

Augusta, Georgia and North Augusta, South Carolina Urban Area

2009 Master Plan

for a sustainable future

Part 1: Executive Summary

February 4, 2009



Acknowledgements

This plan is prepared for Augusta Tomorrow, Inc., Dennis B. Skelley, President, and the Cities of Augusta, Georgia and North Augusta, South Carolina. The work is supervised by Augusta Tomorrow, Inc. who has provided policy direction for this work. This is largely done through its Master Plan Oversight Task Force, who has reviewed and commented upon the work in progress. Chaired by Braye C. Boardman, advisory members include the following:

- J. Michael Ash
- Braye C. Boardman
- Nadia D. Butler
- Robert A. Cooks
- Walter Dukes
- G. M. Grkovic
- Kyle E. Howell
- Steven Kendrick
- Robert J. Kuhar
- Charles B. Martin
- Julian W. Osbon
- Robert C. Osborne
- H. M. Osteen, Jr.
- George A. Patty
- Patrick J. Rice
- Thomas H. Robertson
- Dayton L. Sherrouse
- N. Turner Simkins
- Dennis B. Skelley
- Chester A. Wheeler, III

Special thanks to Camille A. Price, Chief Administrative Officer for Augusta Tomorrow, Inc., for her tireless efforts and infinite patience in coordinating our activities locally.

Preface

Augusta and North Augusta, its sister across the river, have all the ingredients with which to build a sustainable regional urban setting which is unique in the country. It has a rich history, from the pre-Columbian era into the cutting edge twenty-first century, with many a compelling story and a host of historic settings in which to tell them. The golf and equestrian traditions of the region give it international sports prominence, and its rowing regattas and ball sport competitions attract national participants. Its opera, symphony, theater companies and museum collections are unmatched by cities of much larger size. It has one of the preeminent fine arts public education programs in the nation. The mild climate and its immediate accessibility to nature and water soothe the soul. Its citizens are diverse, energetic, well-traveled and well-educated. It is a major center for the health sciences and has Fort Gordon, the Savannah River Site and other cutting-edge research/high-tech institutions and businesses nearby. Key leaders build their lives in this community when they easily could seek fortune elsewhere. Newcomers want to stay.

... there's magic here.

Thanks to its natural and cultural resources and the inspiring work of its citizens, past and present, this Urban Area is at a very pivotal place today. The shared vision of this master plan is to realize a dynamic and sustainable Urban Area, here at this spot on the Georgia/South Carolina line, spanning and incorporating its river, harnessing its untapped potential and the energy in the air, and then building on the best that both shores have to offer.

The Westobou Vision

The name given the Urban Area for purposes of this report and for the encouragement of this on-going process is “The Westobou Vision,” hereafter referred to in these reports as Westobou or the Westobou Urban Area. The name Westobou is a Native American name for the Savannah River. This phrase is used to represent Augusta and North Augusta’s “shared vision” for the area that encourages a spirit of collaboration and cooperation across this river, devoid of political, special interest or proprietary boundaries.



Part 1: Executive Summary

The Augusta/North Augusta 2009 Master Plan for the Urban Area includes three documents, which are available, upon request, from Augusta Tomorrow, Inc.:

Part 1: Executive Summary-- Provides an overview of the Master Plan Final Report, highlighting its key themes and goals and introducing the Action Districts and Market Creation Projects.

Part 2: Final Report-- Provides a more detailed narrative of the Plan, including Context for the Plan, the Idea of Westobou, and the Action Districts within North Augusta and Augusta. The district sections also further describe and illustrate their respective Market Creation Project(s).

Part 3: Appendices-- Provides the most thorough examination of the Market Creation Projects, including an economic analyses and an illustrative timetable.



Looking east over the Urban Area and the Savannah River

The Executive Summary is organized into the following sections:

- 1. Purpose of the Plan**
- 2. Context**
- 3. The Idea of Westobou**
- 4. Westobou:**
The North Augusta Districts
- 5. Westobou:**
The Augusta Districts
- 6. Other Key Recommendations**
- 7. Next Steps**



1. Purpose of the Plan



The Augusta region and the encompassing counties and communities in both Georgia and South Carolina, are at a crossroads. Not since the early days of the 1840s, when city leaders decided to make this area into a major manufacturing center, the “Lowell of the South,” has the potential for a dramatic repositioning of the region been as high as it is today. National trends are taking the nation in new directions and this five-county region has the assets and attributes to be in the vanguard of that movement. This series of documents lay out a Master Plan for perhaps the most important of these, the Augusta/North Augusta Urban Area.

This is a twenty-year plan, aimed at guiding both short and long range decision making. To this end, the planning effort has taken a ‘fresh eyes’ look at issues and opportunities within both the Urban Area and its broader region. This Master Plan is built on the solid foundation of a number of prior master planning efforts completed and largely implemented over the past twenty-five years.

The Plan was also charged with finding common themes upon which the two communities could develop “a shared vision.” During the course of this work, a unified logo was developed. The word “Westobou,” the Native American word for the Savannah River, is used in the Plan to capture the regional, cross boundary nature of the area.

The Plan is designed to be inclusive and recognizes that the Urban Area is part of a larger five-county community, spanning two states, and that these two cities are tied to one another by the Savannah River.

The planning process has been marked by nearly one year of intense outreach effort, including five public meetings with an attendance of over 200 citizens, over 100 individual meetings, several input and briefing sessions with elected officials from both sides of the river, and various individual neighborhood meetings.



The Plan asserts that in order to realize the full potential of a place, one must understand its assets and attributes, as well as the obstacles and challenges, particularly those which are unique to the place. The strategy is then built on several core precepts, derived from the national, regional and urban context within which Westobou exists.

These would:

Capitalize on the Local Energy...

