



DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY Regular Board Meeting MEETING AGENDA
MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2025 - 10:00 AM
736 PARK NORTH BOULEVARD, SUITE 120 ♦ CLARKSTON, GEORGIA 30021
(404) 296-6489 ♦ WWW.CLARKSTONGA.GOV

Note: The Board of Directors may go into Closed/Executive Session to deliberate any item on this agenda as authorized by the Georgia Open Meetings Act, Georgia Government Code Chapter O.C.G.A. S 50-14-1.

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF THE 10/20/2025, AGENDA

IV. APPROVAL OF THE 09/08/2025, MEETING MINUTES

- a) 09/08/2025 Meeting Minutes

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any member of the public may address the Board during the time allotted for public comment. Each attendee will be allowed 3 minutes for comments at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The public comment period will be limited to 40 minutes, and it is not a time for dialogue. If your public comment contains a series of questions, please submit those to the Planning & Economic Development Director in writing. This will facilitate follow-up by the council or staff. The DDA desires to allow an opportunity for public comment; however, the business of the DDA must proceed in an orderly, timely manner.

VI. PRESENTATIONS

- a) Digital aspects of Passport to Clarkston Project presentation - BeSpoke
1. Sample Digital Flipbook Presentation
 2. Intake Form Presentation
- b) Service Agreement for Pass to Clarkston Digital Flipbook - BeSpoke

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- a) Discussion of rollout logistics for Clarkston Digital Flipbook

- b) Final review of the findings of the 2025 Clarkston Business Survey

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a) Strategic Visioning for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority

1. Review and discussion of the final strategic visioning report for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority
2. Discussion and potential adoption of final mission and vision
3. Phase 2 of Strategic Visioning Announcement

b) Joint Work Session with City Council – Discussion and Scheduling:

1. To finalize November 6, 2025, at 6:00p.m for a joint work session with City Council. Key discussion points will include the DDA’s status as a Component Unit of the City, reporting and accounting requirements, strategic partnerships for property development and acquisition, funding strategies for small business grants, DDA branding and logo development, economic development initiatives, the DDA mission and vision statement 2025 Business Survey Findings, and the Passport to Clarkston Project.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES OF A REGULAR BOARD MEETING
OF THE DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF CLARKSTON, GEORGIA
HELD BY TELECONFERENCE, ZOOM AUDIO/VIDEO
IN SAID CITY ON MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

On Monday, September 8, 2025 at 10:00 AM, the Downtown Development Authority of Clarkston, Georgia met in a Regular Board Meeting in-person and by teleconference, Zoom Audio/Video in said City. Mayor Beverly Burks called the meeting to order. The following members of the City Council were present: Vice Mayor Debra Johnson and Councilmembers Sharifa Adde; Yterenickia Bell; Jamie Carroll; Susan Hood; and Mark Perkins. Absent: None. The following City staff were present: ChaQuias Miller-Thornton (City Manager); Tomika R. Mitchell (City Clerk); Yolanda McGhee (Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer); Christine Hudson (Police Chief); Richard Edwards (Planning and Economic Development Director); and Laura Moore (City Attorney).

NOTE: Items appearing in these minutes are in the order they were discussed, not necessarily in the order they appeared on the agenda.

I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Director Garcia called the meeting to order at 900

II. ROLL CALL

The following board members were present: Chairperson Johnny Garcia, Vice chairperson Rezwan Amad, Treasurer Nebiyu Ermiyas, Secretary Adria Marshall, Director Beverly Burks and Director Akbar Lassi.

III. APPROVAL OF THE 9/8/2025, AGENDA

Adria M. motioned to add to the Proposal for the Passport to Clarkston Digital Flipbook Presentation to Old Business item B. Motion seconded by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M motioned to add a joint work session to discuss city real estate matters with Attorney Kyle Williams to New Business as item 7B. Motion was second by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M motioned to add a discussion of Amending the day and meeting time of the DDA Regular Scheduled Meetings to New Business as item 7C. The motion was seconded by Rezwan A. The aye votes were: 4, with nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

Adria M. motioned to approve the 9/82025 Agenda. The motion was seconded by Nebiyu E. The aye votes were: 4, with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE 8/11/2025, MEETING MINUTES

a) 8/11/25 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the 8/11/25 meeting minutes was made by Rezwan A. Motion seconded by Nebiyu E . The aye votes were:4 , with the nay votes: 0. Motion passed unanimously.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any member of the public may address the Board during the time allotted for public comment. Each attendee will be allowed 3 minutes for comments at the discretion of the Presiding Officer. The public comment period will be limited to 40 minutes, and it is not a time for dialogue. If your public comment contains a series of questions, please submit those to the Planning & Economic Development Director in writing. This will facilitate follow-up by the council or staff. The DDA desires to allow an opportunity for public comment; however, the business of the DDA must proceed in an orderly, timely manner.

Chairperson Garcia opened the floor for public comments. No comments were offered.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

a) Update on Business Survey Findings

Staff reported that the number of survey responses had increased from approximately ten at the last meeting to twenty, following additional outreach efforts. With the larger dataset, several themes became clearer.

Some responses highlighted concerns about homelessness and crime. Board members acknowledged that while these may be based on perception, they nevertheless influence public opinion and should be addressed. Staff was directed to coordinate with the Police Department to compile downtown-specific statistics on homelessness and crime for presentation at a future meeting.

Survey responses also pointed to needs in business growth and support, including financial resources, attracting new clients, and improving advertising. Several members noted a disconnect between businesses and institutions such as the local college and encouraged closer partnerships to leverage opportunities.

The permitting and licensing process was discussed extensively. Many respondents marked their experience as “neutral,” which members interpreted as hesitancy to openly critique City operations. Staff explained that while the City has streamlined licensing, delays at DeKalb County Fire plan review remain the primary bottleneck. Members expressed concern that these delays, while not the City’s fault, are often perceived by business owners as City-related.

Staff announced that City Council had recently approved new permitting software, scheduled for launch in November, which will allow online business license applications. The Board welcomed this step but emphasized the importance of maintaining in-person assistance for Clarkston’s diverse community. Staff confirmed that a public computer

and staff support would be provided at City Hall. Members recommended that the DDA and City collaborate to host training sessions in November and December to guide business owners through the new platform.

The Board also discussed improving communication regarding zoning changes. Members suggested creating a system to confirm receipt of official notices. Several members also supported a concierge-style model, in which a designated staff member would help business owners through licensing and permitting. Staff noted that the new software would also reduce duplicative paperwork, such as repeated ID submissions.

The discussion returned several times to the issue of efficiency. Staff shared that the City is considering bringing fire inspections and plan reviews in-house, which could reduce delays and strengthen Clarkston's reputation as business-friendly. Members also acknowledged that while survey respondents valued beautification and events, many placed higher priority on direct support services and funding opportunities.

No motion was made under this item. Staff will return at the next meeting with crime and homelessness data, proposed training session dates, recommendations for improved communication, and updates on the feasibility of in-house inspections.

b) Presentation: Proposal for the Passport to Clarkston Digital Flipbook

Melanie of Bespoke Design and Development presented the updated Passport to Clarkston digital coupon book concept. The proposal included the creation of an interactive flipbook to highlight local businesses with free basic listings and optional paid premium upgrades.

The Board agreed that all Clarkston businesses should receive a free basic listing for the first year to maximize participation and engagement. Premium options would allow businesses to feature offers, purchase larger listings, or update promotions more frequently, with revenues collected directly by the DDA.

Key points of discussion included frequency of updates, accessibility, branding, responsibilities, and rollout planning. Bespoke confirmed that while free listings would be updated annually, premium tiers could be structured to allow quarterly or monthly updates, with featured promotions refreshed more frequently as needed. To ensure equitable participation, intake forms will be available in multiple languages, hard copies will be provided, and staff will assist businesses with submission. The Board emphasized that the platform must maintain human assistance for those who struggle with online forms.

The branding of the project was carefully considered. While members appreciated the "Passport" concept as a nod to Clarkston's diversity, several noted it may cause confusion. The Board agreed to retain the creative passport-style imagery but to include the terms "coupon" or "discount" prominently in the final title for clarity.

Responsibilities were clearly assigned. Bespoke will design, set up, and technically

manage the flipbook, host the intake platform, and provide ongoing updates. The DDA will manage business outreach, handle collection of revenues from premium listings, and coordinate marketing. Staff will work with Bespoke to establish intake questions, manage communications, and oversee rollout events. Counsel will prepare a contract or memorandum of understanding specifying scope of work, payment responsibilities, and disclaimers clarifying that businesses are solely responsible for honoring their listed offers.

Rollout strategy: The Board adopted a phased approach. The first phase will pilot the platform using businesses owned by DDA board members, allowing the system to be tested internally. The second phase will launch publicly at the City's Trunk-or-Treat event in October, with a promotional station and QR codes for attendees to access the coupon passport. The strategy will include:

- Testing of intake forms by Board members and staff within one week.
- Creation of multilingual promotional materials.
- Partnership with nonprofits, places of worship, and community groups to distribute the coupon passport.
- Integration with the City's Constant Contact newsletters, website, and social media for announcements.
- A defined update schedule (initially quarterly, with potential monthly premium options).
- A press release to accompany the official launch.

The Board recognized the project as a leading initiative that highlights the DDA's commitment to supporting local businesses. A motion to approve the concept and direct staff and Bespoke to proceed under the framework discussed was made by Beverly Burks, seconded by Nebiyu Ermiyas, and passed unanimously (6-0)

c) Continued Discussion: Digital Coupon Book Project

Although the agenda listed this item as a continued discussion, the Board did not hold further discussion. Instead, a presentation was given by Bespoke Design and Development on the proposal for the Passport to Clarkston digital flipbook. The presentation outlined the concept, scope of work, and responsibilities of both Bespoke and the DDA. Following the presentation, the Board deliberated, assigned responsibilities, and approved a motion directing staff and Bespoke to proceed with the rollout strategy as presented.

d) Continued Discussion: Policy Procedure Manual

Chairperson Garcia noted that there were no substantive updates since the last meeting. Staff confirmed that draft materials had been provided to the attorney for review. The matter remains ongoing and will be revisited once revisions are complete.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

a) Evaluation and Adoption of Mission and Vision Statement — Georgia Tech Center for Economic Development Research

Board reviewed drafts from Georgia Tech's Economic Development Research program.

Discussion focused on ensuring compliance with statutory requirements by explicitly referencing business and economic development. Members also expressed concern with the repetition of the word “opportunities” in the draft mission.

A motion to adopt the draft vision statement was made by Director Rezwan, seconded by Director Beverly, and passed unanimously. (6-0)

Motion to Rescind: Following further discussion, a motion to rescind the prior motion adopting the draft vision statement was made by Director Rezwan, seconded by Director Beverly, and passed unanimously. (6-0)

Staff was directed to work with Georgia Tech and the City Attorney to revise the mission and vision statements for presentation at the next meeting.

b) Joint work session to discuss city real estate matters

Attorney Kyle Williams explained the DDA’s powers with respect to City-owned properties, including ownership, leasing, issuing bonds, and development partnerships. The Board discussed the importance of coordination with the City Council.

The Board and staff tentatively agreed to hold a joint work session with City Council on September 30, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., prior to the Council’s regular work session.

c) Discussion of amending the day and meeting time of the D.D.A Regular Scheduled Meetings

The Board discussed whether meeting times should be adjusted to encourage greater public participation. Members noted that public attendance is often limited regardless of timing, but agreed that Monday mornings may not be ideal for business owners.

Counsel and staff advised that attendance is usually issue-driven.

After deliberation, the Board agreed to maintain its regular schedule of the second Monday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Open house sessions will be held quarterly rather than monthly. Staff was directed to increase meeting promotion through the City’s website, newsletters, and social media.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 11:00 Motion made by Director Beverly. Motion seconded by Director Rezwan. The motion passed unanimously (6-0)

SAMPLE FLIPBOOK



About Clarkston, GA

Known as the “Ellis Island of the South,” Clarkston, Georgia is one of the most diverse square miles in America. Home to residents from more than 40 different countries and speaking over 60 languages, Clarkston is a thriving community where cultures, traditions, and opportunities converge. This rich diversity makes Clarkston a unique destination for dining, shopping, cultural experiences, and community connection.

The city has long been recognized as a gateway for global cultures and a welcoming environment for families, entrepreneurs, and small businesses. With its walkable downtown, accessible transportation, and growing network of shops, eateries, and cultural hubs, Clarkston continues to build its reputation as both a vibrant local community and a destination for visitors across the Atlanta metro area.

About The Clarkston Downtown Development Authority

The Clarkston Downtown Development Authority exists to foster economic vitality and enhance the quality of life within the city’s downtown district. The DDA’s mission is to encourage sustainable growth, support small businesses, and create innovative opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the best of Clarkston.

Through strategic initiatives, community programming, and public-private partnerships, the DDA champions projects that:

Strengthen Clarkston’s identity as a culturally rich and welcoming city.

