



**Smart Growth America**  
Improving lives by improving communities

## **Natchez, Mississippi**

### **Cool & Connected Workshop**

### **Report and Suggested Next Steps**

USDA Rural Development Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI)

**To:** Mayor Darryl Grennell  
James Johnston, Community Development Director  
Riccardo Giani, Director of Planning & Zoning

**From:** John Robert Smith, Smart Growth America  
Brian Rathbone, Broadband Catalysts  
Brian Lutenecker, Smart Growth America

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### **Executive Summary**

Pursuant to our technical assistance award with the City of Natchez, this Memorandum constitutes Smart Growth America's final report summarizing the recent *Cool & Connected* workshop, and suggesting possible *Next Steps* the city could take to craft a vision for the future development of the focus areas addressed during the workshop.

John Robert Smith and Brian Lutenecker—representing Smart Growth America (SGA)—and Brian Rathbone, representing Broadband Catalysts, met with local leaders and residents on April 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to provide assistance via the *Cool & Connected* tool, supported by a grant SGA received under USDA Rural Development's Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) program.

Following productive interviews and discussions with various stakeholders — including residents, advocates, city and local agency representatives, business owners and elected officials — the following *Next Steps* are recommended:

- 1. Create an advisory and implementation committee including the interests present at the workshop, to implement these action items.**
- 2. Fully capture and present Natchez' story to the outside world.**
- 3. Reinvest in downtown through implementation of the master plan.**
- 4. Seek new development projects to fill in the “missing teeth” while paying careful attention to building and site design.**
- 5. Create a marketing and branding campaign for downtown including ongoing place management.**
- 6. Focus on placemaking and streetscapes in the city center to make it a destination where people want to visit and to linger.**
- 7. Adopt a Complete Streets policy and implementation strategy.**

- 8. Achieve reliable, redundant communications.**
- 9. Pursue a cellular booster project**
- 10. Establish Wi-Fi Internet access zones in downtown**
- 11. Create educational programs that attract new talent and keep young people in the community.**
- 12. Engage service sector industry throughout the city as well as city employees in customer service training so they become ambassadors for Natchez.**

## Need for assistance

The *Cool & Connected workshop* that Natchez received from Smart Growth America was extremely timely for the community and region.

Natchez is located along the banks of the Mississippi River at the Louisiana border in Adams County. It has experienced a population loss of more than 30 percent since 1980. Major employers such as the International Paper mill have left the community, reducing employment opportunities.

Further, Natchez is not located along a major interstate highway, in many ways an intentional decision by the community over generations to isolate itself. This means it is more challenging to capture visitors who might pass through another community on their way somewhere else.

But Natchez is beginning to more intentionally move forward. The community recently completed a downtown master plan and is ready to proceed with implementation. The consultants who prepared the downtown plan recommended Natchez recruit location independent businesses and workers. But they recognized that to do this, the community needs more reliable high speed broadband Internet access. After all, this is the highway that present and future workers choose to be on.

Natchez also has a number of companies already providing such service, but the coverage is spotty, even in downtown. Further, the community wants to understand how to market its improved Internet service once it is implemented to attract these new businesses and workers – as well as all of the other amenities it offers. Finally, the community wants to make the case for focusing on downtown redevelopment rather than creating new subdivisions on the edge of the city.

The community is also beginning to tell a more complete story about its history, including the challenging Reconstruction and civil rights eras. Despite its perceived isolation, the community is focusing more on tourism to tell that story and support its local economy. Natchez has several historic and cultural landmarks within its boundaries or a short drive away. The Grand Village of the Natchez People, run by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), expects to be housed in a new museum in the coming years as its already strong stream of visitors has caused it to outgrow its facility. Windsor Ruins is also being restored. Next up will be a new museum at the Old Jefferson College. MDAH hopes that these new facilities will have a significant impact on Natchez' local economy by bringing more tourists to the area.

But it also recognizes that tourism alone will not keep its economy afloat. It plans to take the advice of the consultants who wrote its downtown master plan and pursue improved Internet access that will allow it to recruit new businesses and workers that will revitalize downtown and the local economy.

For all of these reasons, the Cool & Connected workshop was extraordinarily timely for Natchez.

## Review of SGA's Visit to Natchez

SGA's technical assistance visit occurred over two full days, April 24-25, 2019. The visit included the following components:

- A tour of major points of interest in Natchez. Sites visited included:
  - Downtown
    - Mississippi River, Riverwalk and bluff
    - Rail depot
    - Canal Street Depot
    - Old Yazoo and Mississippi River Valley Depot
    - Eola Hotel
  - Historic neighborhoods
  - Grand Village of the Natchez
  - Natchez-Adams County Industrial Park
  - Jordan Transport
  - Old hospital
  - Medical corridor including new hospital
  - Fort Rosalie
- Five group interviews with invited community stakeholders, each lasting 30-40 minutes. The following stakeholder groups were represented:
  - Downtown businesses (5 participants)
  - Business and industry (3 participants)
  - Faith communities (3 participants)
  - Education (4 participants)
  - Health care (3 participants)

The interviews provided the SGA team with additional perspectives on Natchez' existing and future broadband needs as well as on the community's overall economic and fiscal health, expanding the voices beyond those in the room at the next day's workshop.

Interview questions asked of each group included:

1. How long have you lived / done business in Natchez? What brought you here and what keeps you here?
2. Identify one point or intersection that best defines Natchez to you and tell me what that looks like in 20 years.
3. What are Natchez' singular assets and what are the city's significant challenges?
4. How do you rate broadband service for you personally and for your entity?
5. If there was more robust broadband at higher speeds how could you leverage it for your entity? How could Natchez leverage it to accentuate its assets and overcome its challenges?

For the names of those interviewed, refer to appendix A.

- An evening presentation open to the public and local media.

The evening presentation, held in the Natchez Council Chambers, provided an overview of emerging national demographic and economic trends at play across the American landscape. Former Meridian, Mississippi Mayor John Robert Smith examined the economic impact of 20th century suburban development patterns, discussing the trend of migration by both Baby Boomers and Millennials to vibrant city and town centers. The presentation established the emergence of the Millennial generation as the predominant driver of economic demand and the workforce sought by today's job creators, emphasizing that generation's interest in walkable, bikeable, vibrantly social towns and cities. A longer discussion of these critical issues Natchez faces is included below.

Brian Rathbone, SGA's broadband consultant, also provided an overview of what broadband Internet access is and the benefits that it can provide to a community like Natchez. He also considered the challenges to its deployment in Natchez, particularly among the existing infrastructure in the historic downtown.

- A day-long workshop open to invited stakeholders

The SGA team began with a review of the economic and demographic trends presented at the public presentation the previous evening. Setting the rural context, the presenters summarized the issues communities like Natchez are facing across the country.

The presenters challenged participants to consider what kind of rural community Natchez is:

- Gateway
- Resource Dependent
- Retirement
- Edge
- Traditional Main Street

Those present felt that Natchez was resource dependent, given its proximity to the Mississippi River.

Recognizing that communities are now in a ferocious competition over creating a sense of place, former Meridian, Mississippi Mayor Smith presented his city's story of downtown revitalization and economic development through the renovation and celebration of historic structures.

Brian Rathbone, the broadband consultant, presented on the connection between broadband Internet and economic development. He also provided case studies of communities similar to Natchez that have successfully leveraged broadband Internet access as a tool for downtown revitalization and economic development, including Haleyville, Alabama and Rutherford County, North Carolina. Brian also presented the results to date of the survey provided by the workshop team to gauge how well Natchez' existing Internet and mobile phone services work.

Three speakers representing the community and state also spoke:

- Mayor Darryl Grennell
- Katie Blount  
Director, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Mr. Lance Harris  
Director, Grand Village of the Natchez Indians

The remainder of the workshop was devoted to small group discussions and presentations back to the larger group. The participants broke up into groups, each discussing a unique topic:

1. How can life and safety services (hospital, police fire) work together to address dead spots and service gaps in the rural parts of Adams County?
2. How can Natchez fully identify the Internet connectivity problems negatively affecting downtown businesses and potential solutions?
3. How can Natchez leverage the vacant downtown spaces for more residential that can be marketed to Baby Boomers and Millennials?
4. Identify cooperative ways to enhance pre-K through post-grad computer skills and access to technology.

While there were four discussion topics, one larger combined group decided to focus on both questions #2 and #3. Two other groups each tackled one of the two remaining questions.

Each group received a large paper map of the city and surrounding area as well as an oversized worksheet for identifying a goal for their focus area and actions to achieve it.

The instructions for completing the worksheet were as follows:

## Group Exercise

### Think about your group's overall goal...

S.M.A.R.T Actions <small>Actions should contribute to success of a goal and be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and have a Time frame</small>	What is this and why is it important? <small>Describe this action and write out a complete and compelling sentence or two about why it's important.</small>	Immediate Next Steps <small>(Next 3 Months)</small>	How will we know success? <small>Think about metrics, numbers that are feasible and measurable to track. Think qualitative and quantitative.</small>	Timeframe <small>Short 0-6 Mon Medium 6-12 Mon Long 1-2 Years (Feel free to adjust these as needed)</small>	Lead and Supporting Role <small>Who is the primary responsible organization or person? Who will support the lead?</small>	Cost and Implementation Resources <small>What is the cost in dollars and so on? What potential funding sources exist?</small>
<b>Specific</b> <b>Measurable</b> <b>Achievable</b> <b>Relevant</b> <b>Time Frame</b>	<b>How will this action help reach your goal?</b>	<b>What should the community do within the first 100 days to implement this action?</b>	<b>And what are the potential challenges or roadblocks to success?</b>	<b>What are the short-term, medium-term, and long-term steps?</b>	<b>Which individuals and entities will lead and support your action?</b>	<b>How much will your action cost in dollars and time?</b>  <b>How could it be funded?</b>

On the worksheet, participants identified each action and a path for achieving it. They could also draw changes visually on their map.

For a list of participants at the workshop, refer to Appendix A and for a summary of the workshop discussions, see appendix B.

*Note: The intent of these workshops is neither for Smart Growth America to create a plan nor bind the communities to any particular course of action, but to assist ongoing regional efforts to create a more vibrant, successful region, consistent with the goals of their envisioned plans.*

## Lessons from the workshop

The Cool & Connected workshop helps small towns and rural communities leverage broadband to revitalize downtowns and promote sustainable economic development. The workshop was designed to facilitate a discussion of how the city might effectively partner with neighborhoods, local businesses, institutions, broadband providers, and other entities to increase and improve the community's access to broadband internet access. It provided an opportunity for Natchez' community members to evaluate current and potential local policies and practices by measure of how they might foster economic development.