The Plan builds on recent achievements and expressed aspirations of the area's key stakeholders, as well as the energy that many individual citizens and interest groups are pouring into current projects and initiatives. These range from 'bricks and mortar' development to program expansion within the high-technology/health sciences community, to new downtown retail and dining, to the birth of the Westobou Festival, to large scale neighborhood improvement activities.



The 13th Street Bridge crossing over the Savannah River to connect North Augusta, SC and Augusta, GA



Hammond's Ferry 'New Urbanist' development in North Augusta



"Amen Corner" at the Masters Tournament

Let History repeat itself...

The Plan uses history as a guide and as an inspiration. These two cities, Augusta and North Augusta, share a history of reinvention. Augusta spent nearly 100 years as a small town, before it reinvented itself as a major manufacturing center, then, yet again as a nationally known recreation/holiday destination. North Augusta literally had to abandon its flood-prone, original town site, Hamburg, and start anew, atop the bluff, in order to prosper. Conditions today are right for rekindling this inventive spirit and tradition.

Tap its National Reputation, Assets and Emerging Opportunities...

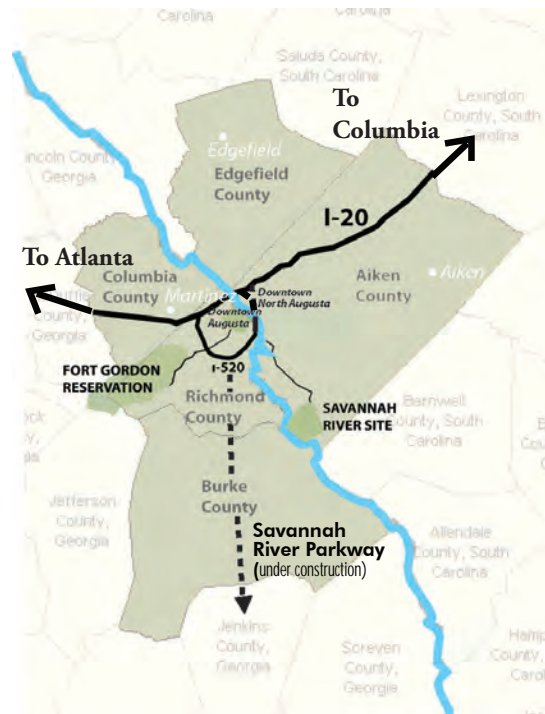
Augusta, with its association with the Masters Golf Tournament, one of the world's premier sporting events, is known favorably throughout the world. Both Augusta and North Augusta provide venues for national and regional sporting events. With its natural, historic and cultural amenities and its mild climate, Westobou can become a very attractive alternative to large cities or harsher climates. The so-called "Half back" movement could catalyze dramatic growth in the retirement living sector.

The area is well connected by roadways east and west to Columbia, Atlanta and beyond. Efforts to create equally good north/south connections must be encouraged. With the emerging need for more sustainable development policies, passenger rail service, particularly to Atlanta and Columbus must be reconsidered.

Nationally and internationally, the trend is toward a greater focus on creating jobs in high-technology, sustainable development and the health sciences sectors. Augusta has the resources to develop the higher education facilities to produce people who can grow these sectors in the area.

The Savannah River, a major east coast river, defines much of the Georgia/South Carolina line and gave reason to settle in this area to begin with. It remains the single most defining element of Westobou and its region. The river's comprehensive, coordinated and balanced management must be given very high priority.

Within the Five County Region



Recognize that the Westobou Urban Area is part of a Larger Five-County Region...

Westobou is but one component of the larger five-county region, which together make this economic, environmental, social and cultural setting viable and thriving. While the Westobou Urban Area is the primary venue for cultural and entertainment activities and the regional business center, despite having many jobs are located here, most of the people (and the individual wealth) live outside the Urban Area. Most of the natural amenities of the region lie outside the Urban Area. Most retail activity is found elsewhere. Several major employers, the Savannah River Site and Fort Gordon for example, are at the far reaches of the region. Several other towns: Aiken, Martinez, Edgefield, Hephzibah and others, have their own assets, issues, politics and agendas.

Economically, the region is strong. In the future, however, continued uncoordinated growth may not be economically viable and certainly not environmentally responsible. Growth management is a critical issue, and, given the political structure of Richmond County in particular, should be a very high priority.



Define the Westobou Urban Area With an Eye to a Prosperous Future...

Ultimately, this is a master plan for the joint Urban Area of Augusta and North Augusta. That these two cities, located in two different states and often having different views on matters of mutual interest, have recognized the need for a coordinated planning effort, is a remarkable thing. There is insight here. Given our continually contracting world, a more inclusive and more regional approach to planning and decision-making is in the best interest of both cities. Open and continuous communication is key.

The boundary for Westobou is elastic, and careful consideration was given to its limits. Across the globe, the best urban areas are compact, high-density and walkable. There is much underutilized land in both communities, so the balance between excess land and the ability to fill it becomes a major issue.

For the Urban Area to be healthy, a large and diverse downtown residential population is essential. Many opportunities exist to create exciting new urban apartments in both downtowns. Smaller households are the norm in core urban centers. However, Westobou is blessed with a ring of older residential neighborhoods around it, parts of which are within walking distance of the downtown core.



North Augusta's downtown along Georgia Avenue



Laney Walker, one of Augusta's traditional neighborhoods



The Augusta River Walk and amphitheater on the Savannah River

In the peripheral residential neighborhoods of Laney Walker, East Augusta, Harrisburg, and Historic North Augusta, while making general recommendations for each, the Plan focuses on those areas within each neighborhood that are most proximate to the amenity of river, canal and the traditional downtown. This would reinforce the densification of the Urban Area while providing a variety of housing for a diverse range of household types and income levels.

