



# **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP) PANEL**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT &  
REVITALIZATION OF THE 13TH AVENUE & 13TH STREET  
CORRIDORS; COLUMBUS, GEORGIA**



**December 2011**



**Urban Land Institute** **Atlanta**

Serving Georgia, Alabama, and Eastern Tennessee

## ULI – THE URBAN LAND INSTITUTE

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 and has over 30,000 members from more than 90 countries. It is one of America's most respected resources of information and knowledge on urban planning, growth and development. ULI is a non-profit research and education organization. Its mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. To encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing experiences, ULI membership represents the entire spectrum of land use and real estate development disciplines, working in private enterprise and public service. Among its members there are developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, planners, public officials, brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students and marketing and brand identity experts.

## ULI ATLANTA

With over 1,000 members throughout Georgia, Alabama and Eastern Tennessee, ULI Atlanta is one of the largest District Councils of the Urban Land Institute. We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media.

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed the technical expertise of its members to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. ULI Atlanta brought this same model of technical assistance to the Metropolitan Atlanta area. Local ULI members volunteer their time to serve on panels. In return, they are provided with a unique opportunity to share their skills and experience to improve their community.

Through Technical Assistance Program Panels, ULI Atlanta is able to enhance community leadership, clarify community needs and assets, and advance land use policies that expand economic opportunity and maximize market potential.

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ULI Atlanta would like to thank the panelists, moderators and TAP Committee members for their time, energy and passion for ULI and Midtown Columbus.

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The Panel is also grateful to have the benefit of input from the many stakeholders and residents who attended the session, including: John Anker, David Arrington, Elizabeth Barker, Will Barnes, Kimberly Beck, Tom Buck, Ed Burdeshaw, Will Burgin, Debbie Cabellero, Walter Calhoun, Trey Carmack, Ron Cottle, Wayne Coulter, Betsy Covington, Bitsy Dedwylder, Frank Etheridge, Courtney Grunninger, Robert Hecht, Ken Henson, Jeff Hudson, Isaiah Hugley, Helen Johnson, Will Johnson, Rick Jones, Justin Krieg, Frances Malone, Dorothy McDaniel, Donna Newman, John Peebles, Virginia Peebles, Amanda Rees, John Sheftall, Butch Smith, Suzanne Solomon, Teresa Tomlinson, George Wade, III and James Worsley.

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**Panelists** from L- R (*front row*): Patty Farr, Cheryl Morgan, Robbie Gring Cambell, Jonathan Bartlett (*second row*): Jim Bynum, Bob Wilkerson, Brad Davis, John Karnowski, Pat O'Leary (*back row*): Alan Tidwell, Jerry Miller, Russell Posey

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Midtown area in Columbus, Georgia is rich with amenities and opportunities. The boundaries of Midtown contain historic neighborhoods, architectural history, engaging streets, schools, places of worship, neighborhood commercial districts, museums and art galleries. At Midtown's edges, Downtown, Uptown, the medical center and the Wynnton Road Corridor are regional destinations for entertainment, civic services, medical services and shopping. Connecting the midtown districts and neighborhoods to the surrounding areas is a dense, well-connected street network with tree-lined streets.



Even with such great qualities, Midtown is looking for new and better. Particularly, the Midtown community wants more from the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors. Today these corridors are worn around the edges and need improvement. But tomorrow, with new investment in the area, they can be Midtown's next great asset and destination.



To help sort through the issues, opportunities and long term vision for the area, MidTown Inc. engaged ULI Atlanta's Technical Assistance Program to convene an advisory panel to begin re-imagining a transformed area.

Over the course of a day and a half, the Panel worked with Midtown community leaders to learn about the history and current conditions, as well as, the community vision. Recommendations followed on next steps to make the community dreams a reality. Pulling from their expertise in real estate, architecture, community planning, transportation, engineering, economic development and marketing, the Panel provided the community with expert insight into the unique challenges and opportunities in Midtown.

Midtown is an engaged community, and now it needs to organize around a new identity and vision to create its next chapter.

### ***Guiding Principles***

Over the course of the discussion with community leaders, several themes rose to the top as key community goals and strategies for Midtown. Among them are:

- Promote a unified Midtown identity and sense of place.
- Create community destinations
- Enhance and expand housing options
- Preserve and improve environmental features
- Enhance and expand access to parks and greenspace
- Enhance and expand retail and restaurant options

In addition to general recommendations for Midtown, the Panel focused on the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors as key focus areas to drive change and create community destinations. For the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors, key goals include:

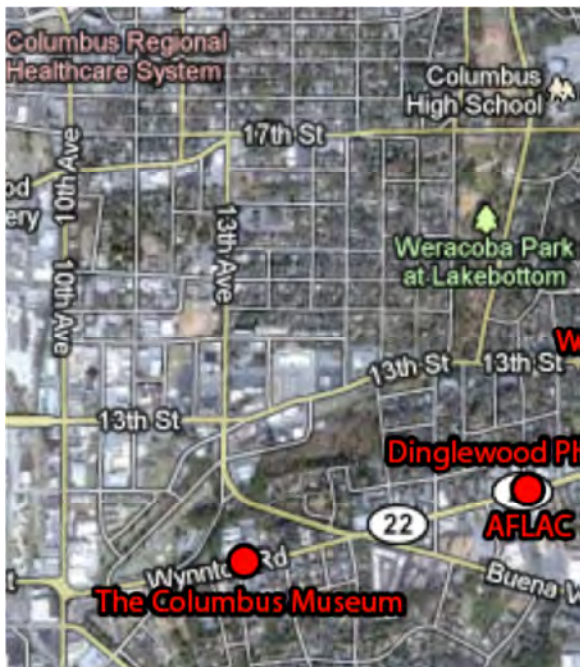
- Establish 13th street as the gateway to Midtown
- Re-create 13th Ave as a walkable street and neighborhood destination
- Re-envision the greenway and create new greenspace amenities
- Develop a Master Plan for 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors to guide public and private improvements

## COMMUNITY AND PROJECT CONTEXT

Midtown, Inc. worked with the TAP Committee to receive advice and recommendations on the redevelopment of the properties along the 13th Avenue and 13th Street corridors. Midtown Inc. is working to foster development along these corridors that will serve as community destinations for shopping, socializing, recreation and job opportunities, as well as, an attractive gateway into Midtown. Below are summaries of the project focus area and the role Midtown Inc. and the Panel play in developing this report.