Communities around the nation are always concerned about their fiscal and economic health. This is especially true of small towns and rural regions.

Fiscal health means a local government's bottom line: *Does the life cycle cost of a project's investment—upfront infrastructure, ongoing service provision and eventual repair and maintenance—cost more than what it produces in tax revenue?*

Economic health includes the general economic well-being of the community and its region: *How does new investment and development add to or detract from the creation of economic competitiveness, fiscal efficiency and sustainability, jobs, jobs access, retention of local talent, cultural identity and wealth?*

In approaching these questions for Natchez, as in any part of the country today, it is important to bear four trends in mind:

### **Our nation's demographics are changing in a way that profoundly affects the housing market in large cities and rural areas alike.**

Demographic trends are moving the housing market strongly away from conventional suburban housing.<sup>1</sup> That presents a significant opportunity for rural communities to compete for new growth. The two biggest demographic groups in the nation—retiring Baby Boomers and Millennials (18-39 year-olds) — both express strong preferences for a more walkable, urban/village lifestyle.

Data tells us that ten percent of all city-dwelling Americans would prefer to live in rural locales if those places are walkable, connected to the larger region and possess a strong sense of character

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<sup>1</sup> See "The Changing Shape of American Cities," Luke J. Juday, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, March 2015.

and place. That represents a pool of 26 million potential transplants that the area could compete to attract. Indeed, forty percent of Millennials prefer to live in rural places, provided those places have a vibrant rural fabric. The vast majority of net new households formed have no children at home, and most of them are one- and two-person households, which are much more likely to prefer a walking lifestyle. These trends depart from those experienced in the latter half of the 20th century.

**Demographic Change**  
20<sup>th</sup> century vs. 21<sup>st</sup> century

- Retirement of the Baby Boom
- Rise of the Millennials
- Smaller households
- Changing preferences

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**The formula for economic growth is changing.**

**The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy**

- Creativity, knowledge, innovation
- Importance of networking, interaction
- Demand for skilled workers

**“A region’s most important source of competitive advantage is its workforce. . . it’s the pool of talent that attract firms, particularly in the knowledge economy.”**

-- Ania Ania Wieckowski, Harvard Business Review, May 2010

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Business growth used to be driven by large corporations that operated in a fashion that was both private in ownership structure and linear in manufacturing and production. In the past, new research breakthroughs occurred in sealed research laboratories controlled by the companies that owned them. Manufacturing and other business processes occurred in assembly-line situations, with little interaction across or inside industries. These conditions led to communities that featured large, sealed-off campuses and tended to be linear in their arrangements.

Today, business growth is driven by collaboration among many types of entities — private companies, research institutions, universities, and others — that must interact frequently and work together creatively. This trend requires cities and communities that encourage interaction and collaboration — the opposite of the older model described above. How communities are designed directly impacts their ability to create interactive and collaborative environments.

Most significantly, the innovation economy, as it is sometimes called, depends heavily on skilled workers. The companies that are driving innovation are pursuing highly educated talent, especially among Millennials. Increasingly, companies find it necessary to locate in places where their target workforce wants to live. Increasingly, that means walkable communities.

**People on the move are looking to relocate to places with a high quality of life. In fact, they are willing to sacrifice salary for location. High quality of life is defined more and more by the character of the town center than by the size of a front yard or square footage of a home.**



Every region, small or large, has ubiquitous “big box” retailers that are successful and generate major sales tax receipts. However, because they are ubiquitous and the same in every community, they do not create a shopping experience that is unique to a particular community. With online buying playing a bigger role for consumers

(especially for bargain hunters), many are looking for a more authentic experience when they shop in person. This type of retail occurs most readily in downtowns along walkable city blocks.

There is a distinctive niche in downtown Natchez for additional small specialty retail, restaurants, and coffee shops that will attract locals as well. These types of establishments should make no effort to compete with Walmart or other major retail. Rather, they should seek out niches that those other areas cannot or has no interest in filling.

Major retailers that once developed in suburban locations only are now adopting a retail presence and footprint suitable for a storefront in a downtown. This is especially true in, for example, Franklin, TN. In addition, we are experiencing more online buying and some retailers are already

**Development affects costs**

Expenditures for infrastructure and services are more efficient in denser, better connected areas.

imagining a downtown presence that is more cost effective because it has limited staff and no stock. Customers select their item locally and it is shipped to their home.

Consumers are demonstrating strong preferences for shopping locally at unique establishments that offer handcrafted, regional products. They prefer this experience to be a short distance from their homes and offices and within a comfortably walkable town center. This is bringing new value to traditional walkable main streets. Natchez is well suited to taking advantage of this shift in consumer choice.

More recently, SGA’s *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown*<sup>2</sup> examines the characteristics, motives, and preferences of companies that have either relocated, opened new offices, or expanded into walkable downtowns between 2010 and 2015. Smart Growth America partnered with global real estate advisors Cushman & Wakefield to identify nearly 500 companies that have made such a move in the past five years. Of those, Smart Growth America interviewed representatives from more than 40 companies to gain a better understanding of this emerging trend. These companies’ new locations are in areas that are dramatically more walkable than previous sites. The average Walk Score of companies’ previous locations was 52; the average Walk Score of the new locations is 88. Similarly, Transit Scores grew from an average of 52 to 79

<sup>2</sup> The report is available for download from <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown/>



and Bike Scores bumped from an average of 66 to 78.

This trend is visible across the country, in big cities and small ones alike and should be a factor in the economic development strategy of all communities, including Natchez.

**Reliable high speed Internet access can be a critical tool for pursuing downtown revitalization and economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

Rural cities and towns are looking for new ways to attract and retain workforce talent and compete for new businesses. Natchez, like many rural communities that have traditionally relied on industries such as manufacturing, is repositioning to benefit from an increasingly information- and technology-based economy.

Communities like Natchez are seeking new opportunities to drive job growth but inadequate broadband access may inhibit economic development and the attraction of new businesses and residents. Businesses need fast connection speeds to move and manage information efficiently and to stay competitive in an increasingly tech-oriented economy. If the service is too slow, unreliable, or unaffordable, it can hinder these efforts and discourage the new residents—particularly Millennials and Baby Boomers—from moving to them.

Schools and hospitals represent other critical entities that must be connected via reliable Internet access. Teachers and students need reliable Internet access, both at school and at home, for educational activities and homework. Hospitals and other medical facilities need Internet access for communicating with outside partners, transferring records, and providing telemedicine for those who might not be able to visit in person. When that Internet access goes down, these activities cease.

While Natchez is already making great strides in connectivity as evidenced by the infrastructure already in place, the city and the surrounding area still suffers from unreliable and slow service—and even dead spots. This is true in many parts of the city, including downtown, and the surrounding county. Natchez serves to benefit from more business, year-round residents, and tourism-focused efforts.

**Note:** *Not all of these trends will be completely relevant in every situation. Rural communities are more reliant on private automobile ownership, and transit is often less feasible in these situations. But it is important to bear all three in mind in considering the fiscal and economic health of any community.*

## Takeaways from SGA's visit

### Assets

- Mississippi River, overlooked by the Bluff District
- Eola Hotel
- Ritz Theater

- Historic architecture in downtown
- Heritage tourism industry built around the antebellum homes
- Faith communities
- Community events throughout the year such as the balloon race
- Natchez Convention Center brings in conferences and other outside groups
- Existing fiber and other infrastructure in support of broadband Internet
- Residents tend to agree that Natchez is a great place to live and an under discovered gem.

### Opportunities

- Implementation of the downtown master plan, adopted in 2018, and particularly renovations to the Eola Hotel
- Transformation of the Historic Railroad Depot into a food, beverage, and entertainment venue
- Opportunity Zone in downtown Natchez
- Improvements to high school vocational programs could be improved to connect graduates to new opportunities
- Formal organization of the Downtown Natchez Association
- New Arts District
- Makeover of MLK Triangle
- New PhD program in nursing at Alcorn State University's Natchez campus
- Hospital's roof represents an untapped location for broadband / wireless infrastructure

### Obstacles/Disconnects

- Declining population and loss of major employers
- Long time residents / natives think Natchez is easy to acclimate to for new residents. However, newcomers don't feel that way.
- Perception that Natchez is not telling its story to itself.
- Downtown vibrancy ebbs after 5pm.

- Despite existing fiber and other infrastructure in support of broadband, it does not serve everyone. Connectivity issues remain—even in downtown—that limit the productivity of the private sector.
- Critical entities including the hospital, schools, and Alcorn State University’s School of Nursing do not have a backup (redundant) Internet connection.
- Fire and police experience dead spots in rural parts of the county. This represents a potential life and safety issue.
- There is a perception that the quality of education and the schools are substandard. Internet connectivity at schools and the ability of students to access the Internet at home are threats to education.
- Recruiting by local employers can be a challenge. It can be difficult to recruit new talent and some local residents can be perceived as “unemployable”.
- Natchez lacks a sense of “arrival”.

## Participant viewpoints

Appendix B summarizes each group’s discussion, numbered in the order of verbal presentation at the workshop.

## Actions for Success

Natchez’ success has always been based on its connectivity to commerce, sharing and receiving resources, and to cultural connectivity. The Natchez Trace and the city’s access to the Mississippi River were important mechanisms by which Natchez connected with the outside world. While these historic assets are still critical to Natchez, they are no longer the sole sources of connectivity.

In decades past, Natchez purposely chose not to be part of the interstate highway system but now aggressively desires to be part of that system. There is a new highway that is equally and arguably more important for today and for generations to come: the Internet highway accessed via high speed broadband connectivity.

With this new highway in mind, we offer the following recommendations and associated action steps.

### Overall Recommendation

#### 1. Create an advisory and implementation committee including the interests present at the workshop, to implement these action items.

The workshop hosted by Smart Growth America was a great first step towards planning for downtown revitalization by leveraging broadband Internet and other assets. The city and region should be proud of its local history, culture, architecture, and amenities. Those present at the workshop were enthusiastic about the future of the community in terms of its vision and opportunities – and may form the basis for an implementation committee if a suitable body does

not already exist.

However Natchez chooses to implement it, building local leadership capacity is vital to move these next steps forward. Smart Growth America recommends establishing an implementation committee to take responsibility for the next steps recommendations that follow.