2. Context for the Plan

The Urban Area's Attributes

The Westobou Urban Area lies within a unique physical setting, on a quiet stretch of a majestic river, with cascades and falls a few miles to the north, Lake Olmstead to the west, the Phinizy Swamp to the east, and peppered all round with brick ponds. Key building blocks include:

The Savannah River, Canals and Ponds

An essential aspect of the Urban Area, its vast water amenities offer more potential for framing new directions here in Westobou than in most other cities. The historic Augusta Canal system commands a prominent place within the urban core and connects the city to the natural beauty of the Savannah River environment.

Augusta's Health Sciences Industry

The medical area, the largest employer in the region, can be the catalyst for much more economic growth in the Urban Area.

Broad Street

Laid out in 1738 by General James E. Oglethorpe initially as both thoroughfare and parade ground, the 160 foot right-of-way is one of the widest streets in America. The proportions of this street offer the opportunity to realize a true urban place, not only for cars, but for a myriad of uses and activities, with



An aerial view of the Urban Area

its character changing as one travels its one mile plus length.

Augusta's Urban Grid and North Augusta's Georgia Ave

The downtown grid, extending from East Boundary to 13th Street and from the river back to beyond Telfair Street, defines Augusta as a city. Georgia Avenue with its formal, 'main street layout' and, with the new Municipal Building at one end and historic

Lookaway Hall at the other, gives North Augusta the framework for developing a classic southern town center.

Many Significant Historic Buildings

The historic building stock stands as a defining element of the urban fabric of both cities. In North Augusta, Lookaway Hall commands the top of Georgia Avenue, surrounded by other historic nineteenth century residences. In Augusta,



Broad Street is largely intact, as is the Old Towne neighborhood and much of the Greene Street/Telfair Street area, and Harrisburg.

Support for Arts, Heritage and Culture

There is a genuine arts scene within the Urban Area. Augusta is home to the Morris Museum of Art, with one of the most significant collections of the work of southern artists found anywhere. There are active opera, ballet, theater and symphony companies. A new major event, the Westobou Arts Festival was successfully kicked-off last year. The Augusta Canal National Heritage Area Visitor Center and canal boat tours present the area's industrial heritage in interactive ways.

National and Regional Sports Venues

Augusta has its golf mystique. The area's year-round mild climate has attracted other outdoor activities, including organized rowing, equestrian and a variety of other team events. Exploration of its nearby natural areas is particularly accessible via the riverway and canal system.

Greenways and Open Space

The basic framework exists such that Westobou can link its various attractions, the regional community and the surrounding natural environment.

The Urban Area's Obstacles and Challenges

While both cities have much that is positive, both have problems in the existing built environment, including:

Deteriorating Urban Fabric

Each city has its share of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, vacant parcels and 'Suburban' style replacement structures.

Obsolete Housing

Houses, which are too small and present poor layouts, do not meet today's market demands. Others are too large for their lots, not allowing adequate outdoor play/gardening space, while some non-code compliant structures are too costly to bring into compliance.

Problematic Public Infrastructure

Areas that otherwise have attributes that would make them highly desirable development sites are marred by power lines and substations along the canal and railroad tracks bisecting the city or blocking greenway expansion. The J.C. Calhoun Expressway bisects historic Harrisburg and the Augusta canal system, creating a barrier to the medical area's expansion toward the downtown. Augusta's levee cuts the city of Augusta off from having direct and

open access to its downtown riverfront. In North Augusta, the US 1/Martintown Road interchange area prevents easy and logical access to downtown Georgia Avenue and hampers growth in this area.

Lack of Organized Open Space Network

Augusta's disjointed open space reduces people's desire to move downtown. While there are a number of small parks and playgrounds scattered throughout, they are not joined in any discernible network or system. There is also the need to develop a cross-river open space pathway system that can better connect the two cities.

Implementation issues

The fact is that for more than a century, there has been little organized, cooperative interaction at the governmental level between the two cities. In the case of Augusta, there is often conflict among urban and suburban interests. Augusta's consolidated government has not promoted a strong coordinated redevelopment capability.

A major purpose of this Master Plan is to establish a foundation on which these issues and opportunities can begin to be addressed.



