

# Agricultural Focus

## SUMMARY

This Community Transformation Strategy is built around an agricultural-based economy, where residents, businesses and community stakeholders are dependent on the success and growth of a particular agricultural industry in their area. This strategy should seek a balanced approach to grow and to support an already existing economic climate that is unique to your region of the state. Consider how your downtown can work to support this economy through business development, business retention, educational programming and/or volunteer initiatives.

## KEY DESCRIPTORS

Locally grown, locally raised, plants and animals, agri-tourism, food production, packaging, farms, farmers' market, community supported agriculture, big industry, Georgia grown, makers, USDA, insurance, farm-to-table, machinery, stock shows, animal auctions, fairs and festivals, community identity, regionalism and forestry.



What you see depends on how you see the world. To most people, this is just dirt. To a farmer, it's potential."

– Doe Zantamata

## PROS

- This strategy takes advantage of existing regional resources.
- This strategy focuses on fresh food and fresh products.
- This strategy aims to eliminate food deserts.
- It supports locally made, locally grown products.

## CONS

- Water quality may present concerns.
- A lack of economic diversity can present obstacles.
- An agricultural strategy is vulnerable to environmental forces.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- This strategy requires a diverse business mix to support the local economy in a holistic way.
- You need to educate all entities on the benefits of regionalism.
- An agriculture-based strategy can create entrepreneurial opportunities for under-engaged populations.
- Not all agricultural based businesses are food driven. (e.g., timber, cotton, etc.)

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- What local products are grown or made in my community?
- What existing business currently serve the agricultural economy, or could they be adapted to do so?
- How can we secure the long-term sustainability of this industry?

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# FOUR-POINT APPROACH ACTIVITIES

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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- Encourage the development of co-op and CSA type of businesses.
- Develop a community garden.
- Incentivize the re-location or activation of business that support the agricultural economy.
- Incentivize sustainable agricultural practices
- Assist in the activation of businesses that specialize in farm-to-table or a makers' market.
- Offer a communal kitchen space for start-up businesses.
- Recruit a farm-to-table restaurant, serving locally sourced foods.
- Evaluate water resources to support hydroponics, fisheries, etc.
- Develop an online business directory highlighting businesses with locally made or grown products.

## DESIGN

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- Plant edible landscape elements in or around the downtown district.
- Encourage habitat creation through downtown landscaping.
- Offer locally made downtown amenities like bike racks, benches and planters.
- Create a physical environment to support a local farmers' market or makers' market, such as:
  - A pavilion, a large grassy area or gravel sites
  - Public restrooms
  - Gathering spaces that include benches and tables
- Use rainwater harvesting to irrigate downtown vegetation.
- Develop a public arts program which ties in to the agricultural history of the community and broader region.

## PROMOTIONS

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- Offer a local wildlife or locally grown dinner downtown as a fundraising event.
- Create an edible garden of the month club and use local farms to help talk about best practices for growing fruits and vegetables in your region of the state.
- Work regionally to host an agricultural fair or livestock show.
- Host a touch a tractor/truck event downtown.
- Develop a locally grown or regionally grown logo specific to your community and market it as part of a comprehensive shop local campaign.
- Offer a weekly farmers market and encourage the market vendors to accept EBT recipients.
- Work regionally with partners to develop an online community calendar highlighting all agricultural based events and activities.
- Host an agricultural based event or festival focusing on a regionally grown product.
- Encourage experiential tourism with pumpkin patches or Christmas tree lots hosted downtown.

## ORGANIZATION

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- Develop variances that allow for small scale agricultural processing to take place downtown.
- Install irrigation meters.
- Sign up to participate in the Georgia Grown farm trail program.
- Recruit a representative of the local agricultural economy to serve on your Main Street program's board of directors.
- Partner with schools or educational institutions to develop programs highlighting the importance of the agricultural economy and the role that it has historically played in supporting and shaping the downtown. Use the information gathered to develop marketing materials and fun, collaborative pieces, such as a downtown coloring book to share your story.

# PARTNERS

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Future Farmers of America

Small Business Development Center

Community Development Block Grant

Georgia Grown

American Farm Bureau Federation

National Farmers Organization

4-H clubs

Georgia Department of Agriculture

Georgia Department of Economic Development

Georgia Farmer's Market Association

Locally established growers association

State, agricultural industry organizations

Cooperative Extension Service offices

Georgia Department of Natural Resources