This body should begin meeting as soon as possible. Members of the committee should come from, but not necessarily be limited to, the following sectors of the community – representing diverse stakeholders:

- Local governments – City of Natchez, Adams County, Southwest Mississippi Planning & Development District
- Major employers such as Jordan Carriers
- Small and downtown business owners
- Representatives of the Grand Village of Natchez Indians and/or Old Jefferson College
- Natchez-Adams County Chamber of Commerce & the Natchez Business & Civic League
- Natchez Downtown Development Association
- Historic Natchez Foundation
- Natchez, Inc.
- Visit Natchez
- F.O.R. Natchez
- Merit Health Natchez and other healthcare providers
- Educational providers such as the Natchez-Adams School District, private schools, Alcorn State University, Copiah-Lincoln Community College
- Representatives of existing broadband Internet providers
- Other community representatives

**The SGA team recommends that the community implement the remaining action steps below under the committee’s leadership and guidance.** The action items provided in the remainder of this document are intended to be comprehensive. To maximize the chances for success, it is important that this implementation body designate both a chair responsible for the overall effort and a subcommittee for each action item.

#### **Short-term Actions (1-6 months)**

- Provide a copy of the downtown master plan to each committee member and urge them to read it as they begin their work
- Hold the first meeting of this body soon after receiving this finalized memo and establish a regular meeting schedule (at least monthly)
- Elect a chair and designate a lead for each of the recommended action items
- Report back to the city council and staff on a regular basis

#### **Medium- and Long-term Actions (6 months and longer)**

- Ensure that this body continues meeting on a regular basis and that all members are encouraged to be engaged in the process
- Continue to provide reports back to city leaders to ensure they remain abreast of the committee’s progress

## 2. Fully capture and present Natchez' story to the outside world.

Natchez is internationally known today for its fine collection of antebellum homes, located in and around downtown as well as on plantations. But the full story of Natchez is much more finely layered, beginning with the original inhabitants—the Natchez people—the French / Spanish explorers and settlers, and the post-civil war emergence of a more equitably shared future along the bluff.

Natchez now appears ready to tell its story to the outside world in order to attract new residents and visitors. It has already begun that work of telling its story -- for example, by donating the visitor's center to the National Park Service (NPS). All support that Natchez and the business community can give to the NPS staff present there will help ensure that the local and regional story is accurately reflected in the narrative presented there.

Further, a closer working relationship with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) and its Grand Village of the Natchez site is important. The village is located several miles from downtown in a residential area where Jefferson Davis Boulevard dead ends. Its location is not one that someone would happen upon by accident. Even if they did, the entry signage is small and does not draw the visitor into the site.



**Examples of arrival signage at state park and historic facility entry points. (Image sources: kenlund and dionhinchcliffe on flickr)**

Natchez can help drive more visitors to learn about this history by encouraging and creating trailblazing and infrastructure improvements to facilitate access. This includes installing sidewalks and developing a sense of arrival to the Grand Village site. These improvements also afford the site the level of prominence within the community this important local historical site deserves.

Recognizing that the site is difficult to find for visitors, trailblazing signage (described in more detail below) can direct visitors driving to the site from downtown or other points within the city.

The Old Jefferson College and other local historical sites run by MDAH, even those outside the city limits, could also appear on trailblazing signage to help visitors navigate to them in between patronizing other businesses and attractions within the city limits.

### Short-term Actions (1-6 months)

- Work with the National Park Service (NPS) to ensure that the region's history is fully and accurately told in the visitors' center, including the Natchez people, European settlers, and the community's more recent history
- Reach out to the Mississippi Department of Archives (MDAH) to meet regarding trailblazing and creating a sense of arrival at the Grand Village and other local historical sites that agency operates

### Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)

- Work with the NPS to implement any changes at the visitors' center needed to accurately and completely tell the area's story
- Work with MDAH on a plan for trailblazing and a sense of arrival to the Grand Village

### Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)

- Implement the plans created in partnership with MDAH and NPS

## Downtown Recommendations

### 3. Reinvest in downtown through implementation of the master plan.

Natchez' robust and award winning downtown master plan, adopted in 2018, offers a clear vision for the future of the city's heart. With this master plan adopted, the next step is implementation. Downtown is ripe for transformation into an even more comprehensive city center that continues to attract tourists while providing housing and opportunity for both current and future residents.

As downtown renovations are planned, the community must not view each restoration project as merely a standalone building. Rather, these legacy structures collectively create a framework and context for both Natchez' history and its future that is worthy of celebration and community pride.

In the downtown core, Natchez should preserve historic buildings to the greatest extent possible (at least the facade if the whole building isn't salvageable). Each legacy building contributes to the whole of downtown, is critical to the storytelling of Natchez' history, and provides unique spaces for adaptive reuse.

Pursue renovation and revitalization of the Eola Hotel as a catalyst for implementation of other aspects of the downtown master plan.

One of the key projects discussed in the plan is the historic Eola Hotel, which has been vacant since 2014. Since its closure, there have been two proposals for its future, including reopening it as a hotel or transforming it into affordable senior housing. Regardless of the direction this redevelopment takes, the SGA team strongly believes that redevelopment of the hotel is among the first orders of business for Natchez.

Returning it to its former life as a hotel would allow even more tourists to be interested in Natchez' antebellum homes as well as the stories of those who served and labored in the homes. And, as the downtown master plan notes, it would allow the Natchez Convention Center to bring in more conventions and meetings that it currently turns away.

Further, a stronger story of Natchez' continuum from past into the future is more authentically told when historic structures are once again utilized for their historic purpose. This makes the

investment all the more valuable to the city.

As an example of the importance a historic hotel can bring to a small downtown, the Alluvian Hotel in Greenwood opened in 2003 to great acclaim. Comprising three historic buildings, including the former Irving Hotel, this boutique hotel has been a driver of a larger resurgence of downtown Greenwood.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, as a residential building, the former hotel could bring much needed affordable housing units to downtown. As presented at the workshop, Baby Boomers are looking to retire in a place where they can easily walk to many of their daily needs and amenities. The most important thing is that the Eola Hotel be returned to productive use again.

Whatever form the Eola's future takes, this historic building is simply too valuable to allow it to continue to lie fallow. Every day it lies vacant, it continues to deteriorate and the city continues to miss out on the benefits it could offer the community either as a hotel or as a residential development.

#### Renovate second and third floors of downtown buildings into residential units

Natchez has a significant inventory of historic buildings with similar second and third story possibilities. The SGA team encourages Natchez' civic leadership to work with those property owners to incentivize this type of redevelopment. When a town has a residential population in downtown beyond 5pm, the community begins to experience a true vibrancy in its center. It is the reestablishment of a downtown residential population that cities create the vibrancy within their town center that this century's economy demands.

Natchez' leaders should explore efforts to create new residential units through renovation of historic buildings even as the Eola hotel project moves forward.

#### Leverage existing structures to create more evening and weekend entertainment opportunities in downtown

Natchez should seek opportunities to create an energy in downtown that reverberates into the evening after government offices and many local businesses close for the evening.

For example, renovating the former train depot into a satellite visitor center combined with an active dining and entertainment space offers the dual purpose of bringing both tourists and residents into downtown. Tourists can learn about the antebellum homes and other attractions throughout the area. Even more important, the visitor's center offers another opportunity for Natchez to tell its story to the outside world. Dining and entertainment options within the space will appeal to both visitors and locals alike.

The downtown master plan outlines a potential strategy for bringing the Ritz Theatre back to life, as part of an arts district. The theater and potential surrounding venues represent additional opportunities to offer entertainment into the evening hours, whether live performances or movies are shown. Whether the restoration process is driven by the public or private sector, restoring this theatre as part of an arts district that is a downtown destination is key to Natchez' future.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thealluvian.com/hotel>

### Short Term Actions (1-6 months)

- Work towards reaching a community vision on next steps for the district including prioritization of projects identified in the downtown master plan.
- Proactively meet with the current owner of the Eola hotel as well as owners of properties with vacant second and third stories to discuss partnering with them on redevelopment of the site.
- Reach a decision regarding the next steps for the properties
- Form a small team of the necessary city, county and chamber of commerce staff who are empowered to streamline the approval processes that will encourage the private sector to move expeditiously to create needed downtown housing

### Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)

- Research and apply for funding applicable to the type of project selected (such as USDA grants and loans, low to moderate income tax credits, TIF districts, historic tax credits, Opportunity Zones, and New Market Tax Credits) to incentivize and support the private sector redevelopment of the Eola hotel as well as for creating new upper floor housing units in other historic properties downtown. Refer to Appendix D for USDA resources
- Continue partnering with the site owners to address the inevitable and unexpected hurdles to overcome that will keep the projects moving forward.

### Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)

- Continue to pursue implementation of other components of the downtown master plan as the Eola Hotel project and creation of upper floor residential units move forward

## 4. Seek new development projects to fill in the “missing teeth” while paying careful attention to building and site design.

The master plan identifies several priority infill development sites of which some could be the focus of new residential developments. This action item offers recommendations for how to design these sites to achieve the greatest return on the investment.

### Focus on small lot homes and small format multifamily units

Traditional small lot homes and small format multifamily units are the right types of residential development to focus on in and around downtown. This will add some density and allow for housing choices while preserving the historic look and feel of downtown. Consider the tiny home model as one possible type of housing development.<sup>4</sup>



Photos of small format residential units and small lot homes suitable for a community like Natchez.

<sup>4</sup> For information on a tiny home development in Clarkston, Georgia, see <https://www.microlifeinstitute.org/clarkston>



## Site Design



Buildings – active spaces, which generate people – serve to engage and activate the street space. This is done by both creating an attractive street wall and through buildings’ permeability (doors and windows). These techniques promote human contact and make passersby feel comfortable. The building itself should front the sidewalk and meet the block face.

When any new buildings are being planned or redeveloped downtown, special attention should be paid to how any included parking is designed. Parking can often be wrapped within or behind the building faces to help screen the parking. Feelings of welcoming and comfort are lost if cars are in the way between the sidewalk and the building itself. This is why parking goes behind the building -- not because we need to hide the parked cars.

The SGA team recommends that parking be accessible from side streets or rear alleys to allow the major streets to remain attractive walking environments for pedestrians. This will maximize the best use of the site for those walking between various destinations.

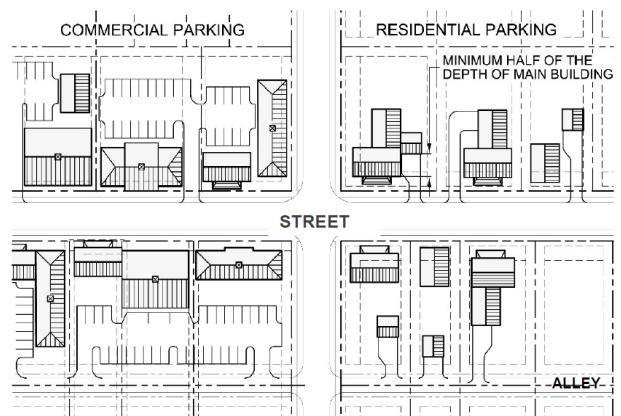
This figure demonstrates the proper placement of surface parking around project sites.

