

# DOWNTOWN JASPER

STRATEGIC PLANNING  
WORK SESSION

20  
25



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
of COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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# OVERVIEW

WORK SESSION



## INTRODUCTION

On August 20–21, 2025, the Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA) held a strategic work session to strengthen its foundation as a start-up program and advance progress toward Main Street designation. They then hosted a Main Street Community Vision meeting on November 19th where downtown business owners and community members shared their feedback on what they would like to see downtown. Through guided discussion and collaborative planning, board members defined a clear mission and vision, identified priorities for downtown revitalization, and established a unified direction for the organization. A comprehensive SWOT analysis helped identify key strengths, opportunities, and challenges, laying the groundwork for three Community Transformation Strategies—**Beautification Initiatives & Design, Business Activation & Development, and Tourism**—each supported by defined goals, success factors, barriers, and actionable steps to guide Jasper’s continued growth and partnership toward full Main Street designation.

### BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Vonda Blandin  
Marty Callahan  
Jack Dunn  
Parish Lowrie, Chair  
Sonny Proctor  
Brian Rittenberry  
Pam Watkins, Vice Chair

### CITY REPRESENTATIVES

Councilman Brandon Hannah

### FACILITATOR

Ebony Simpson, DCA Office of Downtown  
Development

### MAIN STREET STAFF

Carly Glaze, Main Street Manager/Community  
Engagement Manager



# OVERVIEW CONT.

## WORK SESSION



## PURPOSE & EXPECTATIONS

A strategic planning work session provides the opportunity for an organization to step back from day-to-day operations and intentionally plan for the future. It creates space for board members, staff, and stakeholders to reflect on their mission, vision, and goals, while strengthening alignment and collaboration. This process encourages creative thinking, reinforces shared ownership, and builds a clear roadmap to guide decision-making with a unified voice.

For the Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA), this session represented a continuation of their progress as a start-up program—a meaningful step in strengthening the foundation already being built toward Main Street designation. At the beginning of the session, participants were asked, “What would you like to take away from today’s work session?” Their responses revealed a strong commitment to identifying priorities for the next three years, learning more about the roles of the Main Street and DDA programs, and finding new ways to help downtown businesses succeed. There was excitement around laying the groundwork for great things to come—from fostering a stronger organizational structure to creating a clearer role and path forward. Participants also emphasized the importance of hearing from one another and ensuring that every voice is part of shaping the path ahead.

Collectively, these expectations reflect Jasper’s shared vision for progress, revitalization, and a thriving downtown rooted in both its history and its future.

- Evolution
- Starting point
- Great things
- New solid foundation
- Revitalization of downtown
- Learn about Main Street MS/DDA
- Find ways to help downtown businesses succeed
- Identify priorities for the next three years
- Clear role and clear path forward
- Hearing from others in the room



# S.W.O.T.+ ANALYSIS



A SWOT analysis is a method used to identify and evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of an organization, project, or situation. For the purposes of this activity we looked at your downtown through the lens of the Main Street Program. A SWOT Analysis helps in understanding internal capabilities and external factors, which aids in the strategic decision-making process.



## STRENGTHS

Internal Benefits, Pros & Advantages that give you an advantage over others. Usually past or current. (Example: amazing staff, consistent board members)



## WEAKNESSES

Internal Shortcomings, Cons, Disadvantages, Problem Areas, etc. that place you at a disadvantage relative to others. Usually past or current. (Example: poor leadership, constant vacant board seats)



## OPPORTUNITIES

External Situations, Change, Breakthroughs or Possibilities that could positively impact an organizations performance or objectives. This can be trends within the industry, the economy or the marketplace you are not yet tapping. Usually current or future. (Pull regional customers from mall to downtown)



## THREATS

External Challenges, Competition, Issues, or Change that would give us Disadvantage or Decline or even pose a risk. This can also be trends that competitors are pursuing that we are not capable of pursuing. Usually current or future. (we don't have enough retail shops downtown)



## PLUS: WHAT'S UNIQUE

Other areas unique to your downtown that clearly identify something unique about you, your organization, your market, your customers, environment, local politics, local culture, demographics, culture, etc. Identify truly unique areas that others might not claim.

# STRENGTHS

Below are the “Strengths” and creative sparks from the SWOT Analysis, organized by theme. Participants identified key strengths of the organization, which were grouped into related categories and used to develop actionable strategies that build on Jasper’s existing advantages for future growth and success.

STRENGTHS	
Theme	Creative Sparks
<b>Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events every single weekend (small and large)</li> <li>• Downtown Live</li> <li>• Unique events to Jasper</li> </ul>
<b>Community Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Warmth</li> <li>• Giving</li> <li>• People and culture</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> <li>• Sponsors</li> <li>• Local support</li> <li>• Locals that support the Highway 515 corridor</li> </ul>
<b>Strong DDA Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity of board members</li> <li>• Engagement of board members</li> <li>• Hired staff: Carly</li> <li>• Council support</li> </ul>
<b>Downtown Character &amp; Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History</li> <li>• KSU historic archives project</li> <li>• Historic look of downtown</li> <li>• Streetscape</li> <li>• Walkability</li> <li>• Parks within downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Location &amp; Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to Atlanta</li> <li>• Mountain view</li> <li>• Vistas</li> <li>• Beautiful setting</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational Capacity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zoning</li> <li>• Communication (better with City, DDA &amp; business owners)</li> <li>• Drive</li> </ul>

# STRENGTHS

## Strategies

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- 1 Partner with external organizations (e.g., Chamber, Sheriff's Office) to draw attention.
- 2 Partner with other businesses to host events each weekend.
- 3 Invite locals to submit event ideas so they feel involved and included.
- 4 Plan more events downtown.
- 5 Create a mailing list for businesses to improve communication.
- 6 Ensure fundraising happens early and often.
- 7 Attend council meetings and maintain relationships.
- 8 Ensure board members are fulfilling duties and accountable to committees.
- 9 Create a developmental program for smooth transitions of DDA members.



# WEAKNESSES



Below are the "Weaknesses" portion creative sparks from the SWOT Analysis. They have been categorized in themes. In this section, participants identified and discussed areas for improvement within the organization, with their observations organized into distinct thematic groups to better understand common challenges and opportunities for growth. The participants then worked together to develop strategic solutions, turning these identified weaknesses into opportunities for positive organizational change and enhancement.

