

Proposed
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT AREA
AND PLAN

For
The Downtown Core Area
of
Statesboro, Georgia

Prepared by
Statesboro Planning and Community Development
Department
and
The Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia

All Revisions Through 12/8/2020

Approved by the City of Statesboro
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Introduction

The City of Statesboro adopted an update of its Comprehensive Land Use Plan in 2019. Two of the main goals stated in the Comprehensive Plan was the revitalization of the City's downtown area and the connecting commercial corridor to the Georgia Southern University Camps (termed "The Blue Mile") as well as the revitalization of the neighborhoods surrounding Downtown Statesboro and The Blue Mile. These areas are called the **Core Area** of Statesboro.

To achieve these revitalization goals in its Core Area, the City has chosen to adopt an Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) as defined by Georgia Code 36-61-1 which allows it to use various tools, including land acquisition, to accomplish URP objectives.

The City's Department of Planning and Community Development was charged with the responsibility of presenting a viable URP to City Council for adoption. The Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia was asked to assist the Department with the preparation of the URP.

The provisions in the Georgia Code for urban redevelopment by municipalities requires that certain conditions must exist within an area designated for redevelopment. These conditions are;

1. "One or more slum areas exist in the City; and
2. "The rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of such area or areas is necessary in the interest of the public health, safety, morals, or welfare of the residents of the City".

To meet these conditions, the City must also find that;

1. A feasible method exists for the relocation of families who will be displaced from the urban redevelopment area(s) in decent safe and sanitary housing within their means;
2. The urban redevelopment plan conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan; and
3. The urban redevelopment plan will afford maximum opportunity for private enterprise to participate in the rehabilitation or redevelopment activities contemplated by the plan.

After extensive investigations and study, an Urban Redevelopment Area boundary was proposed, and an Urban Redevelopment Plan prepared, which meets these conditions and findings as indicated in this report. Subsequent Revitalization Area Strategy Plans will be developed for Neighborhood Target Areas delineated in the URP which will address the specific redevelopment and revitalization activities to be carried out including acquisitions and rehabilitation of blighted properties; relocation of families and individuals from those properties into decent safe and sanitary housing; removal of blighting influences and improvement of neighborhood infrastructure and facilities.

Executive Summary

The Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) for the Core Area of Statesboro embraces the following areas of Statesboro;

1. Downtown Statesboro as defined by the Downtown Master Plan adopted in 2012
2. The Blue Mile Corridor connecting Downtown Statesboro to the Georgia Southern University Campus as defined in the Blue Mile Plan adopted in 2015
3. The following neighborhoods identified in the City's 2019 Comprehensive Plan as needing revitalization;
 - a. Johnson Street;
 - b. MLK;
 - c. Whitesville; and
 - d. Mulberry Street and Black Bottom.

Conditions that exist in Downtown Statesboro and a plan for its redevelopment and revitalization are documented in the 2012 Downtown Statesboro Master Plan and have been included in this URP by reference. Likewise, existing physical and economic conditions and plans for revitalization for the Blue Mile Corridor are well documented in the Blue Mile Tax Allocation District Proposal Study and accompanying Redevelopment Plan. That Redevelopment Plan is likewise included in this URP by reference.

The underlying study for this Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) is primarily the four neighborhoods identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan as requiring Revitalization. This study focused on:

1. **Housing conditions** using data obtained from Bulloch County tax records which identified single family residence conditions from inspections conducted during property tax reassessment as: Poor (likely beyond rehabilitation) or Fair (requiring rehabilitation). Windshield surveys were used to verify these condition ratings and to identify residential structures which were dilapidated and vacant (uninhabitable);
2. **Identification of blighting influences** such as incompatible land uses adversely affecting the living conditions in the neighborhood; inadequate or failing infrastructure; lack of public facilities such as parks, pedestrian walkways, poorly maintained streetscapes and unmaintained vacant lots;
3. **Socio-economic conditions of residents** of each neighborhood including the number and percent of families living below poverty levels, status of home occupancy, median family income, family size and composition. This data is needed to determine the affordable housing needs of families within the neighborhoods who might be displaced as a result of revitalization plan implementation;

4. **Survey of public facilities** available to neighborhoods including schools, parks and government services.

This data, as presented in the report, was used to define the proposed URP Area Boundary and Neighborhood Target Areas for specific future revitalization planning and implementation.

PART 1 – BACKGROUND AND FACTORS AFFECTING URP AREA DESIGNATION AND PLAN

City History and Characteristics

Incorporated in 1803, The City of Statesboro thrived for many years as a center of production of Sea Island Cotton. As the county seat for Bulloch County, it is one of 4 incorporated cities within the County. Today, Statesboro remains relevant as an economic center due to the rapid growth of Georgia Southern University located within the City. It's estimated 2019 population of almost 32,000 makes it one of the larger cities in its region. Excluding student population, the city's permanent population is around 12,000.

The city did not experience significant growth until 1980 when Georgia Southern University began to grow and expand to a current student population of over 20,000. Even with the addition of some new industry locating in the City and surrounding area, the levels of unemployment and poverty have remained high. It is estimated (2018) that nearly half of all families living in Statesboro are living below the poverty levels established by the U S Census

Even though the University campus is located within a mile of Downtown Statesboro, the downtown area has failed to capitalize on the economic activity created by the large student population. Housing developed to accommodate the students has primarily located away from downtown as opportunities for in town student housing were never developed.