### Consider adopting a form-based code for downtown

To both facilitate new development and guide it to create the right building envelope, Natchez may wish to consider if a form-based code is right for downtown. A form-based code (FBC) is an alternative to the conventional zoning most localities adopted in the mid-20th century. It is intended to regulate development so as to achieve a desired form of the built environment, one that emphasizes walkability and the creation of appealing public spaces, in a mixed-use setting. This contrasts with conventional zoning, which emphasizes the separation of uses, and was developed largely to accommodate an automobile-centric development pattern.

One of the advantages of a FBC is to simplify the project approval process. Because the characteristics of acceptable and desirable development are established by the community beforehand, application review can become somewhat routine, or at least simplified. Protracted negotiations among applicant, government, and community members can be avoided. This has benefits both for developers (concerned about the uncertainties of the entitlement process, and the associated costs that may be incurred) and for neighbors (concerned about the nature of the development that may occur next to them, and the impact on the neighborhood).

The potential benefits over time, in achieving a community’s goals for development, do require significant “upfront” investment in a planning effort, including the time of municipal staff and



**Proper design of surface parking around project sites. (Source: Marshall, Virginia draft form-based code)**

citizens.

Refer to the Form-Based Code Institute (a program of Smart Growth America) resources page for more information on implementing FBCs.<sup>5</sup>

### Short Term Actions (1-6 months)

- Identify the priority parcels for infill development, using the recommendations of the downtown master plan

### Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)

- Explore adopting a downtown form-based code overlay to encourage building and site design that promotes walkability and placemaking

### Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)

- Create and implement a plan for infill development consistent with the downtown master plan and sensitivity to the existing architectural fabric

## 5. Create a marketing and branding campaign for downtown including ongoing place management.

While Visit Natchez serves as a destination branding organization for the region, a branding campaign specifically for downtown Natchez would help market the community and its unique identity to the outside world. This campaign should embody the unique features downtown has to offer both visitors and potential new residents. It can include components such as a unique logo and moniker. The city and all other partners should use the downtown branding consistently for it to be most effective. If carefully planned and executed, the marketing and branding campaign can serve as another mechanism for Natchez to tell its story to the world.

As an example, consider the Pepsi logo or another well known corporate logo which does not require one to read the product name in order to recognize it.

Natchez might consider creating a logo related to its local history, including the Natchez people. It might base its logo on elements of the existing images for the Grand Village and/or the Natchez Trace.

The marketing campaign should focus around downtown's proximity to nearby destinations such as the Grand Village of the Natchez and Old Jefferson College. It should also focus on the balloon race, pilgrimages and other festivals and special events throughout the year. It is also



Pottery from the Grand Village site offers one potential model for such a logo. (Image source: Herb Roe, [www.chromesun.com](http://www.chromesun.com) on Wikimedia)

<sup>5</sup> <https://formbasedcodes.org/resources/>

critical for the campaign to market what specifically makes Natchez unique both within the region and beyond. The city, chamber of commerce, or another established community group within Natchez should run the campaign. This does not need to be a new entity; it can be incorporated into one of these other entities but it requires a dedicated staff member to pursue.

#### Play up the importance of the Blues Trail

The Blues Trail includes four stops in Natchez, three of which are located in downtown. However, despite the presence of this important statewide history in Natchez, our team saw limited signage directing tourists to these historical markers. The branding and marketing campaign should play up this important local history and consider wayfinding signage that directs tourists to the markers where they can learn more about the sites, even if they are not blues fans or did not come to Natchez for that reason.



#### Examples of marketing and branding of other communities in Mississippi.

##### Expand the functionality of Natchez' existing *Natchez First* mobile phone app

Sponsored by the Natchez-Adams County Chamber of Commerce as well as the Magnolia Bluffs Casino, the Natchez First app offers useful tools for Natchez residents and visitors alike. However, the community might consider expanding the app to create more tools and features for visitors. Or the community could develop an entirely separate app for tourists. Features of the new or updated app might include:

- Guided downtown walking tours pointing out historic landmarks and buildings as well as the Mississippi River, sharing their history
- Walking tours specifically focused on the antebellum homes in downtown plus a driving tour of other antebellum homes
- Driving directions to the Grand Village of the Natchez, Old Jefferson College, the visitor's center, the fort, and other more distant landmarks.

To the extent possible, the app should feature a design consistent with the branding campaign described above.

### Consider expanding the branding campaign to include water towers

Some communities have extended their branding campaign to their water towers. By making this otherwise mundane infrastructure eye catching, it gives it a new purpose as a marketing tool or even public art.

As Natchez thinks about utilizing its existing water towers to deploy WiFi or improved cell phone service, it is worth considering what other purposes this infrastructure can offer the community.

The photos below offer two different levels of utilization of water towers for a community marketing purpose. We are not suggesting that Natchez replace an existing water tower solely for this purpose, but these photos are offered a range of suggestions from something that could easily be deployed now to a design that could be implemented at the end of an existing water tower's life cycle. Consider expanding branding to the many water towers within the community.



Peachoid water tower in Gaffney, Georgia.  
Source: Flickr user sarahee



Water tower in Folkston, Georgia. Source: Flickr user Jimmy Emerson, DVM

### **Short- and medium-term Actions (1-6 months)**

- Work with local businesses, and other partners to develop a branding and marketing campaign for downtown including a unique identity, informational materials, online presence, and/or a mobile phone app. Ensure all entities (city, county, chamber, and other partners) use the branding guidelines when referring about downtown.

### **Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)**

- Ensure that the branding and marketing campaign continues to represent downtown and its amenities by updating it from time to time.

## **6. Focus on placemaking and streetscapes in the city center to make it a destination where people want to visit and to linger.**

When our team asked what singular point in the city defines Natchez, people identified the intersection of Main Street and the bluff. Local residents have a strong association with downtown and the Mississippi River. In short, Natchez residents need to see downtown as their greatest asset. It must be consciously developed with an attitude of pride and promotion.

Invest in the creation of a sense of arrival for downtown Natchez.

Downtown Natchez has several key gateways for those arriving from out of town or other parts of the city. Shortly before arriving in downtown at each entrance, the community should create, wherever space allows, a visual narrowing via an alley of trees or other mechanism. This will encourage drivers to slow down and pay attention to their surroundings before they get to downtown. The Mississippi State University Extension will be able to recommend the most appropriate trees from the state list, avoiding ornamental varieties, to create a consistent look.

At the entrances to downtown—including off the Natchez-Vidalia Bridge, John R. Junkin Drive (Highway 425), and Highway 61—a gateway monument like those shown in the photos will further heighten the sense of arrival. This artistic gateway should represent the culture and history of the area, while taking into account the downtown branding described above. The design of the monument could be decided through a community design charrette, a competition, or by soliciting proposals from local or Mississippi artists. Ensure that an overhead monument is high enough to allow all vehicles to pass freely beneath it.

Consider including elements of the branding campaign described above into the design of the monument.



**Monument in Parsons, Kansas.**  
Source: Flickr user J. Stephen



**Arrival gateway in Council Bluffs, Iowa.**  
Source: Travel Iowa on Pinterest

As the above examples show, this monument differs greatly from a landscaped “Welcome to Natchez” sign that might be placed at the very edge of the community.

Invest in a place management entity that is solely focused on downtown.

“Placemaking” is not only about physical changes to the built environment; it is about quotidian activities like sanitation, marketing, relationship building, and so on. As distinct places, walkable centers have functional needs; they need to be clean and safe. A “Place Management” entity tends to the day-to-day operational needs of a sector, provides a focus for efforts for revitalization, and facilitates ongoing engagement among all stakeholders.

The best branding and most aggressive marketing fail if daily attention is not paid to downtown. Therefore, the SGA team echoes the downtown master plan in recommending the designation of a place management entity -- including an individual who only thinks about the

cleanliness, safety, image, and overall attractiveness of downtown. This individual will perform or otherwise coordinate maintenance activities on a daily basis such as replacing worn signage and making sure flowers are watered. This service could be provided by the chamber of commerce or another community organization, if not the City of Natchez.

It must be stressed that, as used here, *place management* refers not to a specific location or property, but to a broader geographic sector—from a few blocks to a multi-neighborhood area—and that it is about the management of public spaces within that area (streets and sidewalks, public squares, etc.) not private property.

This effort should ensure downtown offers a variety of programming throughout the year – such as festivals, markets, concerts, theater, and participatory activities – that bring people downtown. These activities can also further create an identity for Natchez that draws people from beyond the city’s boundaries. In short, Natchez needs someone(s) whose job it is to think about downtown all day, every day—and is not burdened with other activities. This individual should be empowered to call upon volunteers and city staff to help perform needed tasks, whether maintenance or event planning is needed.

For example, Montgomery County, Maryland a suburban jurisdiction outside Washington, DC, maintains three “Urban Districts”, serving specific commercial areas within the county.<sup>6</sup> One of these is the Silver Spring Urban and Arts and Entertainment District, whose mission is to provide “. . . enhanced services to the Central Business District to ensure that downtown Silver Spring is maintained as a clean, safe and attractive environment to promote a vibrant social and business climate to support long-term economic viability and vitality. SSUD services include ambassadorship, security, streetscape maintenance, walkway repairs, tree maintenance, marketing, promotions and special events. The Silver Spring Urban District sponsors a summer concert series, the Silver Spring Jazz Festival, the Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade, and other events to attract people to downtown Silver Spring.”<sup>7</sup> The director and staff are employees of county government. It has a total budget of about \$3.5 million and a staff of 35.

On the other hand, the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) in northern Virginia’s Arlington County is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, public-private partnership, which serves a 3½-mile corridor. Governed by a board that includes property owners, businesses, neighborhood associations, and county representatives, it has operated with total staff of about 2-3 positions and a budget of about \$300,000, supported by about \$200,000 from the County, and the balance from memberships and event revenues. CPRO coordinates major events (like an annual Blues Festival which draws attendees from across the metropolitan area), maintains banners (decorative and informational) that are hung from street lamps and over the street, and operates two weekly farmer’s markets. It serves as a convening venue for the Columbia Pike community, as well as providing marketing and branding for the corridor.