Support local entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Attract investment and foster job creation.

Enhance the vibrancy and appeal of the downtown district.

The Passport to Clarkston initiative represents a natural extension of the DDA’s mission—bringing together businesses, residents, and visitors in a creative and engaging way that celebrates Clarkston’s unique character while driving economic growth and community pride.

YOUR LOCAL SHOPPING
COUPON PASSPORT
CLARKSTON, GA

Discover the best of Clarkston with the Passport to Clarkston! This digital guide is your key to exploring local restaurants, shops, and community favorites while supporting the businesses that make our city unique.

The Passport features free listings, special offers you can redeem at participating locations, and spotlights on local events and businesses. It's a fun and interactive way to shop local, save money, and experience everything Clarkston has to offer.

Start exploring, stamp your journey, and see how far your Passport can take you!

COUPON PASSPORT SHOPPING GUIDE

CLARKSTON, GA

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

CLARKSTON, GEORGIA

CROSSFIT
 LIMINAL

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

OVERHEAD GARAGE DOOR SERVICE

Precision

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

Linktree

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SPECIAL OFFER HERE

PREMIUM BUSINESS

COUPON PASSPORT SHOPPING GUIDE

VISAS



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME

CLARKSTON, GA

COUPON PASSPORT SHOPPING GUIDE

CLARKSTON, GA



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME



SPECIAL OFFER HERE

SCAN ME

COUPON PASSPORT SHOPPING GUIDE



Injury2Wellness
CENTERS

**SPECIAL
OFFER
HERE**

SCAN
ME

CLARKSTON, GA

KEEP YOUR PASSPORT HANDY!

Your journey through Clarkston doesn't stop here. Shop, dine, explore, and support the local businesses that make our city one-of-a-kind.

Follow us online for updates, new offers, and featured businesses.

Bring a friend and share the experience.
Every dollar spent locally strengthens our community.

**YOUR LOCAL SHOPPING
COUPON
PASSPORT**

CLARKSTON, GA

CREATIVELY DESIGNED AND MANAGED BY
BESPOKE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT CO.

All coupons and promotions in this Coupon Passport are exclusive to the individual offering business.

Customers seeking to redeem any coupons or promotions offered in this Coupon Passport should look exclusively to the individual offering business without any recourse against The Downtown Development Authority of the City of Clarkston. This Coupon Passport is offered for promotional purposes only to further trade and commerce in the downtown business district of the City of Clarkston without any warranties or guarantees by The Downtown Development Authority of the City of Clarkston.



**CREATIVELY DESIGNED AND MANAGED BY
BESPOKE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT CO.**

Intake Form



Welcome

Hi there, please fill out and submit this form.

1 Question

[START →](#)

Is your business registered in the City of Clarkston

Yes

No

SUBMIT

Is your business registered in the City of Clarkston

Yes

No

SUBMIT

Business Information

Legal Business Name:

DBA/Brand Name (if different):

Business Type (retail/restaurant/service/other):

Street Address:

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City

State / Province

Postal / Zip Code

Primary Phone Number:

Please enter a valid phone number.

General Email:

example@example.com

Point of Contact (POC) Name/Title:

POC Email:

example@example.com

POC Phone:

Please enter a valid phone number.

Nonprofit/Minority/Refugee/Veteran-Owned status:

Next

Social & Digital

Instagram:

Facebook:

TikTok:

LinkedIn:

Any Additional Social Or Digital Assets:

Back

Next

Offer/Coupon Details

Description of Offer (exact wording as you want it shown):

Offer Type:

- % Off
- \$ Off
- BOGO
- Free item with purchase
- Bundle/Package
- Service discount
- Other

Eligible Products/Services:

Exclusions:

Minimum Spend (if any):

New Customers Only

- Yes
- No

In-Store Only

- Yes
- No

In-Store Only

- Yes
- No

Online Redemption URL (if applicable):

Promo Code text (if applicable):

Blackout Dates (if any):

Redemption Mechanics:

- Show coupon on phone
- Printed
- Unique code entry
- QR
- Online checkout code


Per-Customer Limits:

Back

Next

Creative & Branding


Logo Upload



Browse Files
Drag and drop files here

Brand colors/hex:

Ad photo or product image:



Browse Files
Drag and drop files here

Allow DDA to edit copy lightly for clarity/length:

- Yes
- No

Allow DDA to crop/resize images for layout:

- Yes
- No

Back

Next

Tracking & Reporting

POS system used:

Can you track promo code usage?

- Yes
- No

Preferred reporting cadence:

- Weekly
- Mid-campaign
- End-of-campaign

Back

Next

Pricing & Placement

Basic Listing **Free**

Quantity

Edits to current listing **\$25.00**

Quantity

Quarter Page Listing **\$50.00**

Quantity

Half Page Listing **\$75.00**

Quantity

Full Page Listing **\$100.00**

Quantity

Total **\$0.00**

Back

Next

Accessibility & Language

Languages preferred for listing:

- English
- Spanish
- Amharic
- Arabic
- Burmese
- Nepali
- Somali

Other Language:

Back

Next



English (US) -

Optional Impact Goals

Primary goal (choose up to two):

- New customers
- Off-peak traffic
- Product launch
- Inventory

Other:

How did you hear about this program?

Back

Next



English (US) -

Permissions & Acknowledgements

By signing, you acknowledge: *

- You have rights to publish submitted logos/images and grant Clarkston's DDA use rights.
- The offer complies with laws and store policies.
- You will honor the offer during the validity window.
- You will provide redemption metrics with DDA if available.

Authorized Signer Name/Title:

Signature

Sign Here

Powered by [Jotform Sign](#)



Project Service Agreement

Between: Bespoke Design & Development Co. (“Contractor”) and Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) (“Client”)

Effective Date: _____

1. Project Overview

This Service Agreement outlines the terms under which Bespoke Design & Development Co. will design, develop, and maintain the **Passport to Clarkston Digital Flipbook**—a digital initiative promoting local businesses and encouraging community engagement in Clarkston.

2. Scope of Work

Bespoke Design & Development Co. agrees to perform the following services:

1. **Design & Layout** – Professional creative design and layout of the Passport to Clarkston digital flipbook.
2. **Content Upload & Formatting** – Uploading, formatting, and visually integrating business listings, offers, and advertisements.
3. **Monthly Updates** – Regular content updates reflecting new businesses, promotions, and community events.
4. **Hosting & Accessibility** – Secure hosting and distribution of the Passport in a mobile-friendly digital format.

5. **Technical Support & Quality Control** – Ongoing quality checks, troubleshooting, and support to ensure optimal functionality.
-

3. Timeline

- Project commencement will begin upon signing of this Agreement and receipt of all final business content.
 - The **initial digital flipbook** will be completed and launch-ready within **three (3) weeks** of receiving final content.
 - Ongoing updates will occur on a **monthly** basis unless otherwise agreed in writing and will be completed by the 25th of each month.
-

4. Fees & Payment Terms

Design & Setup (One-Time Fee)

- Development, design, and initial launch: **\$350.00**

Monthly Maintenance & Hosting

- Hosting, updates, and ongoing support: **\$50.00 per month**

Payment Schedule

- The \$350 design/setup fee is due **upon signing** of this Agreement.
- Monthly maintenance fees of \$50 are **billed at the start of each month** following the project launch.

- Payments are due within **15 days** of invoice date.
-

5. Ownership & Intellectual Property

All design, content layout, and technical components created by Bespoke Design & Development Co. remain the property of the Contractor until full payment is received. Upon final payment, ownership of the *Passport to Clarkston* design and assets (excluding proprietary software or hosting infrastructure) will transfer to the Client.

6. Suggested Revenue Model

To sustain the project long-term, the DDA may implement the following participation tiers for local businesses:

1. **Basic Listing (Free)**
2. **Edits to current listing (\$25 per edit)** – Updates completed monthly.
3. **Quarter Page Listing (\$50)**
4. **Half Page Listing (\$75)**
5. **Full Page Listing (\$100)**

Bespoke Design & Development Co. may assist with the layout and placement of advertisements under future add-on agreements as desired by the DDA.

7. Term & Termination

This Agreement shall remain in effect until terminated by either party with **30 days' written notice**. In the event of termination, the DDA shall pay for all work completed up to the effective termination date.

Hosting and update services will cease upon termination unless a separate transfer agreement is executed.

8. Confidentiality

Both parties agree to maintain the confidentiality of all materials, designs, and data shared during this project and will not disclose such information to third parties without prior written consent.

9. Limitation of Liability

Bespoke Design & Development Co. shall not be liable for any indirect, incidental, or consequential damages arising from the use or inability to use the Passport platform. Liability is limited to the total amount paid under this Agreement.

10. Governing Law

This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia.

11. Entire Agreement

This document constitutes the entire understanding between both parties and supersedes all prior proposals or communications related to the project. Any changes must be agreed to in writing and signed by both parties.

12. Signatures

Bespoke Design & Development Co.

Name:

Title:

Date:

Clarkston Downtown Development Authority

Name:

Title:

Date:

2025 Clarkston Business Survey Findings

Clarkston Downtown Development Authority



Purpose, Duration, & Intent of the Business Survey

Over the past several months, the **Clarkston Downtown Development Authority** has undertaken a comprehensive business outreach effort to gain a deeper understanding of the needs, challenges, and opportunities within Clarkston's downtown commercial district.

This initiative was designed to **strengthen the DDA's role as a data-driven partner** in economic development and to help guide collaborative strategies between the DDA, City of Clarkston staff, and City Council.

The survey represents an **in-depth collection of business feedback gathered between March 2025 to** , combining **digital responses and in-person outreach**.

Through this process, the DDA sought to:

- Identify the **current state of downtown businesses**, including operational years, size, and industry mix.
- Assess **barriers to business growth**, such as permitting, visibility, or marketing needs.
- Gather direct feedback on **opportunities for revitalization**, including desired new businesses and improvements.
- Strengthen **communication and partnership** between business owners, the DDA, and City leadership.

Survey Focus Areas and Key Topics

- This presentation provides an in-depth overview of the 2025 Clarkston Business Survey findings. The following topics reflect insights from business owners across the City of Clarkston and outline areas where the Downtown Development Authority and the City can work together to strengthen business retention, support entrepreneurship, and guide future investment.

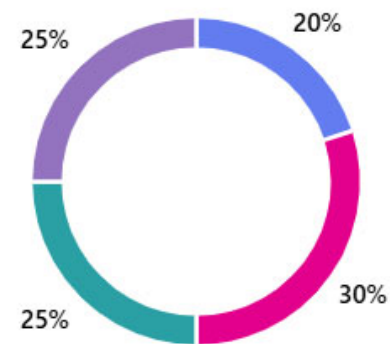
Topics to Be Presented

- Years of Operation & Business Tenure
- Types of Businesses Represented
- Number of Employees & Workforce Composition
- Business Planning & Preparedness
- Rating of the Overall Business Environment
- Advantages of Operating in Clarkston
- Challenges & Barriers to Growth
- Desired Services, Resources, & Support
- DDA Engagement & Awareness
- Training & Professional Development Interests
- Desired Business Types & Market Gaps
- Experience with Permitting & Licensing
- Common Operational Challenges
- Future Opportunities for Clarkston
- Interest in DDA Participation & Collaboration
- Strategic Outlook for Economic Growth

Each section of this presentation corresponds directly to the **specific survey questions** asked during the 2025 Clarkston Business Survey. Visual results and interpretive summaries follow each question, ensuring transparency and consistency in how feedback is presented and analyzed.

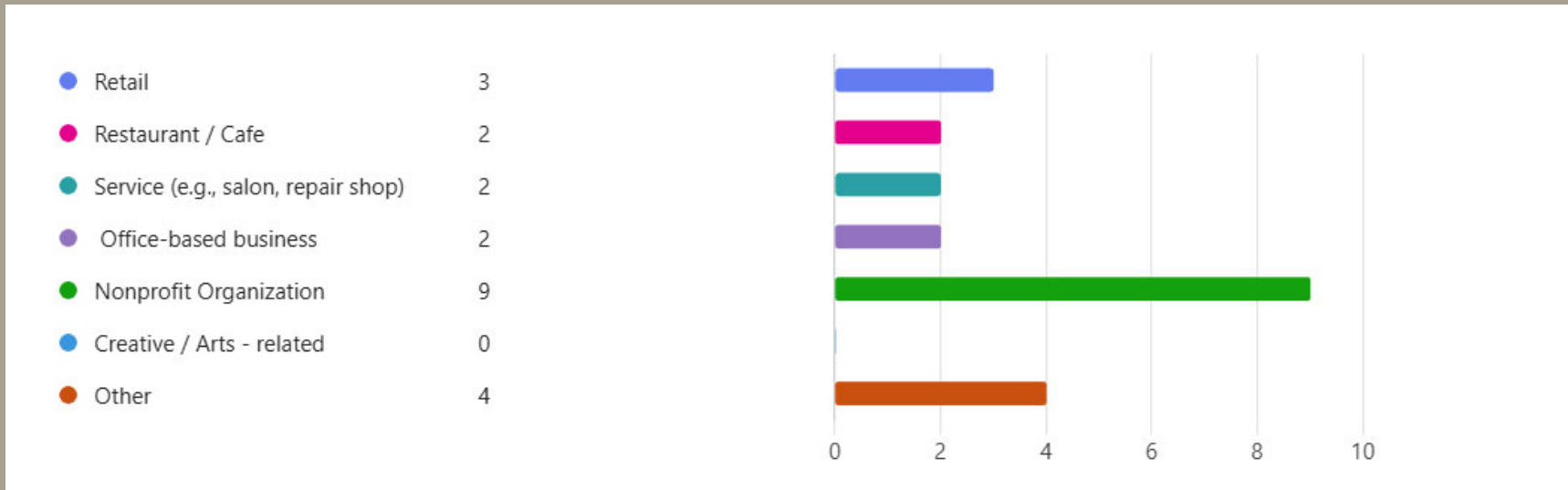
1. How long have you operated your business in Clarkston?