The **Core Area** of Statesboro encompasses its City Commercial Center and four adjacent older residential neighborhoods.

Downtown remains an area of older commercial buildings with only a limited number having been modernized or rehabilitated. It is also the center of City and County Government.

The adjacent residential neighborhoods consist of older homes; most built prior to 1980; many built prior to 1960. Neighborhoods west of downtown (Johnson Street and MLK neighborhoods) have a substantial number of deteriorating or dilapidated single family rental and owner-occupied housing units and other blighting influences. Likewise, the Whiteville neighborhood north of Downtown, has similar conditions. The Mulberry Street and Black Bottom neighborhoods to the east of Downtown have a few pockets of dilapidated housing and a number of homes requiring rehabilitation. Each of these neighborhoods have continued to deteriorate over time and have not experienced any growth or new development.

Existing Land Uses within the City of Statesboro are shown on Exhibit 1. The age of housing in the City built prior to 1960 and 1980 is shown on Exhibit 2. A Socio-Economic Profile of City residents is presented in Table 1.

Community infrastructure is old and failing in many of the Core Area and older neighborhoods. Sidewalks, underground storm drainage (vs. open ditch drainage) and adequate streets are lacking in many areas. Blighting influences such as vacant and abandoned housing and non-residential structures, abandoned vehicles and household debris stored on lots or vacant land areas and conflicting land uses are found throughout most of these core area neighborhoods.

The Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the City of Statesboro in 2019 and recently amended, places a high priority on the revitalization of neighborhoods in decline and the revitalization of the downtown commercial area. The Future Land Uses and Character Areas Map, shown on Exhibit 3, and adopted by the City in 2019, calls for future land uses in Downtown Statesboro and the adjoining residential areas to remain essentially unchanged but to be revitalized through revitalization and redevelopment including rehabilitation of older structures and infrastructure.

The City has yet to fully capitalize on the presence of more than 20,000 college students located within a mile of its downtown area. Yet the opportunity exists for many of the older yet attractive and architecturally significant structures to be rehabilitated for mixed commercial and residential uses attractive to college students seeking to live in a more urban environment. The connecting mile long corridor from the downtown area to the University, dubbed The Blue Mile, is now the focus of implementation of an adopted redevelopment plan funded, in part, by revenues by a Tax Allocation District (TAD) created for that purpose. Similarly, a redevelopment plan for Downtown Statesboro has also been adopted and is currently being implemented by an active Downtown Development Authority and Main Street Program and has shown some signs of success.

To address the revitalization needs of inner-city neighborhood areas, the City has prepared this Urban Redevelopment Plan for adoption and implementation through Revitalization Area Strategy Plans for each of the target neighborhoods identified in the URP.

Part 2 - The Statesboro Urban Redevelopment Area and Plan (URP)

In order to define the Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) Area, specific data on housing conditions, socio-economic profiles of families living within the planning area boundary, and an evaluation of the condition of community facilities was gathered and analyzed. Additionally, the following City plans were examined: Future Land Use; plans for future infrastructure and public facility scheduled improvements; and approved plans for the redevelopment of Downtown Statesboro and establishment of the connecting corridor to the University, The Blue Mile.

Establish the Boundary of the Urban Redevelopment (URP) Area

From the analysis of data collected within the Core Area of Statesboro, a boundary for the Urban Redevelopment Area has been proposed that includes:

1. The greatest concentrations of slum, vacant and deteriorating housing;
2. The greatest concentrations of blight and blighting influences such as incompatible land uses, poorly maintained property, and inadequate access;
3. Inadequate or lack of public infrastructure;
4. Inadequate or lack of public facilities and services;
5. The greatest concentrations of poverty; and
6. Currently approved Redevelopment Plans for Downtown Statesboro and the Blue Mile Corridor.

The data used to establish this boundary is presented in this Part 2 of the report and the recommended URP Boundary is shown on Exhibit 4 and Exhibit 6.

The Core Area Neighborhoods

The Statesboro City Council approved the recommendation of the City's Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Program committee and has designated four neighborhood target areas for revitalization activities, all located within the Core Area. These include

1. Johnson Street Community;
2. MLK Community;
3. Whitesville Community; and
4. Mulberry Street Community (including the adjacent Black Bottom Neighborhood).

Each of these neighborhoods is located entirely within the URP boundary and are shown on Exhibit 4 and 6.

The City has recently expanded and directed its focus on several major actions in preparation for undertaking neighborhood revitalization activities. These include

1. Addition of two code enforcement officers to address property maintenance issues;
2. Adoption of a comprehensive property maintenance code;
3. Revitalization of the Statesboro Housing Authority through the appointment of new Commissioners to serve on its board and the recruitment of a new Executive Director. The Housing Authority is adding to its mission and functions the advocacy and promotion for the development of new affordable housing and the revitalization of residential neighborhoods through housing rehabilitation and removal of dilapidated housing and blighting influences;
4. Establishment of an incentive program with funding (\$500,000) to encourage the development of in-fill single family housing within the City including a set-aside of \$100,000 for affordable housing development in the Whitesville Neighborhood Target Area.
5. The recently re-instituted Statesboro – Bulloch County Land Bank Authority will begin to function by the end of 2020 with a focus on assembling tax-foreclosed properties for redevelopment with affordable housing; and

6. A planned submission of a Community Housing Improvement Program (CHIP) grant to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (January 2021) to begin the rehabilitation of owner-occupied substandard housing in the Johnson Street Neighborhood Target Area.
7. Approved proceeding with the design of badly needed park improvements in the MLK (Luetta Moore Park) and Johnson Street Neighborhood (Grady Street Park) Target Areas.