### ***Project Focus Area***

The 13th Street Corridor extends from the viaduct east to the intersection of 13th Street and the southern edge of Warracobba Park. The 13th Street corridor serves as a key transportation connection between downtown and key destinations east of Midtown including Columbus State University, Fort Benning and shopping centers along the Wynnton Road corridor.



Within the boundaries of the 13th Street corridor, the properties along the street are a mix of commercial, retail and light industrial uses. Additionally, Dinglewood Park, Warracoba Park and the greenway that connects the two parks front the eastern edge of the corridor. The street changes significantly from west to east through the corridor. Starting at the viaduct, the corridor begins with 6 lanes (7 at the intersection of 10th Avenue) and gradually tapers down to 4 lanes past the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue. The condition of the street varies from good to poor, with variable sidewalk conditions, gaps in the sidewalk, limited street trees and significant visual clutter (signs, power lines, etc.).

The 13th Avenue corridor begins at the intersection of 17th Street and 13th Avenue and extends south to the intersection of 13th Avenue and Wynnton Road. The 13th Avenue corridor connects the East Highland neighborhood and the Columbus Regional Medical Center area to 13th Street, the Columbus Museum area and Wynnton Road.

Within the boundaries for the 13th Avenue Corridor, the properties along the street are a mix of commercial, retail, residential and civic uses. Additionally, there are several vacant parcels and the corridor's only city-owned park space, Lindwood-Tillis Park, located along the corridor. The street is predominately a two-lane street, except at several intersections that expand to accommodate left turn



lanes. The condition of the street is good with some street trees and sidewalks along both sides of the street.

The two most significant intersections within the focus area are the intersection of 13th Avenue and 17th Street and the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue. 13th Avenue and 17th Street is a five way intersection that also includes Linwood Boulevard. 13th Avenue and 13th Street is a significant intersection in terms of traffic volume, transportation connections and a visual crossroads where the two focus corridors connect.

The high point of the focus area is at the intersection of 13th Avenue and 17th Street, with 13th Avenue sloping down to the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue before climbing back up to the intersection of 13th Avenue and Wynnton Road. 13th Avenue is relatively flat, but it slopes down from the viaduct to the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue before climbing gently towards Weracoba Park and the eastern portion of Midtown. The intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue is the general low point within the focus area.

### ***Midtown Profile***

Once a small collection of estates established in the 1830s, Midtown has grown to include a collection of neighborhoods and commercial districts over the past 100 years. Today, Midtown attracts residents and visitors with its park-like settings, proximity to Columbus destinations as well as its cultural, educational and recreational amenities.

The area contains six contiguous historic neighborhoods with commercial, medical and educational facilities to support the neighborhoods. Additionally, Midtown is home to the Columbus Museum, Columbus Library and the international headquarters of AFLAC. Midtown contains over 20,000 residents in 8,500 households and approximately 17,700 people that work in, or within 0.5 miles of, the area.

Midtown is also within a 10 minute drive of Fort Benning, a key employment center and economic resource for the Columbus region. As a result of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Act, Fort Benning is projected to add approximately 27,000 new residents to the area (5,000 officer level military personnel, 10,000 family members and another 10,000 support personnel) due to the US Army Armor Center and School relocating from Fort Knox, Kentucky.

**Midtown Inc.** is a community revitalization organization that serves as a community organizer, facilitator and advocate for the residents, businesses and property owners located within the Midtown boundaries. The mission of Midtown Inc. is to advocate, promote, facilitate and guide the revitalization and redevelopment of the Midtown area in a manner that is consistent with the visions and aspirations of its residents and the greater Columbus community.



***Columbus Museum***  
*Photo credit MidTown, Inc.*



***Columbus Library***  
*Photo credit MidTown, Inc.*



The organization is led by a diverse Board of Directors that embraces a broad vision and implementation strategy to support the following:

- Advocate for Midtown Columbus as an important economic and community resource within the City of Columbus.
- Develop and implement a strategy to renew and sustain Midtown Columbus as a vibrant community of neighborhoods and businesses in coordination with local and state officials as well as stakeholders, including residents, institutions, business owners and property owners,
- Identify and facilitate redevelopment opportunities in Midtown by working with officials, stakeholders and potential investors.
- Create a sense of place in Midtown Columbus through brand identity development, marketing and communication strategies, community outreach and community organization.



### ***Midtown TAP Objectives***

MidTown, Inc. looked for several specific outcomes from the TAP Panel. These objectives were used to guide the discussion and focus of the TAP Panel.

The specific objectives include:

- Propose appropriate land uses for the areas/corridors in question
- Determine how best to facilitate revitalization in the area (i.e. utilizing existing buildings, etc.)
- Comment on the capacity of the existing utility infrastructure
- Address the utility of the impaired stream
- Propose a strategy for development that relies heavily on public-private partnerships.

### ***ULI TAP Objectives***

The primary objective for the ULI TAP Panel was to make recommendations about how best to facilitate the improvement of the Midtown area, with the primary focus being the two corridors, in a manner that is consistent with the existing neighborhood vision for Midtown. The panel provided guidance and direction to MidTown, Inc. staff regarding how best to encourage the redevelopment and revitalization of the 13th Avenue and 13th Street corridors.

In particular, the panel focused their input on the following topics:

- Market Analysis
- Brokerage and Land Assembly
- Community Planning and Urban Design
- Brand identity development
- Strategic Marketing support for economic development and community communication
- Engineering
- Transportation
- Commercial and Residential Development
- Marketing and Branding



## MIDTOWN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Panel began with a discussion about the existing strengths and weaknesses of Midtown as a whole, as well as within the focus corridors. The Panel's comments, as well as the input from the Midtown leaders in attendance, are summarized below. Additionally, the strengths and weaknesses were used to provide context and the basis for the recommendations from the Panel.