● Less than 1 year	4
● 1-3 years	6
● 4-7 years	5
● 8+ years	5



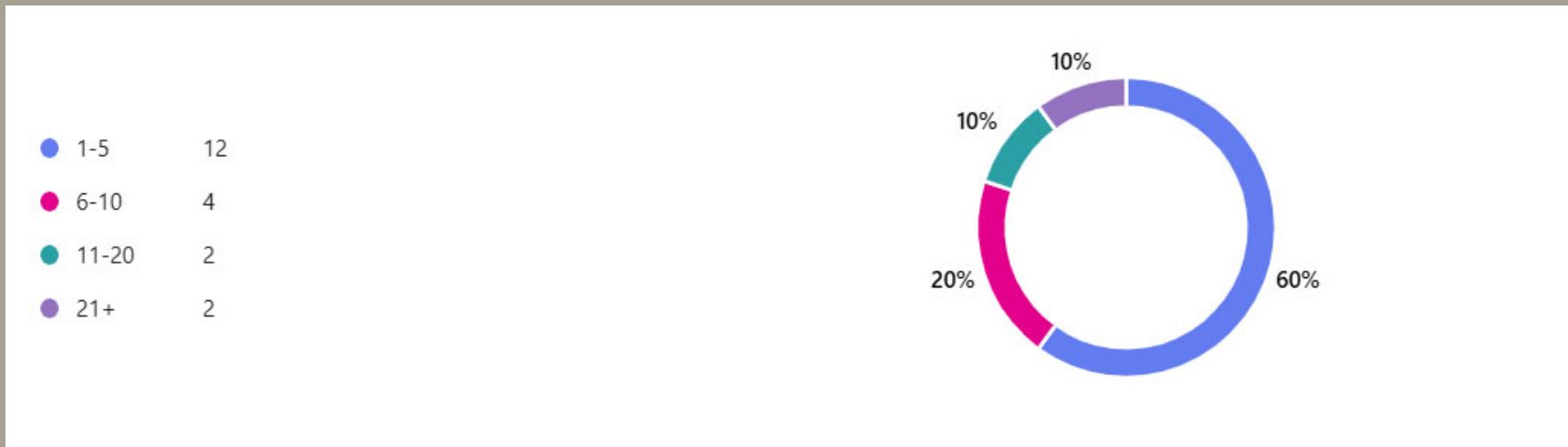
- Clarkston’s business landscape is built on long-standing local investment. Many owners have remained here for 5+ years, demonstrating a deep commitment to the community. By prioritizing retention and reinvestment in these established businesses, the DDA can help strengthen the economic core that supports future growth.

2. What type of business do you operate?



- Clarkston’s business landscape is remarkably diverse—spanning retail, service, nonprofit, professional, and food-based enterprises. This diversity is one of the city’s greatest economic assets and should guide branding efforts that celebrate Clarkston’s global identity and entrepreneurial spirit. The DDA can leverage this diversity as a core part of Clarkston’s economic development narrative, while attracting new industries to the city, diversifying its business diversity further.

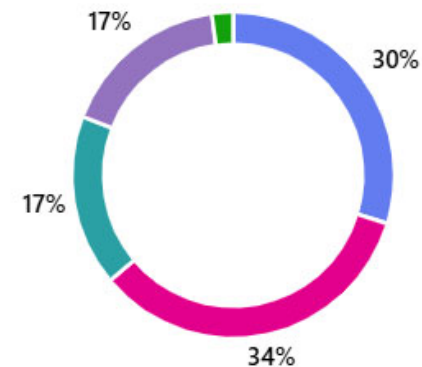
3. How many employees (including yourself) does your business have in Clarkston?



- Most businesses employ fewer than 10 people, reflecting a citywide network of micro- and small enterprises. Supporting these firms with training, small grants, and increasing resource access will enhance their sustainability and contribute to local job creation—one of the DDA’s most immediate opportunities for impact.

4. Does your business have any of the following plans in place?

Marketing plan	14
Operating plan	16
Advertising plan	8
Product Strategy	8
None of the above	1



- While some businesses report having financial or marketing plans in place, a significant portion operate informally. This presents an opportunity for the DDA to strengthen the ecosystem by offering workshops and mentorship on strategic planning, digital presence, long term planning, and business management.

5. How would you rate the overall business environment in Downtown Clarkston?



- Respondents expressed moderate satisfaction with Clarkston’s overall business environment. This signals progress but also highlights areas for improvement—particularly in coordinated marketing, infrastructure investment, and small business visibility. The DDA can bridge these gaps by facilitating citywide collaboration between property owners, local organizations, and Clarkston city officials to develop solutions that support the growth of city’s business environment.

6. What are the biggest advantages of being a business owner in Clarkston?

- “If your business is mission driven , it makes sense to establish it in a diverse environment.”
 - “Exposure & Potential”
 - “Diverse population. Cooperative City Management.”
 - “Non-profit community”
 - “Proximity to where our principal clients (refugees and immigrant communities live and worship), proximity to transportation/walkability, proximity to other service providers in the area, richness of community culture.”
 - “The feeling of community and the transparency of the city employees.”
 - “Proximity to my home. Close relationship to administration, client diversity, feeling welcome.”
 - “You witness and enjoy the philosophy of diversity.”
 - “Small city”
- Business owners consistently praised Clarkston’s cultural diversity, sense of community, and accessibility. These strengths reinforce Clarkston’s reputation as a welcoming and globally connected city. The DDA can build upon this identity by implementing placemaking initiatives and marketing campaigns that elevate Clarkston’s inclusive economic story.

7. What are the biggest disadvantages or challenges of being a business owner in Downtown Clarkston?

“The area is a bit run-down. If we could have better-developed properties, we would attract more customers.”

“Concentration of poverty, downtown vitality, and limited foot traffic into businesses.”

“Slow processing and dynamics.”

“Not having sustainable economy to support businesses in Clarkston.”

“Less disposable income per family, to spend on extra purchases. More marketing/communication expenses due to diverse clientele.”

“Lack of interest in the community from outside the community, growing homelessness and crime from Memorial Drive moving further into the area.”

“Structure. Feeling ambiguity about what each business does.”

“License renewals.”

“Too many restrictions and regulations on businesses.”

“Clear signage”

“There's not very many spacious places to get out my home office and co-work, particularly those that are open into the evening during the weekday until like 9 pm. Local college and high school campuses could appreciate this too.”

“Unified Marketing of the businesses by the city. Little to no spotlight of businesses.”

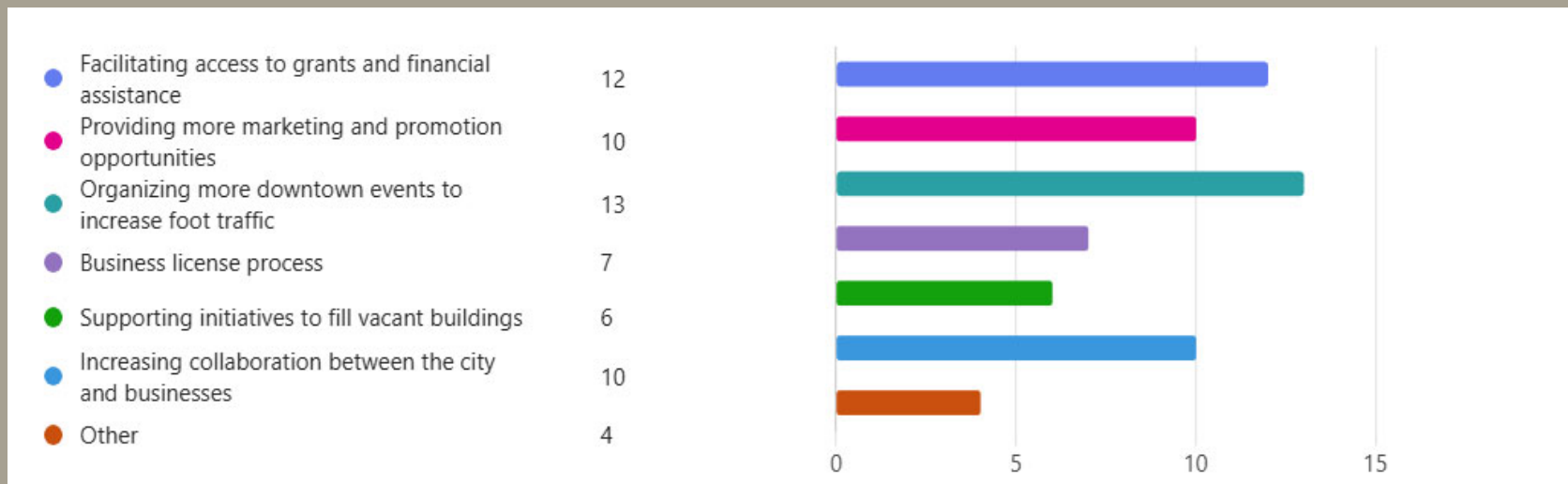
- **Top concerns include limited consumer spending power, inconsistent property conditions, and regulatory complexity. Addressing these challenges will require coordinated action between the City, DDA, and private sector—focusing on business retention, infrastructure improvements, process transparency and education, to foster a more competitive business environment.**

8. What specific services, resources, or programs would help strengthen your business?



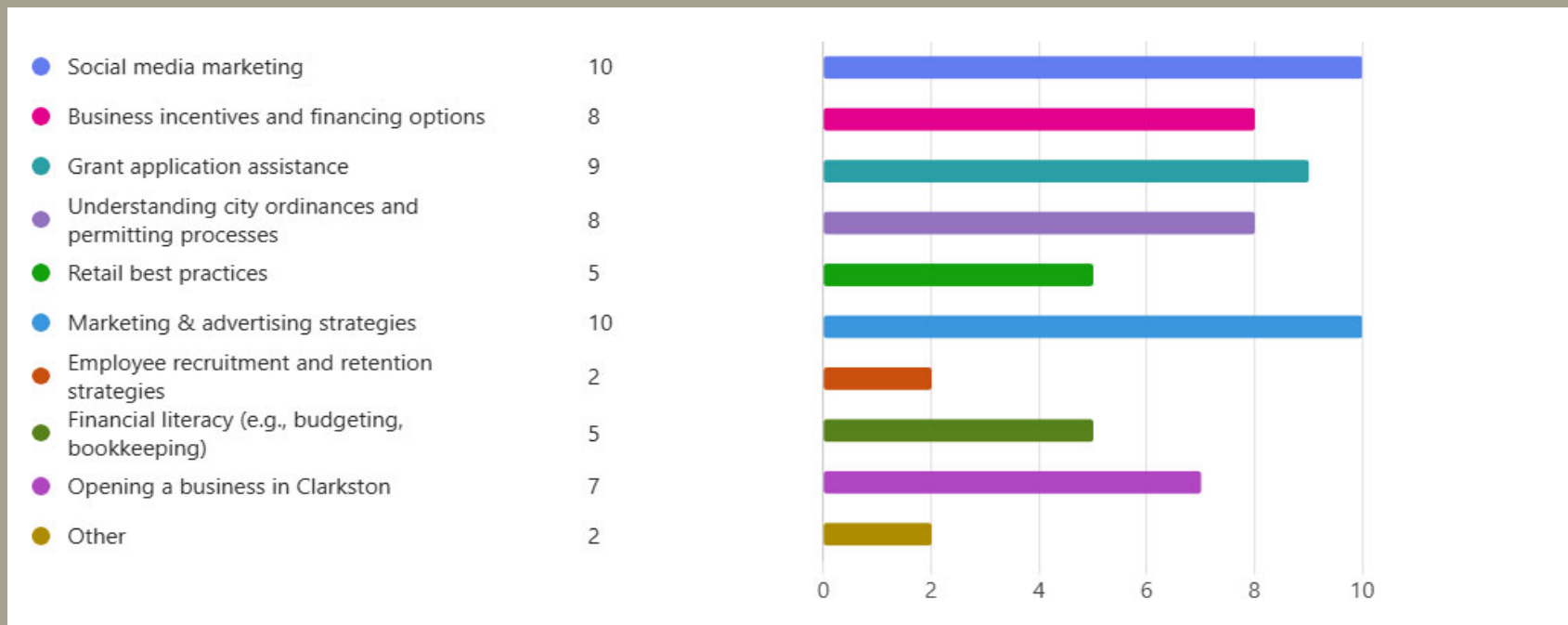
- Business owners expressed a clear need for expanded marketing support, financial resources, and technical training. This provides the DDA with actionable direction: to create a centralized business resource hub and foster partnerships with organizations that can deliver capital and capacity-building opportunities.

