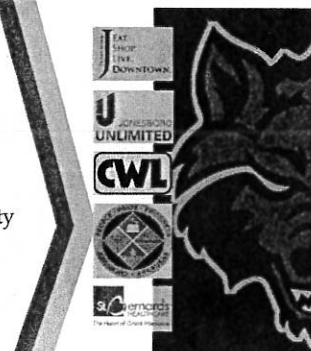


**A-State/Downtown  
Corridor Committee**

Report to Mayor Perrin and City  
Council

October 2, 2018



**Corridor Committee Members**

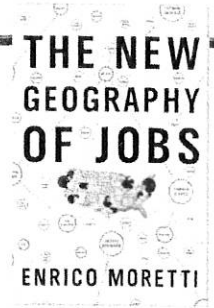
- **Andrea Allen** – Delta Center for Economic Development
- **Jerry Morgan** – Chair, Jonesboro Advertising and Promotion Commission; First National Bank
- **Jamar Andrews** – Pastor, Word Baptist Church
- **Chris Moore** – Jonesboro City Council; Owner, Moore Plumbing
- **Chris Barber** – Chair, Jonesboro Unlimited; President and CEO, St. Bernards Healthcare
- **Kevan Inboden** – Special Projects Administrator, City Water and Light
- **Kelly Dampousse** – Chancellor, Arkansas State University - Jonesboro
- **Lindsey Ford Wingo** – Executive Director, Downtown Jonesboro Association
- **Mike Downing**, Vice President, Jonesboro Unlimited
- **Derrel Smith** – Planning Director, City of Jonesboro
- **Ted Herget** – President, Gearhead Outfitters

**Purpose of the Committee**

- Facilitate the attraction and retention of ASU students/faculty and young talent in Jonesboro.
- Formulate a strategy for redevelopment and the removal of blighted conditions.
- Spur economic growth and new tax revenue.
- Determine the potential of the Wolverine property on Aggie Road

**Talent Attraction/Retention**

- “Education levels will determine which cities thrive in the future.”
- Cities need a critical mass of highly educated workers engaged in the regular, often informal, exchange of ideas.




**Projected 2020  
Labor Demand  
and Supply by  
Skill Level**

McKinsey&Company

Skill Level	Change	Demand	Supply
High-skill workers	-23	140 million	117 million
Medium-skill workers	+5	509 million	514 million
Low-skill workers	+20	172 million	192 million

High-skill workers = college degree or higher; medium-skill workers = high school or vocational training only; low-skill workers = primary school or no education.

“75% of young talent surveyed said that finding a ‘cool city’ was more important to them than finding a good job.”



### Downtowns

- "Downtowns are the symbolic centers of cities and are unifying forces for their communities."
- Vibrant downtowns:
  - Diverse restaurants and bars.
  - Live music, Arts, Retail, Festivals.
  - Walkable and Bikeable.
  - Informal places to hang out and meet others.



### Corridor - 2 miles

Walk - 40 min. Bike - 11 min. Bus: 26 min.



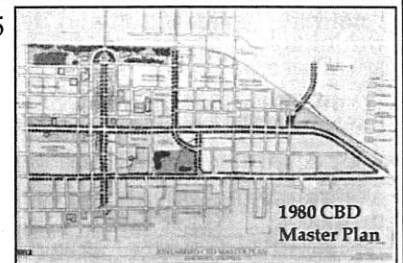
### Wolverine Property



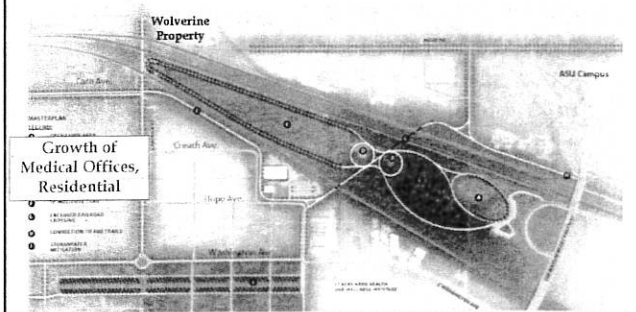
- Challenges:**
- Mixed surrounding land use:
    - Industrial, commercial, and residential.
  - Poor street access.
  - Too small for significant development.
  - Lower income area.
  - South of RR has greater potential.

