

Our Engagement

Creating a community vision is a planning step that should not be taken lightly. It requires a thoughtful approach to engaging the community and empowering stakeholders. Community engagement for the Locust Grove Town Center LCI encouraged aspirational planning while understanding limitations. In doing so, three basic questions were asked:

- What is Locust Grove Town Center today?
- What does Locust Grove Town Center want to be?
- What steps will be required for Locust Grove Town Center to be successful?

Asking these questions allowed the visioning process to yield a set of desired outcomes and action items that align with community values. The questions were asked in a variety of ways at numerous events during the visioning phase. These events included Stakeholder Interviews, a Core Team Meeting, and a Public Workshop.

As part of the initial outreach efforts, we asked Core Team Members and the community to describe the strengths and weaknesses of Locust Grove. These images depict the words that were most used to describe the community today.

Key interest groups targeted and invited to participate in outreach activities include:

Elected officials
City staff
Residents
Local business owners
Major employers
Neighborhood advocates
Main Street representatives
Community Development representatives
Public Safety
Public Works
Atlanta Regional Commission

Strengths

Downtown
Historic Location Pro-Business
Hometown feel Accessibility
Quality of Life Investment
 Cooperation Capitalizing I-75 **Tanger Outlet** Retail
Community Accessibility City Council Administration
 Unity Reasonable Property Values Proximity
Developable

Weaknesses

Bedroom Community Highway 42 Market
 Roadway Infrastructure **Parking** **Housing** **Identity** Barriers
Bill Gardner No **Railroad**
No Parks **Traffic Congestion** Transportation Awareness
 Jobs Retail **Pass-Through Traffic**
 Downtown Visibility No Jobs

Stakeholder Interviews

The Stakeholder Interviews were conducted September 2, 2015 in the City of Locust Grove Main Conference Room. Stakeholders included city staff, local business owners, property owners, church representatives, and residents within the LCI Study Area. These interviews allowed over 20 key individuals the opportunity to share their thoughts, one on one with the consultant team.

Strengths

- Strong community
- Quaint Historic Downtown
- Safe Downtown
- Regional accessibility
- Recent Community Development efforts
- The Locust Grove Main Street Program
- Train Watching Platform tourism
- Attraction of young families
- Warren Holder Park
- Great location
- Good visibility from I-75
- Future development opportunities

Weaknesses

- Traffic Congestion
- Bill Gardner aesthetics and safety
- Increase in rail traffic
- Railroad tracks dissect the city
- Peeksville Intersection
- Bowdon Intersection
- Frances Ward @ Bill Gardner intersection
- Ingles and Walmart access points off Bill Gardner
- Downtown retail
- Local and regional awareness of Downtown
- Wayfinding and identity
- Housing opportunities, specifically near Downtown
- Parking in Downtown
- Pedestrian accessibility of Downtown
- Zoning restrictions
- Public recreation, parks, and open space
- Local connections to Downtown

Core Team Meeting

The Core Team is derived of 18 members, including the Mayor, elected officials, City staff, DDA Board Members, a Main Street Program representative, a Locust Grove Heritage Society representative, and several local property owners. Core Team Meetings were the first major visioning event for Locust Grove Town Center, from which came the priority list you see to the right. This list was then used during the Prioritization Exercise at the Public Workshop outlined on the following page.

Priorities

HOUSING

Add a wider range of housing options

RETAIL/DINING

Bolster downtown with additional retail and dining options

TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

At the Interchange, along Bill Gardner and Main Street

EAST-WEST CONNECTIVITY

Add new east-west streets to increase connectivity within the Study Area

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Enhance historic preservation efforts in and around downtown

PUBLIC PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Provide more parks, trails, and open space

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE AMENITIES

Enhance the ability to walk and bicycle in and around the Study Area

BILL GARDNER PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS

Safety and Aesthetics

PARKING

Provide additional parking downtown

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Develop wayfinding signage of Locust Grove and the downtown area

Public Workshop

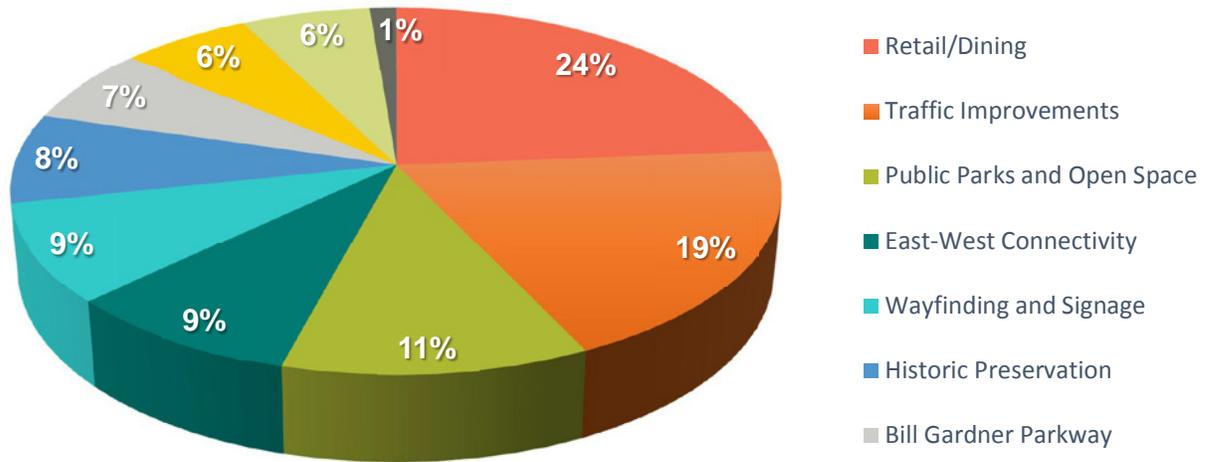
This exercise asked community members to rank up to five potential investment opportunities (out of a list of 10) that they considered to be the highest priority for enhancing Locust Grove. They were then asked to value their priorities and assign monetary value to each, the more money allocated to an investment, the more important it was to the individual. The Priority Exercise results showed that five themes were consistently ranked highest: Retail/Dining, Traffic Improvements, Public Parks and Open Space, Wayfinding and Signage, and East-West Connectivity.

Top Priorities

- 1 *Retail/Dining*
- 2 *Traffic Improvements*
- 3 *Public Parks and Open Space*
- 4 *Wayfinding and Signage*
- 5 *East-West Connectivity*

Out of the top five, Traffic Improvements was listed as a priority for 9 out of 12 participants, however, it represented 5 percent less funding allocation than Retail/Dining.

Overall, these two priorities, along with Public Parks and Open Space, East-West Connectivity, and Wayfinding and Signage, represent 72 percent of the total “funding” available for this exercise.



Dot Mapping Exercise

The final activity was a mapping exercise designed to determine where, within the LCI Study Area, the community wants to preserve existing development, and where they would like to change it. In the map to the right, green denotes “preserve” and red denotes “change”. It is clear that the community feels Bill Gardner needs to change, however, it is clear that there are specific places of preservation, Downtown, City Hall, and Tanger Outlet. Tanger Outlets bring visitors from all across the region, acting as a local catalyst for economic growth.