### ***Strengths***

↑ **Neighborhoods** - The diversity of people and architecture makes the Midtown neighborhoods unique and attractive. Additionally, the walkable, tree-lined streets and parks make the neighborhoods inviting.



↑ **Institutions** - The schools, churches, museums and art galleries collectively make Midtown a rich source of local culture and civic activity.

↑ **Proximity to employment centers** - Midtown is conveniently located in close proximity to several key employment centers in the Columbus area including Downtown, the Medical Center, CSU, AFLAC, Fort Benning and shopping centers along the Macon Road corridor at the eastern edge of Midtown.

↑ **Columbus Museum** - The museum is a source of employment and regional resource for culture and art.

↑ **Transportation Connections** - Midtown Columbus is well connected to other areas of Columbus with streets such as 17th Street, 13th Street, 13th Avenue and Wynnton Road providing important transportation connections to Midtown and surrounding areas. Additionally, Midtown is well-connected internally with a well-established street grid that provides multiple route options to get to neighborhood destinations.

↑ **Medical Center** - The Medical Center serves as a community resource for medical services and employment.

↑ **Traffic Volume** - Traffic volume is high along 13th Street, which is attractive for retail businesses.

↑ **Stream** - The stream that runs through Weracoba Park and Dinglewood Park is an important community connection to nature.



## Weaknesses

- ↓ **Underutilized Properties** - Several commercial and industrial properties sit vacant or without tenants and basic maintenance.
- ↓ **Condition of 13th Street** - The physical condition of the road, sidewalk, utilities and buildings along 13th Street leave much to be desired.
- ↓ **Scale and Attractiveness of Viaduct** - The viaduct is a significant link between Midtown and Downtown, yet it currently serves as a barrier to people walking and biking between the two districts. The number of lanes and lack of architectural and green features make it unattractive and uninviting for all modes of travel.
- ↓ **Flooding** - Stormwater management is a serious issue in Midtown, especially near the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue. Flooding is negatively impacting properties adjacent to the stream and stormwater from the Midtown area is degrading the stream as well.
- ↓ **Stream** - The condition of the stream and stream bank is poor due to the stormwater issues and impacts of utilities in and around the stream. Water and stream bank quality can be improved.



## MIDTOWN OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The panel also discussed the opportunities and challenges facing the Midtown Community. The discussion about opportunities and challenges was used as a transition to begin talking about the overall vision for the area and the potential barriers to achieving the vision. Like the strengths and weaknesses discussion, the ideas were used to inform the recommendations developed by the panel.

### Opportunities

- + **Existing Residents** – Residents are an essential component to any stable and thriving area, and existing Midtown residents play a key role in maintaining and improving the community. Being engaged and establishing a sense of ownership is important for the long-term success of Midtown, and the existing residents will continue to shape the success and vitality of Midtown.
- + **New Rental Market** - Young adults and military personnel define the majority of people moving to Columbus. Younger generations can provide vitality and energy to Midtown. Some may want to “test” the neighborhood by renting while others may want to buy. Providing a range of housing options could be a competitive housing strategy for Midtown.
- + **Beautiful Neighborhoods and Streets** - The existing architectural variety and history, as well as the walkable, tree-lined streets define the quality community character and sense of place many people desire. The





established sense of place provides a competitive advantage for Midtown in attracting new households and businesses.

- + **Diversity** - The diversity of people - young and old, white and black, and a mix of incomes - can be a key economic driver. Inclusiveness and opportunity can enhance people's connection to a community. Continuing this legacy in Midtown can attract new residents and businesses to the area. The mix of culture and variety of people could be one of the unique features that makes Midtown an attractive destination that is different than other areas in the region.
- + **Develop community identity and a believable brand** - A strong, unified community image can be a competitive edge for communities such as Midtown. The initial identity as a "District" has been established and can be expanded to attract new residents and investment to the area.
- + **13th Avenue Right-of-Way** - The wide right-of-way and generous setbacks of buildings along the corridor provides plenty of opportunity and room to re-shape the street. A redesigned street could include new street trees, wider sidewalks, reduced number of lanes or even bike lanes.

## **Challenges**

- **Infill and Redevelopment Barriers** - Several barriers exist for infill and redevelopment along the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors including:
  - Availability of land compared to green field areas at the urban edge of Columbus;
  - Lack of depth to lots;
  - Ability to assemble property to be more viable and flexible for future projects;
  - Property access to corridors and age of utilities; and
  - Property contamination due to existing or past commercial and industrial activity.
- **Aging Population** - The aging of the baby boomer generation is a growing concern in many communities, and Midtown is no exception. Providing appropriate services and access to daily activities will need to be considered as the area continues to age in place.
- **Overcoming Rental Stigma** - Rental properties and people who rent have often been labeled with a negative connotation by using the assumption that people who rent care less for a place than people who own. However, today's economic realities mean Midtown's target audience for new residents such as young professionals, new families, retirees and others, are turning to renting as an attractive housing option. Reduced buying power, temporary employment opportunities (e.g. at Fort Benning), affordability and general desire to own and maintain a home are all factors changing the demographic and need for a variety of housing options in a community.
- **Safety** - The notion of safety, as a perception and reality, needs to be a continued focus in Midtown. Even though safety statistics show Midtown is just as safe as other areas of Columbus, community members in Midtown and outside of the area continue to have a negative safety perception of the area.





- **Accessibility for people who don't drive** - Improving the street quality for people who don't drive will continue to be a growing issue. The elderly and people who can't afford to drive because of income or disability need to have safe, convenient and comfortable access to their daily needs and activities.

- **Walkability** - The street connections between Midtown neighborhoods and commercial areas need improvement to make walking safer, more convenient and comfortable. Portions of sidewalks are missing in some locations and several commercial streets are uninviting to pedestrians because of the high traffic speeds, sidewalk conditions and lack of street trees. Addressing these issues could encourage people to walk more or park and walk to neighborhood destinations in Midtown.