WEAKNESSES	
Theme	Creative Sparks
<b>Money</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited ability to generate revenue outside of fundraising</li> <li>• Reliance on a single street (Kimley Horne) for business activity</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism, Housing, &amp; Hotels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No current tourism drivers, housing options, or hotels downtown</li> <li>• Lack of vibrancy downtown</li> <li>• Insufficient lighting</li> <li>• Poor upkeep of downtown (sidewalks, facades, weeds)</li> <li>• Limited focus on marketing</li> </ul>
<b>More Projects in Town</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More projects needed in downtown</li> <li>• Utilization of Lee Newton Park is limited</li> <li>• Vacant/underutilized buildings</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure &amp; Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of adequate water supply</li> <li>• Infrastructure needs remain unmet</li> <li>• Ongoing water shortage</li> <li>• Limited water availability</li> <li>• Suspension of building permits</li> <li>• Need to address ADA accessibility downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Community Engagement &amp; Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited community participation with local businesses</li> <li>• Planning challenges</li> <li>• Limited collaboration with the county</li> <li>• Lack of unity</li> <li>• Lack of awareness and understanding about downtown development</li> </ul>
<b>Business Mix &amp; Uses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of diversity of businesses in the district</li> </ul>

# WEAKNESSES

## Strategies

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- 1 Generate revenue through vendor fees and profitable events.
- 2 Create “downtown dollars” for local businesses.
- 3 Encourage business contributions through license fees.
- 4 Support local art projects (murals, hydrant/light pole painting, power box art).
- 5 Take care of what we have (maintain Stegall, Perrow, clean sidewalks).
- 6 Improve marketing and create signage (wayfinding, historic sign on Highway 515).
- 7 Find a way to bring more events downtown. Evaluate ADA accessibility for downtown/events
- 8 Prioritize downtown projects on Highway 515 that encourage appropriate growth and complement Jasper’s vision.
- 9 Address Main Street buildings that are falling into disrepair.



# OPPORTUNITIES



Below are the "Opportunities" portion creative sparks from the SWOT Analysis. During this phase, participants identified potential opportunities for growth and advancement, sharing insights about promising possibilities in the external environment. These opportunities were then grouped into thematic categories to highlight key areas of potential development. Through collaborative discussion, participants transformed these opportunity insights into strategic initiatives, developing concrete approaches to capitalize on these favorable circumstances and drive organizational success.

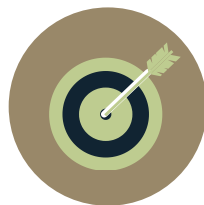
OPPORTUNITIES	
Theme	Creative Sparks
<b>Attracting the Next Generation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth opportunities to attract young professionals to Jasper</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More housing within walking distance of downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Regional &amp; Local Partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnerships with the County and other municipalities for water (a must!)</li> <li>Creating stronger teamwork with Main Street business owners</li> </ul>
<b>Placemaking &amp; Visitor Experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayfinding and directional signage</li> <li>Billboards on the highway to attract visitors</li> <li>Signs throughout downtown</li> <li>New and improved parking options (parking deck, golf cart lot)</li> <li>More music and cultural programming (e.g., Music on Main, Christmas events, high school bands, horses in parades)</li> <li>New projects located closer to downtown</li> <li>Events that drive more foot traffic downtown</li> <li>Opportunities for nightlife (pubs, rooftop bar)</li> <li>Parks and green spaces to enhance the downtown experience</li> <li>Recruitment of new businesses</li> </ul>

# OPPORTUNITIES

## Strategies

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- 1 Identify the three most desired restaurants currently missing in our downtown.
- 2 Identify the most desired industries our downtown is currently lacking.
- 3 Identify the three most desired hobbies currently lacking in our downtown.
- 4 Solve water challenges to allow housing growth.
- 5 Develop incentives to facilitate new housing.
- 6 Pursue public-private partnerships to create housing opportunities.
- 7 Partner with other communities facing similar issues.
- 8 Bring key players to the same table to communicate.
- 9 Facilitate joint meetings with the city and county to encourage discussion.



# THREATS



THREATS	
Theme	Creative Sparks
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing water supply challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism, Lodging, &amp; Business Hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited tourism drivers</li> <li>• Lack of lodging options</li> <li>• Inconsistent days and times businesses are open</li> </ul>
<b>Traffic &amp; Transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic congestion (especially with the new highway)</li> <li>• Highway 53 rerouting impacts</li> <li>• Parking shortages and challenges</li> <li>• Competition with Highway 515</li> </ul>
<b>Growth &amp; Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clear understanding of current growth status</li> <li>• County halting or slowing growth</li> <li>• Poor collaboration among city, county, chamber, and other partners</li> <li>• Council turnover creates instability</li> <li>• Resident perception of growth as negative change</li> <li>• Willful lack of understanding from some stakeholders</li> <li>• Limited or ineffective communication</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Pressures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The economy and overall market conditions</li> <li>• Rising rent prices impacting affordability</li> <li>• Competition from restaurant chains</li> <li>• Limited housing downtown</li> </ul>
<b>Perception &amp; Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social media chatter influencing public opinion</li> <li>• Negative or limited coverage in the local paper</li> </ul>

# THREATS

## Strategies

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1

Encourage partnerships, both at the state and local levels, focused on resolving the water issues.

2

Conduct an engineering study of the Cove Road reservoir to increase supply.

3

Find creative ways to better utilize hotel/motel tax revenues.

4

Market Jasper with billboards to attract visitors.

5

Recruit a boutique hotel to increase overnight stays.



# SWOT ANALYSIS

## *Summary*



The SWOT Analysis highlighted Jasper's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, while also pointing to several priority areas for action. From this discussion, clear strategies emerged that will guide the DDA in setting goals and shaping its three-year work plan:

### **1. Strengthen Events and Partnerships**

Leverage Jasper's existing energy around events and community partnerships to create a more vibrant downtown experience. By building on collaborations with local organizations, businesses, and residents, the DDA can expand programming, foster stronger connections, and draw more people into the heart of downtown.

### **2. Build Organizational and Financial Capacity**

Ensure the DDA has the resources and structure needed to thrive. Priorities include generating new revenue streams beyond fundraising, improving fundraising systems, securing sustainable funding sources (such as hotel/motel tax), and holding board members accountable to their roles and committees.

### **3. Address Housing and Water Challenges**

Position Jasper for growth by tackling foundational infrastructure issues. Solving the community's water challenges, pursuing incentives, and creating public-private partnerships will open the door for new housing opportunities, particularly within walking distance of downtown.

### **4. Expand Tourism, Lodging, and Downtown Amenities**

Support local businesses and attract new visitors by enhancing the overall downtown experience. Opportunities include improving signage and wayfinding, recruiting a boutique hotel, extending business hours, supporting arts and placemaking projects, and diversifying nightlife and dining options.

