

SidewalkTalk Newsletter



Four Receive Georgia Downtown Development Professional Designation at Georgia Downtown Conference

Douglasville, Georgia – Ann Arnold, Director of Downtown Development for the City of Rome; Joe Burnett, Executive Director of Main Street Gainesville; and Connie Tabor, Planning and Main Street Director for the City of Toccoa, have successfully completed the Georgia Downtown Association's certificate level three review. As a result, they are the first three community development professionals in the State of Georgia to be recognized as Master Georgia Downtown Development Professionals. The Georgia Downtown Development Professional certificate review was recently held in conjunction with the 2008 Annual Georgia Downtown Conference in Douglasville, Georgia.

In order to be eligible to sit for the level three review, a candidate must have: successfully completed the Georgia Downtown Association's level two review; a minimum of ten years work experience in downtown development; at least 240 hours of documented training class time; at least forty hours of service as a trainer in various downtown-related topics; and seven letters of recommendation. The candidate must also prepare a dossier that describes his/her body of work as a downtown professional, and make an oral presentation on his/her significant contributions in the field of downtown revitalization and their impact in Georgia.



Ann Arnold, Rome



Connie Tabor, Toccoa



Billy Peppers, Woodstock

"Attainment of this level signifies an exemplary professional in terms of accomplishment, contributions to the profession, and leadership in the professional practice of downtown development in Georgia", says Monica Callahan, current President of the Georgia Downtown Association. "The Georgia Downtown Professional Designation Program distinguishes downtown managers who have reached a milestone of professional success in Georgia and who are committed to continuing professional growth."

Billy Peppers, Executive Director of the Woodstock Downtown Development Authority, successfully completed the Georgia Downtown Association's Professional certificate level one review, and as a result has received the designation of Georgia Downtown Development Professional.

In order to be eligible for the level one review, a candidate must have: at least two years of experience in the field of downtown development; 50 hours of documented training class time; and two letters of recommendation. The review consists of an oral presentation in which the candidate must document his/her downtown organizational

and management success, and a written exam covering downtown development issues, tools and resources.

The professional designation program designates three levels of professional success, each requiring and recognizing more professional success than the preceding level. The program has been endorsed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Department of Economic Development and the Fanning Institute.

For more information on the Professional Development Certificate Program please visit:
www.georgiadowntownassociation.org.

Georgia Downtown Award Winners Recognized at 2008 Statewide Downtown Conference

The Georgia Downtown Association and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) announced the winners of the annual outstanding revitalization awards. Presentations took place during the annual Georgia Downtown Conference October 1-3, 2008 in Douglasville, Georgia.

As the premier conference on downtown revitalization in the state, this event promotes downtown and economic development through public awareness, governmental relations and education. The conference provides an opportunity for downtown and community development professionals and state and local leaders to grow their knowledge regarding programs, activities and tools to aid in revitalization efforts.

The event brought nearly 200 of Georgia's downtown professionals together to develop strategies for bettering their downtown business district. This year marks the 28th anniversary of the nationally acclaimed Main Street Program as developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center. The Georgia Main Street program is one of the original 6 states selected for the pilot program in 1980.

According to Billy Parrish, Director of DCA's Office of Downtown Development, "Since the inception of the Georgia Main Street program in 1980 and the Better Hometown Program in 1997, over \$1.98 billion dollars has been invested in more than 100 designated Georgia Main Street and Better Hometowns with nearly 42,000 net new jobs added and nearly 9,000 net new businesses opened in designated Main Street and Better Hometowns."

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Billy Parrish and Frank Pendergast

The Georgia Downtown Awards were established to recognize individuals, downtown programs and/or businesses that have demonstrated unique efforts in making a difference in their downtowns. The award categories are based on the 4-Point Approach™ of downtown revitalization as developed by the National Trust's Main Street Center and focus on Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs also presents an Outstanding Leadership Award and the Georgia Downtown Association selects one city to be honored for Overall Excellence in Downtown Development each year.

The conference theme this year was "*Homecoming 2008 – Come Home to Downtown*" and the sessions focused on getting back to the basics in downtown revitalization.