- **Need to Establish Regional Uniqueness** - Approximately 5,000 households are located in the Midtown area. If Midtown wants local restaurants, coffee shops and retailers, the area needs to attract people from outside Midtown to make these businesses successful.

- **Commercial encroachment into residential areas** - Commercial development is creeping into residential areas and is threatening the quality and character of these areas. Rezonings and new development should establish appropriate transitions between commercial areas and residential neighborhoods to preserve the unique character of the neighborhoods.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel recommendations below represent the primary topics discussed during the afternoon session and small group discussions with community leaders. The recommendations should be used to guide decision-making about next steps in planning and community improvement in Midtown. While the general focus is on the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors, some of the recommendations also apply more broadly to Midtown as a whole.

### ***Placemaking and Community Identity***

- **Create unique districts or destinations within Midtown** - Applying this strategy can help shape community identity, branding and marketing.
- **Create 13th Street and 13th Avenue Master Plan** - A master plan for the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors can provide several advantages for reshaping the area including:
  - A collective community vision for the area
  - Guide redevelopment projects and private investment in the area



- Prioritize community investments such as infrastructure upgrades for streets and utilities
- Help MidTown, Inc. compete for competitive grants and for state and federal transportation funds
- **Crawl, walk then run** - Look for small successes that can build support for more transformative changes. Examples could be a new streetscape along a street or establishing a new farmers market in the area or pop-up retail shops that drive creativity, community engagement and possible new businesses. When the community is engaged and excited, investment will follow.
- **Use temporary space or activity as “positive place holders” for future opportunities** - Examples of this strategy include dog parks, community gardens, food truck parks and pop-up retailers. These types of activities generate activity quickly, easily and cheaply compared to permanent development. These approaches can make use of vacant or under-utilized spaces to illustrate what is possible and create interest in a new area.
- **Build on success of what is doing well** - The museum and the St. Elmo commercial area are strong community anchors that can leverage current activity for future investment. Using these areas as starting points for community revitalization efforts can use existing “building blocks” to build positive community change.
- **Engage community to market area** - Nothing sells better than personal enthusiasm for an area and who better to sell Midtown than its residents, business owners and employees.
- **Program the area** - Social activities, such as festivals and concert series, help invite new people to the community and enhance community pride. They can be used to raise awareness about Midtown and all it has to offer and to provide fun activities in Midtown.



## Land Use

- **Demand for new parks and greenspace** - While Dinglewood and Warecoba Park both serve Midtown, they are also heavily used and programmed. There is still a need for soccer fields, event spaces and smaller pocket parks. Additional parks and greenspace can enhance the community with new places to gather, play and socialize.
- **Remove fencing around Lindwood-Tills Park** - Removing the chain-link fencing around Lindwood-Tills Park can serve as a short-term “win” to improve the visual character of the 13th Avenue corridor.





- **Create transition areas between commercial areas and neighborhoods** - Providing appropriate transitions between neighborhood commercial areas and established single-family neighborhoods can accomplish several things, including establishing appropriate edges between districts and neighborhoods and reducing commercial encroachment into neighborhoods. An appropriate example would be locating apartments and townhomes between commercial/mixed use areas and single-family neighborhoods. This approach provides a tapering of development intensity.
- **Focus on adjustments to zoning and future land use** Many of the ideas for the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors do not align with existing zoning and Columbus' future land use map. Work with the city and property owners to ensure zoning and the future land use map support the desired community uses and redevelopment opportunities.
- **Opportunities to improve existing buildings** - Look for opportunities to re-purpose and improve existing buildings. Potential strategies include facade improvements, city code enforcement and filling vacant storefronts. These strategies are short-term opportunities that can enhance the visual quality of the corridors.
- **Leverage Linwood-Tills Park for land swap** - Linwood-Tills Park is currently an under-utilized park. The park could be used as a bargaining tool for redevelopment opportunities along the corridor. By relocating and allocating the park space to other areas of Midtown, such as along 13th Street or 13th Avenue, the land swap could help create flexibility in design and redevelopment opportunities and to create new parks.
- **Explore opportunity to buy-out properties at the southeast corner of 13th Street and 13th Avenue** - These properties are constrained by their lot dimensions and impacted by flooding associated with the adjacent stream. Near-by properties could be used to negotiate a land swap to provide existing businesses the opportunity to continue operation while also allowing the properties at the intersection to be re-purposed. Properties could be redeveloped as greenspace and extension of the greenway along the stream. If this strategy is an option, activity should be coordinated with the redesign of the 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue intersection.



## **Transportation**

- **Redesign 13th Street and 13th Avenue intersection** - The intersection is a central cross-roads for the community and the focal point for redevelopment activity along the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors. Additionally, safety is a concern at the intersection, especially with the configuration of Midway

Drive. With the high volume of traffic and turn lane configurations, safety for drivers and pedestrians is compromised and needs to be addressed.

- **Redesign 13th Avenue and 17th Street intersection**

- The 5-way intersection is an important transportation intersection and a gateway to the 13th Avenue corridor. A roundabout at this location appears to be feasible and can serve as a catalyst for redevelopment near the intersection.



- **Transform 13th Street and 13th Avenue into complete streets**

- 13th Street and 13th Avenue can be redesigned as walkable, bikable and transit-oriented streets. Street trees, improved sidewalks, bike lanes and slower traffic speeds can transform the corridors into community destinations for shopping, dining, working and socializing. Access management strategies are needed to reduce or consolidate driveways while providing necessary ingress/egress for existing and future development. Additionally, the transformed streets can support adjacent properties and redevelopment opportunities by enhancing the quality of public space and street life.

- **Enhance the viaduct** - The viaduct is the primary link between Midtown and Downtown, yet there is much that is left to be desired. Re-purposing the bridge as a gateway feature can help improve the visual character of the area and also improve pedestrian and biking connections between Midtown and Downtown. The bridge has more lane capacity than is needed and should be put on a road diet, or reduction in the number of lanes. The left over right-of-way can be allocated to additional sidewalk space, street trees or even bike lanes. Work with GDOT and the local government agencies to secure funding to improve the bridge with architectural and green features, such as better lighting, wider sidewalks, bike lanes, planters, etc.