### **5. Improve Communication and Collaboration**

Strengthen relationships across city, county, and regional partners, while improving communication with downtown business owners. Building unity, reducing misperceptions, and ensuring shared understanding will allow Jasper to move forward with greater alignment and momentum.

### **6. Balance Growth with Identity**

As Jasper grows, it must embrace opportunities that complement its character and long-term vision. This includes identifying targeted industries, restaurants, and amenities to recruit, while maintaining the historic charm, mountain views, and sense of place that make Jasper unique.

# MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement defines what the organization does every day, why it does it, whom it serves, and the broader benefit it aims to achieve. It is a clear and concise expression of the organization's core purpose and direction.

As part of the Jasper Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) strategic planning work session, attendees participated in an exercise to help shape their mission statement by answering three key questions:

- What do you do?
- Whom do you do it for?
- For what greater purpose or benefit?

Below are their responses to each of these questions:

## *What Do We Do?*

### **Leadership & Organization**

- Develop opportunities and allocate resources
- Provide leadership and oversight
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Meet monthly and plan strategically

### **Community & Engagement**

- Create community and engagement
- Foster growth and collaborate with partners
- Serve, encourage, and nurture
- Help and support
- Care for and give hope
- Bring about positive change

### **Preservation & Identity**

- Preserve and protect history
- Restore and enhance downtown's unique character
- Promote and educate the community about local heritage

### **Vibrancy & Quality of Life**

- Create fun and lasting experiences
- Plan events and entertain
- Encourage economic development
- Enhance the capabilities of downtown
- Improve overall quality of life

# MISSION STATEMENT (CONT.)

## *Whom Do We Do It For?*

### **Our Community**

- Citizens and residents
- Families and future generations
- Lifelong residents
- The people of Jasper

### **Our Businesses & Partners**

- Local business owners and entrepreneurs
- Downtown businesses and property owners
- The City of Jasper and the State of Georgia
- Community partners and organizations

### **Our Youth & Future Leaders**

- Kids and students
- Young and old
- Future generations

### **Our Visitors & Guests**

- Tourists and travelers
- Newcomers discovering Jasper

## *For What Greater Purpose?*

### **Preservation & Legacy**

- Preserve history
- Build a legacy for future generations
- Pay it forward

### **Community & Togetherness**

- Create a safe, positive space for togetherness
- Bring joy and pride to citizens
- Because someone must, because we should, and because we can

### **Growth & Sustainability**

- Ensure sustainability and smart growth
- Develop opportunities
- Make a vibrant, sustainable downtown
- Improve our city and enhance quality of life

### **Economic Vitality**

- Generate revenue for local businesses
- Increase the local economy

## *Mission Statement*

***The Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA), by supporting the City of Jasper, its citizens, and its businesses, instills a sense of community pride and improves the quality of life for all.***

# VISION STATEMENT

An organization's vision represents its ideal future—what success will look like if its mission is fully realized and long-term goals are achieved. It serves as a guiding image of the community's potential and the organization's ultimate impact.

As part of the Jasper Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) work session, attendees engaged in a visioning exercise by responding to two forward-looking questions:

- Imagine it's the year 2035—what have you accomplished that brought you to this milestone?
- What should you start working on now to make that vision a reality?

Below are the responses that emerged from this activity:

## *What Have You Accomplished?*

### **Appearance & Atmosphere**

- Beautiful and entertaining environment
- Clean, prosperous downtown for all ages
- Expanded signage and wayfinding
- Improved infrastructure and sidewalks
- Easy access into downtown

### **Preservation & Partnerships**

- Preservation of the past while protecting the future
- Strong City–County partnerships
- Strong community trust, reliance, and understanding of the DDA
- A trusted and engaged community with active participation

### **Economic Vitality & Vibrancy**

- Thriving downtown with people walking and spending money
- A vibrant business community with 100% occupancy
- Longer business hours
- A recognized tourist destination with increased tourism
- Vibrant district filled with people and a new park
- Completion of all phases of Perrow Park

### **Housing & Growth**

- High-density housing within walking distance of downtown
- Housing development implemented in downtown

# VISION STATEMENT (CONT.)

## *What Should You Be Working On Now?*

### **Leadership & Capacity Building**

- Hire more dedicated staff (reduce reliance on volunteers)
- Ensure board visibility and leadership within the community
- Make strategic, sometimes tough, decisions

### **Awareness & Promotion**

- Promote downtown and increase public awareness of the DDA's role
- Host more events that attract businesses and residents

### **Collaboration & Partnerships**

- Expand partnerships and collaboration across sectors
- Establish tourism and volunteer committees
- Engage schools and youth in downtown initiatives

### **Economic Growth & Investment**

- Create incentives for businesses to move downtown
- Generate revenue to purchase downtown properties
- Solve water issues to support growth

## *Vison Statement*

***The Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA) will support a vibrant and thriving downtown community through planning, commitment, and collaboration to build a legacy that lasts.***

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles reflect the Jasper Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) core values and the behaviors that shape how the organization operates and makes decisions. These principles serve as the foundation for daily actions, long-term planning, and how the board interacts with the community. When consistently applied, they help ensure that DDA's work remains aligned with its mission and contributes meaningfully toward achieving its vision.

To develop DDA's guiding principles, attendees responded to the following questions:

- Core Values: What do you value?
- Behaviors: What are or should be the behaviors you exhibit?

Below are the answers that emerged from this exercise:

## *What Do You Value?*

### **Unity & Inclusion**

- Strong core values
- Unity and inclusion
- A family-friendly atmosphere

### **Heritage & Legacy**

- Heritage and preservation
- Legacy — leaving a lasting impression

### **Integrity & Accountability**

- Honesty and transparency
- Dignity and truth
- Equality and fairness
- Integrity and accountability

## *What Behaviors Do You Exhibit?*

### **Collaboration & Service**

- Serve with excitement and positivity
- Demonstrate teamwork and collaboration with others
- Practice servant leadership

### **Mindset & Innovation**

- Lead with understanding of potential and growth
- Be forward thinkers and proactive leaders
- Be open to new ideas — no wrong answers

### **Integrity & Accountability**

- Be forthright, ethical, and responsive
- Show up, follow through, and do what we say we will do
- Work within financial constraints while ensuring return on investment

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES (CONT.)