3. The Idea of Westobou

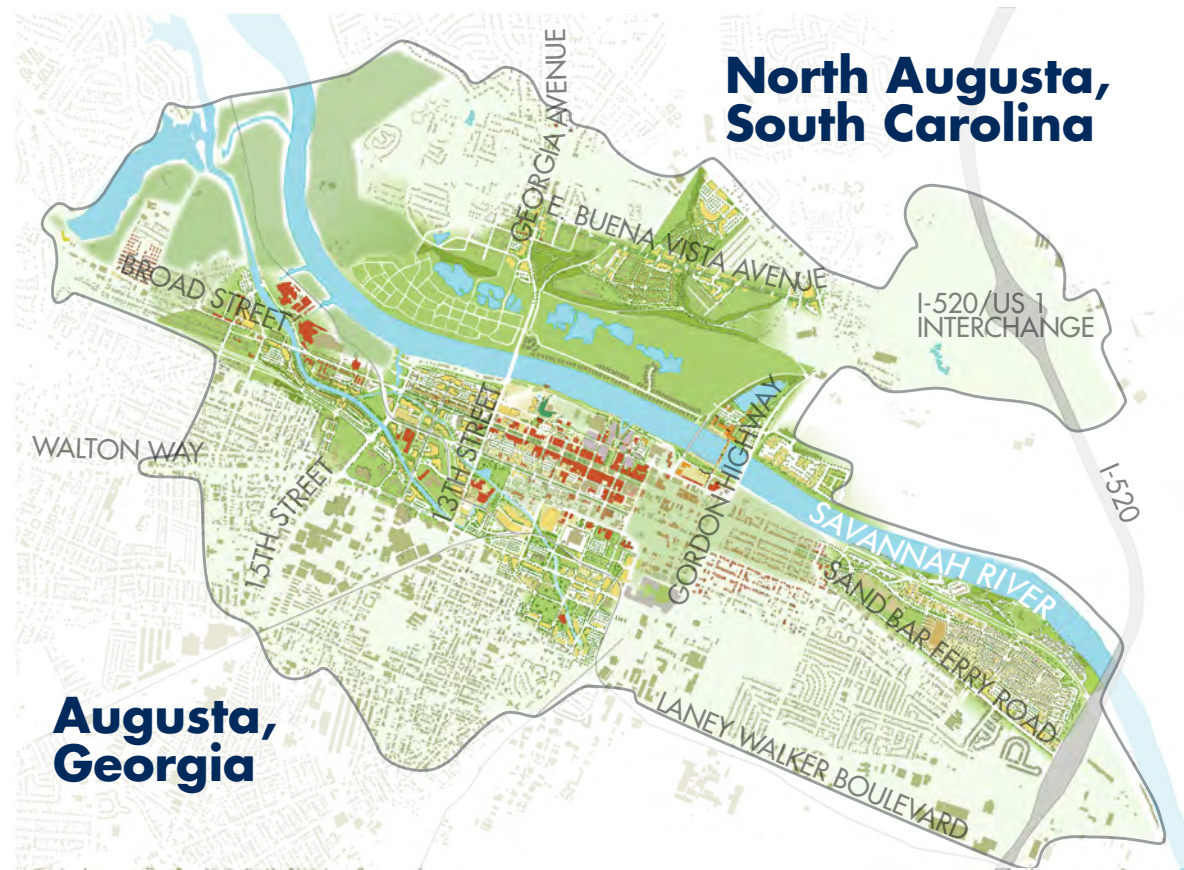
This joint planning effort by Augusta and North Augusta represents a spirit and a willingness of these communities to set aside political boundaries and to see the five-county region and the Urban Area as a whole. Westobou, the Native American word for the Savannah River, spans both sides of the river. The shared vision of this plan is built upon three overarching goals for the Westobou Urban Area:

Linked Garden Cities...
in the midst of a green and natural region with a green environment, waterfront, recreation, and proximity to nature.

A Center for Learning and Innovation...
providing extraordinary health services, research, science, and education.

A Vibrant Place to Live, Work and Play...
with high-quality in-town living, culture, and arts.

Westobou Urban Area Site Plan



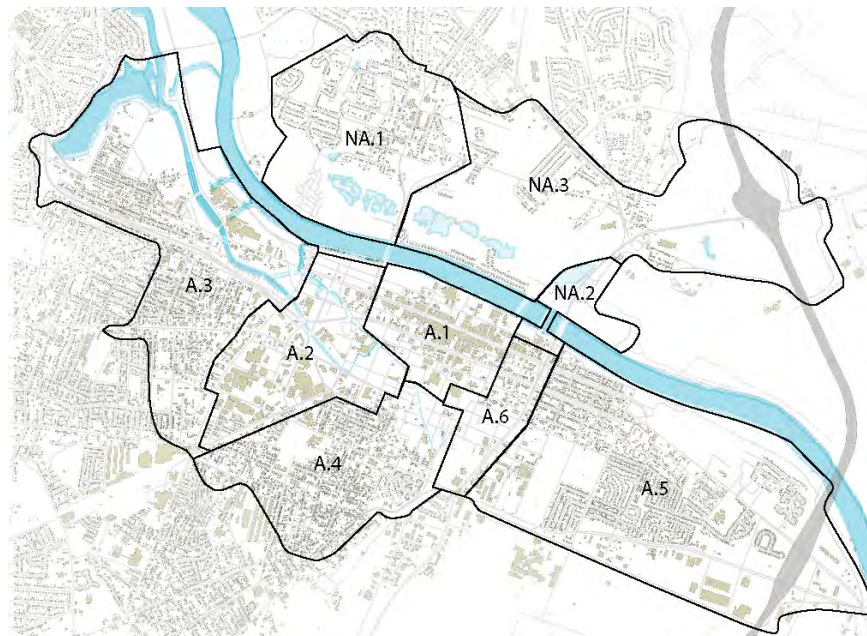
The organizational map of Action Districts below provides the framework for introducing assets, potential projects and potential champions for each project and initiative called for in this Master Plan.

Each district and their projects are introduced in Sections 4 and 5 on the following pages.

Within each district key projects and initiatives are recommended. In most districts, a cluster of individual districts are identified and illustrated as having strong “market creation” value. These are defined as projects that typically can:

1. Create a **strong regional attraction** that brings people back downtown.
2. Offer a **new product or service** for the Urban Area that’s proven economically viable and sustainable in similar size market areas.
3. Demonstrate a **high degree of creativity and innovation** leading to broader recognition and ‘branding’ of the Urban Area (the “WOW” factor).
4. Offer the potential to bring the two cities and their communities to a new level of **economic and social vitality and collaboration**.
5. Build **connections to community and other initiatives** via gateways, open space nodes and greenways.
6. Support **existing projects** and spawn new initiatives.
7. Reinforce the **core themes**.

Westobou Action Districts



North Augusta

- NA.1:** Historic North Augusta
- NA.2:** River Crossing/ Hamburg
- NA.3:** East Buena Vista/ I-520 Gateway

Augusta

- A.1:** Downtown Core
- A.2:** Medical District
- A.3:** Harrisburg
- A.4:** Laney Walker/ Bethlehem
- A.5:** Olde Towne/East of East Boundary
- A.6:** East End Higher Education/Civic District



4. Westobou *The North Augusta Districts*



HISTORIC NORTH AUGUSTA

Historic North Augusta was developed as a planned new town in the late 1800s, largely

residential, with a traditional town “Main Street” along Georgia Avenue, and planned parks. An exciting ‘New Urbanist’ community is just completing its first phase of development down the bluff on the riverfront.