- **Find funding for transportation improvements** - Work with local leaders and government officials to secure funding for streetscape improvements, intersection improvements and changes to the viaduct. Transportation Enhancement funds, Department of Energy grants, and potential discretionary funding from the pending Transportation Investment Act (TIA) one penny sales tax are opportunities that should be explored.

- **Improve pedestrian and biking connections to commercial districts** - Encourage walking and biking between neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial areas with improved streets, paths, wayfinding and fewer driveways.

### ***Marketing Strategies and Branding***

- **Develop real estate brand** - Continue to evolve the brand and identity for Midtown. Potential strategies include a new logo, new tag line or multiple tag lines. A good example of complete branding is Decatur, Georgia.



- **Create developers package** - A developers package can encourage developers to invest in Midtown. A typical developers package should include information such as available properties, aerial photos of the area, zoning, future land use maps, traffic count





information and available incentives to illustrate the community's interest in supporting new development.

- **Create a realtors package** – Just as developers could use an information package to encourage investment in Midtown, a similar package could be created for realtors. The package could highlight Midtown's characteristics, amenities and other unique or attractive elements for new homebuyers or renters.
- **Sell proximity to medical center** - Attracting empty nesters and retirees could be a competitive marketing strategy for Midtown. The proximity of the area to the medical center, with its range of medical services, should be a selling point.
- **Attract new apartments and townhouses to the area** - Apartment options are limited in Midtown even though this housing option is attractive to students, young professionals and even young families moving to the area. To be competitive in the housing market, Midtown needs to expand the variety of housing options to include new apartments and other higher density residential development. Additionally, the higher density residential development can be clustered close to or within commercial districts to support local businesses and provide transitions between commercial districts and single-family neighborhoods.
- **Work with developers and property owners to identify tax credits** - Several tax credit programs, including affordable housing, energy and New Market Tax Credit programs can help turn potential projects for certain target groups into built projects through federal subsidies.
- **Develop signage and wayfinding** - Create a unique signage and wayfinding system for Midtown that reinforces it's identity. The system should also encourage people to visit the "districts" and other important destinations in the area.

### ***Economic Development***

- **Attract local or neighborhood-focused businesses** - There is a strong desire for local and neighborhood-focused businesses. Midtown should work with local restaurateurs, the Chamber of Commerce and others with local business interests to recruit new neighborhood restaurants, retail stores and even service-oriented businesses.
- **Create a small commercial business incubator** - Strategies to encourage local entrepreneurs to open new businesses can help Midtown create the type of restaurants and retail businesses the community desires. By creating a business incubator program, Midtown can help new businesses open in Midtown and bring new services to the area.
- **Create a development fund** - A development fund can be used to encourage new investment in a community by providing low interest, high risk loans for local businesses. Typically, new and local businesses struggle to secure financing for their new operations or developments. The development fund can be used in addition to conventional bank loans to secure the financing needs for small or new businesses. Additionally, development funds can be used as a microfinance or business incubator tool to encourage innovation in business creation for a community.



- **Create a Community Improvement District (CID)** - CIDs are created for commercial districts, where property owners elect to tax themselves and use the tax revenue to fund improvements within the district. A CID can be a tool used to help finance improvements such as streets, utilities, public safety and other area improvements. With a CID for the 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors, funds generated can be leveraged with other local resources to compete for state or federal funding or be used to finance projects outright.
- **Explore the idea of creating a Tax Allocation District (TAD)** - The TAD can issue bonds to pay for public improvements, and any increase in the property tax revenue from the properties within the TAD is used to pay back the bonds. Typically, a TAD operates for a fixed number of years until the bonds can be paid back. TADs in Georgia have been used successfully to leverage investment and generate new economic growth. This approach uses community improvements to drive new investment in a particular area. Like a CID, TADs can be an excellent tool to leverage public improvements to spur economic development and investment in a particular area.

#### Community Improvement District

- Has been used successfully around the country to revitalize center cities
- CID funds can augment existing services such as public safety and they can also be used to leverage additional public and private funds. Conservatively, CID funds can be used to leverage such funds at a ratio of 4 to 1.
- A CID is a geographically defined district in which commercial property owners vote to impose a self-tax. To enact a CID, a simple majority of affected property owners holding at least 75% of the assessed property value of the area must vote affirmatively
- The Georgia Constitution specifies that funds collected through a CID may be used for seven types of applications:
  - Water
  - Public transportation
  - Street and road construction and maintenance
  - Parks and recreational areas and facilities
  - Storm water and sewage
  - Parking, terminal and dock facilities

*"The Georgia Redevelopment Powers Act (OCGA 36-44-1) contains the detailed requirements for implementing TADs. Georgia State University, the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, has also developed a publication that outlines the use of TADs entitled, ["Georgia's Redevelopment Powers Law: A Policy Guide to the Evaluation and Use of TADs."](#) In October, 2007, the Livable Communities Coalition released the findings of its [Survey and Analysis of TADs in Georgia](#). A summary of the Georgia Supreme Court's [recent ruling](#) is also available.*

*City officials can also find more information about TADs and other economic development tools by contacting the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' Office of Planning and Quality Growth at 404-679-5279. Cities interested in using TADs should consult with their city attorney and may gain valuable information by contacting other cities in Georgia that have had success with this financing tool."*

*– Georgia Municipal Association*

- **Build off existing business community** - Midtown's business community is already strong and invested in the area. Many of the business owners live, work and own property in the area already. Existing business can and should be a starting point for any commercial and new business strategy.

- **Test pop-up retail or food trucks** – Food trucks (mobile restaurants), retail stores or event art galleries are a great way to generate activity, test new ideas, fill vacant storefronts and test possible store locations. Pop-up shops can allow local entrepreneurs to try new ideas and see if the neighborhood will support their businesses. Additionally, it can be a great marketing strategy to bring new people into the community and generate local interest in Midtown's commercial districts.