9. How can the Clarkston DDA better support your business?



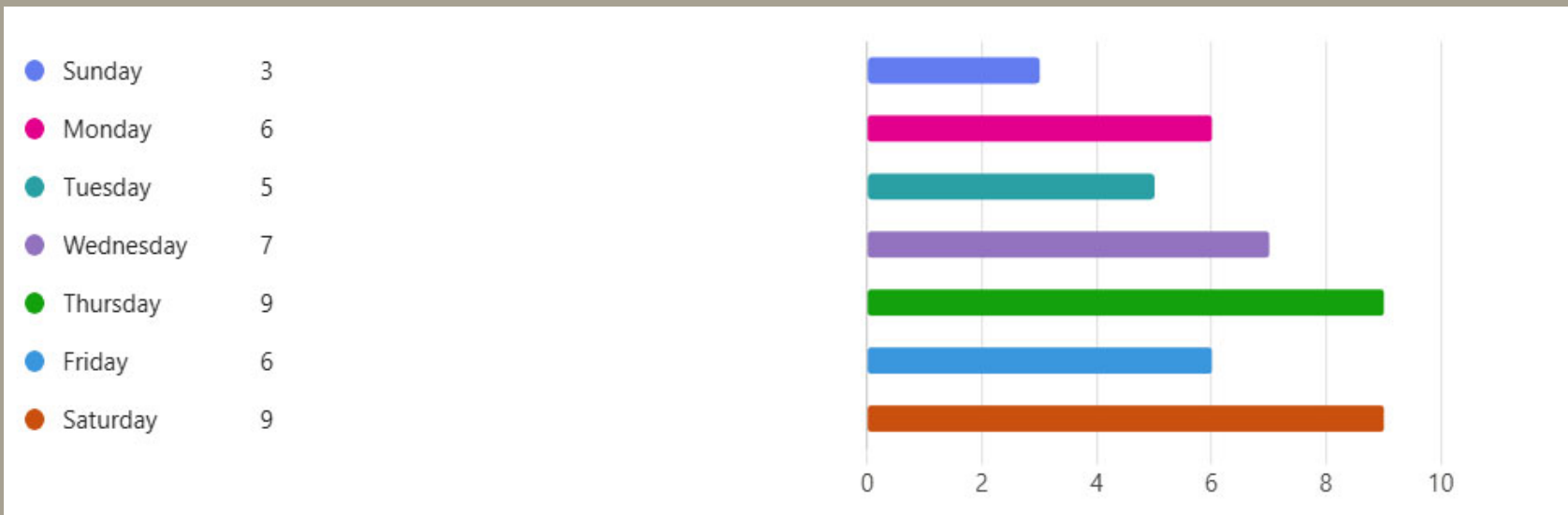
- Many respondents were unfamiliar with the DDA's role, indicating a need for broader outreach and education. Increasing visibility through newsletters, business visits, website development, and workshops can transform the DDA into a trusted partner and valuable point of contact for local business support.

10. What types of training or seminars would you be interested in attending?



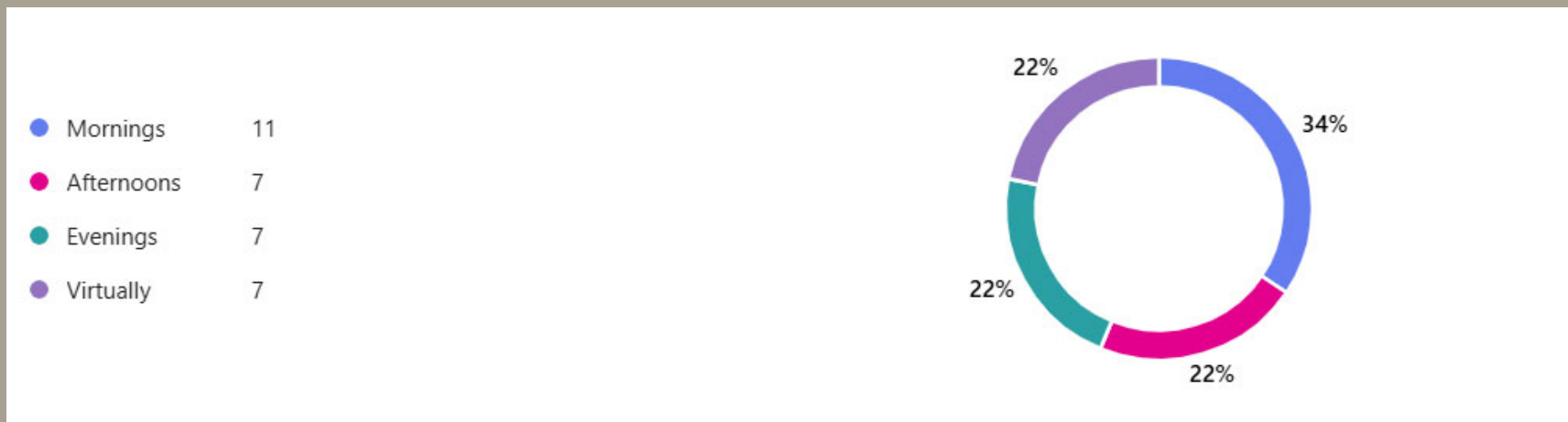
- Respondents showed interest in professional development on topics like marketing, customer engagement, and grant applications. By curating training opportunities and collaborating with regional partners, the DDA can position itself as a conduit for knowledge and entrepreneurship growth across the city.

11. What days of the week work best for attending workshops or training sessions?



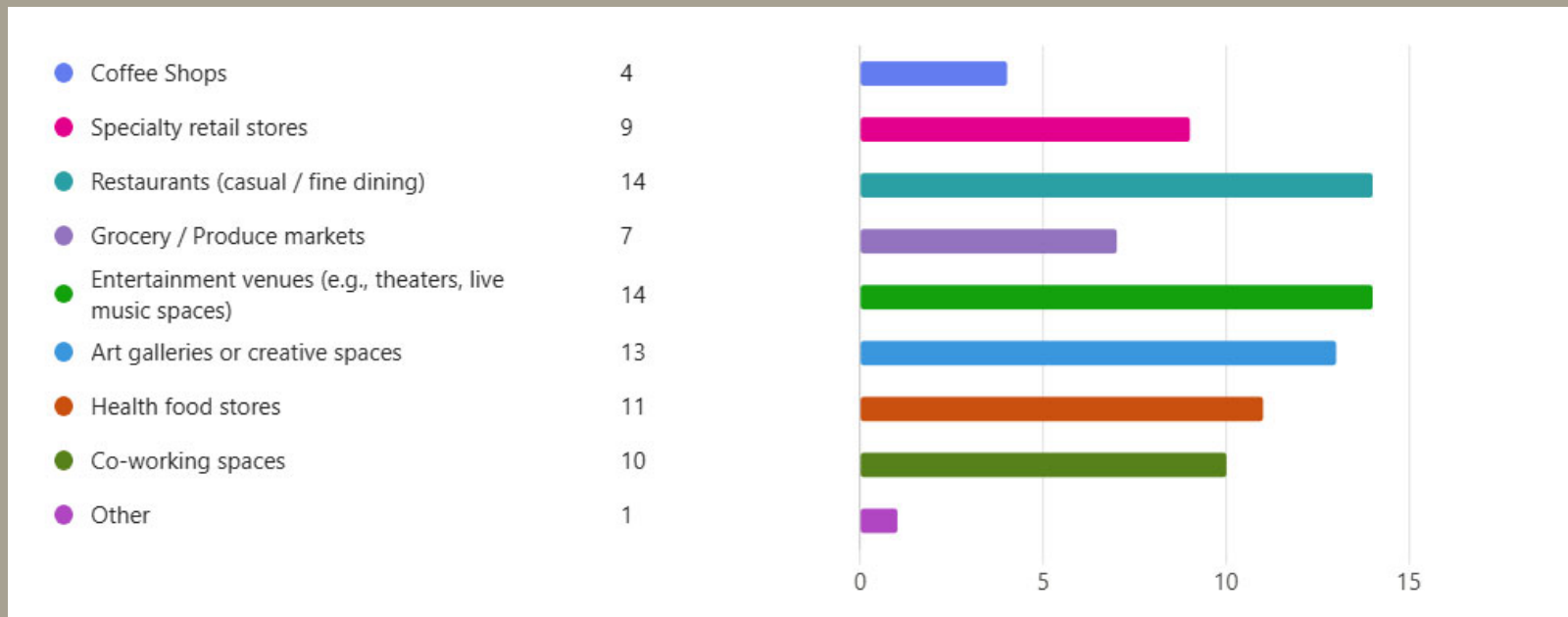
- Survey results indicate that most business owners are available for workshops on Thursdays and Saturdays, with strong secondary interest on Wednesdays. This distribution highlights the importance of offering both weekday and weekend sessions to accommodate varying business schedules, particularly for those with customer-facing operations during the week. For the DDA, alternating between weekday evening and Saturday morning sessions could maximize participation and ensure more equitable access to professional development resources.

12. What time of day works best for attending workshops?



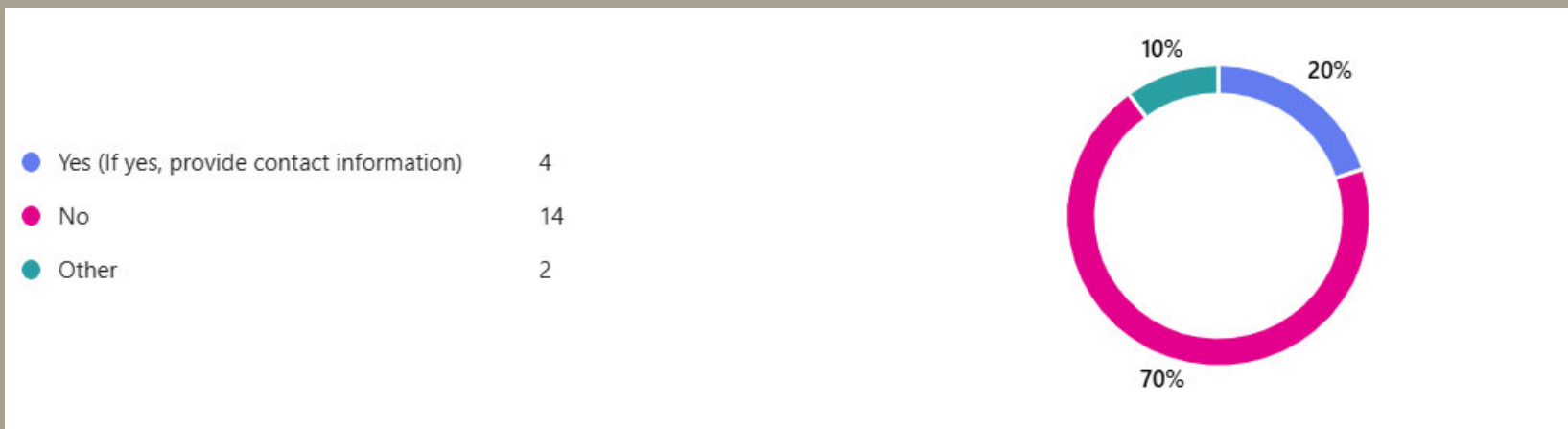
- When asked about ideal times for workshops, business owners overwhelmingly selected mornings as their preferred window, followed by afternoons, and evenings. The DDA can use this feedback to schedule future in person and virtual workshops at times that minimize business disruption, enhance accessibility, and demonstrate responsiveness to the needs of small and micro-enterprises across the city.

13. What types of new businesses would you like to see in Downtown Clarkston?



- Participants highlighted a desire for more restaurants, retail, and entertainment options that create energy and attract visitors. These insights can shape both zoning strategies and business attraction efforts, guiding future development that complements the city's unique character.