The Plan proposes that Georgia Avenue be made more pedestrian-friendly and that a recognizable **North Augusta Town Center** be built as a Market Creation Project around a plaza fronting the new Municipal Center. The Plan supports other area initiatives, including upgrading the neighborhood’s infrastructure; new open-space initiatives along the river and up into the ravines; updated urban design guidelines; and a new pedestrian/bike bridge or dedicated lanes on the 13th Street Bridge.

Champions include the City of North Augusta; North Augusta 2000, a non-profit, citizen-led group; and a number of private developers active in the area.



RIVER CROSSING/ HAMBURG

This district spans the Savannah River between an active railway corridor to

the west and north and along the Gordon Highway Bridge to the east. It is the site of North Augusta’s predecessor, the original Hamburg settlement. It is only within the past twenty years that the river has been sufficiently controlled so that the area can be safely redeveloped. The river between the 6th Street Railroad and Gordon Highway Bridges is currently activated by the Augusta Marina and park just across the river.

This is area believed to be the best location for the two cities to reach across the river and work together in joint development of the banks and its river span to realize an exciting recreation, retail and entertainment destination. A Market Creation Project, **Westobou Crossing**, can foster a lasting synergy between the two cities.

Champions include the governments of both cities and possibly, private developers of adjacent proposed projects, i.e. Kingery Landing and the Pension Fund Site.



EAST BUENA VISTA/ I-520 GATEWAY

This district is strategically located between Georgia Avenue and the

US 1/I-520 corridor. A well-planned development atop the bluff could have a major positive impact on the city. The planned roadway upgrades of East Buena Vista Avenue and the US 1 interchange can make it an attractive new development corridor. However, several sub-standard neighborhoods are in need of revitalization.

With the completion of the final I-520 segment, from US 1 to I-20, the US 1 corridor will become a major gateway into both North Augusta and Augusta in need of thoughtful and enforceable design guidelines. The extensive frontage along East Martintown Road beckons large-scale retail center development.

While this Master Plan document does not identify an illustrative Market Creation Project in this district, when major property comes onto the market, a very significant opportunity for residential and commercial development could reposition this entire area.

The City of North Augusta should continue to give this area’s redevelopment very high priority.

North Augusta Town Center



MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN RIVER CROSSING/HAMBURG

By tying the North Augusta and Augusta communities together with new development that literally spans the river, a destination attraction for both cities could be created. The highlight of the development would be a pedestrian/bike bridge, spanning the river and wide enough to host on-going activities and events. In North Augusta, the long abandoned site of historic Hamburg would be remade into an inviting, recreation-themed waterfront community of high density, mixed-uses including housing, restaurants, retail, boat dock and fishing venue in the former borrow pit.

MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN HISTORIC NORTH AUGUSTA

The realization of the new Municipal Center at the foot of Georgia Avenue, where it curves eastward to align with the bridge into Augusta, forms a near-perfect visual southern gateway to historic Georgia Avenue and the downtown commercial area. Within this area, atop the Savannah River Bluff, a highly identifiable, much needed, new Town Center can be created, by extending the public open-space fronting the new Municipal Center northward to create a new public common around which development can occur.

Westobou Crossing



5. Westobou *The Augusta Districts*



DOWNTOWN CORE

This is the region's cultural heart and is a major employment center. The plan proposes

three new Market Creation Projects here, which, together with other worthy efforts, proposed and complete, create a viable, walkable network of destination attractions. These include: the **Westobou Arts Center**, a proposed performing arts venue situated on the river's edge; **Marbury Village**, a vibrant urban commercial/residential mixed-use initiative that creates a stepping stone between the medical area and the Downtown Core. and the **Augusta Canal Park Neighborhood**, significant residential development situated around a significant, new, large central park and the Third Level Canal. The Plan also supports the relocation of the GreenJackets ball park downtown, under specified conditions.

Public champions include: the Downtown Development Authority, the Business Improvement District (BID), the Mayor and Commissioners, city departments, and state leaders. Potential private sector champions include: the Downtown Business Alliance, downtown property owners, tenants, and individual entrepreneurs. Where the district intersects with the canals, the Augusta Canal Authority is the logical leader.



MEDICAL DISTRICT

The medical area is the largest employer in the region and no other area has equal potential

to provide a strong and sustainable economic engine for the city at large. The goal is to develop the area, bounded by Walton Way, 10th, 15th and Reynolds Streets, into a powerful entity that competes on the national level for both health sciences research and treatment.

The mills and canal system provide an attractive amenity to lure health sciences development into a park setting. Broad Street and St. Sebastian Way are key access corridors between the medical area and downtown. The plan calls for a massive new Market Creation Project, **St. Sebastian Health Sciences Park**, which illustrates key components of this concept.

To realize the full potential of this Medical District, commitments and coordinated actions are required at the highest levels of the public, the medical and business sectors. A consortium should be built to define and implement this initiative. Champions include: the Mayor, commissioner representative, the head of the state delegation, the MCG President, the Chair of Augusta Tomorrow, Inc. and Board of Regents. As much of the area lies within the Augusta Canal National Heritage Corridor, the Canal Authority should also play a lead role.



HARRISBURG

This historic neighborhood includes portions of the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area, including the

First Level Canal, the King and Sibley Mills, Chaffee Park, rows of original worker housing, churches, and, on Broad Street, remnants of the original village center. Olmstead Park and the existing Augusta GreenJackets baseball park are in this neighborhood. Attracting new working households, oriented to the medical area, is a key objective.