## ***Environment***

- **Continue greening Midtown with new trees** - Midtown already has a rich urban forest within the residential neighborhoods. Midtown should continue to work with property owners and Trees Columbus to maintain the quality and quantity of trees in Midtown. Where green elements are lacking and/ or could be enhanced, such as along 13th Street or 13th Avenue, work with the City of Columbus, property owners and others to introduce new trees. Trees provide many positive benefits to communities including stormwater management, soil management, shade, cooling and improved visual character.

“Trees Columbus plants, preserves and protects Columbus’s urban tree canopy... Trees Columbus also advocates for [the] city’s environment, working with local government, businesses and citizens to create and maintain a lively and livable community”

- **Improve stormwater infrastructure** - Midtown is struggling to manage its stormwater in certain areas, and the impacts are noticeable with frequent flooding and degradation of the stream. Updating stormwater infrastructure with new and existing development can help mitigate the negative impacts stormwater can have on waterways and environmental quality.
- **Address flooding issues** - Continue to work with property owners and government officials to alleviate flooding and its impacts on properties, particularly near the intersection of 13th Street and 13th Avenue.
- **Improve quality of stream** - The stream that runs through the area is degraded. The water quality and stream banks are impacted by stormwater and runoff from the surrounding neighborhoods. Stream bank restoration and improved stormwater infrastructure can improve the health of the Midtown’s only natural water feature and the visual character of Midtown.

## NEXT STEPS

The Panel found that Midtown's community spirit and organization is strong and that Midtown, Inc. provides an important forum to build community support for improvements and new investment in the area.

With the leadership of MidTown, Inc. and other community leaders, Midtown has an opportunity to help shape the next chapter in its legacy. To help prioritize what to do next, the Panel recommended the following next steps to move the recommendations into community action.

### ***Short Term (6 months - 1 year)***

- Pursue short-term wins, such as a farmers market, community gardens or pop-up shops
- Develop master plan for 13th Street and 13th Avenue corridors
- Create Developer Package and Realtor Package to support real estate and development investment in Midtown.
- Foster working relationships with local government agencies and other partners to create framework for future partnerships.
- Host meeting with existing business owners to determine their desires and what issues need to be addressed.

### ***Medium Term (1 year - 3 years)***

- Begin implementing master plan
- Begin securing funding for transportation and public infrastructure improvements
- Attract new businesses
- Establish implementation tools, such as a CID, TAD or developer incentives, to drive new investment in Midtown.
- Implement branding and marketing campaign to distinguish the Midtown area.
- Engage the use of other social media techniques to attract people to the area.
- Identify key blocks or parcels that are key to redevelopment to occur in the area. Determine if parcels should be acquired or enhanced.
- Develop and promote new or existing events or festivals that will bring people to the area.

### ***Long Term (3+ years)***

- Attract new development
- Enhance the viaduct and work with GDOT and other relevant agencies early to begin the planning process and implementation process.
- Host a developer day for select developers and investors to showcase Midtown for business.





## PICTURES FROM EVENT



## PANELIST BIOS

### **Cheryl Morgan (moderator)**

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Professor Cheryl Morgan, AIA practiced architecture and urban design in the San Francisco Bay Area for over eight years. She worked with a number of firms including Environmental Planning and Research, Gensler, and the Gruzen Partnership. Before coming to Auburn in 1992 she was an associate with the Berkeley firm of ELS/Elbasani and Logan. Her last project at ELS was the design of new and adaptive reuse buildings along the Singapore River in five blocks of Singapore's Clarke Quay Historic District.

Professor Morgan's professional practice now focuses on urban design, community planning and graphic design. She is also an experienced facilitator.

Cheryl holds two degrees from Auburn University: a Bachelor of Architecture and a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology). Her Master of Architecture degree is from the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana. She is certified by the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards and is a member of the City of Birmingham's Design Review Board. She has worked with the Railroad Reservation Park project in downtown Birmingham; the Red Mountain State Park; is a founding board member of the citizen leadership program – YourTownAlabama. She sits on the boards of Space One Eleven, Operation New Birmingham's Magic City Art Connection, Alabama Architectural Foundation and DesignAlabama. In 2007, she was named a "Woman of Distinction" by the Cahaba Council of the Girls Scouts and in 2010 received the Thomas Jefferson Award from the Jefferson County Historical Commission. Cheryl is a member of the Rotary Club of Downtown Birmingham and is a member of Leadership Birmingham's Class of 2007.

The Urban Studio's Small Town Design Initiative Program – a significant component of Auburn's outreach agenda – has worked with close to 70 small towns and neighborhoods in Alabama under Professor Morgan's direction. This work has resulted in assets-based illustrative master plans that position a community to leverage their distinctive opportunities. Over 450,000 citizens of Alabama live in the towns and neighborhoods impacted by this work.

### **Jonathan Bartlett**

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Jonathan Bartlett is a senior manager in Reznick Group's commercial real estate consulting practice focused on a wide range of services for the real estate industry. Utilizing market, economic and strategic analysis, Mr. Bartlett helps developers, owners, and investors maximize the value of real estate assets. Geographic expansion strategy, project level market studies, economic impact analysis, and development programming all fall within Mr. Bartlett's responsibilities. Based in Atlanta, Mr. Bartlett has completed assignments throughout the United States, including recent work in South Carolina, Georgia, Texas, and Guam.

In his career, Mr. Bartlett has completed hundreds of real estate consulting engagements covering a range of residential and commercial land uses, including multifamily apartments, affordable housing, master-planned communities, and mixed-use developments. He also has experience providing municipalities and public sector entities with fiscal and economic impact analyses supported by rigorous market research, and he has been a frequent speaker on macro-level demographic trends impacting the real estate industry. His primary focus at Reznick Group is to provide the firm's commercial real estate clients with asset- and/or portfolio-level market analysis and strategy services. Mr. Bartlett earned a bachelor's degree from Washington & Lee University, and an MBA in real estate finance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute, REGA, and the National Multi Housing Council.