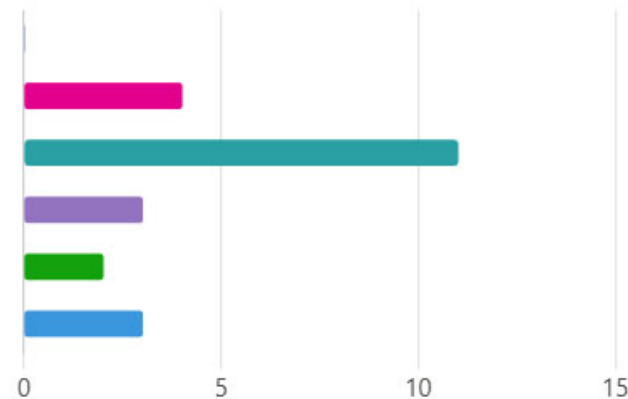
14. Do you know anyone who owns a business elsewhere who may be interested in opening a second location or relocating to Downtown Clarkston?



- Most business owners—**14 out of 18 respondents**—answered **no**, with only 4 indicating interest. This outcome likely reflects current business realities: owners are focused on daily operations, staffing, and maintaining profitability in a challenging market.
- Rather than viewing this as disengagement, it should be seen as **valuable context**—evidence that many businesses may not yet fully understand how the DDA can support their success.
- Moving forward, the DDA can use this insight to design **outreach, programming, and incentives** that make Clarkston a more desirable and supportive place to do business—strengthening communication, promoting available resources, and showing measurable impact that encourages future participation.

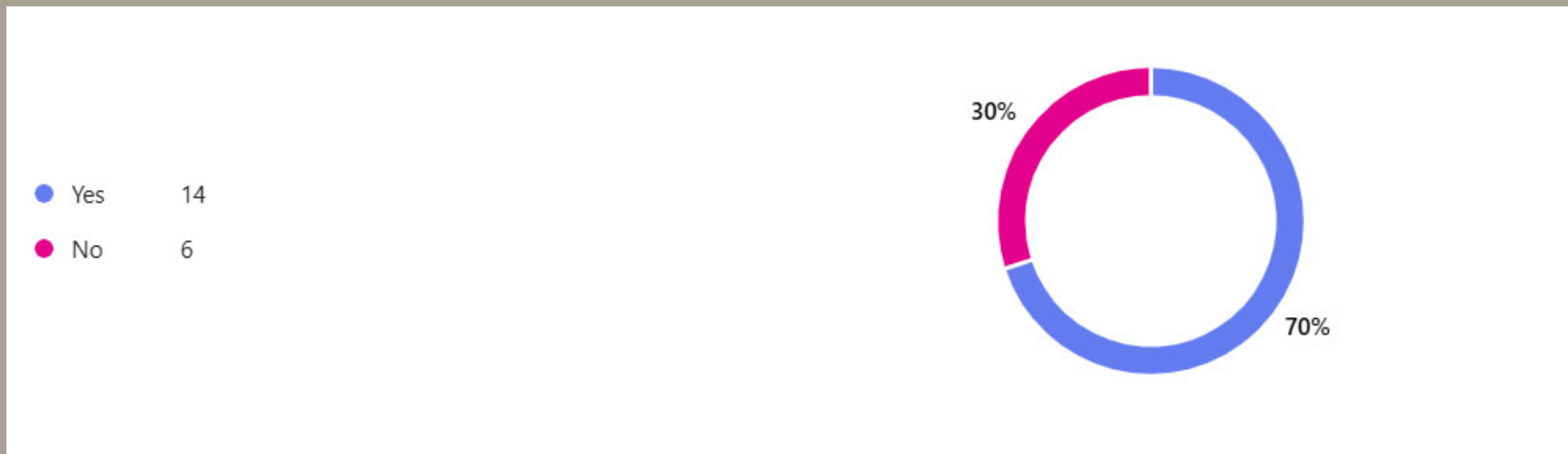
15. How would you rate the process of opening your business in Downtown Clarkston (e.g., permits, inspections, approvals)?

Very simple (explain)	0
Simple (explain)	4
Neutral (explain)	11
Complicated (explain)	3
Very complicated (explain)	2
Other	3



- When asked to evaluate the process of opening a business in Clarkston—including **permits, inspections, and approvals**—a majority of respondents selected **neutral**, while smaller portions described it as **simple** or **complicated/very complicated**.
- This distribution indicates that while most businesses did not encounter severe difficulties, there remains a perception of **inconsistency and uncertainty** within the process.
- For the DDA and City of Clarkston, this feedback shows the importance of continued collaboration to **simplify procedures, improve transparency, and increase guidance for new and expanding businesses**.
- Enhancing the user experience—through clearer communication, accessible checklists, and stronger coordination between departments—will help make Clarkston a more predictable and appealing place to launch or grow a business.

16. Do you feel the current permitting process (application, fees) is fair and transparent?



- While most businesses found the permitting process manageable, several cited the need for more clarity and predictability. The DDA can help simplify the experience for new and expanding businesses by acting as a liaison between the private sector and City departments. This support can be a structured partnership between city staff and board members to foster educational opportunities for business owners and developers.

17. What were the top challenges you faced when opening or operating your business in Downtown Clarkston?



- Common challenges include marketing limitations, capital constraints, and infrastructure conditions. A coordinated DDA-led approach—linking businesses with funding, technical assistance, and marketing initiatives—can help overcome these barriers and enhance citywide economic resilience.

18. What do you see as the biggest opportunity for Downtown Clarkston in the next 3–5 years?

- “Re-development of the downtown area.”
- “Thriving community.”
- “Façade improvements.”
- “Tourism and Research Attraction.”
- “To bring in companies like Starbucks and others to Clarkston business district. They are really an indicators for growth.”
- “Leveraging cultural diversity. Capitalizing on bike trail participants.”
- “Business growth.”
- “Launch a seasonal street fair series to increase foot traffic.”
- “Host international food nights or cultural festivals to celebrate diversity.”
- “Build a calendar of outdoor music, theater, or farmers market weekends.”
- “Increased notoriety.”

18. (Continued – Part 2)

“New business growth and development, existing business improvements, improved landscape/greenspace, improved/redevelopment of housing, focused international initiatives, improved identity.”

“If downtown Clarkston works to promote refugee diversity as one of its assets for the growth in the future it will be promising!”

“To embrace and intentionally incorporate all of the lived experiences, knowledge, talents and skills that our immigrant population and new U.S. residents bring to Clarkston from all of their various countries. It's very valuable and should be woven into everything - signage, murals, sculptures, events, print & digital marketing, the type of businesses that are recruited, food served at DDA-related events and activities, the design of exterior buildings, who the DDA hires/contracts with to accomplish its goals, etc.”

“Unifying the downtown businesses. Identify a day/way to spotlight all downtown Business Such as have a Cultural Fest that highlights the unique features of diverse cultures.”

18. (Continued – Part 3)

“Business Growth & Incentives Offer grants or reduced rent for startups in retail, food, or wellness.”

“Encourage pop-up shops in vacant storefronts to test new business ideas.”

“Create a mentorship network for local entrepreneurs.”

“Walkability & Streetscape Enhancements Add outdoor seating, planters, and decorative lighting to improve curb appeal. Implement pedestrian-friendly changes like safer crosswalks and bike lanes.”

“Develop interactive public art, murals, or sculpture walks.”

“Sustainability & Green Initiatives Promote eco-friendly retail practices and incentives for going green.”

“Add charging stations or “green roofs” on city-owned buildings.”

“Create a community garden or small urban farm to activate unused space.”

“The chance to stand strong and strengthen its identity as an internationally focused city by highlighting and helping the many ethnic owned businesses to expand (especially restaurants and specialty cultural items stores)--especially as other places back away from such a focus. Clarkston can continue to stand out as unique.”

“Beautification. Continuity of a vision for operation. (Inside and out)”

- Respondents view the next three to five years as pivotal for Clarkston’s economic growth, emphasizing opportunities in mixed-use redevelopment, pedestrian infrastructure, and business recruitment. The DDA can leverage these insights to guide policy recommendations, prioritize investment areas, and strengthen partnerships that foster sustainable growth citywide.

19. Please provide any additional feedback or suggestions on how the DDA can improve the downtown business environment.

“Restaurants need help improving the facade, inside atmosphere, and ambiance in order to attract customers from all over Atlanta.”

“There is no single answer to such a question. I will say however that businesses require patrons with disposable income (generally speaking).”

“Facade improvement, and City of Clarkston business promotion.”

“Marketing the city to new developers. Need new money in the city.”

“Offer technical assistance, access to micro-loans, business planning help, and mentorships (especially for immigrant and refugee-owned businesses).”

“More marketplace developments and upgrading the community lifestyle.”

“Clearer avenues for people wanting to rent spaces for shops and businesses to have access, more incubator spaces for businesses to get started before growing, encourage a few more casual dining restaurants to locate there (or help small scale refugee eateries to expand into something larger)”

19. (Continued – Part 2)

“Happy Hours. Meet and greets.”

“Make educated, well researched decisions.”

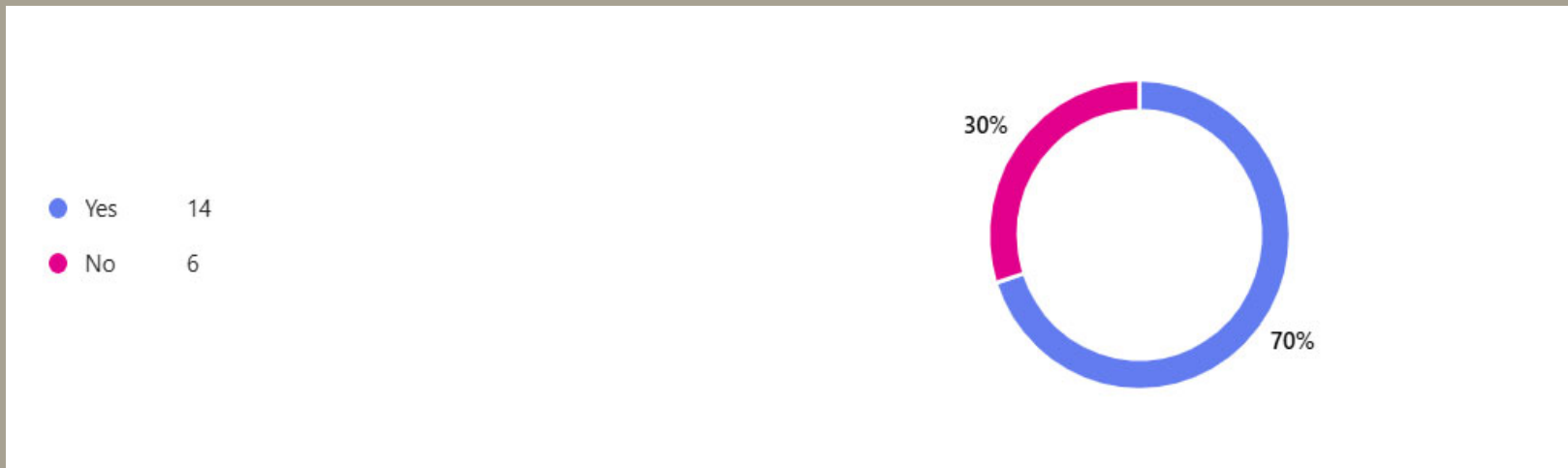
“The new street pavement edges too sharp and destroying our tires.”

“Add more public and cultural events downtown. Seasonal celebrations and activities that highlight different cultures could attract more visitors and bring the community together, making Clarkston a stronger destination.”

“Facilitate community give back opportunities.”

- **Clarkston business owners see opportunity in redevelopment, corridor activation, and increased collaboration among stakeholders. These align directly with the DDA’s mission and highlight the potential for placemaking, public-private partnerships, and strategic property reinvestment to elevate Clarkston’s economic landscape.**

20. Would you like to be more involved with the Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA)?



- Most respondents expressed willingness to engage with or stay informed about DDA activities. This creates a pivotal opportunity to grow the DDA's network, develop a actionable collaboration ecosystem, and ensure that Clarkston's business community has a unified voice in shaping future economic policy and investment.

Conclusion – Key Takeaways

The 2025 Clarkston Business Survey reveals a resilient, diverse, and community-driven business landscape. Business owners are optimistic about Clarkston's future and eager for **collaboration, visibility, and access to resources that support sustainable growth.**

The data demonstrates that Clarkston's economy is defined by small and micro-enterprises with long-standing roots, strong community pride, and a shared desire for improvement. While challenges such as limited visibility, outdated infrastructure, and capital access remain, these are balanced by **significant opportunities** in redevelopment, placemaking, and inclusive branding.

The DDA is uniquely positioned to bridge gaps between business owners, City staff, and external partners—serving as both **connector and catalyst** for Clarkston's next phase of economic development.

Next Steps for DDA

The Clarkston DDA's ongoing partnership with **Georgia Tech's Economic Development Research Program** provides a structured framework for defining the Authority's **Mission, Vision, and Strategic Priorities**.

The 2025 Business Survey results serve as a critical data source for that process—capturing what Clarkston's business community values most: collaboration, visibility, and opportunity.