Housing Conditions and Characteristics within the URP Area:

Within the City as a whole, it is currently estimated that there are approximately 12,750 housing units. Nearly 75 % of the housing in Statesboro has been built since 1990 when a development boom caused by the rapid expansion of Georgia Southern University started. Of these, only 23.5% units are estimated to be owner-occupied, a continuing decrease since 2000 (when estimated at 28%). A major cause of this low percentage has been the development of a large number of housing units for Georgia Southern University students.

Within the URP Area, most of the housing units, an estimated total of approximately 1800, were built prior to 1980, and a significant number prior to 1960, as shown on Exhibit 2. Further, it is estimated from Census Block Group data that an even smaller percentage of housing units within the URP area are owner-occupied, perhaps as low as 20%.

PLEASE NOTE, that data on the condition of housing was collected and mapped for the City from the property records of the Bulloch County Tax Assessor.

Within the City as a whole, the number of housing units rated as Poor (dilapidated) by the Bulloch County Tax Assessor is 116 (3%) and a total of 365 (9%) were judged to be Fair (requiring significant rehabilitation).

Within the URP Area, conditions are significantly worse. Of the total estimated 1000 single family units in the URP Area, 288 (29%) are rated as Fair and 110 (11%) rated as Poor by the Tax Assessor. From field investigations, it was determined that this data was reasonably accurate.

The condition of housing within the City is shown on Exhibit 4 and solely within the URP on Exhibit 6 (including vacant dilapidated residential structures). The tabulation of housing data is presented in Table 2

Most multi- family housing in the City is located outside the Core Area and has been developed since 1990. Within the URP, there are a few older apartment buildings; mostly less than 20 units each that are in fair condition except for two newer small duplex rental complexes with less than 20 units each. Two large public housing complexes totaling approximately 120 units are located within the Core Area.

Within the Mulberry Street neighborhood and along the S. Main Street Corridor, there are a few older and historic homes with a few listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These

homes, for the most part, appear to be well maintained. However, there is community concern that these structures and the neighborhood in which they are located be preserved and that blighting influences, such as incompatible uses, not be allowed to encroach into these areas.

Finally, a visual inspection was made of the URP area to locate and inventory vacant dilapidated residential and other structures. A total number of almost 75 were identified. These buildings are also shown on Exhibit 6.

Photographs of a representative sample of these vacant units and other blighting influences is presented in Appendix 3 with their location identified within neighborhood areas

Neighborhood Blight and Blighting Influences within the URP Area:

Within the URP, there exists many blighting influences that have affected the overall appearance and physical condition of the four neighborhood target areas.

The most serious of these are many vacant and abandoned (often boarded up) residential, and to a slightly lesser extent, non-residential structures. In many neighborhood areas, vehicles are stored, often undrivable, in front, side and rear yards of homes. Also, prevalent, are plies of household and unusable building materials in yard areas waiting to be removed.

In recent months, the City has added code enforcement staff that are successfully addressing these conditions and are having a positive impact. Expanding and improving on these activities, particularly removal of dilapidated vacant structures is a priority of the URP, particularly in the early years of the program.

Other blighting influences include inadequate or difficult to maintain open drainage systems; an unused park in Whitesville which has not been maintained in some time, narrow and inadequate streets; poorly maintained street rights of way; and incompatible land uses negatively affecting adjacent or nearby residences. These issues will require replacement, improvements and/or removal.

One very noticeable defect in the neighborhood target areas is the lack of safe pedestrian walkways. Attention to this will be extremely important particularly offering school children and residents the opportunity to walk to school or to nearby shopping, parks or recreation areas. Likewise, pedestrian access to nearby shopping areas will be a healing asset for these target neighborhoods.

Socio Economic Profile of Families Within the URP Area:

The population of Statesboro is approximately 31,600 (2020 - US Census Estimate). Other estimates place the city's population at around 33,000. The "daytime population" is somewhat

higher and estimated at 37,600. These population figures include the 20,000 plus students at Georgia Southern University. Of the total city population, 52 % is white and 48 % is minority (41% African American) with a growing Hispanic segment currently around 4%.

The median family income for 2018 was estimated at \$31,124 with nearly 50% of families falling below the median family income poverty level. The concentration of families below the poverty level is primarily concentrated within the Core Area of the City and the URP and is currently estimated at slightly over 50%.

Employment within Statesboro has been relatively stable, however, unemployment among the City's workforce is currently estimated to be almost 20% according to recent data from the US Census. That rate is influenced by even larger unemployment rates estimated within Core Area neighborhoods and a high 28% unemployment level among those in the labor force under 25 years of age.

Socio-economic characteristics within the URP area are similar to those for the City with some exceptions, particularly poverty levels.

Exhibit 5 shows the various Census Block Groups within Census Tracts in the URP with population and poverty levels indicated for each Census Block Group. The Block Groups or portions of Block Groups falling outside the URP Boundary generally estimate less than 20% of families below the family income poverty level.