The following awards were presented by Monica H. Callahan, President of the Georgia Downtown Association and Billy Parrish. The Georgia Downtown Association and DCA co-sponsor the annual downtown conference and the awards.

Congratulations to the following:

| | |
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| Organization | |
| Wrightsville | Outstanding Outreach - Historic Courthouse Driving Tour (22 counties) |
| Cleveland | Most Valuable Volunteers - Stepping Stone Farms |
| | |
| Design | |
| Decatur | Outstanding New Construction - The Artisan Phase 1 & 2 |
| Douglasville | Outstanding New Construction - O'Neal Plaza Stage |
| Metter | Sensitive Rehabilitation - Nicholson Photography & Impact Signs Building |
| Lawrenceville | Sensitive Rehabilitation with Infill - Aurora Theatre |

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|-------------------------------|---|
| Savannah | Design Improvement Program - MLK /Montgomery Street Corridor Design Assistance |
| Promotion | |
| Cleveland | Best Downtown Special Event - White County's Sesquicentennial |
| Thomasville | Most Creative Marketing Piece - Planter sign visual marketing for The Shops Off Broad |
| Valdosta | Best Retail Booster - Downtown Valdosta's First Fridays |
| St. Marys | Best Image Building Campaign - Downtown Golf Cart Concierge |
| Economic Restructuring | |
| Thomasville | Best Commercial Redevelopment Activity - International Design & Display Group |
| Bainbridge | Most Innovative Business Anchor - Jakes Pawn & Gift Shop |
| Suwanee | Best Problem Solving - City of Suwanee's Town Center |
| Leadership Awards | |
| Milledgeville | DCA Outstanding Leadership Award - Frank Pendergast, DDA chair |
| Toccoa | GDA Annual Award of Excellence in Downtown Development |

Suwanee Master Plan Update Will Focus on Dual-Personality Downtown

Downtown Suwanee is a bit like the ancient Chinese symbol yin-yang. Quaint, historic Old Town and the newly constructed, bustling Town Center represent contradictory yet complementary aspects of downtown Suwanee. The City of Suwanee is poised to update its 2002 Old Town Master Plan in order to determine how best to create a unique synergy for its dual-personality downtown area.

"We want to find a way to merge these two areas," says Planning Director Josh Campbell. "Our desire is that both of these areas – these two sides of downtown Suwanee's personality – be compatible and tied to one another."

The City of Suwanee will contract with Ecos Environmental Design, an Atlanta-based landscape architecture, urban design, and planning services firm, to lead the 6- to 9-month downtown master planning process. Throughout the process, Ecos will collaborate with other firms: Market & Main will focus on housing; URS will concentrate on transportation issues; and architectural firm Smith Dalia also will consult. The cost for this downtown master plan will be about \$85,000.

Consultants will work with City staff and a steering committee comprised of 12-15 residents, business owners, and other stakeholders as well as rely on public input in order to create the new master plan.

The process is expected to begin in September with the first of five community meetings anticipated for October. Community meetings will be open to Suwanee residents and downtown stakeholders. These meetings, notes Campbell, will offer opportunities for citizen involvement through review and input.

Says Campbell: "Despite the success of Town Center, we have some challenges in our downtown area. The master planning process will help us identify strategies for addressing these challenges and embracing new opportunities."

Georgia Cities Foundation Conducts Sixth Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Tour



Tour participants arriving in Madison

The Georgia Cities Foundation conducted its sixth annual Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Tour on October 29-30, 2008. The purpose of this tour is to expose representatives from cities that are interested in downtown revitalization to community leaders from cities that have experienced some degree of success in their revitalization efforts. This year's tour featured visits to the "Mentor" cities of Madison and Milledgeville.

Included on the 2008 tour were representatives from nine "Mentee" communities – Auburn, Braselton, Cleveland, Conyers, Hampton, Maysville, Royston, Trenton, and Union Point – as well as a "Resource Team" consisting of representatives from the following agencies and nonprofit organizations: the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, the Georgia Department of Economic Development, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources – Historic Preservation Division, the

Georgia Department of Transportation, the University of Georgia – Fanning Institute, the United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development, Georgia Power, the Georgia Downtown Association, and the Georgia Cities Foundation.