Based on this alignment, the DDA's next steps will include:

Integrate Survey Insights into the EDRP Framework – Use business feedback considerations to ground the developing Mission and Vision statement in authentic, data-driven understanding of local needs.

Define Strategic Priorities Around Identified Gaps – Focus on outreach, infrastructure investment, and business support programming as central pillars of the DDA's purpose.

Develop Implementation Metrics – Establish measurable outcomes tied to EDRP recommendations, such as increased business engagement, retention, and investment activity.

Enhance Communication and Branding – Ensure the refined Mission and Vision are clearly conveyed through the DDA's online presence, outreach materials, and citywide partnerships.

Position the DDA as a Development Partner – Align with City Council and regional partners to deliver on the shared economic goals that will emerge from the Georgia Tech collaboration.

Together, these actions ensure the DDA's Mission and Vision are not just aspirational but **rooted in community data** and capable of driving measurable, inclusive growth across Clarkston.

Strategic Visioning for Clarkston Downtown Development Authority



Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute
Center for Economic
Development Research

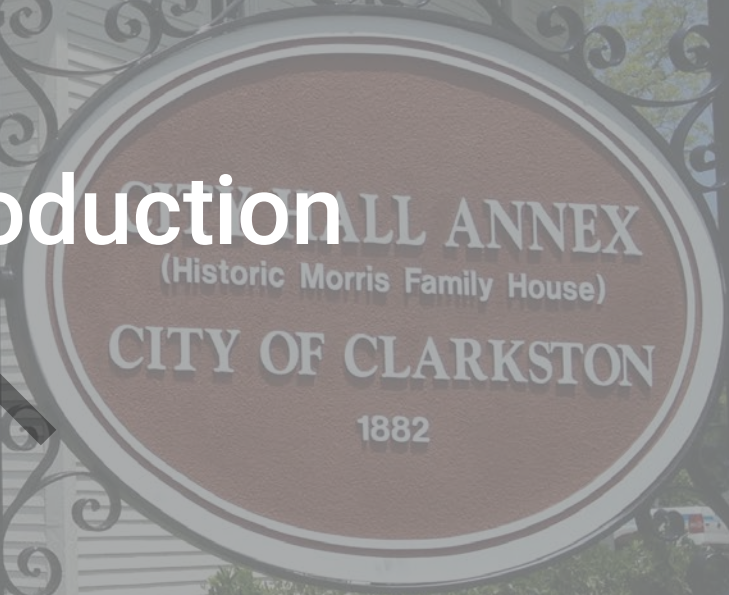
October 2025

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Background and Introduction



Background and Introduction

Center for Economic Development Research

The Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI2) is Georgia Tech's chief business outreach and economic development organization. Since its inception in 1960, its core mission is to help business, industry, entrepreneurs, and economic developers across Georgia grow and remain competitive. EI2 continues Georgia Tech's sixty-year legacy of commitment to community economic development by providing research and technical assistance to support economic development efforts in communities in Georgia and around the world.

CEDR's economic development team are experts with decades of experience in advising economic development and community leaders on how to stay competitive in an ever-changing global economy. CEDR's staff includes:

- Downtown Development Experts
- Economic Development Finance Professionals
- City Planners & Economists
- Housing, Retail, Office, & Industrial Market Analysts

The expertise of the CEDR team is concentrated in the areas of strategic planning, organizational development, labor market and workforce analysis, facilitation, research, and economic and fiscal impact analyses. All faculty have a depth of experience performing applied research for the economic development community. When needed, staff can supplement their skills by calling on Georgia Tech academic faculty to assist in specific research projects. Through their research, CEDR helps clients understand the opportunities and challenges in fostering local and regional economic development.



Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute
**Center for Economic
Development Research**

The Center for Economic Development Research (CEDR) is an applied economic development unit of EI². CEDR assists local elected officials, economic developers, policy makers, and community and state leaders who seek innovative tools and methods to leverage their local advantage and quality of life for their residents by attracting, maintaining, and growing business and industry within their areas.

The Economic Development Research Program (EDRP)

Georgia Tech has played a role in Georgia's economic development for decades. Between 1985 and 2000, the Economic Development Research Program (EDRP) provided affordable research services to communities throughout the state. The goal of this research was to find new industries that could profitably use the resources of Georgia communities. During that period, EDRP relied on state funding to support most of the research along with limited funding from communities requesting the research.

In 2012, the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI2) a five-year grant as an EDA University Center to leverage the university's assets to build regional economic ecosystems that support high growth entrepreneurship and improve community capacity to achieve and sustain economic growth. With this funding, EI2 reintroduced EDRP as a competitive process to provide affordable economic development consulting services to communities throughout Georgia.

The program's goal is to enhance the development opportunities in counties and communities throughout Georgia by pinpointing significant investment possibilities based on a particular area's comparative advantage. The program also strives to assist policy decision-making and to help governmental organizations carry out their missions through in-depth research. Each EDRP project request that EI2 receives is evaluated using the following criteria:

- Probability of Success: What is the likelihood that actions resulting from the project will be successful?
- Requestor Involvement: Has the requestor indicated a willingness to become actively involved in the project during the study phase and in the follow-up and implementation phases?
- Magnitude of Impact: What is the expected impact in terms of capital investment, jobs created, jobs preserved, or some other measure that can be quantified?
- Innovation: Does the project idea show innovative thinking on how to enhance economic development?

Although EDRP continues to rely upon the funding from the EDA University Center grant to carry out projects, a nominal funding commitment from each community applying for a research project is important, as it helps extend project resources so more can be done, and it makes the community a committed partner in the project. Economic development is by nature and necessity a team endeavor. The combined skills and energies of Georgia Tech researchers, state and local officials, and resource development specialists will complement existing efforts to foster a healthier economy and to better the quality of life for all of Georgia. Visit the [EDRP website](#) for more details about the program.

The Barnesville Economic Development Strategic Assessment was funded in partnership with the Enterprise Innovation Institute's EDA University Center EDRP program.



The mission of the **Economic Development Research Program (EDRP)** is to assist local communities by providing affordable economic development and policy research to enhance their competitive positions.

Project Overview

Georgia Tech is pleased to share this report with the City of Clarkston Downtown Development Authority (DDA) that summarizes the strategic visioning and planning services completed by the Downtown Development Board and its partners.

The City of Clarkston's newly formed Downtown Development Authority initiated a Strategic Visioning process to discuss priorities, how to work effectively for the city, establish a working vision and mission statement, and establish next steps. The goal of this strategic visioning work is for the DDA to use this visioning process as the groundwork for future strategic planning efforts.

The Strategic Visioning process consisted of three main tasks:

- Review of previous plans
- Three visioning sessions
- Final report

The final report includes results from the previous plan review and the visioning sessions with the DDA board members and other stakeholders, in addition to short and long-term initiatives the DDA can implement to support Clarkston's development.

History

The current Clarkston Downtown Development Authority was established after the Clarkston Development Authority dissolved in 2021. The goal of creating a new authority was to create a standard Development Authority that every municipality in Georgia has the right to create. The current DDA boundary is in Figure 1

Purpose of a Downtown Development Authority

DDAs play an important role in community and economic development. Authorized by the state and activated by the local community, DDAs can be used as the financial vehicle to facilitate projects on behalf of the local government. Georgia's Downtown Development Authority Law allows municipalities to activate a downtown development authority to support growth and redevelopment of central business districts.

For DDAs to remain active, they must file appropriate paperwork annually with the State of Georgia. Inactivity from DDAs can serve as a barrier to business attraction in a city's downtown and commercial corridors.

In Georgia, DDAs are authorized to exercise financial flexibility to support economic development. Examples of tools they can use include:

- Property tax incentives
- Revenue bonds and notes
- Infrastructure upgrades
- Ad valorem tax incentives
- Own/lease and sell property

Previous Plans

Georgia Tech reviewed several previous plans and studies for Clarkston to understand what priorities have been established through other planning efforts, and how the DDA can support implementation of initiatives important to the city. A summary of the plans reviewed is included in Table 1. The top Clarkston 2040 Plan Priority Policies aligned particularly well with activities the DDA can support. Several of the top 10 policy priorities focus on downtown or commercial development and establishing a sense of place. The action items in the plan include:

- Encourage mixed-use developments in the downtown core and annexed nodes
- Develop a robust network of parks connected by sidewalks, trails and bike facilities
- Promote more restaurants, pop-ups, food trucks and other entrepreneurial activities in the downtown core
- Develop foster, and promote arts, culture and tourism activities
- Develop a civic space within the downtown core

The DDA has the opportunity to support the implementation of all the above action items and future downtown action items developed in subsequent plans.

Figure 1: Current DDA Boundary

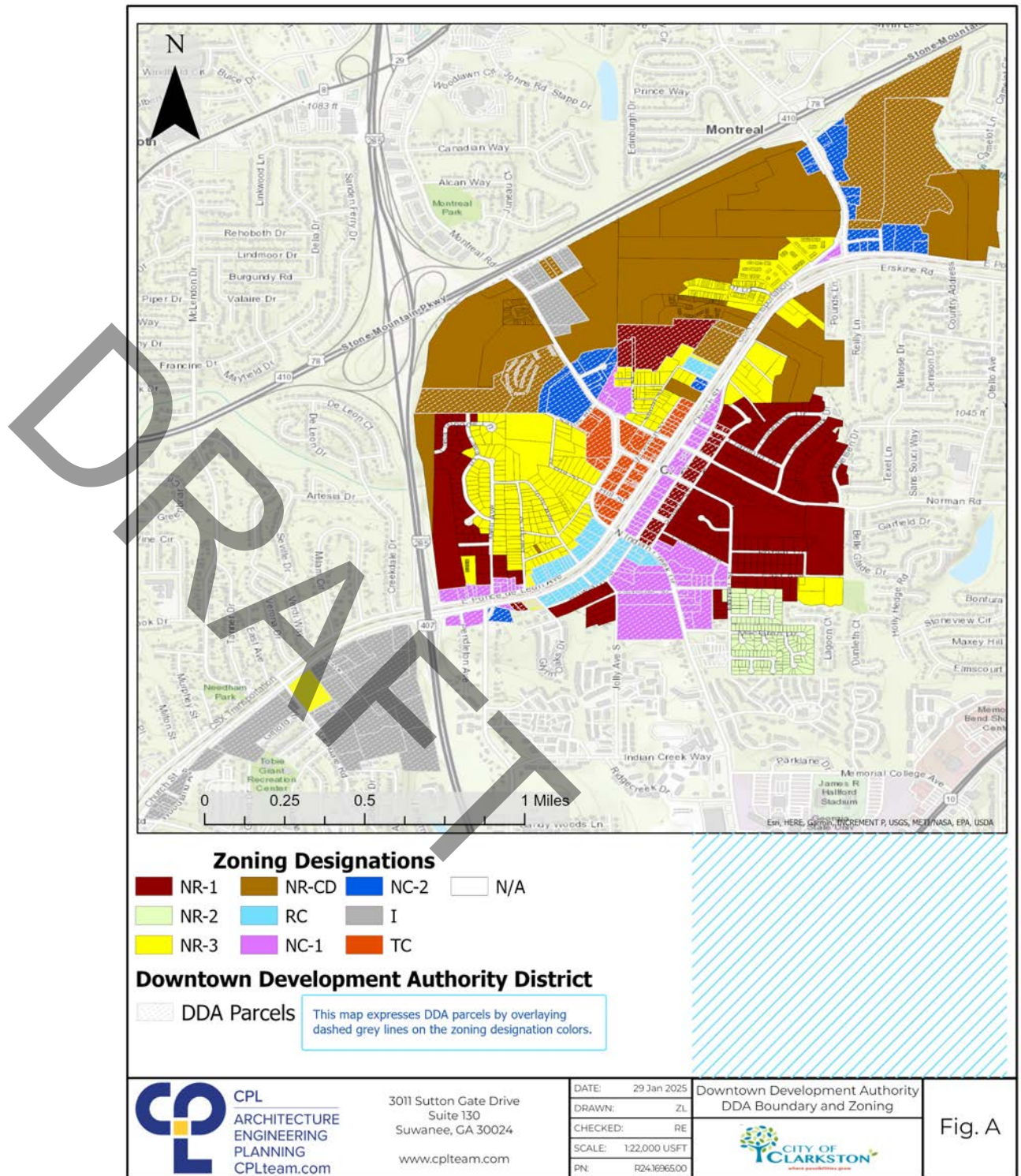


Table 1: Previous Plan Review

Study	Date	Purpose	Responsible Party
Clarkston 2040 Update	2021	Guide growth and development through 2040, focus on housing, economic development, transportation.	City of Clarkston, ARC, Clarkston 2040 Steering Committee
Clarkston Greenway Report	2024	Establish safe, equitable trail system, improve mobility, health, and connectivity.	City of Clarkston, ARC, Project Advisory Group, Community Ambassadors
DeKalb 2050 Comprehensive Transportation Plan	2022	Identify high-priority projects like bike/pedestrian connections and complete streets in cities like Clarkston	Supporting ARC, MARTA, local jurisdictions including Clarkston
DeKalb 2050 Unified Plan- Executive Summary	2022	Reflect needs of diverse communities like Clarkston, with special attention to immigrant, refugee, and low-income populations.	Supported by ARC, consultation teams (ex. Kimley Horn, etc), input from cities like Clarkston, stakeholder groups
DeKalb 2050 Comprehensive Land Use Plan	2022	Promote redevelopment, housing diversity, economic opportunity, and environmental conservation. Inform zoning and land use decisions for Clarkston and other municipalities	Collaborators: ARC, Decide DeKalb, Planning Commission, consultant teams Local input: City of Clarkston

Section Two

DRRAFT

Visioning Sessions

Visioning Session Number One: Getting to Know You

Background

At the first session with the Clarkston Downtown Development Authority, Georgia Tech introduced the visioning process, its purpose, and project outcomes. The goal of the first session was to gain a better understanding of its members and the aspirations they have for the DDA. Specific topics discussed include current strengths and challenges for Clarkston, the goals they want to achieve, and opportunities they see for the DDA to support the development of Clarkston.