## *How Do We Engage With Others?*

### **Communication & Transparency**

- Communicate openly and honestly
- Build trust, be understood, and be relied on by the community

### **Partnerships & Collaboration**

- Form genuine partnerships and connections
- Work with nonprofits and schools
- Encourage public collaboration and engagement

### **Community Support & Inclusion**

- Be supportive and helpful
- Take care of relationships — people matter
- Show support for locals, even beyond boundaries
- Involve the community through inclusion and participation

## *Guiding Principles*

- ***We believe in open communication with the community; therefore, we lead with honesty, excitement, and a commitment to supporting genuine partnerships and connections.***
- ***We believe in accountability to ourselves and our community; therefore, we act with honesty and integrity.***
- ***We believe in supporting downtown businesses for the future; therefore, we promote leadership and forward thinking.***
- ***We believe in a fair and level playing field; therefore, we lead with ethical intentions.***

# PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

## COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES & GOAL SETTING

Building on the alignment and momentum of the first day, Day 2 of the Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA) work session focused on turning ideas into action. Attendees worked collaboratively to define clear priorities, identify potential barriers, and chart a practical path forward. Through guided discussion, they selected and refined three Community Transformation Strategies (CTS) that reflect Jasper's unique character and vision for its downtown.

For each strategy, participants developed meaningful goals, identified critical success factors, and outlined tasks and action steps to guide future efforts. The group also discussed how to define success in measurable ways, ensuring that progress can be tracked and celebrated along the way. While the discussions were shaped by Jasper's specific context, they were grounded in the philosophy of the Main Street Approach—a guiding framework that emphasizes deliberate, place-based strategies for strengthening a downtown or commercial district's economy. The Approach helps communities prioritize their work, align partners and resources, and create a clear, shared roadmap for change.

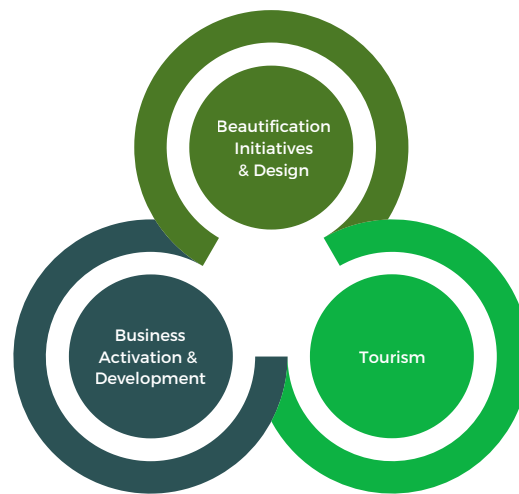
These strategies are implemented through the Four-Point Approach, which provides a proven structure for coordinated action across multiple areas of focus:

- **Design** – Enhance the physical and visual aspects of downtown through beautification, signage, historic preservation, and public space improvements.
- **Organization** – Build the DDA's capacity by strengthening partnerships, engaging volunteers, and ensuring strong leadership and funding.
- **Promotion** – Position downtown as the heart of the community by marketing its unique assets, creating memorable events, and telling its story.
- **Economic Vitality** – Support a resilient economy by retaining and growing existing businesses, attracting new ones, and encouraging housing and mixed-use development.

Together, these Four Points ensure a balanced, comprehensive approach that addresses Jasper's downtown from every angle—its look and feel, organizational strength, community identity, and economic health. With these guiding principles in place, the DDA identified specific goals to serve as the backbone of the plan. These goals are broad, long-term aims that define what the DDA will work toward and guide the community closer to its shared vision. While specific tactics and action steps may evolve over time, the goals provide steady direction. Achieving them is essential to fulfilling the DDA's mission and realizing the desired future for Downtown Jasper.

# COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

Community Transformation Strategies (CTS) serve as the overarching themes that guide and inspire investment in downtown Jasper. They are the backbone of the DDA's work, helping to focus efforts and align partners around shared priorities. The purpose of CTS is to unify projects, programs, and events under one coordinated plan that advances Jasper's vision for a vibrant, thriving downtown. Jasper's selected Community Transformation Strategies are:



## **Beautification Initiatives & Design (4 votes)**

For Jasper, beautification means creating a downtown that reflects pride, history, and identity. This strategy focuses on improving curb appeal, enhancing public spaces, and engaging businesses and residents in visible projects such as murals, design standards, and façade improvements. Beautification strengthens Jasper's mountain-town character while building momentum for future revitalization.

## **Business Activation & Development (6 votes)**

For Jasper, business activation & development means strengthening existing businesses while creating opportunities for new growth. This strategy focuses on listening to business needs, improving communication and resources, and encouraging mixed-use development to build a vibrant and sustainable downtown economy.

## **Tourism (8 votes)**

For Jasper, tourism means making downtown a destination that attracts both residents and visitors. This strategy focuses on marketing, signage, and events that draw people into downtown while showcasing the community's character and supporting local businesses.

# GOALS

After completing a goals ideation exercise, the group refined their ideas into goals, each supported by at least three specific tasks and action items. These tasks and action items represent concrete activities that will drive goal achievement, serving as the "how" in the organization's path forward.

For successful goal implementation, the group carefully considered both critical success factors and potential barriers for each goal. Critical Success Factors are the essential conditions that must be established to achieve objectives, while Barriers represent existing or potential risks and challenges that could impede progress. Understanding these barriers helps identify key obstacles and constraints that might stand in the way of success.

Finally, the group defined success through carefully chosen objectives that clearly illustrate what goal achievement looks like and demonstrate meaningful progress. These success metrics were designed to be measurable and tied to specific desired outcomes, ensuring they reflect genuine advancement toward each objective.





# CTS: Beautification Initiatives & Design

## Goal #1 – Enhance the Beautification of Main Street.

*Expanded: Strengthen the curb appeal and visual character of Main Street by implementing coordinated beautification projects, fostering partnerships, and aligning resources for long-term impact.*

### Critical Success Factors:

- City involvement
- Curb appeal
- Funding
- Support from property owners
- Signage
- Creation of design standards
- Branding initiative

### Barriers:

- Limited funding
- Infrastructure needs (lighting, etc.)
- Competing city priorities

### Tasks & Action Steps:

Task: Establish a Downtown Façade Improvement Program (Design / Economic Vitality)

- Action Step: Identify and secure funding sources
- Action Step: Develop grant guidelines and award criteria
- Action Step: Promote the program to property owners
- Action Step: Award grants to selected applicants

Task: Implement a Public Art & Mural Program through Partnerships (Design / Promotion)

- Action Step: Develop program guidelines
- Action Step: Facilitate concept drawings
- Action Step: Select mural designs
- Action Step: Implement mural project

Task: Activate Business Involvement in Downtown Beautification (Organization)

- Action Step: Host a Business Community Design Day
- Action Step: Advertise the meeting
- Action Step: Evaluate results of the meeting
- Action Step: Organize bi-monthly Main Street community cleanups (Saturdays)