Day One – Madison

The first day of the tour was spent in Madison, where participants were greeted at the Chamber of Commerce and then separated into groups for walking tours of the downtown area. The tour groups viewed such historic attractions as the Morgan County Courthouse, the Rogers House, and the Rose Cottage, as well as the City's Round Bowl Spring Park project. The groups also viewed several rehabilitation and infill projects, including a former ice house that now houses a restaurant, retail shops, and upper level loft housing. Following the walking tour, the groups convened at the Chop House, where Planning Director Monica Callahan discussed the City's strategies for downtown revitalization and discussed several specific projects, including Town Park and the Rose Walker Lane neighborhood. The day concluded with a reception at Madison Markets, a turn-of-the-century cotton warehouse that now houses an antiques mall, tours of the recently constructed James Madison Inn, and dinner at Town 220 Bistro, a downtown restaurant.



Tour guide Ken Kocher on left and Lee Nelson of Union Point on right

Day Two - Milledgeville

The second day of the tour was spent in downtown Milledgeville, where tour participants were welcomed at City Hall and provided with a brief history of Milledgeville by Dr. Bob Wilson, Professor of History at Georgia College & State University. City Manager Scott Wood and City Planner Russell Thompson discussed the city's strategies to establish tax incentives through the use of enterprise zones, urban redevelopment plans, and opportunity zones in hopes of creating new job opportunities in the downtown area. Additionally, Frank Pendergast, a local business owner, discussed his plans to convert the former Belk's building into a boutique hotel, restaurant, and conference center.

Following the presentations at City Hall, a riding tour was conducted through the city's downtown, allowing participants to see two planned projects - the former Belk's building, and the Campus Theatre, which will be rehabilitated and used as a black box theatre and bookstore. Riders also viewed the City's streetscape project, the Baldwin County Courthouse, and the downtown campus of Georgia College & State University. The tour group then visited the Old State Capitol, located on the campus of Georgia Military College. Following lunch in the former House of Representatives Chambers, the group toured the Old Governor's Mansion, which recently completed a \$9 million restoration effort.

Department of Community Affairs and Georgia Cities Foundation Assist with Downtown Project in Acworth

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) through its Downtown Development Revolving Loan Fund Program and the Georgia Cities Foundation (GCF) recently provided low-interest loans to the Acworth Downtown Development Authority (DDA) for the acquisition of a commercial building located at 4791 South Main Street in downtown Acworth. The DDA provided simultaneous loans to the project's owner/developer, BBE&F, LLC, owned by principals Jonathan Braden, Larry Braden, Jim Eaton and Ben Flanagan. The subject building, known locally as the Battles Building, is approximately 16,600-square-foot and is the



Before picture of Battles Building

central portion of a three-parcel, circa 1970, strip mall that is adjacent to the historic downtown business district. The property previously housed the Battles grocery store and has been vacant for over two years. In addition to acquisition, the overall project involved major renovation, to include converting the property into four commercial condominium units that will either be sold or leased. The project transformed the plain brick veneered property into a structure that echoes the historic fabric of the adjacent historic district, using architectural elements found in the historic district, including segmental arches, brick pilasters, stonework, and decorative cornices. The project does not project a sense of a false history, but rather pays homage to the integrity of the historic downtown. The total project cost was \$2,405,824, which included \$810,473 in acquisition costs. DCA and GCF each provided loans of \$250,000 for the project.



After picture of Battles Building

The project fit in nicely with the City's plans for downtown revitalization. Acworth's present downtown commercial district dates from the mid 1860's through the early part of the 20th century. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006. The downtown is linear in configuration, as its growth was directly tied to the railroad that bisects the commercial district along with old US Highway 41.