Table 1 presents a summary of Socio-Economic Data for Statesboro, obtained from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the US Census Bureau for the City and for the URP.

Public Facilities and Parks

Parks and public open spaces exist throughout the core area and are generally well maintained. Plans are currently being prepared to improve the parks within the Johnson Street and MLK Neighborhood Target Areas. Improvements and addition of facilities at the Luetta Moore Park, located in the MLK Neighborhood, are estimated to run \$2,629,000; improvements and additions to the Grady Street Park, located in the Johnson Street Neighborhood are estimated to run \$1,352,543. The Statesboro City Council has approved the funding for design of these park projects and funding for construction is to be through a bond issue by the City's Urban Redevelopment Agency to be formed at the time of approval of the URP Area.

The Blue Mile corridor, as previously discussed, is to benefit from the addition of small public parks and streetscapes to make pedestrian traffic more attractive to students at Georgia Southern University.

Most City and County government services are conveniently located in the center of the Core Area of Statesboro.

Downtown Commercial Center and The Blue Mile Connector

A significant amount of time and effort has been devoted by the City and the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority to the study, analysis and development of plans for the revitalization of Statesboro's downtown areas and the corridor connecting it to the Georgia Southern University campus. **The revitalization of downtown is important for the adjacent core city neighborhoods as significant employment and upward family income mobility would result from new businesses locating in Downtown Statesboro or within the Blue Mile Corridor.**

In 2012, a Downtown Master Plan was prepared. Its theme, "**Downtown Needs a Vision, a Plan and Leadership**" resulted in a vision and a plan to be carried out by the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority. The plan focused on a redevelopment area created when the DSDA was formed in 1981. This area comprises 75 city blocks totaling 390 acres with approximately 300 commercial establishments occupying some 900,000 square feet. Approximately 1000 residents live in adjacent neighborhoods within the DSDA boundary.

Reference Exhibit 4

The study evaluated the physical condition of buildings within the DDA. While several buildings (estimated less than 20%) were considered either substandard, deteriorated or dilapidated (beyond economic repair), most buildings were in good condition. Eight buildings within the DDA were classified as historic and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The plan identified a number of opportunities for revitalization of Downtown Statesboro, the most noteworthy being the development of housing in mixed use commercial structures, particularly unused upper floors of downtown commercial buildings; a large public open space for daily use and public events; an improved and inviting connection of Downtown Statesboro to the University; and, a more inviting appearance for entrances into and within the Downtown area. Extensive streetscape planning has subsequently been completed with additional projects, particularly within the "Blue Mile" corridor soon to be started.

The resulting plan focused on the following major objectives for action by the City and the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority:

1. Creation of large and small public open spaces with a focus on the County Courthouse Square for public gatherings and enjoyment;
2. Streetscape improvements within Downtown to create a more inviting pedestrian environment;
3. Streetscape improvements to corridors leading into Downtown along with secondary new retail development within those corridors;
4. Capitalize on available housing development in underutilized structures in Downtown;
5. Develop improved pedestrian and bicycle routes leading into and through Downtown;
6. Consider a transit plan linking pedestrian and university housing areas to Downtown;

7. Maintain a commercial support structure for existing business and for the attraction of complimentary new businesses; and
8. Capitalize on the proximity of the University and its large population base of students and staff.

While initiatives have been undertaken to implement these and other recommendations in the plan, much remains to be done. To capitalize on the Downtown's proximity to the University, the DSDA led the effort for the creation of a Tax Allocation District (TAD) as a major funding tool for implementing the Downtown Redevelopment Plan. **The Downtown Redevelopment Plan is to be updated in 2021 by the City and the DSDA.**

An outgrowth of the Downtown Master Plan was the preparation of a plan and redevelopment of the "Blue Mile" in 2015. The Blue Mile focuses on the component of the Downtown Master Plan to connect the University Campus with Downtown as a part of an economic development strategy to increase commercial activity in downtown and to see the development of new business and offices as a result of this increase.

Priorities of the Blue Mile include:

1. Creation of a pedestrian friendly corridor with open spaces, wide sidewalks and bike lanes for safe movement as well as attractive streetscape providing a Blue Mile identity;
2. Development of new complimentary businesses to Downtown and targeted to student traffic; and
3. Development of housing opportunities for students as well as young professionals.

Plans for the Downtown Redevelopment and the Blue Mile Corridor have been duly adopted by the City of Statesboro and are included in this Urban Redevelopment Plan by reference. **It should be noted, that the Redevelopment Plans for Downtown and the Blue Mile in the TAD, do not meet the requirements of the Urban Redevelopment Plan being presented in this report. The plans adopted however, meet the requirements under TAD Legislation to enable their implementation. Both plans are incorporated in this Urban Redevelopment Plan by reference so their components now conform with the legal requirements of Georgia Code (Section 36-61-1 – Urban Redevelopment Law).**

The boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority's redevelopment plan and The Blue Mile as well as the TAD are shown on Exhibit 6.