The key functions for such an entity can be summarized as:

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<http://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/BASISOPERATING/Common/Department.aspx?ID=16V10>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.silverpringdowntown.com/go/silver-spring-urban-district>

- **Manage the day-to-day needs of the neighborhood, from trash pickup and street cleaning to graffiti removal and changing streetlights.** Although the place management entity may not be directly responsible for carrying out these tasks (though, in some cases they are), it can play a key role in seeing that these issues are tended to expeditiously.
- **Market downtown to potential investors, both from within the region and from outside of it, and create a culture of hospitality for both companies and new residents.** One of the first and most important tasks associated with the establishment of a BID (or other place management entity) should be creating a brand identity for downtown Natchez. This can tie in with marketing efforts for local businesses, recruitment of new businesses, and promotion of development opportunities.
- **Program public spaces to bring residents to the neighborhood throughout the day, week, month, and year.** A key function of place management is to make good use of events to create excitement and draw people—both nearby residents and visitors from farther afield—such as festivals, markets, outdoor movies, music and other live performances, sporting events and competitions. Coordination and promotion is important; having a regular schedule of events throughout the year can result in visits becoming a regular habit, offering a reliable stimulus for both private business and public revenues, and positive marketing for the community.
- **Pursue and promote redevelopment opportunities.** Work with business owners, developers, and interested companies to help mixed use, walkable centers continue to grow.
- **Regularly convene key stakeholders.** Bring together landowners, business owners, and developers at regular intervals to discuss needs, address problems, and strategize for future growth. Consider inviting business development staff from other towns, Adams County, or the state, and aim to think expansively about how downtown can become even better—now and in the future.
- **Assess performance.** Keep track of how the neighborhood does over time. Are there vacancies and business closings, or new tenants and new construction? The steward should compile data that measures the outcomes, progress, and goals of downtown over a short-term, mid-term, and long-term basis, and work continuously to improve that performance.

The place management effort could also include a program to help local small businesses apply for loans and grants that help them grow and expand.

Focus efforts on internal circulation within the city center and connections to amenities and nearby neighborhoods.

Natchez has great potential for a fully walkable city center accessible by all users of all abilities. To accomplish this, the SGA team recommends that Natchez examine its existing infrastructure with a goal of filling in any gaps in the sidewalk and pedestrian infrastructure. This will ensure that reaching destinations on foot in the city center is seamless and safe. This includes determining locations where sidewalks might not be fully accessible to persons with disabilities due to steps, limiting the destinations these individuals can easily and safely reach. Even if the existing steps remain, ensure that the sidewalks are fully accessible.

As sidewalks are repaired or replaced, consider taking the opportunity to coordinate with broadband Internet providers to drop new conduit below them. This will reduce the cost of providing this infrastructure at a later date.

In addition to well-maintained sidewalks throughout downtown, bicycle racks will also encourage residents to bike to downtown. Because of the compact size of downtown and the close proximity of neighborhoods, the SGA team recommends the addition of bicycle lanes to facilitate travel between residential areas and the city center as roadways are resurfaced or restriped. These bicycle lanes should be extended to connect to the bluff, Mississippi River, and other community gathering places downtown.

A bikeshare (docked or dockless) or a bicycle rental program can help those who do not own their own bike (or tourists who arrive without their own bike) explore the community by bike. A bikeshare system can be successful in a smaller rural community, even one smaller than Natchez as a case study from Iowa shows.<sup>8</sup>

#### Add signage for both pedestrian wayfinding and trailblazing for drivers

Wayfinding presents a set of destination choices that quickly orient the reader to where they are and how to get where they are going. Trailblazing points to a specific destination and assumes the user won't have the time to stop and read. Natchez needs both types of consistently designed signage leading people both to downtown and to specific destinations within it.

These types of destinations may include, but certainly not be limited to, a reopened Ritz Theatre, city hall, the post office, parks, antebellum homes, the Blues Trail, and other destinations. For drivers, this additional signage should make them aware that they are heading towards downtown and encourage them to slow down and observe their surroundings as they drive through it. Signage directing drivers to existing off street parking located behind buildings will also encourage them to stop and explore downtown. As noted elsewhere, trailblazing signage both within and outside downtown that directs them to the Grand Village and other historic destinations is also important.

The signage should be a consistent theme throughout Natchez. Its design should be artistic and easy to follow. It should repeat the information provided in the mobile phone app so it builds a sense of continuous familiarity with downtown for the visitor.

Once drivers are out of their cars, additional markers providing a self-guided walking tour of downtown telling its history and describing regional culture will encourage visitors to further explore downtown as they move from one marker to the next. The new markers will also help the city recognize and celebrate its local history. All of the above signage and wayfinding should be designed around a consistent graphical theme as part of a larger branding effort for downtown.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.fastcompany.com/90326681/this-company-lets-small-towns-have-bikeshares-too>





Examples of trailblazing signs (left two photos), wayfinding sign (center right photo), and historical marker (far right photo).  
 Sources: Seymour Tribune; Pinterest user Cloud Gehshan; Town of Leesburg, VA; Historical Marker Database (photographer: William Fischer)

Encourage outdoor dining

Restaurant patrons enjoy dining outside in nice weather. By bringing alleys to life and allowing dining tables on the sidewalks where they are unobtrusive will encourage more people to try downtown’s existing and new restaurants.

Sidewalk dining is another mechanism that attracts diners. A restaurant need only put a single table out on the sidewalk and passersby know the restaurant is open for business. This encourages them to sit down and have something to eat or drink.

The SGA team understands that current city ordinance places burdens on local businesses who wish to offer outdoor dining. We encourage the city to change its ordinances to allow for this type of use in a way that does not impact the use of sidewalks, alleys, or other rights of way. Examples of communities with outdoor dining ordinances include Alexandria, Virginia<sup>9</sup>; Covina, California<sup>10</sup> and Winfield, Illinois<sup>11</sup>.

**Short-term Actions (1-6 months)**

- Identify the major gateways to downtown and develop themes for downtown gateway monuments that celebrate Natchez' local and regional identity.
- Identify local ordinances impacting outdoor dining, including on sidewalks, balconies, and in alleys.
- As part of the Complete Streets policy implementation described below, consider where bicycle lanes could be added to offer connections to nearby residential neighborhoods as well as to amenities and community gathering places downtown

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/outdoor\\_dining\\_ordinance.pdf](https://www.alexandriava.gov/uploadedFiles/planning/outdoor_dining_ordinance.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Covina/html/Covina17/Covina1757.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.villageofwinfield.com/documentcenter/view/8042>

- As part of the Complete Streets policy implementation (described below), consider missing links where sidewalks and bicycle lanes could be added to offer connections to nearby residential neighborhoods, riverfront, and tourist destinations
- Explore the feasibility of a bikeshare system in Natchez
- Paint / repaint crosswalks in the city center as required and review condition of existing sidewalks

### Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)

- Begin discussions with the Mississippi Department of Transportation or other roadway owners to utilize right of way owned by these agencies to place monuments where they will be visible by motorists.
- Begin repairing any sidewalks identified as deficient (or any incomplete pedestrian connections) and design them to be Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant.
- Seek funding to pay for monument designs from chamber of commerce or other entities
- Install additional wayfinding signage that allows visitors to explore and learn about the history of downtown.
- Consider temporarily repurposing one or more parking spaces as outdoor dining at one or more restaurants during pleasant months.<sup>12</sup>



Example of on-street parking temporarily repurposed as dining (Source: jsonline.com)

### Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)

- Place monuments at gateways to downtown and tree columns leading up to downtown gateways. Ensure that this signage, once placed, receives ongoing maintenance.
- Create and fund a place management entity, including a manager who has the authority to task city departments to respond when needed to address maintenance and care of the downtown
- Consider the application of the following features to increase pedestrian safety and visibility to drivers:
  - Raised crosswalks
  - Different pavement types or colors to distinguish them from the roadway pavement
  - High-Intensity Activated crossWalk (HAWK) or Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFBs)<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see <http://archive.jsonline.com/business/two-east-side-parking-spaces-replaced-by-14-outdoor-dining-tables-b9982256z1-220860751.html>

<sup>13</sup> For more information on this technology, see <http://www.bikewalknc.org/2015/04/understandingpedestrian-signals/>

- Implement bike lanes to connect the city center with neighborhoods and recreational destinations such as the Mississippi River and other community gathering places
- Consider creating a bikeshare system (docked or dockless) that will allow residents to reach their daily needs and visitors to explore downtown and surrounding areas
- Add additional human-scale street lighting around sidewalks and crosswalks, as well as at important destinations, in the city center. Ensure there is sufficient lighting on connection routes to nearby neighborhoods.
- As the I-14 project moves forward, consider how to create a sense of arrival from it as well as ways to lure drivers passing through off the highway for a meal or break

### **7. Adopt a Complete Streets policy and implementation strategy.**

Natchez should adopt a Complete Streets policy to ensure that all future street design efforts consider the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and persons with disabilities. Natchez should then work with Adams County, to adopt their own policy and to implement Complete Streets throughout the region, in conjunction with the Mississippi Department of Transportation. Adopting a Complete Streets Policy demonstrates Natchez' commitment to establish, design, and implement transportation improvements, addressing and balancing the needs of citizens of all ages and abilities.

Refer to Appendix E for a list of helpful Complete Streets resources available online.

According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, an ideal Complete Streets policy:

1. Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete the street
2. Specifies that the term “all users” includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
3. Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way.
4. Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
5. Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
6. Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
7. Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
8. Directs that Complete Streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
9. Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
10. Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy

Taking a Complete Streets policy from paper into practice is not easy, but providing some momentum with specific implementation steps can help. Some policies establish a task force or commission to work toward policy implementation. There are four key steps for successful implementation:

1. Restructure procedures to accommodate all users on every project;
2. Develop new design policies and guides;
3. Offer workshops and other educational opportunities to transportation professionals,

- community leaders, and residents; and
4. Institute better ways to measure performance and collect data on how well the streets are serving all users. Each of these steps requires agencies to think in new ways and, in order to do so they must include a wider range of stakeholders in decision-making.