During the meeting, DDA board members participated in an online survey via Mentimeter for Georgia Tech to better the perceptions of Downtown Clarkston, how economic development efforts are currently handled, and how the DDA can support economic development. Highlights from this survey include:

- Recent economic development planning efforts have been encouraging, and stakeholders are hopeful about the future of downtown.
- The DDA can serve as a bridge between public and private entities.
- Promoting Clarkston and making its downtown a destination is a priority.

Visioning Session Summary

A more detailed summary is included on the following pages.

Grading Downtown Clarkston

Figure 2: How Would You Grade Downtown Clarkston?

A	0%	D	60%
B	0%	F	0%
C	40%		

Figure 3: How Would Visitors Grade Downtown Clarkston?

A	17%	D	67%
B	0%	F	0%
C	17%		

For the first exercise, DDA Board Members were asked to grade downtown Clarkston from their perspective. Results are shown in Figure 2, and highlight that most members feel there is room for improvement downtown.

Figure 3 summarizes how participants think visitors would grade downtown Clarkston today. Compared to their own view, some felt that visitors would give downtown an A, but most felt that visitors would also see downtown as needing improvement.

Figure 4: Downtown Clarkston: Today

Why is Downtown Clarkston Important?

Feedback on the importance of downtown highlighted that it serves as the city's economic driver and a community gathering spot. Downtown can also elevate awareness of the city and serve as a home for a variety of businesses, serving the city's diverse population. There is also an opportunity for downtown to serve as a revenue generator for the city.

Downtown Clarkston Today and In the Future

Most felt that currently downtown feels undefined and uninspiring. Undefined, because of a lack of gateway and other signage that delineates the downtown boundary, and uninspiring, due to a lack of vision and comprehensive strategy to guide design and development (Figure 4).

There were also positive feelings about downtown, specifically a sense of hopefulness about the role the DDA can play in improving downtown the area, and as well as the upcoming planning work that will also have an impact on downtown.

In the future, board members would like to see a family-friendly downtown that is home to thriving small businesses that cater to the diverse community and activate downtown throughout the entire day (Figure 5).

Mixed-use developments were also something board members would like to see, so that more housing is incorporated downtown.



Figure 5: Downtown Clarkston: Future



Downtown Clarkston Strengths and Weaknesses

Clarkston has several strengths, including its location, existing restaurants, population density, and development opportunities. Clarkston is well located, both to highways (78 & 285), major roads (East Ponce De Leon Avenue & Memorial), and trails/green space (Stone Mountain Path & Friendship Forest), as well as being well situated within Metro Atlanta. Downtown’s proximity to the Stone Mountain Path was seen by participants as a particular strength, as it provides the opportunity to attract pedestrians and cyclists to downtown (Figure 6).

The current diverse offerings of existing restaurants are a strength and can be leveraged to showcase the diversity of the city. Clarkston is a small city with a high population density, creating an opportunity for high turnout at events. Finally, participants shared that development opportunities, especially increasing housing density downtown, are a strength for the city.

Weaknesses included a lack of curb appeal, comfortable public space, and signage, leading to a feeling that downtown is disjointed and not inviting to visitors (Figure 7).

How Can The DDA Help

DDA Board members felt they could help make Clarkston a better place by engaging with businesses and residents to locate and support downtown, and serving as the bridge between public and private entities. They also felt that the DDA can promote downtown and support planning impactful events, making downtown a destination. Lastly, the DDA could guide both new and existing small business owners. Partners the DDA can leverage include:

- Decide Dekalb Development Authority
- Dekalb Chamber of Commerce
- Small Business Association
- City of Clarkston
- Local Business Association
- Georgia Piedmont Economic Development
- Other DDA’s

Figure 6: Downtown Clarkston Strengths



Figure 7: Downtown Clarkston Weaknesses



Visioning Session Number Two: Who Do You Want to Be?

Visioning Session Summary

The second visioning session focused on what they want their future to look like and their role in the future development of Clarkston. Several external stakeholders attended this meeting, providing their expertise on how the DDA can have a positive impact on Clarkston.

The goal of this meeting was to brainstorm both opportunities for the DDA to participate in and spearhead that will improve the city, and key terms to include in the DDA's vision and mission statements.

Opportunities were broken up into three categories: People, Place, and Plan opportunities, and participants provided feedback on each category. People opportunities are ways to engage people in a way that supports business. Place opportunities asked about ways to improve places and make them areas where people want to be. Respondents also provided specific properties that could be good redevelopment projects. Plan opportunities asked how planning efforts can support improvements, and how the DDA can interact with both regional and local planning efforts.

People Opportunities

People opportunities focused on events that highlight the diversity and culture of Clarkston. Specific ideas for events include:

- Music and cultural events
- Restaurant week
- Seasonal (holiday) events
- Bike festival
- Retail markets
- Arts festival

Plan Opportunities

Feedback on plan opportunities included ways that the DDA can interact with local leaders, city staff, and businesses, and how they can learn best practices from more established DDAs.

To engage with local businesses,

Establishing quarterly meetings with local leaders and workshops with City Council, the Historic Preservation Commission, and Planning & Zoning to ensure priorities are aligned.

There are several upcoming planning opportunities that DDA Board Members can participate in, including the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and Comprehensive Plan updates. Participating in these plans will provide an opportunity for board members to ensure these plans' goals for Clarkston align with the DDA's goals and how the DDA can be a supportive implementation partner.

Field trips to other DDAs were seen by participants as an important opportunity.

Learning from peers, through DDA field trips, was seen as an important opportunity by participants. Topics to discuss with other DDAs include:

- Existing priorities
- Existing programs
- Organization success
- Organization challenges
- Funding mechanisms

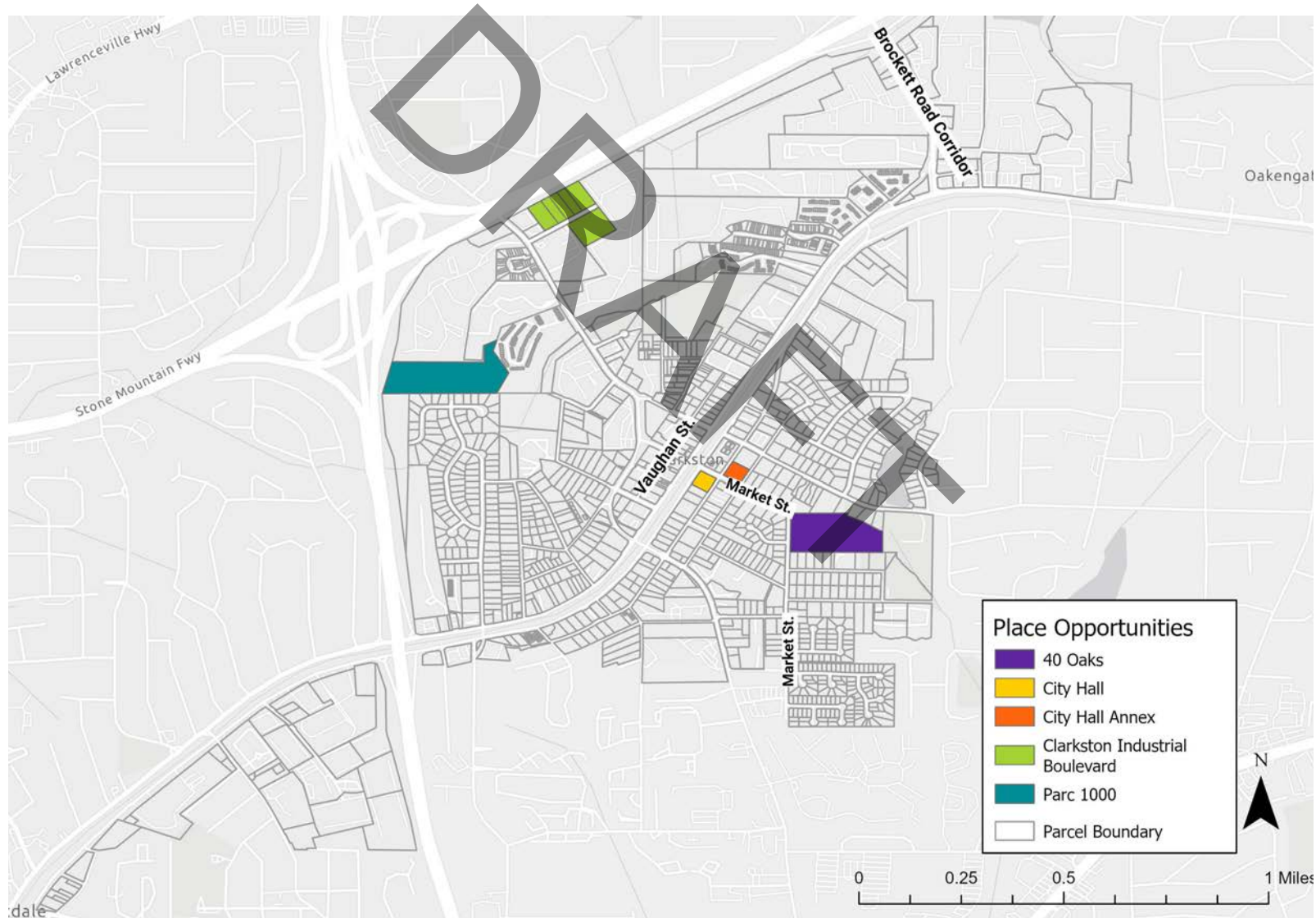
Potential DDA's to visit include:

- Decatur
- Lawrenceville
- Norcross

Place Opportunities

The place opportunities shared by board members are shown in Figure 8. Market Street was shared most frequently as a place of opportunity, where the DDA can focus its improvement efforts. The Vaughn and Brockett corridors were also mentioned. Some potential properties the DDA saw as an opportunity include the old City Hall building.

Figure 8: Place Opportunities



Visioning Session Number Three: How Do You Get There?

Visioning Session Summary

The final visioning session focused on finalizing the vision and mission statement for the Downtown Development Authority. Most of the meeting time was allocated to discussing potential action steps to include in the final mission statement that will communicate the action steps the DDA plans to take to achieve its vision.

Based on feedback from session two, the mission statement includes action items grouped into people, place, and plan opportunities.

Lastly, next steps and potential activities for the DDA to implement were discussed.

Draft Vision Statements

Several draft vision statements were presented to the group, with iterative feedback provided until the group decided on a final vision. The draft vision statements discussed are included below.

1. Clarkston: A Welcoming City for All

Celebrating our vibrant diversity, Clarkston is a family-friendly, inclusive community where sustainability, and kindness support economic growth and cultural connection.

2. Clarkston: A Place for Everyone

Family-friendly, business-ready, and built on kindness and connection.

3. Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

To build a vibrant, inclusive city where diverse businesses thrive, and community and culture drive sustainable growth.

4. Clarkston: Growing Business, Honoring Community

We support and grow local businesses through inclusive development, cultural celebration, and sustainable investment—ensuring long-term success for entrepreneurs and families alike.

Final Working Vision Statement

Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

Draft Mission Statement

The Clarkston Downtown Development Authority is committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient downtown by embracing the unique culture and diversity of our community. We champion People Opportunities through dynamic events that celebrate Clarkston's rich heritage and multicultural identity. We invest in Place Opportunities by enhancing the physical environment that reflect the pride and potential of our city. We advance Plan Opportunities by cultivating strategic partnerships with other DDAs, engaging regularly with city officials, and actively participating in local and regional planning efforts to ensure sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

Final Working Mission Statement

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

Session Three

Once stakeholders completed workshopping the vision and mission statements, Georgia Tech reviewed the initial next steps and potential activities that the DDA can undertake. Representatives from Georgia Tech facilitated a discussion about the next steps and potential activities included below.

Additional information about next steps and potential activities is included in section four.