# CTS: Beautification Initiatives & Design (cont.)

## **Goal # 2: Celebrate Main Street's Unique Identity.**

*Expanded: Reinforce Jasper's distinct character as a quiet mountain town by highlighting its history, sense of place, and community pride through strategic design and placemaking efforts.*

### **Critical Success Factors:**

- Buy-in from businesses
- Strategic design and planning
- Clear understanding of Jasper's current identity

### **Barriers:**

- Lack of buy-in
- Limited staff capacity
- Limited funding

### **Tasks & Action Steps:**

Task: Create a Downtown Placemaking Plan (Design)

- Action Step: Work with designers to develop concept plans
- Action Step: Evaluate plans and provide feedback
- Action Step: Implement plan

Task: Identify and Prioritize Key Public Spaces (Design)

- Action Step: Audit existing public spaces
- Action Step: Identify potential and underused areas
- Action Step: Develop plans for selected areas

Task: Involve the Community in Shaping Main Street's Identity (Organization / Promotion)

- Action Step: Host a Community Design Day
- Action Step: Advertise the meeting
- Action Step: Evaluate results of the meeting

Task: Pursue Participation in the Georgia Economic Placemaking Collaborative (Organization / Economic Vitality)

- Action Step: Research the program
- Action Step: Apply to participate

### **Define Success - Strengthening Partnerships CTS:**

- Paint three murals downtown
- Business owners actively help with community cleanups
- Host a downtown walking audit
- Host a community design day



# CTS: Business Activation & Development

## Goal #1 – Support Existing Businesses.

*Expanded: Strengthen the success and sustainability of downtown businesses by improving communication, providing resources, and creating tools that respond to their needs.*

### Critical Success Factors:

- Small business development support
- Meeting demand for small business coffee/meeting spaces
- Staff leadership (Carly)
- Business wish list surveys
- Business directory
- Online licensing
- Infrastructure improvements

### Barriers:

- Lack of buy-in
- Limited knowledge/awareness
- Limited funding
- Reliance on more events for momentum
- Inconsistent meeting cadence

### Tasks & Action Steps:

Task: Conduct a Business Needs & Priorities Survey (Organization / Promotion)

- Action Step: Identify the best questions to ask
- Action Step: Optimize contact list for outreach
- Action Step: Compile and review responses

Task: Develop and Maintain a Downtown Business Directory (Economic Vitality)

- Action Step: Pull active licenses from planning and zoning
- Action Step: Confirm businesses are still active
- Action Step: Work with city and web designer to create the directory



# CTS: Business Activation & Development

(cont.)

## Goal #2: Create Mixed-Use Opportunities.

*Expanded: Encourage a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational uses downtown by identifying available properties, educating the community, and pursuing funding and partnerships.*

### Critical Success Factors:

- Identification of properties and buildings
- Funding
- Zoning already in place

### Barriers:

- Lack of sizable plots
- Limited funding
- Lack of developers
- Residents with a “no growth” mindset

### Tasks & Action Steps:

Task: Build a Downtown Property & Development Inventory (Economic Vitality)

- Action Step: Utilize QPublic to review property ownership
- Action Step: Inquire if properties are for sale or lease

Task: Increase Community Awareness of Mixed-Use Development Benefits (Promotion / Organization)

- Action Step: Use social media to share information
- Action Step: Host informational meetings
- Action Step: Promote meetings widely

Task: Pursue Funding & Investment for Mixed-Use Projects (Economic Vitality)

- Action Step: Research available grants
- Action Step: Locate potential investors
- Action Step: Host fundraising events
- Action Step: Coordinate with the Chamber or County Development Authority on potential incentives or grant matches.

## Define Success - Business Activation & Development CTS:

- Downtown property & development inventory created
- Business directory created
- Password-protected property database created
- Business survey completed

## **Goal #1: Market Downtown.**

*Expanded: Promote downtown Jasper through consistent marketing, a strong social media presence, and accessible visitor resources that highlight businesses and attractions.*

### **Critical Success Factors:**

- Strong social media presence
- Downtown resource packet/visitor guide

### **Barriers:**

- Lack of ownership of social media
- Limited communication channels
- Businesses not fully bought in
- Limited funding

### **Tasks & Action Steps:**

Task: Develop a Downtown Resource Packet (Promotion)

- Action Step: Gather and organize information for packets
- Action Step: Design and distribute the Downtown Resource Packet to new businesses, partners, and potential investors through digital and print formats.

Task: Create a Social Media Marketing Plan (Promotion)

- Action Step: Create a content plan
- Action Step: Review Lavonia's example for best practices
- Action Step: Assign a social media lead or subcommittee to manage posting and monitor engagement.

Task: Establish Downtown Signage and Wayfinding (Design / Promotion)

- Action Step: Budget for signage needs (e.g., bathrooms, businesses, directional/wayfinding)
- Action Step: Identify and get bids from companies and local artists
- Action Step: Select vendor(s) or artist(s) for signage installation
- Action Step: Coordinate with City staff for placement and permitting
- Action Step: Install signage in prioritized locations

Task: Evaluate Advertising Options (Promotion)

- Action Step: Research billboard, print, and digital advertising opportunities
- Action Step: Compare costs and reach of different options



# CTS: Tourism

(cont.)

## **Goal #2: Increase Foot Traffic Downtown.**

*Expanded: Attract more residents and visitors to downtown through partnerships, collaboration, and improvements that make the district more inviting and walkable.*

### **Critical Success Factors:**

- Partnerships and collaborations
- Learning from other towns

### **Barriers:**

- Competition with Lee Newton events
- Sidewalk challenges
- Limited funding

### **Tasks & Action Steps:**

Task: Coordinate with Public Works on Downtown Improvements (Organization / Design)

- Action Step: Convene meeting with Carly, Josh, Douglas, Pam, Parish, and Brian
- Action Step: Develop a shared list of priority improvement projects and timelines based on feedback from the coordination meeting.

## **Goal #3: Expand and Enhance Downtown Events.**

*Expanded: Grow Jasper's event offerings by creating signature experiences, adding smaller low-cost events, and strengthening partnerships to improve sustainability.*

### **Critical Success Factors:**

- Council buy-in
- Clean, safe environment

### **Barriers:**

- Limited funding
- Weak communication (internal/external)
- Limited collaboration
- Shortage of volunteers
- Risk of event failure

### **Tasks & Action Steps:**

Task: Create a Jasper Signature Event (Promotion / Organization)

- Action Step: Identify the signature event (Soup Bean Festival)
- Action Step: Pick a date
- Action Step: Launch social media promotions
- Action Step: Secure sponsors
- Action Step: Recruit participants
- Action Step: Identify and fund prizes



# CTS: Tourism

(cont.)