A Market Creation Project, the **Harrisburg Canal Village**, proposes aggressive neighborhood revitalization along the First Level Canal and Broad Street, building off of existing historic structures. The Plan also calls for urban design guidelines to protect this residential area from further encroachment; a program of infrastructure improvements; reuse of the Sibley Mill; a reuse plan for the present GreenJackets Park; reconfiguration of the J.C. Calhoun Expressway; relocation of overhead power lines; and streetscape improvements on the main corridors.

Champions include: the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, the Harrisburg Neighborhood Association, local not-for-profits, 'faith-based' groups, the Kroc Foundation and private developers. The medical area should limit their development activities in this area and become a steward of the neighborhood. Given the location, the Augusta Canal Authority would have a lead role.



LANEY WALKER/ BETHLEHEM

In these historic working class neighborhoods, characterized by small lots and obsolete housing stock, building deterioration and abandonment is common. The challenge is to reinvent the area such that modern needs can be met at an affordable price, and that the quality of the built product is good and lasting.

The Plan supports the city's recent master plan for this neighborhood. A proposed Market Creation Project, **Dyess Park Canal Village**, builds on the attributes of the existing canal and park settings. Additional recommendations include gateway streetscape improvements; private and not-for-profit housing development; and the rehabilitation and reuse of the key historic structures.

The role of champions is critical here. Augusta's Department of Housing and Community Development is already involved, with a new master plan for the area and the acquisition of property for redevelopment. The Augusta Neighborhood Investment Corporation (ANIC) is actively purchasing and developing whole blocks. A number of 'faith-based' groups are actively investing in the neighborhood now. Along the canal, the Augusta Canal Authority should have a lead role in this ambitious initiative.



OLDE TOWNE/ EAST OF EAST BOUNDARY

This area sits on the eastern end of the Urban Area and runs from the Gordon Highway eastward to I-520 and from Laney Walker Boulevard north to the Savannah River. Old Towne is a beautiful, historic neighborhood with a diversity of house types and styles. The Plan calls for the creation of a new eastern "gateway" with roadway and streetscape improvements along Sand Bar Ferry Road, East Boundary, Laney Walker Boulevard, and a possible Broad Street extension along the levee. A new, auto-oriented, overlay commercial zone is recommended along Laney Walker Boulevard, including the existing Exchange Club fairgrounds.

The area north of Sand Bar Ferry Road can be transformed into a unique recreation-oriented, new community. The proposed **Sand Bar Ferry Riverside** Market Creation Project would provide both a waterfront and agricultural character on the edge of Augusta's Urban Area.

Champions include: the city, largely through its Housing and Community Development and the Recreation departments; the Augusta Housing Authority; neighborhood churches; and a number of possible special interest groups, such as the Exchange Club, Golden Harvest and private ventures.



EAST END HIGHER EDUCATION/ CIVIC DISTRICT

The riverfront lies at its northern edge of this district and Broad Street connects it directly to downtown. There is much underdeveloped land and many underutilized buildings here, including the former Richmond Academy, which can be reused.

Augusta needs more of a college/university campus community in or adjacent its downtown core. Two themes emerge: performing arts and health/environmental science technology. Ideas include an expansion site for Augusta State University or for Paine College; an extension of Georgia Tech, a relocation site for an existing college, a new or infill campus for an independent college or institute. With the Gordon Highway and Laney Walker Boulevard within close proximity, this area has excellent access to the Savannah River Site, Fort Gordon and the Medical College of Georgia high-technology venues.

Champions should be found and a campaign to develop this initiative should be given high priority. Initially, a city-driven effort, it would ultimately require significant support from the reaches of the higher education industry.

Westobou Arts Center



MARKET CREATION PROJECTS IN THE DOWNTOWN CORE

Set on the Savannah River, the Westobou Arts Center, which is surrounded by history and is adjacent to the Augusta Convention Center, the new Trade, Exhibit and Event Center and the Augusta Common, offers a unique opportunity for a state-of-the-art regional and national destination in the Urban Area. At the same time, Marbury Village revitalizes three blocks of Broad Street (10th to 13th Street) into a unique and exciting up-scale living, working, and retail environment within Augusta's downtown core. Finally, the creation of a large central park between downtown and the emerging Third Level Canal redevelopment area and the medical area would act as both a connector and a catalyst to surrounding development.

Marbury Village



Augusta Canal Park Neighborhood



St. Sebastian Health Sciences Park



MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN THE MEDICAL DISTRICT

The city, indeed the county and the region, joined with the health sciences community, could realize a cutting edge, nationally significant, mixed-use health sciences park on the scale of University of California San Francisco's Mission Bay in this area of underutilized land between the present medical area and the downtown core.

MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN HARRISBURG

The First Level Canal, as it runs from Chaffee Park eastward to the historic and iconic Butt Bridge, offers nearly a mile of high quality waterfront. An up-scale, European-styled canal village with the canal-bordered, tree-lined path, and near continuous row housing would be part of the greenway network connecting to downtown. At Broad Street, the village would flow into the historic mill scene with a new neighborhood center of mixed historic and site-appropriate, new construction.

Harrisburg Canal Village



Dyess Park Canal Village



MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN LANEY WALKER/BETHLEHEM

Residential development around Dyess Park and the Third Level Canal will create a high-quality affordable neighborhood of renovated and new housing at the point most proximate to the downtown core and at the eastern terminus of the historic canal system. The project would also capitalize on the presence of the new Judicial Center to create a new neighborhood commercial center.