Next Steps

- Finalize the vision and mission statements
- Schedule a workshop session with other city partners to establish consensus on prioritized activities and executions
- Compile and report out business survey results
- Participate in the upcoming LCI and Comprehensive Plan updates
- Schedule site visits with neighboring DDA's
- Develop a five year work plan

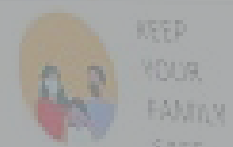
Potential Activities

- Gateway Signage
- Develop a starting a business guide
- Schedule reoccurring touch points with existing businesses
- Property inventory and mapping
- Evaluate the need for potential programs such as signage or facade improvement grants
- Events - who, what, when, where and how

Final Working Vision and Mission

FRIENDSHIP FOREST
WILDLIFE SANCTUARY
CITY OF CLARKSTON, GA

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Working Vision

Clarkston: Where Global Cultures Build Local Success

To build a vibrant, inclusive city where diverse businesses thrive through inclusive development, cultural celebration, and sustainable investment.

Working Mission

The Clarkston DDA is dedicated to building a vibrant, connected downtown by celebrating the city's cultural fabric through dynamic experiences, enhanced public spaces, and promoting partnerships, civic engagement, and regional collaboration.

Section Four



Next Steps

Next Steps

Next Steps

Finalize Mission and Vision

For the DDA to support businesses and economic development efforts of the City of Clarkston, the authority should first focus on finalizing its mission and vision statements to set the direction for the organization.

Once the mission and vision have been finalized, the DDA should schedule a workshop session with other city partners to share the final mission and vision and to establish consensus on prioritized objectives and action items. City partners to host a workshop that includes:

- City Council
- Department of City Planning
- Historic Preservation Commission

Early meetings with city partners can help ensure the DDA and the city are aligned on goals and priorities, increasing the likelihood of successful project implementation.

Continuing to hold open houses to engage the community on the purpose and future of the DDA should be prioritized.

Business Survey Results

Earlier this summer, the DDA created a survey for local businesses. Summarizing the survey results and having major takeaways on hand for the workshop session with city partners to help establish priorities.

The survey results should also be shared with local businesses at a future open house.

Participation in Upcoming Planning Projects

Several planning projects are anticipated to start in Clarkston over the next year. Two important planning efforts include the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) and the Comprehensive Plan Update. The DDA Board Members

should participate in these efforts to ensure DDA priorities are included in these plans.

DDA Field Trips

An excellent way for the Clarkston DDA to learn the best ways to be an effective organization for the city. Scheduling visits with more established DDAs can provide an opportunity for board members to learn about their programs and successes, and what they would do differently.

Develop a Five-Year Work Plan

Leveraging the momentum from the visioning process, the DDA can create a detailed five-year work plan that outlines the goals of the organization and prioritized strategies to achieve the goals.

Table 2: Example Goals and Strategies

Plan Component	Purpose	Plan Example
Goals	Sets the long-term direction for a community's economic development.	G1. Champion People Opportunities
Objectives	Broken into manageable steps (SMART)	O1.1. Increase the number DDA hosted/co-hosted/sponsored events.
Strategies	Specific actions to achieve the objectives. A clear path for implementation.	S1.1.1 Host a Clarkston Restaurant week highlighting the City's diverse cuisines. Provide attendees with participation guides and cards to track attendance.

**Potential Opportunities +
Case Studies**

Opportunities and Case Studies

Opportunities

This section shares potential policies and programs the Clarkston DDA could implement to support economic development and placemaking initiatives in the city.

Placemaking

Clarkston can use existing assets to create a more vibrant, walkable downtown that reflects its global community and local pride.

Through engagement with the [PATH Foundation](#) and an [AARP Livability Assessment](#), the city can evaluate the need for public comfort features – including optimal bench spacing for rest and social interaction, clear and multilingual signage, accessible bike repair stations, and well-placed waste receptacles for both humans and pets. These efforts aim to create a more inclusive, people-centered downtown that supports both everyday use and special events. Market and Rowland streets provide a great location to place gateway signage, pointing people to nearby developments.

Figure 9: Market and Rowland Street



Source: Georgia Tech

Center of Gravity: The emotional and visual anchor of your downtown. This is the place people tag on Instagram, gather naturally, or associate with the town’s identity. Build connections outward from this spot – visually, physically, and programmatically.

Best Practice: Statesboro Art Park

The [Statesboro Art Park](#) transformed a vacant railroad right-of-way into a lively gathering space, featuring walkways, flower-inspired landscaping, and interactive installations like a community sundial and a six-foot-tall “BORO” sign. The vibrant outdoor space showcases a rotating installation of contemporary public art.

Figure 10: Statesboro Art Park



Source: City of Statesboro

Pop-Up Placemaking: Temporary installations can test ideas, activate space, and build momentum. Use planters, picnic tables, shade sails, and murals to define space; host events to kick off the space and monitor usage. Rotating programming by time of day and audience can help broaden engagement and reach different audiences.

Section Five

Community Events

While the DDA is new and still establishing its priorities, the DDA could support existing community events. By aligning with familiar and well-attended gatherings, the DDA can introduce its initiatives, gather feedback, and promote downtown goals without the overhead of organizing standalone events. Additionally, these partnerships demonstrate a commitment to supporting local culture and commerce, reinforcing the DDA's role as a collaborative and responsive leader in downtown revitalization.

The DDA could also partner with local businesses and other city departments to create new events designed to engage target populations and promote downtown businesses and venues. Some examples include:

Wellness Walk: Host monthly “wellness walks” featuring health-related businesses (chiropractors, pharmacies, smoothie shops, fitness facilities, etc) to encourage public space engagement while highlighting local businesses.

Bike Month (May): Partner with other cities along the Path during National Bike Month. Programming could include bike repair clinics, beginner bike rides for children, or a weekend event with vendors.

Digital Engagement

The [Georgia Main Street](#) Program offers marketing and storytelling technical assistance, helping cities develop balanced social media strategies and creative content plans. [Main Street America](#) catalogs resources on social media storytelling. Suggested overarching themes for Clarkston might include connected, kind, fabric, vibrant, and inclusive.

Some tips on digital engagement include:

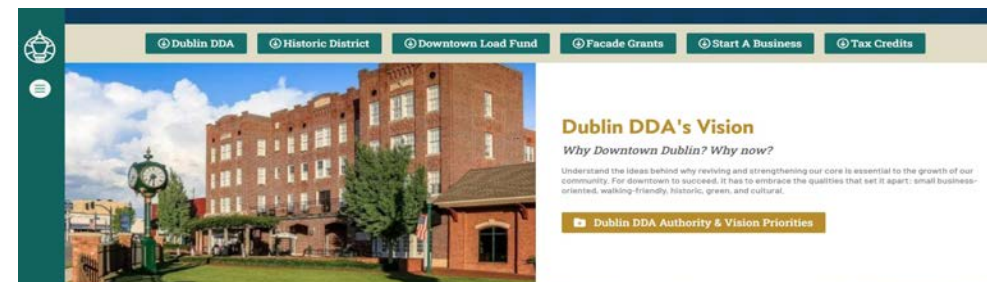
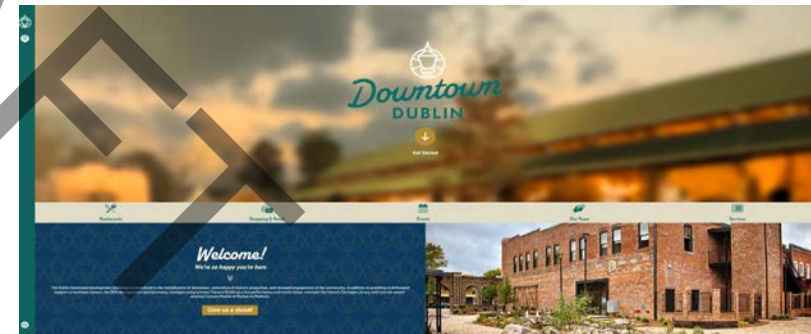
- Branding – Create an identity that echoes the DDA's vision and represents the community character.
- Events Calendar – Keeps the residents and visitors informed of upcoming events, festivals, and meetings.

- Business Directory - Highlight local businesses with photos, contact info, and links. Include categories (e.g., dining, retail, services) and filters for ease of use.
- Interactive Maps - Show parking, public art, green spaces, and walkable routes. Use tools like Google Maps or GIS-based platforms.
- Visioning Documents – Share the downtown master plans, visioning study, and placemaking goals. Include downloadable PDFs with summaries for public transparency.
- Local Business Portal – Provide a direct link for businesses to connect with the DDA to drive engagement, ensure resource utilization, and create a proactive approach.

Best Practice: Dublin DDA

Downtown Dublin: A vibrant image-rich web presence with easy navigation for residents, visitors, and business owners. The DDA vision and priorities are clearly visible.

Figure 11: Dublin DDA Website



Source: Dublin DDA

Small Business Support

The DDA could establish a small business guide to provide information for potential business owners on important items, including regulatory information, any financial assistance, and available supportive services.

Creative Incentives

To design the most effective incentive packages for Downtown Clarkston, we recommend conducting two key assessments:

- Business Survey Analysis – Utilize the results of the recent survey to determine current business needs, challenges, and growth opportunities.
- Commercial Building Windshield Survey – Evaluate the physical condition, occupancy status, and redevelopment potential of existing commercial properties.

Together, these tools will provide a data-driven foundation for tailoring incentives that support business retention, attract new investment, and guide strategic revitalization efforts.

Best Practice: Kennesaw Downtown Development Authority (KDDA) Flex Grant Program

The Flex Grant Program is a targeted initiative designed to support small businesses within the downtown district by providing grants ranging from \$500 to \$2,500. This reimbursable, matching grant program empowers businesses to enhance productivity, improve infrastructure, expand operations, and invest in technology and marketing. Eligible projects include equipment purchases, façade improvements, software upgrades, and placemaking activities—all aligned with the broader goal of strengthening the downtown economy. The Flex Grant Program Guidelines and Application form are included in the Appendix.

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Appendix



Kennesaw Downtown Development
Authority Main Street on the Move Flex
Grant Application

Contact Information

Business DBA Name: _____

Legal Name (if different): _____

Street Address: _____

Website: _____

Primary Contact Name: _____

Title: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____

Grant Request

Project Description:

Total Project Budget: _____

Requested Grant Amount: _____

Percent of Total Budget: _____

Estimated Project Completion Date: _____

As a separate attachment, please include supplementary materials outlined in the grant guidelines (cost estimates, drawings, schematics, goal statement, etc.).

Acknowledgement

By signing below, I affirm that the information provided in this grant application is both truthful and accurate. I understand that all text and photos submitted in this application may be used by the KDDA during grant announcement/award and in press related materials pertaining to the grant recipients.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

KDDA Main Street on the Move Flex Grant Program Guidelines

Purpose:

The KDDA will award grants ranging from \$500 - \$2500 to small businesses in Downtown Kennesaw for projects that will enhance productivity, expand or improve business processes, improve service delivery, support business expansion, or improve business facilities/infrastructure. Grant amounts are discretionary and will be awarded based on need and potential impact.

Eligibility:

- Businesses applying for this grant program must be located within the KDDA boundaries, hold a valid City of Kennesaw Business License, have no outstanding code enforcement violations, and must have generated revenue as of October 1, 2024.
- The grant is reimbursable and requires a minimum 50% match. Applicants must submit valid expense receipts for the approved project to receive payment. Once awarded, a request for reimbursement should be submitted to the KDDA prior to the end of the fiscal year (September 30). Applicants should submit a Source of Funds Statement along with the project budget.
- Examples of eligible projects include (but are not limited to):
 - Purchase of new equipment to expand/improve business processes or increase production
 - Purchase of software or technology products to improve business efficiency/ processes
 - Capital expenses related to facility renovation/expansion (includes signage)
 - Technical assistance (consultant fees, etc) for the development of new or alternative revenue streams, expanded marketing opportunities, brand development or other business needs
 - Capital expenses related to façade improvement
 - Capital expenses related to major equipment purchases necessary for production or service delivery
 - Marketing support for new downtown businesses (open less than 2 years)
 - Costs associated with participation in the Fusus camera program with Kennesaw Police Department
 - Expansion of performing arts or placemaking programming within the downtown area
- Applicants cannot be an employee or board member of the KDDA, or be an immediate family member of an employee or board member. Immediate family is defined as an employee's spouse, parent, sibling, child, grandchild, and grandparent, and includes any of these persons of a step, in-law, foster, or adoptive relationship to the employee. Applicants cannot be a federal, state, or municipal employee, or elected/appointed official.
- Only for-profit businesses are eligible; non-profits are not eligible.

Grant Repayment

- KDDA reserves the right to require that grant funds be repaid to the KDDA by the business owner if the business relocates outside of the City of Kennesaw's Central Business District within 3 years of grant award. Repayment guidelines will be included in the grant award agreement.

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Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute
Center for Economic
Development Research

October 2025