**James J. Bynum III**

Director, Healthcare Planning &amp; Strategies | Perkins + Will

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Jim Bynum, LEED® AP is a principal and healthcare planner in Perkins+Will's Healthcare Planning & Strategies Group. He has specialized in healthcare planning, programming and design for over 27 years. He leads and participates in many of Perkins+Will's largest and most complex projects, ensuring that the solutions support the client's strategic goals.

Mr. Bynum has both domestic and international experience ranging from the smallest hospital facilities – critical access hospitals – to the largest – academic medical centers. His recent international experience includes planning for a 600 bed hospital in West Africa.

He has facilitated two Perkins+Will Healthcare Center of Excellence conferences – large planning and design charettes - focusing on the future of healthcare.

Mr. Bynum has served as a guest speaker and panelist at professional conferences and universities.

**Robbie Gring Campbell**

Gring Consultants

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Robbie Campbell founded Gring Consultants in 1988 with a single-minded focus: to solve a client's toughest business challenge with Marketing and Communication Solutions. What began as a marketing firm, focused on commercial real estate entities and their properties, has evolved into a full-service consulting resource that today addresses broader issues and industries.

The firm solves a wide variety of business challenges using a proprietary process. Once consensus is reached on the most appropriate solutions for reaching the desired results, our team of creative resources knows how to effectively implement programs and produce deliverables down to the smallest tactical detail.

All Gring Consultants' clients have a common objective: motivating their targets to take a specific action.

Corporate image and brand development, new product launches, client relationship interaction programs, brand expansion and consumer communication strategies are included in the firm's impressive success stories for clients such as Bullock Mannelly Partners, Carter USA, Campbell-Stone Retirement Centers, Childress Klein Properties, Cousins Properties, Eola Capital Group, Equitable Real Estate, FAISON, HINES Interests, IDI, Jones Lang LaSalle Americas, Mutual of New York, Overseas Partners Limited, Pope & Land Enterprises, RiverOak Investment Corporation, Sloss Real Estate Group, The St. Joe Company, TMW Realty Management and Watkins Retail Group.

Prior to the creation of Gring Consultants, Robbie was Corporate Marketing Director for Fidelity Mutual Life Insurance Company's commercial real estate portfolio in Philadelphia, National Sales Representative for Designs by Harrill, Marketing Director of Lenox Square Mall, Consultant with Morris & Fellows and Marketing Coordinator for Cousins Properties, Inc.

She has been a faculty member of both the NAIOP Annual Leadership Conference and the International Council of Shopping Centers' Institute providing leadership educational sessions including "The Secret to Strategic Planning."

Robbie has designed and facilitated hundreds of strategic planning sessions for a variety of companies as well as non-profit organizations including Yes! Atlanta, The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, The Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence, Water@Work and the Atlanta Commercial Board of Realtors. In 1996, she was co-chair of the Buckhead Business Association's Leadership Development Program. For eight



consecutive years, she was a chapter organization and communication adviser to the Board of Directors of the Georgia chapter NAIOP (National Association of Industrial and Office Properties). Her assignment with NAIOP was to design and facilitate 2-day annual planning retreats with their Board of Directors. In the Fall of 2009, she was retained by the Atlanta District of Urban Land Institute (ULI) to lead a 2-year strategic planning initiative for their 24-member Executive Committee.

She has a B.A. in Communication with graduate study in Public Relations from George Washington University. In 2008, she completed Masters University by Robbins Research International.

Robbie and her husband, Dale, enjoy the great outdoors, particularly their mountain retreat in The Great Smoky Mountains of Western North Carolina. She tends to her creative side with daily walks, music, cooking and photographing sunsets in beautiful places.

Her current personal passion is writing fiction with hopes of selling her first collaborative screenplay – a romantic comedy entitled “A Moment Can Last Forever.”

### **Patty Farr**

**Director of Development | Morris and Fellows**

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Patty Farr is the Director of Development for Morris and Fellows, which develops, leases, owns and manages upscale mixed-use communities. Most recently her projects have included Vickery Village in Forsyth County and Woodstock Downtown, in the City of Woodstock. Her projects have been awarded the “Development of Excellence” by the Urban Land Institute, named “America’s Neighborhood” by Better Homes and Gardens Magazine, cited as “Development of the Year” by the Atlanta Regional Commission, received the CNU International Charter Award for Best Neighborhood District, and named “America’s Best Smart Growth Community” by the National Homebuilders Association.

She also provided master site planning and feasibility consulting for mixed use developments in Clemson SC, Greenville, SC, Atlanta GA, Columbus, GA and Big Canoe GA.

- Developed fast-track project concept feasibility and market analysis studies providing each project’s economic viability to owners and investors.
- Consulted with brokers and leasing on site selection, market analysis, and tenant mix.
- Established site and building cost budgets and corresponding tenant lease rates to maximize revenue generation.
- Provided insight to architects and engineers in master planning to create maximum leasable area and to ensure tenant visibility with appropriate service and access increasing tenant retention and success rates.
- Coordinated with architects, engineers and contractors monitoring design and construction to assure projects did not exceed budget and were completed in accordance with established schedules.
- Managed the creation of form leases, Landlord Work Letters, Tenant Work Letters, project design standards, signage criteria, and tenant manuals incorporating maximum protection of the owner’s interest and profitability.
- Successfully managed the coordination of tenants throughout leasing, tenant suite design, landlord review and approval process and during construction build-out assisting tenants to achieve a smooth and expeditious opening.
- Facilitated a seamless turnover from construction to property management and managed the property management team for systems set-up, and all facility repair and maintenance.

**John Karnowski**

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John Karnowski, P.E., PTOE, AICP is the Director of Transportation for Foresite Group and a graduate of Georgia Tech. He has been working in the transportation field for nearly 24 years in both government and the private sector. Mr. Karnowski is the 2012 President of the Georgia Section of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. He is the former chair of the Gwinnett County Transportation SPLOST Citizen Advisory Committee, a graduate of Leadership Gwinnett, a board member with the Council for Quality Growth, and an advocate for a number of transportation initiatives in Georgia including the Transportation Investment Act and bicycle and pedestrian safety.