### Short-term Actions (within 1-6 months)

- Create a timeline for the adoption of a Complete Streets policy within three to six months. The timeline should consider:
  - Who needs to be involved in the development of the plan.
    - Local elected officials and City staff
    - Smart Growth America recommends the city work to bring seniors and people with disabilities together with Mississippi DOT to work on accessibility issues
    - It is recommended that a meeting and tour with Mississippi DOT be setup to demonstrate the accessibility issues some citizens face on a regular basis when interacting with state highways
    - This is a fantastic opportunity to affect change not only at a local level but also at a state policy level
  - When to release a draft of the plan to the public.
    - The timing of this release is critical to project success
    - The public should see a draft version
  - What type of feedback it will ask from the community and what it will do with the feedback.
    - To create community buy-in, Smart Growth America recommends sharing a draft of the plan with the public and asking for their buy-in. However, Natchez must be clear on exactly what type of feedback they are looking for (high level, such as does this fit your vision for the city, or more details-oriented, such as what do you think of this sentence) and how Natchez will use the feedback. This will create transparency and manage expectations for residents.
    - Host open houses within the community, otherwise known as meeting people when and where they are at. For example, Natchez could reach out to local church groups or have meetings on weekends, which may be easier for some residents to attend.
- Determine the type of plan(s) to adopt
  - A Complete Streets policy will change and add value to Natchez' decision-making process. Natchez should identify the type of policy that would be most effective in sparking change, while being realistic about the type of policy that can be passed and implemented successfully. Many communities begin with a simple resolution that then leads to a more complex internal policy.
    - A Resolution will allow the mayor and city council to lead the initiative on Complete Streets and leverage their leadership to highlight the importance of Complete Streets with the public and the media.
    - A Council-adopted ordinance will codify the policy into law.
- Plan a community/press event
  - Natchez should celebrate the success of the adoption of a Complete Streets policy with a public event. This will help educate the public and media about Complete

Streets, as well as allow the city and the community to celebrate the passage of the policy.

### **Medium and Long-term Actions (6 months and longer)**

- Incorporate Complete Streets policy into roadway and intersection redesigns as they occur

As with all conceptual plans, implementation is the challenge. The key here is to engage the most influential and passionate individuals and partners in the community. The success or failure of implementation will rest in the efforts of the implementation committee as supported city leaders. It has been our pleasure to work with the City of Natchez, as we observe the unique opportunities afforded to both.

### **Broadband Internet**

Technology and connectivity become more impactful to business and economic development with every passing day. Whether it's attracting technology related businesses, telecommuters, re-educating displaced workforces, or just empowering home-based businesses, connectivity is required to participate in the modern economy. Making certain everyone can benefit from technology in an equitable and affordable way is critical to our future success but also remains an enormous challenge.

## **8. Achieve reliable, redundant communications.**

Meet with Merit Health to affirm their willingness and ability to participate in a Natchez, Adams County, Merit Health partnership for a safer, connected community.

The Merit Health site is fed with multiple fiber lines and has a viewshed over underserved areas with regards to voice and data communications for public safety as well as consumer and business services. It also directly overlooks commercial sites that would benefit from robust connectivity options. Consider locating a data hotel, call center, co-working space, satellite campus facility there and consolidate backup power resources and buying power there.

### **Topics to discuss with Merit Health:**

- Discuss common needs and goals (Reliable voice and data communications that can't be taken out by a single fiber cut or power outage, telemedicine, education, etc.).
- Identify fiber and switching assets and capacity available to the Merit Health rooftop
- Confirm capacity of the existing mast, and / or identify capacity for an additional mast or attachment points for possible point-to-point, and point-to-multipoint deployments of fixed-wireless and/or mobile cellular.
- Confirm the need for additional backup generators to ensure all life-saving equipment, communications, and facilities remain available during an extended outage.

Distribute broadband survey to staff at area educational facilities

Meet with representatives from educational providers such as the Natchez-Adams School District, private schools, Alcorn State University, Copiah-Lincoln Community College and request broadband and cell phone survey be sent to all local staff.

Issue an RFP for multi-modal, multi-tenant fiber and wireless communications at the Merit Health site<sup>14</sup>, the county-owned communications tower, the School of Nursing, and the K12 schools, etc. Our research indicates AT&T, Cable One, C Spire, and Unity Fiber likely have facilities already available at that location or nearby. These multiple connections do not appear to be in use simultaneously by any single organization, which limits the benefits of route and provider diversity.

Convene stakeholders including police, fire, sheriff, emergency management, schools, healthcare, and government to discuss the finer details of how Natchez' goals can be achieved through planning, common infrastructure and common investment. Seek to purchase gigabit or faster speeds to gain economy of scale, then securely apportion those services across multiple stakeholders. Purchasing lower speeds individually can result in a much higher cost per megabit of speed.

For example: Dedicated gigabit service (1,000 megabits-per-second) can cost roughly \$3,000 per month. Stepping down to just 10% of that speed (100 megabits-per-second) generally costs \$1,500 per month, resulting in only in a 50% savings for a 90% decrease in speed. The first \$1,000 or so goes toward the infrastructure that is required to serve any level of speed, and then there are lower add-on costs for greater bandwidth utilizing that common infrastructure (i.e Fiber optic cable running from the street to the building).

**Topics to include in RFP for providers:**

- Request providers show the routes their fiber takes from key structures to ensure route diversity and whether that fiber is aerial, buried, or a combination of the two.
- Request information on network downtime and if the fiber routes are part of a ring or series of rings, which impart a greater degree of redundancy and reliability.

Example RFP:

- Person County, North Carolina:  
<http://www.personcounty.net/Home/ShowDocument?id=4809>

Example cooperative agreement:

- Bedford County, Virginia:  
<https://www.bedfordcountyva.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=7246>

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<sup>14</sup> Example RFP from another hospital: <http://bit.ly/2HFcc5f>

Issue RFP for county-wide residential broadband service utilizing the infrastructure maps and survey results generated as part of this project.

Encourage multiple partners where possible. If multiple fixed-wireless providers wish to use different frequencies from a common location, this should be encouraged whenever possible. Unlicensed frequencies are generally considered “first come first serve” due to the practical limitations interference imposes, but the use of these frequencies should be managed through diplomacy whenever possible.

Example RFP:

- Vance County, North Carolina: <http://www.kerrtarcog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Vance-County-Broadband-RFP-final.pdf>

### **Topics to include in RFP for providers:**

- Require matching funds from providers for any publicly funded deployments. Dollar for dollar match suggested.
- Require providers to estimate coverage, speeds, monthly costs, and any charges related to data usage (i.e. data caps). If data caps apply, what is the charge or penalty for exceeding the cap?
- If the service cannot penetrate foliage, what options do home/business owners have and how much do those options cost?

### **Short-term Actions (1-6 months)**

- Meet with Merit Health to affirm their willingness and ability to participate in a Natchez, Adams County, Merit Health partnership for a safer, connected community.
- Request that Merit Health distribute the broadband survey to all staff (either the paper version in Appendix C or the web link: <http://bit.ly/natchezinternet>)
- Meet with representatives from educational providers such as the Natchez-Adams School District, private schools, Alcorn State University, Copiah-Lincoln Community College and request broadband and cell phone survey (either the paper version in Appendix C or the web link: <http://bit.ly/natchezinternet>) be sent to all local staff.
- Designate an individual to collect and enter the paper surveys received from Merit Health and the educational institutions online at <http://bit.ly/natchezinternet>

### **Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)**

- Convene stakeholders including county planner, county manager, city planner, police, fire, sheriff, emergency management, schools, healthcare, and government to discuss the finer details of how your goals can be achieved through planning, common infrastructure and common investment. Generate a prioritized project list and assigned points of contact for each agency.
- Request providers show the routes their fiber takes from key structures to ensure route diversity and whether that fiber is aerial, buried, or a combination of the two. Create a map of known fiber routes and key structures.

- Request information from providers on network downtime and if the fiber routes are part of a ring or series of rings, which impart a greater degree of redundancy and reliability.

### Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)

- Issue Request for Proposals (RFP) for county-wide broadband service
- Calculate gap funding and match needed. (Budget and gap analysis completed)
- Apply for grant and loan program to fill the gap. (Applications submitted)
- Consider tax abatement to incentivize downtown business owners to get their buildings ready for broadband without disturbing the historic facade

### 9. Pursue a cellular booster project

Cellular phone boosters can improve reception in identified areas where signals are limited. By examining results of the broadband and cellular phone survey the SGA team conducted in Natchez and partnering with providers, Natchez can improve signal strength and quality. An RFP for the boosters and installation is needed to move this project.



Example of a cell phone booster (Source: <https://www.wilsoncellular.com/>)

### Topics to include in RFP for providers

- Require respondents to indicate how they will handle the required cable runs in structures that were not necessarily designed to accommodate interior cabling or cable entry into the building.

### Short-term Actions (1-6 months)

- Contact FirstNet state representative for Mississippi and make her aware of the project plus ask if Natchez can be moved up on the FirstNet deployment list<sup>15</sup>
- Determine which frequencies are in use for cellular voice and LTE in the area and by which carriers including (700mhz, 850mhz, 1700mhz, or 1900mhz frequencies are anticipated) Create a frequency list by wireless provider for all technologies deployed in the county.
- Contact manufacturers\retailers like WeBoost, Cel-Fi, SureCall, SoldSignal etc. and ask if they can offer volume discounts or a test unit.
- Purchase test booster(s) if none are provided
- Create instructions to do a site survey and “soft install”
- Allow potential buyers to do a “soft install” and see if the results are satisfactory at their location.

### Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)

- Follow up with survey respondents and get booster count and provider list. Create a list of boosters needed for each provider / frequency.

<sup>15</sup> Contact information: Vicki Helfrich, 601-359-5333 or [information@wcc.ms.gov](mailto:information@wcc.ms.gov) via <https://www.firstnet.gov/public-safety/spoc>



- Coordinate proposed booster locations with cellular providers in advance
- Issue RFP for boosters and installation services

### **Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)**

- Select RFP winner (RFP Awarded)
- Monitor the project through completion (when all units installed or returned)

## **10. Establish Wi-Fi Internet access zones in downtown**

A Wi-Fi network for visitors and residents is a critical tool to keeping Natchez moving down the highway represented by the Internet.

But a Wi-Fi network is only as good as its performance during peak usage, such as during concerts, balloon races, or other events. Consider sharing a gigabit or faster connection between the Natchez Convention Center, Natchez Grand Hotel, and other structures surrounding the desired Wi-Fi service area. If an access point is located on a structure, that structure will inherently need / have access to the network, which can then be employed for additional purposes within that structure.

At sign on, the Wi-Fi should automatically direct users to a useful landing page where they can find information on parking, restrooms, restaurants, as well as other attractions and accommodations. It should also collect users' home zip codes to help Visit Natchez or other entities identify travel and tourism markets for future advertising.

The project should also include considerations for signage to let visitors know the otherwise-invisible Wi-Fi service is available and that it can potentially be used for Wi-Fi calling, since many are not aware this new technology exists.

Issue an RFP for a smart Wi-Fi deployment focusing on Phase one to include the park / amphitheater, and walking trails along the bluffs. This RFP can be followed up with additional phases for the applicant with the winning proposal.