## Tasks & Action Steps cont.:

Task: Host Smaller, Low-Cost Events (Promotion)

- Action Step: Book musicians and entertainers
- Action Step: Identify dates for smaller events
- Action Step: Partner with local organizations or businesses to host events
  - Examples: Wrestling match, Chocolate Walk, small pop-up concerts

Task: Identify Alternative Event Venues (Organization)

- Action Step: Evaluate spaces that do not require street closures
- Action Step: Develop a plan to activate underutilized spaces

Task: Learn from Other Towns (Organization / Promotion)

- Action Step: Contact Gray (DDA), Suwanee (partnerships/arts), and Hartwell (volunteer program)
- Action Step: Schedule and conduct visits
- Action Step: Document and share lessons learned with the board

Task: Create an Annual Downtown Event Calendar (Promotion / Organization)

- Action Step: Finalize event budget
- Action Step: Schedule all dates for the year
- Action Step: Reach out to businesses and partners to add activities
- Action Step: Partner with Chamber to print and distribute

Task: Strengthen Event Partnerships (Organization / Promotion)

- Action Step: Reach out to KPB, Historical Society, Farmers Market, etc.
- Action Step: Identify missing or potential partners
- Action Step: Partner with Chamber for Marble Fest downtown events

Task: Improve Event Evaluation (Organization)

- Action Step: Review details of existing events
- Action Step: Document successes and challenges
- Action Step: Make recommendations for future improvements

## Define Success - Tourism CTS:

- Launch a Jasper signature event (Soup Bean Festival)
- Host at least two smaller, low-cost events in partnership with local businesses/organizations
- Develop and distribute a downtown resource packet for visitors
- Create and implement a social media marketing plan for downtown promotion
- Establish new downtown signage and wayfinding (bathrooms, businesses, directional)
- Publish and distribute an annual downtown event calendar
- Strengthen partnerships with at least three local or regional organizations to support events

# APPENDIX

The appendix contains a comprehensive compilation of brainstorming ideas collected over the course of the day. Serving as a repository of inspiration and a valuable resource, it remains readily accessible for future reference and utilization in work planning.



# Debrief: Day #1



Day one of the Jasper Downtown Development Authority’s work session brought a sense of focus, alignment, and optimism. Participants described the process as refreshing and energizing, noting how organized the discussion felt and how much progress had already been made. Several reflected on the idea of “building our house” and now “living in it,” recognizing that the DDA is moving from concept to reality.

There was pride in seeing everyone involved and on the same page, along with genuine appreciation for the collaboration and commitment in the room. For some, this moment had been years in the making, and the shared energy reflected both excitement for what’s ahead and confidence in the group leading the way.

## Key Takeaways:

- A strong sense of organization, alignment, and shared excitement emerged
- Participants recognized this as the start of “building their house” and taking ownership of their role
- There is deep pride in being part of a unified, action-oriented team

# Building Downtown Jasper's Foundation for Success

## **Building the Foundation for Implementation & Impact**

As the Jasper Downtown Development Authority (DDA) continues to strengthen its foundation and work toward Main Street designation, three focus areas will be essential to turning this plan into measurable, long-term success: data-driven decision-making, structured implementation, and broad community engagement.

## **Building the Foundation for Data-Informed Decisions**

Reliable, up-to-date data will guide Jasper's decision-making and strengthen future planning. The DDA should create and maintain a Property and Business Inventory to track business type, ownership, and occupancy within the downtown district. This information—combined with community feedback and market data—will help identify opportunities for redevelopment, business recruitment, and investment.

Updating the inventory regularly will support transparent reporting, strengthen partnerships, and ensure that downtown strategies remain grounded in accurate, real-time insights.

## **Implementation Framework & Year-One Focus**

This Work Plan will serve as a living document that evolves alongside Jasper's growth. In the first year of implementation, the DDA will prioritize:

- Visible, achievable projects that demonstrate early progress and build community trust.
- Quarterly check-ins to review tasks, celebrate milestones, and adjust priorities.
- Documentation of outcomes, volunteer hours, and partnerships to track measurable impact.

By focusing on early wins and steady progress, the DDA will maintain momentum while building systems that ensure long-term sustainability.

## **Volunteer & Partnership Engagement**

Downtown success is a collective effort. The DDA will continue to build partnerships with city departments, local schools, civic organizations, the Chamber, and downtown business owners to expand capacity and share resources. Engaging volunteers through committees aligned with the Four-Point Approach—Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Vitality—will help distribute workload and foster shared ownership of Jasper's success. Active partnerships and community participation will not only help achieve the goals outlined in this plan but also serve as vital steps toward full Main Street designation.

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

During the work session, board members participated in a goal-setting exercise designed to align their ideas with the Jasper Downtown Development Authority's mission and vision. Participants were asked to develop action-oriented goal statements addressing what should happen now, what supports those who live and work downtown, and aspirational "wouldn't it be great if" scenarios. This approach encouraged both practical and visionary thinking about Jasper's future. After generating individual ideas, the group worked collaboratively to categorize each goal within the appropriate Community Transformation Strategy (CTS), ensuring that all priorities aligned with the organization's strategic focus. The complete set of responses from this exercise is presented below.

## **CTS: Arts & Entertainment**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Bring more small events consistently to downtown
- Have something going on every weekend

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Host events every weekend
- Create consistent day and night event programs with a calendar
- Build nightlife opportunities

Q3. (no responses recorded)

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- We had weekly events at all parks

## **CTS: Beautification Initiatives and Design**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Beautify with more and different flowers

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Make a statement with Christmas decorations to create a spirit of giving
- Ensure abandoned buildings don't fall into disrepair
- Improve municipal signage
- Address general improvements in town

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Continue to develop Stegall, Peace, and Perrow parks
- Give downtown a facelift

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- Create colorful architecture and design downtown
- Clean sidewalks and improve curb appeal
- Develop a plan for a vibrant downtown with three signature structures

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

## **CTS: Business Activation & Development**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Collaborate with all downtown businesses

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Test extended hours at certain businesses to see if more people will come
- Meet with prospective business owners interested in opening downtown
- Attract new businesses to fill vacant buildings

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Partner with Main Street businesses to identify issues and explore solutions
- Support growth opportunities for business owners
- Improve parking, Wi-Fi, and walkability downtown
- Identify and secure grants for business owners
- Build a vibrant peer group to discuss challenges (beyond the Merchant Association)

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- All Main Street businesses were excelling
- Events weren't the only way Main Street businesses succeeded
- The DDA could buy property downtown
- Developers built what Jasper needed, not just what they wanted
- Developers used pre-approved plans to guide projects

## **CTS: Community Serving**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Seek feedback from business and building owners
- Encourage more participation from community partners and citizens
- Tap into youth groups that want to help
- Get known in schools for high school volunteers
- Gather input from more people

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Hold quarterly meetings with Main Street business owners

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Be approachable to staff, not just business owners
- Show visible support to businesses

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- Get with businesses and leaders to ask what they want in their town
- Create a wish list for Main Street initiatives
- Identify areas for improvement on Main Street
- Create a master calendar for board and citizens
- Structure committee meetings with set schedules

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

## **CTS: Downtown Living**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Bring housing into Jasper

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Create Main Street residential opportunities
- Encourage more people to live in Jasper

Q3. (no responses recorded)

Q4. Imagine: “Wouldn’t it be great if...?”