Part 3 - Urban Redevelopment Plan Requirements Per Georgia Code (Section 36-61-1 Urban Redevelopment Law) – Findings from This Report

For the Urban Redevelopment Plan to be a legal, effective and usable tool for the City of Statesboro, the Plan must;

1. **"Conform to the City's approved Comprehensive Plan"**

The Comprehensive Plan, approved by the City in December 2019 and amended in December 2020, has recommended that a plan for the revitalization of neighborhoods include the removal of dilapidated (slum) housing and other blighting influences. In addition, an aggressive program of code enforcement and housing rehabilitation programs was recommended. To address this need, the Comprehensive Plan work program reflects the need for the designation of an Urban Redevelopment Area and plan(s) to address the revitalization of Core Area neighborhood areas and the downtown commercial center.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan recommends that a Housing Plan be prepared to address the housing needs of City residents, including those living in the neighborhood target areas within the Urban Redevelopment Plan Area boundary. That recommendation has been added to the Work Program contained in the Plan and is currently underway.

The Comprehensive Plan also identifies two parks, Luetta Moore and Grady Street, both located within the URP Area in the MLK and Johnson Street Neighborhoods, for substantial improvements.

Redevelopment Plans have been developed for the revitalization of the downtown commercial Core Area as well as the Blue Mile Corridor to connect the Georgia Southern University Campus to Downtown Statesboro. A Downtown Statesboro Development Authority and a Tax Allocation District (complete with an adopted Redevelopment Plan) for these areas have been approved by the City to provide a funding mechanism for the implementation of plans approved by the City. These areas are included in the overall Urban Redevelopment Area and Plan contained in this report. Reference Exhibit 3.

Finding: The Urban Redevelopment Plan conforms to the City of Statesboro’s Comprehensive Plan Approved by the City of Statesboro in 2019 and as amended (2020).

- 2. “Be sufficiently complete to indicate that redevelopment activities proposed by the plan, including acquisition, demolition and removal of dilapidated (slum) structures; rehabilitation of sound structures; removal of blighting influences; redevelopment and improvements to land and sites acquired, or any combination of these activities, are for the purpose of removing slums and blighting influences and will stimulate new development and stabilization of areas within the Urban Redevelopment Area boundary and beyond”.**

Four neighborhoods in the core city area have been identified as in decline and requiring removal of dilapidated and often vacant slum housing as well as blighting influences like incompatible land uses, badly maintained vacant properties, inadequate or poorly maintained infrastructure and lacking community facilities such as parks. Rehabilitation of other substandard housing as well as the improvement of infrastructure serving these neighborhoods is likewise a priority. The four neighborhood areas identified include:

1. Johnson Street Community;

2. MLK Community;
3. Whitesville Community; and
4. Mulberry Street and Black Bottom Community

Within each of these communities there exists a substantial number of dilapidated and deteriorating housing as well as blighting influences. **Reference Exhibit 4.** The determination of the degree of blight and housing conditions was made through individual structure inspections by the Bulloch Co. Tax Assessor (reference individual property tax records) and verified by field investigations conducted by the Coastal Regional Council and the Statesboro Planning Department staff.

In instances where dilapidated properties or blighting influences are acquired, those properties will be developed as affordable housing or needed community facilities. The proposed improvements to the Luetta Moore and Grady Street Parks will likewise help stabilize the neighborhoods.

A Ten-Year Plan Implementation Program for the URP (and beyond) has been developed to address the blight and blighting influences within the 4 neighborhood target areas through redevelopment and revitalization efforts. **Reference Exhibit 7.**

Finding: A Redevelopment Area Strategy (RAS) is being prepared for the Johnson Street Neighborhood for adoption by the City Council following the adoption of this Urban Redevelopment Plan. Similar RAS Plans are to be prepared and adopted for each of the other three identified neighborhoods over the 10–year period.

3. **“Provide for the relocation of any families displaced from the Urban Redevelopment Area(s) into decent, safe and sanitary housing within their means and without undue hardship”.**

No families will be relocated in the initial year following the adoption of the URP. Rather, activities will focus on the removal of a substantial number of vacant dilapidated structures in each of the neighborhood target areas and other blighting influences. An Affordable Housing Plan will likewise be prepared during the first year implementation phase of the URP which will serve as the basis for developing affordable housing to serve as a resource for those families displaced by the acquisition of dilapidated housing and those needed for the effective redevelopment activities to revitalize neighborhoods. In planning for the revitalization of each of the Target Area Neighborhoods within the URP and the adoption of a Redevelopment Area Strategy (RAS) Plan for each area, particular attention will be given to the relocation needs of families being displaced as the result of acquisition of blighted and slum properties. **A relocation plan will be incorporated in the RAS for each neighborhood and will be reviewed and adopted by the Statesboro City Commission following a public hearing.**

Finding: No displacement of families or relocation will occur in the first year of URP implementation. Redevelopment Area Strategy Plans, including the RAS for Johnson Street

will include a plan for the relocation of families displaced from slum and dilapidated housing as well as the identification of affordable housing opportunities for those displaced families.

4. **“Afford maximum opportunity consistent with the sound needs of the City of Statesboro for the rehabilitation or redevelopment of any designated Urban Redevelopment Area by private enterprise”.**

The City of Statesboro is participating in the Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) Program and has an active committee formed to address the housing needs for the City. This collaboration will seek to bring all resources, public and private, to bear in expanding the base of affordable housing in Statesboro. One focus will be to arrest the declining percentage of homeownership among families in Statesboro.