John participated with ULI as a member on the 2004 Walkability Atlanta Task Force which produced “The Plan for a Walkable Atlanta” that still guides the City’s pedestrian policies today. While working for the City of Roswell during the “boom years”, he acquired experience in virtually all areas of transportation planning and engineering. His experience includes: transportation planning, infrastructure sustainability, highway corridor studies, traffic control device studies and design, roadway and intersection safety audits, traffic impact assessments, traffic forecasting and modeling studies, data collection, transit studies, airport studies, livable centers initiative studies, and more.

John’s specialty topics include transportation safety related to school zones railroad grade crossings, truck routing, pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety, speed control, parking access and circulation, sign and signal inventories, and municipal traffic ordinances.

**Jerry Miller**

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In 2006, Mr. Miller formed Fabric Developers, LLC, a development and consulting firm committed to restoring the fabric of inner city Atlanta through human scale, neighborhood-oriented development. ([www.fabricdevelopers.com](http://www.fabricdevelopers.com))

Mr. Miller was a founding partner of Miller-Gallman Developers, LLC, ([www.atlantaloftco.com](http://www.atlantaloftco.com)) a real estate development firm that focuses on historic rehabilitation loft apartments and new in-fill development in Atlanta and other cities. Since its inception in 1995, it has developed over \$100 million in loft apartments and condominiums. It has been part of the rejuvenation of the Ponce corridor and the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood through its development of Glen Iris Lofts, Troy Peerless Lofts, and Ponce Springs on Glen Iris Drive across from the old Sears Building—now the Ponce Market redevelopment..

It has also been an integral part of the transformation of the Castleberry Hill historic loft district, having completed numerous rehabilitation and new construction projects in that neighborhood. Miller-Gallman has received awards in adaptive re-use from the Urban Design Commission, for historic preservation from the Georgia Trust, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources—Historic Preservation Division, Athens Clarke Heritage Foundation , and the Columbus Historic Foundation.

Mr. Miller earned an MBA in finance from the Wharton School of Finance and a BA from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has been an Atlantan since 1980. He chairs Capitol Hill Neighborhood Development Corporation, a 501(c) 3 that works to affect development around the Capitol and serves on the boards of Atlanta Habitat for Humanity and the Decatur-DeKalb YMCA. He is an elder at Central Presbyterian Church across the street from the Capitol in downtown Atlanta.

**Patrick O'Leary**

Principal | HGOR

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As a leader of the Community Design Studio, Pat possesses a unique adeptness with themed communities that is sought after both regionally and internationally. One of his most distinct talents is weaving the land's natural topography into a project's unique character. His talents are evident throughout the firm's portfolio of high-end primary and secondary communities.

Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, Michigan State University, 1983

**Russell Posey**

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Russ Posey oversees all healthcare, office and industrial development activities and services for The Alter Group's and Alter+Care's developments in the Southeastern United States. This includes land acquisition and planning; engineering; site design; landscape architecture; building architecture; annexation and due diligence; environmental work; subdivision and platting; permitting; and construction.

Mr. Posey began his planning and development career in 1978. He joined The Alter Group and Alter+Care in 1998.

Mr. Posey's work on behalf of Alter+Care and The Alter Group includes St. Bernards Health & Wellness Institute, a 54,000 SF wellness center for St. Bernards Medical Center in Jonesboro, AR; Morehead Medical Plaza, a 285,000 SF medical office building for Carolinas HealthCare System, Charlotte, NC; Wellspring Center, a 70,000 SF medical office building for CHRISTUS Spohn Health System, Corpus Christi, TX; Good Samaritan Medical Center, a 50,000 SF medical office building within a master-planned 30-acre healthcare village, Huber Heights, OH; Madison Medical Plaza, a 70,000 SF medical office building in Joliet, IL; Provena Medical Office Building Caton Farm, Joliet, IL; Chattahoochee Corners, a 106-acre business park, Duluth, GA; Concourse at Quadrangle, a 60-acre business park, Orlando, FL; Cypress Creek Concourse, a 48-acre business park, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Spectrum Office Park, a 14-acre business park, Fort Lauderdale, FL; Brookside Concourse, a 45-acre office park, Alpharetta, GA; and Windward Concourse, a 40-acre business park, Alpharetta, GA.

Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering, West Virginia University

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**Alan Tidwell, Ph.D.**Assistant Professor of Finance – Dept. of Accounting & Finance, Turner College of Business & Computer Science  
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Dr. Alan Tidwell is an Assistant Professor of Finance at Columbus State University his teaching responsibilities at CSU include real estate finance, principles of real estate, investments, and managerial finance. He has also taught courses in real estate development, quantitative real estate analysis and real estate investment analysis. He has published multiple articles including articles on mixed-use development, "green" commercial real estate, and has research interests in housing, mixed-asset portfolio construction, real estate valuation, and derivatives. Dr. Tidwell has substantial industry experience in commercial real estate valuation, and trust and investments. He



holds the Certified Financial Planner® and Certified General Real Property Appraiser designations and has an interest in the American Real Estate Society, American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association, and Southern Finance Association. Dr. Tidwell has presented papers at both the American Real Estate Society and the American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association meetings.

**Bob Wilkerson**

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Bob is Principal and Founding Partner in the firm of 2DStudio, LLC, located in the historic Lyric Theater Building in downtown Birmingham, Alabama.

Previously, Bob was Senior Planner and Manager of Design-Based Planning services for Alabama markets at BWSC, Inc. Prior to that Bob held the position of Senior Planner for the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham.

Bob hold three degrees from Auburn University:

- BS, Business Administration, Finance, 1977
- BS, Environmental Design, School of Architecture, 2002, magna cum laud
- MLA, (Masters in Landscape Architecture), School of Architecture, 2002, magna cum laud

Bob's professional experience also includes 21 years in the banking industry, serving his final 10 years in the industry as Senior Vice President and Group Manager at SouthTrust.

2DStudio, LLC is an innovative planning & design firm, grounded upon the principals of sustainable urban design & development.