- People were living on Main Street
- Housing was available downtown
- Downtown attracted more residents

## **CTS: Ecotourism and Recreational Economy**

Q1–Q2. (no responses recorded)

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Establish a baseball team (MLB)

Q4. Imagine: “Wouldn’t it be great if...?”

- Jasper had nightlife that was high quality (not low-end)
- Nightlife venues stayed open past 9pm
- Jasper hosted a music festival drawing from all directions
- Downtown featured attractions like a golf simulator, observation deck, and rooftop venues

## **CTS: Foundation Building & Financial Stability**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Get a real budget in place

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Provide sustainable board funding through reserves

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Build cash reserves for operations

Q4. Imagine: “Wouldn’t it be great if...?”

- Generate income beyond fundraising
- The DDA was financially sustainable (“We made money”)

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

## **CTS: Maintaining Authenticity**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

Thrive as a community by balancing business growth, quality of life, and uniqueness

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

Take advantage of mountain views from rooftops

Q3–Q4. (no responses recorded)

## **CTS: Placemaking**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Maintain a clean, safe, walkable downtown
- Create spaces where people want to gather

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Encourage shopping in Jasper

Q3. (no responses recorded)

Q4. Imagine: “Wouldn’t it be great if...?”

- Attract diverse restaurants with different food options

## **CTS: Public Health & Wellness**

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Create opportunities to work out in Jasper

Q1, Q2, Q4. (no responses recorded)

## **CTS: Storytelling**

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Build a distribution list for email notifications
- Increase the board’s presence on social media

Q1, Q3, Q4. (no responses recorded)

## **CTS: Tourism**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Create walkable streets and improve traffic control
- Increase tourism through Chamber partnerships
- Bring more foot traffic into downtown Jasper

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Develop overnight lodging options
- Turn Jasper into a Christmas destination (Hallmark movie experience)

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

## **CTS: Tourism (cont.)**

Q3. Create a goal that supports the people who live and work in Downtown Jasper.

- Bring more events to downtown
- Work with developers to land a hotel

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- Jasper had a hotel and small conference center
- Jasper became a true destination, not a pass-through town
- Something to do every weekend downtown
- Downtown offered more diverse dining (Asian food, food trucks, etc)

## **CTS: Transportation & Pedestrian Experience**

Q1. Create a goal that will help you accomplish your vision.

- Add wayfinding signs downtown
- Create a visual markup of Main Street changes

Q2. Create a goal that addresses something important that is not happening right now.

- Add golf cart and UTV parking
- Create a paid parking lot and app for downtown parking

Q3. (no responses recorded)

Q4. Imagine: "Wouldn't it be great if...?"

- Launch a downtown trolley
- Expand parking and improve signage
- Make Main Street and surrounding areas more walkable

# GOAL SETTING RESPONSES

## Summary of Jasper's Goals/Ideation Exercise

The Jasper DDA's goal-setting exercise revealed an ambitious and hopeful vision for downtown. Board members consistently emphasized the importance of events and activation—wanting something happening every weekend, from small gatherings to signature festivals, to make downtown lively and inviting. They expressed a strong commitment to beautification and design, calling for more flowers, seasonal decorations, signage, and improved curb appeal to create a vibrant sense of place.

Business development was another key theme, with goals focused on collaborating with local businesses, attracting new ones to fill vacancies, supporting extended hours, and exploring mixed-use opportunities. Housing emerged as a recurring aspiration, with many envisioning more residential options in or near downtown to strengthen its vitality.

Board members also highlighted the need for tourism development, including hotels, wayfinding signage, walkability improvements, and a push to brand Jasper as both a Christmas destination and a year-round draw for visitors. Ideas like nightlife, rooftop venues, and music festivals reflected a desire to broaden Jasper's recreational and cultural offerings while still preserving its authenticity and mountain-town character.

Underlying these goals was recognition that the DDA must also focus on foundational capacity: building reserves, creating reliable revenue streams, setting clear committee structures, and strengthening community engagement. Together, these ideas reflect Jasper's commitment to balancing bold aspirations with the practical steps needed to support a strong, sustainable downtown.

# FROM PLANNING TO ACTION: CLOSING SUMMARY

Thank you for your dedicated participation in this intensive 1.5-day work session. Together, we've built a strong foundation for your Main Street program by developing:

- A clear mission and vision
- Guiding principles that will inform your decisions
- Community transformation strategies
- Specific goals, tasks, and action steps
- Metrics for defining and measuring success

To transform this framework into actionable results, your next steps are to:

1. Assign responsibilities to board members, volunteers, and staff for each task
2. Establish realistic timelines and due dates
3. Create detailed budgets for each initiative
4. Implement a progress tracking system
5. Engage with key community partners who will be essential to your success

All the ideas generated during this session are valuable resources as you move forward. We encourage you to revisit them regularly as you implement your plan.

Your commitment to revitalizing Main Street is evident in the quality of work produced during this session. We look forward to seeing your vision become reality as you implement these initiatives.

Best wishes for continued success!

# SAMPLE WORK PLAN TEMPLATE

A comprehensive work plan template should incorporate certain key components. While you may tailor the format to best suit your needs, it is essential that it captures these fundamental elements to ensure strategic planning, accountability, and successful plan implementation.

While a great deal was accomplished during the 1 ½-day work session, we did not have time to determine several critical details reflected in the example below. These include identifying the board and staff members responsible for specific tasks, establishing due dates, tracking progress, and allocating budget resources. Without these elements, the plan lacks the necessary structure to drive action and measure success. Clearly defining responsibilities, deadlines, and resource needs will provide the direction and accountability required to move forward efficiently and achieve the intended outcomes.