Additionally, a revitalized Statesboro Housing Authority beginning with a new and diverse board membership and recruitment of a new Executive Director with a broad background in affordable housing development and revitalization of neighborhoods is underway.

Recently, the City established an incentive program to encourage the development of owner-occupied housing in new infill areas of the City. The program has been funded with a \$800,000 allocation of funds to assist private developers with land acquisition and infrastructure development as a means for lowering the cost of housing. Bonus points will be awarded developments that focus on creation of lots in URP neighborhoods for affordable housing.

Private contractors will be used for rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing within the Neighborhood Target Areas.

Finding: It is planned for the Housing Authority, in partnership with the City, to become a focal point for affordable housing development and neighborhood revitalization planning and implementation. Continuation of the GICH Initiative will assure continued efforts to build a strong public-private housing coalition to address the affordable housing needs of Statesboro. The City’s recently created and funded incentive program for subdivision development will likely attract private developers to Core Area neighborhoods and the affordable housing market. Further, the City of Statesboro will complete an Affordable Housing Plan for the City in cooperation with the GICH initiative by mid-2021. These initiatives will focus on expanding the capacity and incentives for non-profit and private initiatives to develop affordable housing within the URP target neighborhoods and the URP Area.

5. **“Be determined by the City of Statesboro as necessary and appropriate to address the decline of neighborhoods, commercial core areas and to provide new affordable housing opportunities for families and individuals”.**

This Urban Redevelopment Plan was reviewed and discussed at stakeholder meetings held before final consideration by the Mayor and City Council of Statesboro. Stakeholder attendance and concerns are recorded and included in the Appendix.

The start of preparation of an Affordable Housing Plan by the City, with input and leadership by the GICH Committee, will help guide the City to marshal resources for the development of new affordable rental and ownership housing. This will help meet the needs of families possibly displaced by implementation of the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Finding: Through public participation, stakeholder involvement in the preparation of this plan and consideration by the Statesboro City Council at workshops and public hearings, the City has determined that the implementation of this URP is appropriate to address the decline of neighborhoods and for offering new and expanded affordable housing opportunities. Likewise, it has been determined by the City Council that the proposals contained in the URP are consistent with the recommendations adopted by the City (2019) in its Comprehensive Plan.

Part 4 - A Ten – Year Urban Redevelopment Implementation Plan for Statesboro

The Ten-Year schedule for implementation of the Urban Redevelopment Plan (URP) calls for the preparation of a Redevelopment Area Strategy for each of the neighborhood target areas shown on Exhibit 4. Following adoption of the URP, a Revitalization Area Strategy Plan will be prepared and adopted for the Johnson Street Community.

Following is an initial Ten-Year Program designed to begin to address the affordable housing needs and neighborhood revitalization within the Core Area of Statesboro. This plan will be evaluated annually and revised or amended as necessary. **A summary of the Implementation Program is presented in Exhibit 7.**

Year 1:

1. Begin implementation of the Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) for the Johnson Street neighborhood;
2. Complete a detailed analysis of infrastructure and public facility needs in the Johnson Street target area and prepare a plan and cost estimates for improvements;
3. Complete an Affordable Housing Plan for Urban Redevelopment Area target neighborhoods that focuses on expanding the capacity of the local housing agencies and private enterprise to develop new housing units and rehabilitate others. This plan will be created in-house by the Planning Staff or under contract with a second party;
4. A focused effort to remove abandoned and vacant substandard housing in all targeted neighborhoods with an initial goal of removing 10 structures per year;
5. Adoption and implementation of a property maintenance code with a focus on vacant and dilapidated homes, un-maintained lots, partially demolished

structures, stored unusable vehicles and debris remaining on vacant property in all targeted neighborhoods;

6. Increased efforts by the City maintenance crews to maintain street rights of way and removal of debris on vacant private property using code enforcement tools;
7. Hire and train staff for a comprehensive housing rehabilitation program to be funded by CDBG and CHIP Programs. This program will be administered and carried out by either the City of Statesboro, the Statesboro Housing Authority or both; and
8. Using the tools available to the Land Bank Authority, begin to acquire tax foreclosed properties for redevelopment in affordable housing or other neighborhood enhancing use.
9. Complete the design of improvements to the Luetta Moore and Grady Street Parks and issue bonds totaling approximately \$4 Million to complete all planned improvements.

Sources of Funding for Year 1: City of Statesboro, Urban Redevelopment Authority, CDBG, CHIP, Statesboro Housing Authority

Year 2:

1. Begin the inspection of homes to be rehabilitated within the Johnson Street Focus Area and initiate at least 10 rehabilitation projects funded by loans and grants administered by the City in cooperation with the Statesboro Housing Authority;
2. Identify housing and other structures requiring acquisition in the Johnson Street Neighborhood, establish their FMV and develop a relocation plan for those displaced;
3. Continue property maintenance code inspections and initiate remedial action by the City Code Enforcement staff in all target neighborhoods;
4. Working with affordable housing public and private developers, including Habitat for Humanity and other non-profits, begin to assemble and transfer property for single family homeownership housing for displaced families or families in need in all target neighborhoods;
5. Continue Land Bank Authority actions to acquire and assemble tax delinquent properties for affordable housing redevelopment or other public uses in all target neighborhoods;
6. Begin improvements to public infrastructure in areas where housing rehabilitation and/or acquisition of dilapidated housing is concentrated in the Johnson Street neighborhood; and

7. Begin implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan through the leadership of the Housing Authority, the City of Statesboro, the GICH Committee and other public and private entities).
8. Complete improvements to the Luetta Moore and Grady Street Parks.