### **Additional topics to include in RFP for providers**

- Request options for local businesses to host access points on the smart Wi-Fi using various connections for backhaul. By providing a common mesh over places where visitors gather, those who lack cellular service from their provider will be able to utilize Wi-Fi calling anywhere there is coverage on the smart Wi-Fi network. This can facilitate personal and public safety communications on the part of visitors from all over the world.
- Respondents should define how they will keep users safe through isolation, IPv6 encryption, and any other security measures proposed.
- What traffic shaping systems can be employed to prevent long-term abuse of the network and potentially look at it as a way to provide ultra-low-cost service to those on limited budgets.

Example: PANGAEA in Polk County, NC allows locals to subscribe to 10Mbps service at low cost via their public Wi-Fi network.<sup>16</sup>

- How will month to month costs be abated?

#### **Short-term Actions (1-6 months)**

- Identify likely locations for fiber Internet feed and Wi-Fi Access points. Generate a map of Access Points and Network Access.
- Issue RFP for a smart Wi-Fi deployment focusing on Phase 1.

#### **Medium-term Actions (6-12 months)**

- Coordinate with property owners, utilities, and other agencies as required to facilitate completion of the project
- Calculate gap funding and match needed.
- Apply for grant and loan program to fill the gap.

#### **Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)**

- Select RFP winner
- Oversee installation and ongoing network operation Ensure Wi-Fi remains operational and users are happy.
- Evaluate success of Wi-Fi network and consider expansion

### **Education and Community Pride**

#### **11. Create educational programs that attract new talent and keep young people in the community.**

The SGA team heard several times during our visit about the struggles of the public schools in Natchez. But the real story is that the standardized test scores have been improving. It is critical that this improvement is communicated to the wider community via local media, the faith community, and other channels.

Mayor Grennell and the school district superintendent should take the lead in spreading this good news. There are many venues at which they might speak, including the service clubs, social clubs including the pilgrimage, as well as the many faith communities. This topic could make a good Wednesday night presentation at many of the churches.

The Natchez-Adams School District already has an early college program in partnership with Copiah-Lincoln Community College. This program is important and should continue. Such programs can also play a role in helping high school graduates remain in Natchez. An internship or apprenticeship program between local industry and Natchez High School will help prepare students for jobs once they graduate and further improve public perception of the school district.

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<sup>16</sup> More information: <https://www.ncruralcenter.org/2018/05/broadband-innovation-pangaea-internet/>

Just as important, it will encourage students to remain in Natchez once they graduate by connecting them with local employers instead of escaping to larger places such as New Orleans. Natchez needs to hang on to this next generation of young workers and ensuring they are ready for local job opportunities is a critical step to making that happen.

Natchez should also consider offering two years at the Copiah-Lincoln Community College paid by Natchez, Inc., the chamber of commerce members or others in the business community.

This has been done in Meridian, Mississippi, supported financially by the business community and embraced by the local community college. This could be a nice fit for the community college, augmenting and ensuring the success of the programs offered.

Further, workforce development programs in partnership with Copiah-Lincoln Community College will ensure that those who have already graduated from high school have the opportunity to be trained to meet the needs of Natchez' existing and future employers. Training in technology or with other skills will help ensure their employability.

#### **Short- and Medium-term Actions (within 1-12 months)**

- Partner with Natchez High School, the school district), and Copiah-Lincoln Community College to create workforce development programs specifically related to the evolving employment mix
- Spread the word through multiple community channels, particularly local media and the faith community, regarding standardized test score and graduation rate improvements in the Natchez-Adams School District

#### **Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)**

- Periodically evaluate the workforce development programs and modify them as needed to ensure they continue to meet the needs of employers and the community as a whole
- Establish a program offering two years of paid community college

### **12. Engage service sector industry throughout the city as well as city employees in customer service training so they become ambassadors for Natchez.**

Locals working in the service industry or for the City of Natchez have a role to play in creating a positive impression of Natchez. Simply saying “Thank you for visiting Natchez” or “We’re glad you’re here” will go a long way in creating a friendly environment that encourages tourists to visit Natchez again and again.

The Chamber of Commerce or another entity should invest in customer service training for those individuals who regularly come into contact with visitors to Natchez, even those who might be just stopping for gas or to have a meal. These are opportunities to interface with the visitor, communicate positive feelings for Natchez and advise them of local happenings. Those working in the service industry who come into contact with visitors on a daily basis should know how to create a memorable and welcoming experience to keep those visitors coming back.

The Chamber is likely the best placed entity to take the lead in creating the message or “script” that those working in customer service should offer. Classes should be offered on a regular schedule, perhaps as often as once a week. The specific day of the week and time of the class should vary from one to the next to ensure all service industry workers can attend.

The training should cover what the Chamber wants them to say, how to approach visitors, ideas about how to stay abreast on what is currently going on in Natchez to make recommendations to visitors, and other relevant topics.

**Short- and Medium-term Actions (within 1-12 months)**

- Partner with businesses and other entities invested in the community to create customer service training program

**Long-term Actions (12 months and longer)**

- Periodically evaluate the customer service training program and script and modify as needed to ensure they continue to meet the needs of employers, visitors, and the community as a whole

As with all conceptual plans, implementation is the challenge. The key to success with the above action items is to engage the most influential and passionate individuals and partners in the community. The success or failure of implementation will rest in the efforts of the implementation committee as supported by city and other local leaders. It has been our pleasure to work with the City of Natchez and to be able to observe the unique opportunity it has to plan for a prosperous future.

# Appendix A: Interview and Workshop Participants

## April 24, 2019: Group Interviews

### 1:15 PM - Downtown Businesses

- Curtis Moroney, Natchez-Adams Chamber of Commerce
- Sue Stedman, Crye-Leike Stedman Realty
- Johnny Waycaster, Waycaster & Associates
- Deanna Kimbro, Home Bank
- Wanda Horne, World Energy

### 1:45 PM - Business & Industry

- Pat Biglane, Concordia Bank & Trust Company
- Aimee Guido, Natchez, Inc.
- Tim Runnels, Entergy

### 2:15 PM - Faith Communities

- Rev. Joan Gandy, First Presbyterian Church
- Rev. Clifton Marvel, Greater Macedonia Baptist Church
- Clark Smith, First Baptist Church of Natchez (for Dr. Doug Broome)

### 2:45 PM - Education

- Ira Young, Holy Family School
- Keshia Brody Campbell, Natchez Early College
- Zach Moulds, Co-Lin Natchez Campus (for Teresa Busby)
- Fred Butcher, Natchez-Adams School District Superintendent

### 3:15 PM - Health Care

- Dr. Debra Spring, Alcorn School of Nursing
- Lance Boyd, Merit Health Natchez
- Jeff Phillips, Adams County Nursing Center

## April 25, 2019: Workshop

- Lovie Martin, Transit / Senior Citizen Center
- Scott Frye, Natchez Police Department
- Lance Harris, Grand Village of the Natchez
- Woody Townsend, Jordan Carriers (for Shirley Waycaster)
- Chandler Russ, Natchez, Inc.
- Walter Tipton, Natchez Convention Center
- Jay Massey, Cognos Consultants
- Chief Walter Armstrong, Natchez Police Department
- Chief Ventriss Green, Natchez Fire Department
- Robert Hopkins, Cable One
- Curtis Moroney, Natchez-Adams Chamber of Commerce
- Chesney Doyle, F.O.R. Natchez
- Carter Burns, Historic Natchez Foundation
- Zandra McDonald, Natchez-Adams School District

- Zach Moulds, Co-Lin Natchez campus (for Teresa Busby)
- Brad Ferguson, Senator Roger Wicker's office
- Joann Clark, Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith's office
- Calvin Butler, Adams County Supervisor
- Claude Jackson, City of Natchez IT Department
- Charles Crump, City Clerk
- Robert Bradford, Adams County EMA
- Jacob Stewart, CSpire
- Jason Thomas, CSpire
- Cynthia Prine, Cable One
- Mike Lazarus, Adams County Supervisor
- Peggy Pierrepont, Resident

# Appendix B: Workshop Participant Viewpoints

**Question #1: How can life and safety services (hospital, police fire) work together to address dead spots and service gaps in the rural parts of Adams County?**

S.M.A.R.T. Actions	What is this and why is it important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we know success?	Timeframe	Lead and supporting role	Cost and implementation resources
Get inventory from provider.	Countywide MDT coverage.	Jacob - please get shapefiles of towers, coverage, which towers have fiber, backup power	We will deliver the maps that we need.	ASAP	Jacob Stewart	No cost
Identify the capacity of the county-owned tower.	Determine if we can put more equipment on.	Identify where the tower is.	Cost to feed tower.	ASAP - 0-6 months	Jacob Stewart Director Bradford	No cost
Communicate with state highway patrol on tower space.		Contact state highway patrol.	Yes / No	ASAP - 0-6 months	Brian	No cost



**Question #2: How can Natchez fully identify the Internet connectivity problems negatively affecting downtown businesses and potential solutions?**

**Question #3: How can Natchez leverage the vacant downtown spaces for more residential that can be marketed to Baby Boomers and Millennials?**

**S.M.A.R.T. Actions** What is this and why is it important? **Immediate Next Steps** How will we know success? **Timeframe** **Lead and supporting role** **Cost and implementation resources**

Cell phone connectivity downtown	<p>Cell phone based transactions i.e. a card reader on Iphone or Ipad. or e-ticketing</p> <p>Currently need to exit buildings to make calls.</p> <p>Cell phones are usually how the general public accesses the Internet now.</p>	<p>Cell phone boosters</p> <p>Identify physical signal barriers</p> <p>Identify "high" spots for downtown LTE boost (i.e. Eola Hotel)</p>	<p>Private investment</p> <p>Proximity of infrastructure to buildings</p>	4-5 years	Businesses and providers	\$10K for 30 businesses around downtown + installation costs
Public WiFi	<p>Encourages congregation</p> <p>Social service, connecting people</p> <p>Tourism - Geolocation</p>	<p>Designate zone</p> <p>Risks? Costs?</p> <p>5G feasibility</p>	<p>Have not compromised security</p> <p>Not bogged down with multiple residents / businesses using it for data</p> <p>Useful data collection</p>	<p>MS legislation allowoing electrical co-ops to have authority to distribute broadband</p>	<p>City</p> <p>Dig Once - Federal (one trench, multiple tubes)</p>	<p>2 or 3 along bluff (initial capital)</p> <p>Month to month cost (find sponsor)</p> <p>3-5 years - technology replacement</p> <p>\$20K / year for data plan</p> <p>\$15K - capital investment</p> <p>\$20K - when upgrade needed</p>
Creating livable conditions downtown	<p>Lowers barriers for incoming residents</p> <p>Getting buildings "ready" for development (infrastructural / managerial)</p> <p>Attract residency / new businesses</p>	<p>New brand for existing residential units</p> <p>Market rates for target demographics</p>	<p>Residency increase</p> <p>Sales tax increases</p> <p>Creating spaces that attract Millennials and Boomers, with what they both like</p> <p>Fulfillment of downtown master plan</p>	1-2 years	Rico Giani (Planner)	TBD

