Valley Regional Commission
Chip Jones, Former Mainstreet Director, Richland
Eric Vonk, Richland Rum
The Virtual Gateway: Building a More Effective Path to Your Downtown
For many potential customers and investors, the virtual presence (website and social media) is the first “gateway” to a downtown. This session will share a worksheet and presentation on 25 steps a downtown manager can take to ensure an outstanding downtown virtual presence. A prospective customer, tourist, community partner, or investor will quickly find needed information and strong inspiration to make that initial visit.

Speakers:
Alice Sampson, Consultant, Georgia Downtowns
Joel Cordle, Consultant and Senior Downtown Professional, Georgia Downtowns

Downtown Living-Mobile Workshop-Continued

5:00 pm  Reception at Springer Opera House

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm  Awards Ceremony at the Springer Opera House
  Join us as we recognize individuals and local governments for their outstanding achievements in Downtown Development

  Dinner on your own
Thursday, August 24

8:00 am – 9:00 am  Registration and Continental Breakfast with Exhibitors in Connections Hall

9:00 am – 10:15 am  General Session: The Columbus Story
Not that many years ago, downtown Columbus had several old mills and the shallow, rock-strewn waterway of the Chattahoochee River and not much else. With the help of business leaders, property owners and the Chamber, things started to change in the mid-1980s. The River Walk was built, the mills were renovated into apartments, River Center was built and students from Columbus State University were embraced in the downtown area. More recently, the dams were removed from the river to create the longest urban whitewater rafting in the world. The transformation in downtown has been remarkable.
-Richard Bishop, Consultant, Retired Director of Uptown Columbus

10:15 am – 10:45 am  Connections Hall Open (visit with exhibitors and update your Mobile App)

10:45 am – 11:30 am  Crash Courses

Phenix City, Alabama: From Sin City to All-American City
A downtown with a sordid past, Phenix City, Alabama: Sin City, where dice rolled, slots chimed and some ladies had a reputation is rising again. Now, those days are long gone, and with new economic opportunities, like the Chattahoochee whitewater course, Phenix City is reinvigorating its downtown and embracing its riverfront. This exciting story of downtown redevelopment is a story of Economic Development, Tourism, Marketing and Placemaking.
Speakers:
Danny Bivins, Senior Public Service Associate, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, UGA
Leigh Askew Elkins, Senior Public Service Associate, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, UGA
Shaun Culligan, Economic Development Manager, Phenix City, Alabama

Main Street and Tourism Public Relations: Working with Journalists, Bloggers and Social Media Influencers
Bloggers, social media influencers, travel writers, lifestyle writers, family travel experts…the list goes on and on. In this rapidly evolving world of communication, it’s difficult to keep up with trends and new technology while still doing your job—yet most of us know we should. Consumers trust third-party opinions and do their research before dining in a new restaurant or visiting a new destination. Engaging targeted journalists and bloggers can be the most far-reaching and cost-efficient marketing outreach available. In this session, we’ll talk about: goals for your program; how to determine which blogger or influencer; how to find them and the tools necessary for a successful partnership.
Speaker: Laurie Rowe, President, Laurie Rowe Communications
Public Art Walking Tour—limited to 40 people
Columbus has over 65 pieces of public art in the Uptown area. Join the chairs of Artbeat for an informative tour of some of these pieces and how we view the role of public art. To make the tour even more interesting, download "Otocast" from the mobile app store and select "Columbus GA, Artbeat" before we start the tour.

Tour Guides: Rick McKnight, Director of Education, RiverCenter and Helen Johnson, one of the founders of Artbeat and Community Engagement officer for Synovus

11:30 am – 1:00 pm  Lunch on your own (DCA Mainstreet Luncheon)
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm  Connections Hall Open
Visiting with exhibitors and update your Mobile App
Silent Auction Bidding Begins

1:30 pm – 3:00 pm  Concurrent Sessions—Deep Dive
Managing Main Streets in the Digital Age
A critical component for Main Street districts and downtowns across the country is the ability to tell both visitors and locals about the rich history of their communities. As new technology helps bring history to life in an informative and engaging way, Main Streets and downtowns need to embrace it to help tell that important story.
Speaker: Dr. Ron Cook, Co-Founder, distrx, Inc.

Mobile Workshop: Historic Preservation (limited to 40)
Downtown Columbus has seen an incredible revitalization over the last 20 years, but it did not occur by accident. Many of the historic assets in our community. Columbus has found its success in finding what makes it unique and authentic and developed ways to capitalize on those assets. This tour will provide details on some of the key projects and investments that changed the trajectory of Columbus. Downtown Columbus is home to internationally recognized corporate headquarters, strong educational partners like Columbus State University, and many civic amenities such as the River Walk, River Center, and whitewater course to name a few. Tour participants will ride through the downtown residential and business districts with stops along the way to walk through some of Columbus' well established institutions and projects that are just now under development.
Tour Guide, Justin Krieg, Historic Columbus

Finding and Using Financial Incentives
The project has been selected, but how do you find the financial resources to pay for it? Learn how low interest loans and the use of tax credits can stimulate redevelopment in your downtown. What impact will the new Rural Revitalization Tax Credit have on redevelopment? This panel of experts will be able to guide you through the maze.
Speakers:
Cherie Bennett, DD RLF Program Manager, Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Kim Campbell, Preservation and Education Coordinator, Historic Macon Foundation
Perry Hiott, Director, Community Development and Financial Services, Georgia Municipal Association
Quality of Life, Placemaking and Citizen Engagement Through Wellness
This session will tell the story of how wellness initiatives not only keep your employees and community active, but make your downtown a destination, engage a group of citizens you may not have and can truly put your municipality on the map for little or no money at all. Learn how to market the concept, engage the community and turn a small amount of downtown greenspace into a gathering place and a hub for community interaction. This fast paced, fun session will be collaborative, engaging and interactive.

Speaker: Dr. Scott Andrews, Director, Economic Development, Sugar Hill

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm Connections Hall
Exhibitor Reception and Silent Auction
Friday, August 25
8:30 am – 10:00 am  Breakfast and Business Meeting
                    Exhibitor Door Prizes

11:00 am – 1:00 pm  Optional Rafting Trip

No experience is required and all gear and transportation is provided. There is a guide in every raft. First timers and experienced rafters will all enjoy this trip!

This family whitewater trip will focus on the history of Columbus and how the river has been a driving force in the development of Columbus.

The trip takes 2 hours. It will cover local history from the cotton plantations to textile mills to development of Coca-Cola and the banking industry. You will see first-hand what was placed in the river to create the whitewater course and see the first spider Lilly plants that are surviving in the river in decades. Finally you can see how the recreation industry is impacting Columbus.