Year 3:

1. Initiate and complete preparation of a Redevelopment Area Strategy for the MLK Community;
2. Complete a detailed analysis of infrastructure and public facility needs in the MLK target area and prepare a plan and cost estimates for improvements
1. Continue home rehabilitation activities in the Johnson Street Neighborhood and complete 10 projects;
2. Begin the inspection of homes to be rehabilitated within the MLK Focus Area and initiate at least 10 rehabilitation projects funded by loans and grants administered by the City in cooperation with the Statesboro Housing Authority;
3. Begin improvements to public infrastructure in areas where housing rehabilitation and/or acquisition of dilapidated housing is concentrated in the MLK Street neighborhood. Continue infrastructure activities in the Johnson Street neighborhood;
4. Continue code enforcement, affordable housing development and Land Bank Authority activities in all targeted neighborhoods;
5. Identify housing and other structures requiring acquisition, establish their FMV and develop a relocation plan for those displaced;
6. Begin property acquisition and relocation of families in the MLK Neighborhood; and
7. Continue implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan.

Year 4:

1. Continue home rehabilitation activities in the Johnson Street and MLK Neighborhoods and complete 20 projects;
2. Continue code enforcement, affordable housing development and Land Bank Authority activities in all targeted neighborhoods;
3. Begin improvements to public infrastructure in areas where housing rehabilitation and/or acquisition of dilapidated housing is concentrated in the MLK Street neighborhood. Continue infrastructure activities in the Johnson Street neighborhood;
4. Continue implementation of the Affordable Housing Plan.

Year 5:

1. Initiate and complete preparation of a Redevelopment Area Strategy for the Whiteville Community;
2. Complete a detailed analysis of infrastructure and public facility needs in the Whiteville target area and prepare a plan and cost estimates for improvements;
3. Begin the inspection of homes in the Whiteville community and initiate at least 5 rehabilitation projects in the community;
4. Identify housing and other structures requiring acquisition in the Whiteville target area, establish their FMV and develop a relocation plan;
5. Begin property acquisition and relocation of families in the Whiteville target area; and
6. Complete all project activities in Johnson Street and MLK target areas;

Year 6 and Beyond:

Beginning in Year 7, develop a Revitalization Area Strategy (RAS) for the Mulberry Street target area and initiate owner-occupied housing rehabilitation and acquisition of blighted structures and influences within the neighborhood. Continue and complete activities in the Whiteville neighborhood in Year 7. Continue to monitor target areas.

Implementation Responsibility and Oversight

Implementation of The Urban Redevelopment Plan is assigned by the City of Statesboro and its Urban Redevelopment Authority and to the City's Planning and Development Department under the management of its Director. Staffing by the Planning and Community Development Department for the implementation of any revitalization and redevelopment project will include both direct employ and consultant personnel.

Implementation activities and staffing responsibilities will include the following (Responsible staff shown in **bold**):

1. Overall program oversight. **Statesboro Urban Redevelopment Authority (City Council)**
2. Overall program administration. **Director of Planning and Development and a Project Manager.**
3. Ongoing planning for the appropriate reuse of any property acquired to remove blighted housing or blighting influences in neighborhood target areas. This will include general land use plans within the target neighborhoods and specific site plans for specific reuse proposals. Department staff will prepare plans and URP updates and amendments to be reviewed and approved by City Council. **Planning and Development Staff.**

4. Evaluation of existing public infrastructure serving target neighborhoods and the design of improvements necessary to bring those facilities to standard. **Planning and Development Staff using Consulting Engineering Firm(s) in consultation with the City Department of Public Works and City Engineer.**
5. Planning and design of needed public facilities such as passive or active parks. **Planning and Development Staff using Consulting Planning and Landscape Design Consulting Firms working with the City – County Parks Department.**
6. Inspection of homes for rehabilitation. Write up of necessary repairs to bring the home to standards set by the program and to the City’s Property Maintenance and building codes. Assist the owners with the solicitation of repair bids and award of contract(s). Conduct periodic and final inspections and assist property owner with repair project close-out. **Planning and Development Staff using Consultant Building Inspectors**
7. Acquisition activities relating to removal of blighted structures and blighting influences including appraisal of property values. Negotiations of purchase and relocation services for families or businesses displaced by the acquisition. **Planning and Development Staff using Contract Appraiser, Contract Real Estate Professionals. Planning and Development Staff to provide relocation services**
8. Administration of Rehabilitation Loans and Grants and Relocation Assistance Payments for owners involved with the rehabilitation of their property or those displaced by the acquisition of their property. **Planning and Development Staff assisted by the City Finance Department.**

Partnerships to be Developed for Implementation

To achieve the redevelopment and revitalization objectives outlined in the URP, the City, acting through its Department of Planning and Development, will continue and further develop partnerships with local organizations with similar and complimentary affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization program objectives. These existing and future partnerships will fall into these program categories:

1. Affordable Housing

Habitat for Humanity – Local Chapter: The City and Habitat for Humanity have had a long and productive partnership beginning in 2003. Habitat partnered with the city to produce 23 homes for low- and moderate-income families to purchase in a subdivision located in the MLK Neighborhood. The subdivision was constructed by the City using a CDBG Grant. Assistance for building and financing the 23 homes in the subdivision was provided by a CHIP Program grant to the City. The City will seek to expand that relationship by enabling Habitat to

increase its capacity to build more affordable housing as well as its homeownership counseling and financing programs, particularly within the target URP neighborhoods.