**Question #4: Identify cooperative ways to enhance pre-K through post-grad computer skills and access to technology.**

S.M.A.R.T. Actions	What is this and why is it important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we know success?	Timeframe	Lead and supporting role	Cost and implementation resources
Pre-K to 12th grade MUST improve quality / access to technology. Limited WiFi - example is Morgantown Elementary	Equitable access is key to securing education for our youth.	Collaboration	Measurable; improved technology installed capable of access throughout schools	Both short- and long-term growth and accessibility	P-16 administrators and community stakeholders / officials that know about technology	Cost could vary according to school. District budgets fund. Local, state, and federal funding.
State mandated policy must mirror local capabilities. Sometimes these policies evolve to the detriment of students / technologies.	Talent and skills that our students need are replacing tax incentives. Skills = job attraction.	Collaboration between Co-Lin and Natchez / Adams County school districts.				
Increased dual-enrollment at secondary and post-secondary level. Programs should match.	It would increase continuity for the students. It would increase students' marketability and the workforce.	Collaborative conversations for seamless transition 12th to IHL	Articulation agreements help with the seamless transition.	Long term (1-2 years) success.	P-16 administrators, community stakeholders, elected officials, parents	Funding is local, state, and federal. Also, industry would assist in fields that make up their labor force. Various assets and resources.
Both secondary and postsecondary institutions allow for printed and digital resources to match students' needs / desires.	Increase students' confort and success.	Grow over time. Keep up what we're doing.	Measurable data and graduation rates, etc.	Now; short-term		

# Appendix C: Broadband and Cell Phone Survey

## Internet and Cell Survey

### Can you get Broadband Internet?

Broadband Internet is defined as 25Mbps download speed and 3Mbps upload speed. Satellite Internet and cellular (LTE) hotspots do not count as Broadband Internet for the purpose of this survey.

1. Please check YES if you have access to broadband Internet service at your location and NO if you do not.

YES    NO

\*If you answered yes, skip to question 5

2. If you have broadband Internet, is it:

Reliable?                       YES |  NO

Affordable?                     YES |  NO

Fast enough for your needs?    YES |  NO

3. Do you need more options? Please check YES if you would purchase additional broadband Internet service at your location if it were available.

YES    NO

4. Who is your current Internet Service Provider (ISP)? (optional)

5. What is your approximate monthly budget for Internet service? (optional)

## Internet and Cell Survey

6. Is this location a business? Please check YES if this is a commercial location or if you operate a home-based business from this location.

YES    NO

7. Is this location a farm? Please check YES if you earn more than \$1,000 annually from agriculture and NO if you do not.

YES    NO

8. Can you reliably make cell calls and send texts from this location?

YES    NO

9. Can you reliably use mobile Internet (LTE) from this location?

YES    NO

10. Who is your current cell phone provider?

11. What is your address? Please provide address of physical location rather than a P.O. Box.

12. What is your email address? This will only be used in an effort to get you better Internet service. (optional)

This survey is being conducted to help providers understand the level of interest in their services in your area. The more people in any given area who respond to this survey, the more likely the provider will be able to make a business case to provide the service. We can make no promises regarding results only that this information will be used to argue on behalf of you and your community.

## Appendix D: USDA and Other Funding Resources for Projects

The City of Natchez, developers, and the tribal government may be able to take advantage of USDA Rural Development grants and loans to help pay for renovation projects of historic buildings as well as construction of new buildings in downtown. These include:

### Multi-Family Projects

Multi-Family Housing Direct Loans

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/multi-family-housing-direct-loans>

Multi-Family Housing Loan Guarantees

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/multi-family-housing-loan-guarantees>

### Single-Family Projects

Single Family Housing Direct Home Loans

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-direct-home-loans>

Single Family Housing Home Loan Guarantees

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/single-family-housing-guaranteed-loan-program>

### Community Facilities Projects

Community Facilities Direct Loans & Grants

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>

Community Facilities Loan Guarantees

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-guaranteed-loan-program>

Community Facilities Relending Program

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities-relending-program>

Economic Impact Initiative Grants

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/economic-impact-initiative-grants>

ReConnect Loan and Grant Program for broadband and e-connectivity

<https://www.usda.gov/reconnect>

The above list is not an exhaustive list of all available programs through USDA. Natchez is encouraged to refer to USDA's website for eligibility and application instructions for these and other programs (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/all-programs>).

Other funding options include low to moderate income tax credits, tax increment finance districts, historic tax credits and New Market Tax Credits.

## Appendix E: Complete Streets and other resources

The following is a list of Complete Streets resources providing information from the fundamentals to implementation. Click on any of the links to go to the resource.

### Fundamentals

Communities just getting started with Complete Streets will find these materials most useful. They present a comprehensive overview of the benefits and basics of the Complete Streets planning and design approach. The resources listed in this section can be found at the link below or by clicking on the titles below.

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/policy-development/>

- [Introduction to Complete Streets](#). A comprehensive PowerPoint presentation on why we need Complete Streets, available to download for use and adaptation in your community.
- [Presentation and Fact Sheets: Benefits of Complete Streets](#). A free PowerPoint provides an overview of the research-backed benefits of safe, multimodal street planning and design. The Coalition's series of research-based fact sheets explores the many benefits of Complete Streets for various groups of users and outcomes.

Topics include: Health; Safety; Economic Revitalization; Children; People with Disabilities; Older Adults; Public Transportation; Climate Change; Gas Prices; Lower Transportation Costs; Livable Communities; Equity.

- [Other Resources](#). A variety of Complete Streets handouts, downloadable presentations, articles and reports

### Changing Policy

After a community has agreed to the concept of Complete Streets, the next step is to develop a formal policy. The Coalition provides many resources to illuminate best practices, share actual policy documents from across the country, and help communities develop the best, most appropriate policies for their needs.

- [Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook](#). A comprehensive workbook for communities to follow when writing their own Complete Streets policies. For use by city and county agencies, the guide is based in national existing policy and best practices and encourages a thoughtful, inclusive process for developing locally appropriate policy language.
- [Complete Streets in the States: A Guide to Legislative Action](#). AARP and the National Complete Streets Coalition developed a toolkit to use in a state-level Complete Streets effort. This report includes model legislation and a discussion of the various elements of an

ideal law, a roadmap for legislative action, and analysis of existing state Complete Streets laws.

- [Presentation: Complete Streets: Changing Policy](#). Use this PowerPoint presentation and its comprehensive presenter's notes to lead a discussion of Complete Streets policy development in your town. The presentation covers the reasons to adopt a policy and details on the ten elements of a Complete Streets policy.
- [Complete Streets Policy Atlas](#). The Coalition compiles information on all policies adopted to date in our Policy Atlas. The Atlas includes an interactive map of all regional and local policies, and downloadable lists of known Complete Streets policies, across all jurisdictions and at the state level.
- [Best Complete Streets Policies reports](#). The Coalition also reviews all the policies adopted each year and assesses how well they fulfill the ten elements of an ideal Complete Streets policy. The annual Best Complete Streets Policies report highlights exemplary policy language and provides leaders at all levels of government with ideas for how to create strong Complete Streets policies.
- [Ten Elements of a Complete Streets Policy](#). This is a helpful document for others reviewing your draft policy.

## Implementation

Once a Complete Streets policy is in place, the day-to-day decisions a transportation agency and community leaders make in funding, planning, design, maintenance, and operations should be aligned to the goals of that adopted policy document. The Coalition helps communities implement their policies by collecting and sharing best practices and examples.

- [Taking Action on Complete Streets](#). This guide describes five types of activities identified by the Coalition that are needed to reorient a transportation agency's work to fully and consistently consider the safety of all users:
  - Planning for Implementation;
  - Changing Procedure and Process;
  - Reviewing and Updating Design Guidance;
  - Offering Training and Educational Opportunities; and,
  - Measuring Performance.
- Resources, activities, and best practices from communities across the country are [available here](#).
- [Answering the Costs Question](#). A handbook and slide presentation that helps transportation professionals, advocates, and decision-makers make the case that

implementing Complete Streets won't break the bank.

- [Do Complete Streets cost more than incomplete streets?](#)  
Shapard, J. and Cole, M. (2013). "Do complete streets cost more than incomplete streets?" Proceedings, Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, 2013. Paper 13-4283.
- [Implementation Resources](#). The Coalition's series of research-based fact sheets on specific elements of Complete Streets implementation is available for download.

Topics include: *Costs of Complete Streets; Change Travel Patterns; Ease Traffic Woes; Complete and Green Streets; Networks of Complete Streets; Rural Areas and Small Towns.*

### **Other General Resources**

1. *Arts, Culture, and Transportation. A Creative Placemaking Field Scan.* Transportation for America. <http://t4america.org/maps-tools/creative-placemaking-field-scan/>.
2. *The Scenic Route. Getting started with Creative Placemaking and Transportation.* Transportation for America. <https://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/>
3. *Dangerous by Design.* National Complete Streets Coalition. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/dangerous-by-design-2019/>
4. *Resorting Properties, Rebuilding Communities.* Center for Community Progress. <https://www.communityprogress.net/restoring-properties--rebuilding-communities--transforming-vacant-properties-in-today--039-s-america--pages-405.php>
5. *Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown.* Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown/>
6. *(Re)Building Downtown: A Guidebook for Revitalization.* Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/introducing-rebuilding-downtown-a-guidebook-for-revitalization/>
7. *Made in Place: Small-Scale Manufacturing & Neighborhood Revitalization.* Smart Growth America. <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/made-in-place/>
8. *Building Better Budgets: A National Examination of the Fiscal Benefits of Smart Growth Development.* Smart Growth America.



<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/building-better-budgets-a-national-examination-of-the-fiscal-benefits-of-smart-growth-development/>

9. *The Fiscal Implications of Development Patterns*. Smart Growth America.

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/the-fiscal-implications-of-development-patterns-overview/>

10. Form-Based Codes Institute Resources

<https://formbasedcodes.org/resources/>



### **About Smart Growth America (SGA)**

Smart Growth America envisions a country where no matter where you live, or who you are, you can enjoy living in a place that is healthy, prosperous, and resilient. We empower communities through technical assistance, advocacy, and thought leadership to realize our vision of livable places, healthy people, and shared prosperity. Learn more at [www.smartgrowthamerica.org](http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org).

The Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) grant that supported this assistance was awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Rural Development (USDA RD) to Smart Growth America through a national competition.