MARKET CREATION PROJECT IN OLDE TOWNE/EAST OF EAST BOUNDARY

This project would create a new, regional, multi-use open space destination at the eastern edge of the Augusta downtown core, including a 'New Urbanist' village with green, waterfront park, fields and rural amenities in this struggling neighborhood. There is nearly a mile of forgotten, underdeveloped Savannah River waterfront in this neighborhood and the area between Sand Bar Ferry Road and the levee, which is underutilized and cries out for higher and better uses.

Sand Bar Ferry Village



6. Other Key Recommendations

Key recommendations are organized by geographical hierarchy as follows:

Within the Southeast

Decisions and actions outside the five-county region will dramatically impact the growth and development of the Urban Area. In order to become more attractive to businesses and people from outside the region, several big initiatives appear obvious:

Make the North/South Interstate Connection

With the construction of a limited access highway from Savannah to Augusta, a new interstate connection from I-520 north to I-85 and beyond would simultaneously alleviate through-traffic burdens on Atlanta and position Augusta for extensive new development.

Deal with the Inter-City/Interstate Rail Service

As rail line relocation is impractical in the foreseeable future within the Urban Area, the plan recommends at least two new separated grade crossings between St. Sebastian Way and 13th Street and at 10th Street; installation of technology to create a 'no whistle zone' within the Urban Area; as well as track and roadbed improvements to mitigate vibration.

The city and state should consider re-establishing passenger rail service to Atlanta and Columbia from the Augusta/North Augusta Urban Area, assuming that the Augusta metropolitan area is a growth region that would justify commitment and investment in the long run.

Promote Development of New and Expanded Institutions of Higher Learning

City and state agencies should actively promote within Georgia and South Carolina and nationally, Westobou as a superior site for public and private higher education development.

Capitalize on the “Half Back Movement”

Many people who initially retired to Florida, are moving back a bit northward, where they are less bothered by hurricanes, summer heat, traffic and overdevelopment. This area is also a lot closer to friends and loved ones up north.

Manage the Savannah River

The Savannah River is a fragile and essential resource which must be managed from its mountain source to the Atlantic Ocean. Current use and future development must be coordinated and monitored to preserve its existing assets, while addressing the needs of future generations.

Brand it as a Special Southern Place

The Urban Area can become a very well-known setting within this central segment of the Savannah River basin. The exotic word *Westobou*, a Native-American word for the Savannah River, encompasses the spirit of the two communities. It is memorable and evocative, while place and activity neutral. It flows well off the tongue and carries a lot of positive energy.



Within the Five-County Region

The Urban Area is the focus, but this Plan recognizes that it is only one part of a greater whole. Rational planning and development of the entire five-county region is necessary to the health and benefit of all. Initiatives include:

Enhance Access Corridors and Gateways into the Urban Area

Key gateways into the Westobou Urban Area are found in every direction and need attention in terms of the “view from the road” of both public and environments. Key gateways include:

- *Riverwatch Parkway*
- *Walton Way/ Wheeler Road*
- *Gordon Highway*
- *Sand Bar Ferry Road*
- *Laney Walker East*
- *I-520/ US 1 Corridor*
- *Georgia Avenue/13th Street*

All are in need of improvements and enforceable guidelines for adjacent development.

Reinforce Fort Gordon and Savannah River Site Collaborations

These are fantastic resources on which to build the area's economic future and their highly educated and energetic community base enriches the region.

Exploit the Technology Connection

At least four nationally recognized centers of science and technology lie within the region and are readily accessible to the Urban Area:

- *The Augusta medical area*, led by the Medical College of Georgia
- *The Savannah River Site*, one of the nation's leaders in nuclear physics
- *The US Army facility at Fort Gordon*, home of the Army Signal Corps and Homeland Security's NSA
- *The Southeastern Natural Science Academy*, a leader in environmental sciences at Phinizy Swamp

Collaborations can help redefine the area and the region.

Address South Augusta's Needs

Augusta, GA needs a comprehensive growth management plan to provide better community services and develop stronger neighborhood/community nodes. The Regency Mall area is strategically located and its lack of redevelopment success has become a source of frustration and tension in the community. The city should act to catalyze the redevelopment of this site as quickly as possible.

In the Urban Area, Collaboration Is Key...

This area, while rich in so many ways, is unlike some other parts of the country, indeed, even other parts of this very region, where aggressive economic development is occurring seemingly spontaneously, and of its own accord. The stakeholders of this Urban Area must work in coordinated fashion over the coming years to weave the old with the new in an urban tapestry that will create its own sustainable, high quality market sector that attracts people and investment. Together, the initiatives, listed below, constitute a broad framework for improvement throughout the Urban Area.

Integrated Green Corridors and Nodes

Public open space is the loom upon which Westobou's urban design plan is woven. Renovation of existing parks, new parks, places and plazas, with connection via greenways, bike routes and streetscaping is a most critical task for the Urban Area.

More and better Housing Stock

Ultimately, the health and vibrancy of the area requires significantly more households living in Westobou. Renovation programs, infill projects, and new development will help to bolster the area's supply and diversity of housing options.

Accelerated Neighborhood Stabilization and Improvement

Zoning updates and enforcement, code compliance, improved safety, security and social services should be applied as appropriate to neighborhoods within the Urban Area. This includes sensitivity to the findings and recommendations of the most recent comprehensive plans for the two cities, as well, as individual plans for specific neighborhoods.

Cooperative Management of the Urban Area Development Process

Both action and permitting programs such as site assembly assistance, strengthened regulations in form-based zoning code, architectural and open parcel design guidelines, as well as programs for the 'Greening of the Urban Area,' must be facilitated to realize the goals and projects of the Plan.

Relocation/Modification/Removal of Problematic Public Infrastructure

Issues regarding overhead electrical high-tension lines and substations, highway interchanges, the eastern end of the J.C. Calhoun Expressway, and the railroad right-of-way must be addressed within the Urban Area.