**2025 Workplan**

<b>Transformation Strategy 1:</b>			
Why?			
<b>Goal 1</b>	<b>Goal 2</b>	<b>Goal 3</b>	<b>Goal 4</b>
Wildly Important Goal			
<b>Repeat Annual Responsibilities</b>			

<b>Transformation Strategy:</b>					
<b>Goal 1:</b>			<b>Define Success:</b>		
<b>Partners:</b>					
Task	Board Member Responsible	Staff Responsible	Due Date	Progress	Budget
1.					\$0
2.					\$0
3.					\$0
4.					\$0
5.					\$0
6.					\$0
7.					\$0
8.					\$0
<b>Total</b>					\$0

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# DOWNTOWN JASPER: DATA INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

## Introduction

This summary integrates demographic, economic, and visitation data from Main Street America's 2025 Community Transformation Workshop with themes that emerged during the Jasper Downtown Development Authority Work Session. Data sources include Esri, the U.S. Census Bureau, and Placer.ai, each offering a lens into who lives in and around Jasper, who visits downtown, and what spending and movement patterns can inform local decision-making.

Together, these findings provide a baseline to help the DDA and its partners prioritize efforts under Jasper's three Community Transformation Strategies (CTS): Business Activation and Development, Beautification Initiatives and Design, and Tourism.

## Who Jasper Is...

Jasper's population and market dynamics indicate both strength and opportunity: an established resident base with disposable income, a daytime workforce that sustains weekday activity, and a regional footprint that naturally attracts visitors from surrounding mountain towns.

## Strategic Implications: What the Data Means for Downtown Jasper

The combined data from Esri, the U.S. Census, and Placer.ai reveals a community at a pivotal point of maturity—steady in growth, strong in household stability, and increasingly positioned to shape its downtown into a daily destination rather than a periodic stop. Jasper's population and market dynamics indicate both strength and opportunity: an established resident base with disposable income, a daytime workforce that sustains weekday activity, and a regional footprint that naturally attracts visitors from surrounding mountain towns.

While visitation is high, dwell times remain short, suggesting that Jasper's downtown is still primarily a place to 'pass through' rather than a place to 'stay awhile.' At the same time, the area's retail and employment mix shows room for growth in the types of businesses that foster experiential connection—dining, entertainment, and recreation.

From a housing perspective, the data shows a high rate of homeownership and a relatively small supply of rental or small-scale housing options. This indicates a clear opportunity to expand livability downtown through upper-story housing, adaptive reuse, and small infill projects that bring more people within walking distance of Main Street. Visitor analytics add another important layer. Jasper's 1.4 million annual visits and 245,000 unique visitors demonstrate that the district already commands regional attention. Most visitors come from within 20 minutes, with spillover from nearby markets like Ball Ground, Ellijay, and Canton—reinforcing Jasper's role as both a gateway to the North Georgia Mountains and a destination with its own personality.

# DOWNTOWN JASPER: DATA INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Ultimately, this data affirms what Jasper’s work session attendees expressed: downtown is the heart of the community and a reflection of its spirit. The next chapter of Jasper’s downtown story will be written by how the city uses these insights—to strengthen its identity, cultivate partnerships, and design experiences that blend small-town warmth with forward-looking opportunity.

## Key Opportunities Summary

The following opportunities highlight how Jasper can use data-driven insight to strengthen its downtown vision and advance its three Community Transformation Strategies. These ideas are not new initiatives, but rather refinements of the priorities identified during the DDA Work Session—now backed by measurable trends and evidence.

### CTS 1: Business Activation and Development

- Target growth sectors supported by local spending patterns such as dining, wellness, and boutique retail.
- Leverage Jasper’s strong local customer base—45% of visitors originate from within the city.
- Encourage entrepreneurship through flexible spaces like pop-ups or shared storefronts.
- Use data to guide resource allocation for grants and technical assistance.

### CTS 2: Beautification Initiatives and Design

- Enhance comfort, lighting, and walkability to encourage longer visits.
- Highlight Jasper’s authenticity through design elements reflecting its mountain-town identity.
- Pursue housing and adaptive reuse as part of design improvement efforts.
- Beautify gateways and corridors along Highway 515 and Main Street.

### CTS 3: Tourism

- Position Jasper as the ‘Gateway to the North Georgia Mountains.’
- Develop and promote signature experiences that encourage visitors to stay longer.
- Link downtown to outdoor recreation assets through trails and signage.
- Collaborate regionally through shared events and co-marketing efforts.

This data reinforces what attendees voiced throughout the work session: Jasper’s success will come not from reinventing itself, but from deepening its identity—strengthening the relationships, businesses, and experiences that already make it special. By aligning these insights with ongoing projects and future decisions, the DDA and its partners can ensure Jasper’s growth remains both intentional and uniquely its own.

# IN CONCLUSION...

The Jasper Downtown Development Authority's 2025 Work Plan reflects the community's shared commitment to creating a vibrant, welcoming, and economically strong downtown. Through intentional planning and collaborative discussion, the DDA established a clear mission and vision, identified measurable goals, and aligned priorities under three key Community Transformation Strategies: Beautification Initiatives & Design, Business Activation & Development, and Tourism. This plan provides a roadmap for targeted investment, stronger partnerships, and sustained progress—equipping Jasper to celebrate its mountain-town identity while building a thriving downtown for future generations.

As a start-up community actively working toward Main Street designation, Jasper has made meaningful strides in laying the groundwork for long-term success. To continue this momentum and strengthen readiness for full accreditation, the following next steps are recommended:

## 1. Focus on Organizational Capacity

Establish clear committee structures that align with the Four-Point Approach—Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Vitality. Assign at least one task from this plan to each committee, ensuring that every board member has a defined role and regular opportunity to contribute. This structure builds leadership depth and keeps projects moving year-round.

## 2. Create a Simple Annual Work Plan Template

Translate the goals and tasks outlined in this plan into a one-page working document organized by quarter. Include columns for task leads, partners, deadlines, and progress notes. This tool will make implementation visible and help the board track achievements and report progress during monthly meetings.

## 3. Strengthen Partnerships and Communication Channels

Continue building relationships with city staff, the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, and community organizations. Regular communication—through e-newsletters, social media updates, or quarterly partner meetings—will increase transparency, strengthen collaboration, and help position Jasper's DDA as a trusted downtown leader.

## 4. Prioritize Early Wins & Visibility

Select one or two highly visible projects from this plan—such as a downtown mural or a small event series—to complete within the next year. These early successes will demonstrate momentum, inspire confidence, and attract additional volunteers and partners to the effort.

## 5. Document & Celebrate Progress Toward Accreditation

Maintain a shared digital folder to record meeting minutes, photos, press coverage, event flyers, and project updates. These materials will support Jasper's annual assessment and serve as evidence of the DDA's growing impact and alignment with the Georgia Main Street standards of performance.