Georgia Initiative for Community Housing -GICH: The City of Statesboro was awarded a GICH Grant to begin a local program designed to promote and facilitate the development of affordable housing. The GICH Committee has called for the preparation of a housing study to address both market rate and affordable housing needs within the City. Future efforts of the GICH Committee will focus on developing new partnerships with a commitment to develop affordable housing. These could include faith-based organizations within the community, local business interests, the housing development businesses within the community and county and area developers who could be attracted to participate in the efforts to produce affordable housing with available tax credits and special bond financing.

Statesboro Housing Authority: The City’s Housing Authority is looking to expand its role in providing and promoting affordable housing through its current efforts to recruit a new Executive Director. The Authority’s Board has expanded and strengthened the job description and qualifications of its Executive Director seeking someone with affordable housing development and neighborhood revitalization experience.

2. Downtown Redevelopment and Implementation of The Blue Mile Initiative

Downtown Statesboro Development Authority (DSDA): This entity was formed in 2010 by the City to oversee the redevelopment activities planned for the revitalization of Downtown Statesboro. The organization receive funding from the City’s Hotel/Motel Tax collection. When the Blue Mile initiative was created, its implementation was assigned to the DSDA.

Funding for Urban Redevelopment Plan Implementation

Over the Ten – Year period projected for complete implementation of the revitalization of the four URP Target Areas, the following project costs have been estimated using data from the Bulloch County Tax Assessor’s property data and cost estimates shown on the Department of Public Works long term plan for street and drainage improvements.

Following is the estimated project cost for the revitalization of the Johnson Street Neighborhood:

1. Acquisition of dilapidated housing properties –60 @ \$25,000 ea.	\$1,500,000
2. Rehabilitation of approximately 140homes @ an average of \$15,000 grant per home	\$2,100,000
3. Street and storm drainage improvements – Estimate	\$2,000,000
4. Relocation Assistance – Tenants 60 @ \$10,000 each; homeowners 20 @ \$20,000 each	\$ 600,000 <u>\$ 400,000</u>
5. TOTAL HARD COST	\$6,600,000
6. Administrative and Consulting Costs @	<u>\$1,215,000</u>
7. GRAND TOTAL	\$7,815,000

SAY \$8,000,000

Similar costs are anticipated for the MLK Neighborhood but slightly less for the Whitesville and the Mulberry Street – Black Bottom Neighborhoods. Thus, the total URP Costs for the four identified neighborhoods would be roughly estimated at:

1. Johnson Street -	\$8,000,000
2. MLK	\$8,000,000
3. Whitesville	\$4,000,000
4. Mulberry – Black Bottom	\$4,000,000
5. Luetta Moore Park (MLK Neighborhood)	\$2,629,700
6. Grady Street Park (Johnson Street Neighborhood)	#1,352,643
TOTAL URP COSTS	\$28,000,000 (R)

Funding sources for the URP neighborhood revitalization program would come from the following sources:

1. CDBG Grants 2021 -2031	\$10,000,000
2. CHIP Rehabilitation Grants 4 @ \$400,000 each	1,600,000
3. City of Statesboro (infrastructure improvements)	5,000,000
4. Sale of Property Acquired for Redevelopment	5,000,000
5. City of Statesboro (administrative costs)	2,400,000
6. Urban Redevelopment Authority (bonds for parks)	<u>4,000,000</u>

TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS* **\$28,000,000**

***Does not include funding through the TAD for Downtown Redevelopment and Blue Mile Projects.**

PART 5 – ADOPTION OF URBAN REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

Additions to the adopted URP following adoption by the Statesboro City Commission

1. Stakeholder Participation

Record of meeting and attendance and comments

2. Public Participation and Public Hearing

Record of meetings and attendance as well as comments.

3. Adoption of URP Area and Plan by City of Statesboro

Record of Public Hearing and adoption Resolution(s).

EXHIBITS REFERENCED IN REPORT

EXHIBIT 1 EXISTING LAND USE

EXHIBIT 2. AGE OF HOUSING (PRIOR TO 1980)

- EXHIBIT 3. FUTURE LAND USE AND CHARACTER AREAS
- EXHIBIT 4. HOUSING CONDITIONS CITY OF STATESBORO – URP AREA
- EXHIBIT 5. CENSUS TRACT AND BLOCK GROUPS
- EXHIBIT 6. URP HOUSING CONDITIONS AND VACANT STRUCTURES
- EXHIBIT 7. URP 5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
- EXHIBIT 8. PHOTOS OF VACANT HOMES WITHIN NEIGHBORHOOD TARGET AREAS

TABLES REFERENCED IN REPORT

- TABLE 1. SOCIO – ECONOMIC DATA FOR STATESBORO AND URP AREA
- TABLE 2. HOUSING DATA AND CONDITIONS FOR STATESBORO AND URP

TABLE 3. CENSUS BLOCK-GROUP DATA FOR URP