Comprehensive Transportation Planning Review

A number of the Plan's recommendations require adjustments and improvements to the existing roadway networks. There is also a need to review the existing public transportation system service to and within the downtown, including a possible new public transportation loop through the Urban Area. Bicycle and other alternative means of transportation need to be further developed. The need for public parking will increase.

Disruption by rail traffic will worsen if the Urban Area develops as called for in this Plan and this long-standing issue must be addressed. A re-examination of truck and vehicular circulation through the downtown core, especially along Reynolds Street, needs to be conducted.

Taken together, there is a real need to examine the transportation system within the Urban Area. This should be done in a comprehensive fashion, as soon as possible, and should be closely coordinated with the other transportation planning efforts in the region.



7. Next Steps

Implementation Steps

The Master Plan is an integrated, strategic document that presents a series of initiatives, crafted through a broadly consultative process, to set new long-range directions for the region and its cities. The Plan is substantial and ambitious. Both Augusta and North Augusta need to be daring and vigilant to avoid the natural tendency to defer these actions in favor of more acute operational needs that would lessen the ability of the Urban Area to reach its full potential. In order to move these ideas into implementation, the following next steps are recommended:

1 City governments in Augusta and North Augusta should approve and adopt the 2009 Augusta/North Augusta Master Plan for the Urban Area. The Urban Area Master Plan should be treated as an amendment to each community's master plan. The approval and adoption should go beyond acknowledgement of the paper content of the Plan, as governments on both sides of the Savannah River pro-actively encourage coordinated public and private actions to make the proposals of the plan a reality. This includes not only support of project-specific initiatives but also careful review of public and private actions to insure that they support and do not adversely affect the recommended directions in each action district and related to each Market Creation Project.

2 The City of Augusta should create a “development coordinator” position or capability to advocate for the development initiatives recommended by the plan and to facilitate public and private commitments in support of the plan. This type of position would serve as the “glue” or catalyst to move implementation forward, recognizing that all existing special purpose entities and agencies have their own defined agendas and that almost none of them are clearly positioned to do this job across the broad scope of actions recommended by the plan. Consideration should be given to the potential for Augusta Tomorrow, Inc. as the primary funding source of and advocate for the current plan, to serve in or provide direct support to this development coordination role.

3 The City of North Augusta, substantially smaller in size and scale than Augusta, should review with care its staff capability to make sure that it has the appropriate staff support to serve as development coordinator for its parts of the plan. Although current staff have ably supported the current Master Plan and have advocated effectively for its proposals, the requirements of implementation may require a larger staff commitment.

4 On-going oversight is essential. There certainly is the need for a joint planning council who meet regularly to review the status of the individual efforts. This could be a continuation of the Master Plan Advisory Committee, which included non-Augusta Tomorrow, Inc. members from both sides of the river. This oversight role needs to be woven tightly into the planning and development processes of both cities.

5 Both Augusta and North Augusta should commit initial “seed funding” to take the highest priority proposals in their jurisdiction from their current conceptual levels into more concrete implementation proposals. For both communities, this will involve more definitive plans and designs, more concrete measures to control and guide growth, and, in many instances, the ability to assemble land or to achieve cooperative public and private party actions for complex developments.

6 The parties should push beyond the published plan to identify the appropriate individuals, entities, and organizations that can exercise appropriate leadership to turn concepts into reality. As just one example, the Augusta Canal Authority has stated its interest in playing a leadership role for several of the Augusta land use and development initiatives that overlap with the Augusta Canal (i.e. Augusta Canal Park Neighborhood, St. Sebastian Way, Harrisburg, Dyess Park). While there are a number of interested groups, most do not have the mandate, the staff or the expertise to undertake these projects on their own. So, for many of the other initiatives in both communities, there is not a single “lead or coordinating entity,” as will most likely be required, to see the project ideas realized.

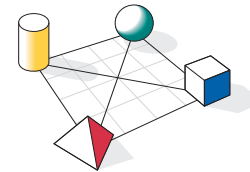
7 The communities should define priorities among the project proposals and should direct their resources towards implementation in an orderly way. The establishment of priorities is, to a degree, beyond the scope of the current assignment, as it represents a judgment that must balance costs, risks, and civic benefits in a way that is uniquely suited to the political process. Several types of priorities could be given, and each community must decide which of the following types of criteria will be paramount:

- Projects which have the *strongest economic benefit and multiplier effect* for larger community benefit, such as the Performing Arts Center, Marbury Village and St. Sebastian Health Sciences Park.
- Projects the *involve joint benefit* to the two communities and are, thus, in the spirit of this cooperative plan, such as the comprehensive greenway network, the Urban Area Transportation Planning Review and Westobou Crossing.
- Projects that *address acute community needs of population groups or distressed areas*, such as along Sand Bar Ferry Road, at Dyess Village and in Harrisburg or along East Buena Vista Avenue.

- Projects that can *attract the most credible and sustained champions* who can provide leadership through the design and implementation process, such as the GreenJackets Ball Park relocation to downtown or the established developer community in Laney Walker.



Master Planning Team



I C O N
a r c h i t e c t u r e

ICON Architecture, Inc.

Jonathan S. Lane, Principal-In-Charge
John R. Shields, Project Director
Michelle Apigian, Project Coordinator
Jennifer Linger, Project Urban Designer/ Planner
Caitlin Bowler, Project Urban Designer/Planner

George Henry George

Clifton Henry, Economic Consultant

The Woodhurst Partnership

Robert S. Woodhurst, Associate Architect

Slate Blue Design

Catherine Stramer, Graphic Design

Amy Rogovich, Rendering