The historic commercial district in Acworth is small in relation to the City as a whole, but the DDA's district extends some three miles along the Main Street corridor. It is the DDA's goal to improve the visual character of the commercial structures outside the traditional historic downtown by encouraging the purchase of such structures by proactive buyers who will agree to undertake the needed façade

improvements and improve the tenant base in the downtown area. The DDA recognizes that as the visual appeal of the district is

improved, the commercial viability of the district will be increased through a higher-quality occupant base and a stronger business mix.

The level of occupancy for buildings in the historic commercial district is 98%, with a waiting list of potential business ventures being maintained in the Acworth Main Street office. As a result of the high occupancy rate and low turnover rate in the historic commercial district, there have been limited opportunities for new business ventures to come into the downtown area. Therefore, the increase of four new storefronts in the downtown district was much needed.

In addition to DCA and GCF assistance, BBE&F, LLC also participated in the DDA's Building Reinvestment Program. The Building Reinvestment Program is designed to inspire and assist building owners to improve their properties and attract stronger tenants and businesses. It is a two-part program, offering an architectural design grant to be followed by an implementation grant.

The architectural design grant reimburses property owners up to \$1,000 towards the creation of a series of architectural plans to improve the façade of a non-historic building. This grant is paid for with funds from the DDA. The implementation grant will reimburse a property owner up to \$5,000 towards the implementation of the architectural plans, and is paid for through the Acworth Revitalization Grants Committee. The Battles Building project was the first property to complete a renovation using the Building Reinvestment Program.



After picture of Battles Building Storefront



After picture of Battles Building Storefront



After picture of Battles Building Storefront

Roswell to host the 2009 Georgia Downtown Conference

During the Georgia Downtown Awards Dinner in Douglasville on October 2, 2008, **Roswell, Georgia** was announced as the host city for the 2009 Georgia Downtown Conference. The conference will held Fall 2009. Stay tuned for more details!



Downtown Roswell

Job Opportunities

Better Hometown Community Coordinator / Clarkesville, Georgia- The City of Clarkesville is accepting applications for a Better Hometown Community Coordinator to perform the following functions. To organize and manage the City of Clarkesville's participation in the Better Hometown Program, an Economic Development Program administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Candidates must be able to attain designation as a Better Hometown Community within 18 months of hire. Regular progress reports to the City Manager and Mayor and Council will be required. Requirements for this position include: Bachelor's degree in economic development or related field is required within one year of employment. Documented work experience with consensus approach management of large scale projects. Experience with tourism development and marketing is a plus. Excellent written and verbal communication skills are required. Proven track record of accomplishing tasks in an accurate and timely manner. Computer skills with Microsoft Office sufficient to effectively perform job in an organized manner. Salary will be based on education and experience. Interested candidates should send a resume with salary requirements to: City of Clarkesville, P. O. Box 21, Clarkesville, Georgia 30523, Attention: City Manager. The City of Clarkesville is an equal opportunity employer and maintains a drug free workplace. End Date: Tuesday, December 30, 2008

Downtown Development Authority Basic Training

The next Downtown Development Authority Basic Training class will be held on Saturday, January 24, 2009 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm in Atlanta. The training session will be held in conjunction with the Georgia Municipal Association's Mayors' Day Conference. To register, visit the Georgia Municipal Association's website at www.gmanet.com.

Georgia Downtown Association Board Members

Monica Callahan - President, Madison
Marcia Hampton - Vice President, Douglasville
Bridget Lidy - Treasurer, Savannah
Niki Knox - Immediate Past President, Georgia EMC

Richard Bishop - Columbus
Joel Cordle - Dahlonega
Lequrica Gaskins - Tifton
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Heather Holder - Macon

Liz Hood - Cartersville
Josephine Kelly - Covington
Billy Peppers - Woodstock
Jan Sanchez - Valdosta
Karen Smith - Thomasville

The Georgia Downtown Association Partners

Brenda Hayes - UGA's Fanning Institute
Jim Lenahan - Georgia Economic Developers Association
Billy Parrish - Georgia Department of Community Affairs
Evan Thibeault - Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
Alan Dickerson - Georgia Municipal Association

Sidewalk Talk is a publication of the Georgia Downtown Association. Articles can be e-mailed to adickerson@gmanet.com. You may contact GDA at 678-686-6296.