### Actions Taken

1. Review the 15 plans and reports that involved the Corridor.

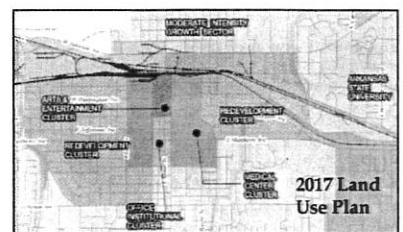


### Feb. 2018 Bike+Ped Plan



### Actions Taken

2. Review area designations by other city agencies.



Actions Taken

3. Review Current Conditions of the Corridor

- Number and type of properties;
  - Ownership; zoning; and infrastructure issues;
- Past redevelopment efforts.
- Potential redevelopment uses.

Wallace Bajjali Proposal to the City, 2014

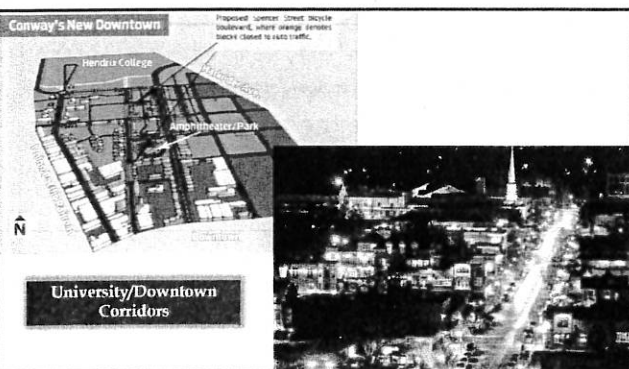


Private Sector Redevelopment Near the Corridor



Actions Taken

4. Best Practices - University/Downtown Corridors



Observations - Downtown/University Corridors

- Most are within walking distance.
  - Convenience
  - DWI
- Variety of amenities:
  - Food, drink, retail, coffee.
  - Arts, music
  - Residential, offices
- Jonesboro/A-State:
  - 2 miles.
  - Not perceived as safe to walk or bike.
  - Not an attractive area.
  - No amenities.

A-State Student Government Feedback

- Nightlife, live music venue, others.
- Bike path to downtown and other areas.
- Shuttles to downtown.
- Local restaurant options.
  - Late night, unique
- Green space, outdoor recreation.
- Arts, museums

Actions Taken

- 5. Best Practices -
  - Redevelopment Process

**Challenges:** Redevelopment of Blighted Areas

All Blighted Areas

- Disinvestment (lower property values).
- Perception of crime.
- Negative appearance.
- Uncertainty of costs.
- Property acquisition issues.
- Lower disposable income.
- Lower traffic counts.

Jonesboro

- No state/local redevelopment incentives.
- Lots of inexpensive developable property available in the city.
- No impact fees on new development.
- Use of Eminent domain??

Benefits of Redevelopment

- New private investment.
  - Increasing property values.
  - New tax revenue.
  - Improved appearance.
  - Spillover effect to nearby properties.
- Reduced crime.
- Employment for nearby residents.



Recommendations



Recommendation #1

- City should endorse the proposed Bike + Ped plan.
  - First priority project: A-State/Downtown connection.

Recommendation #2

- City should create a process to pro-actively facilitate redevelopment projects:
  - Create a redevelopment committee or authority; or broaden the scope of the Land Bank.
  - Assess the best practices of other communities and attempt to adopt those for Jonesboro.
  - Identify the top 3-5 high priority redevelopment areas to concentrate resources among all city agencies.
  - Develop a website with resources and redevelopment opportunities.
  - Create/modify/streamline procedures by city agencies to facilitate redevelopment projects.

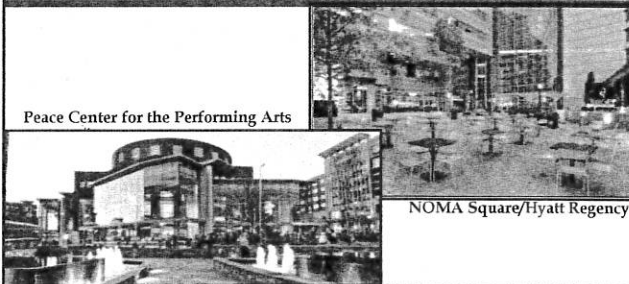
Elements of a Redevelopment Agency

- City committee/commission with professional staff.
  - Review other cities organizational makeup.
- Identify, package, and promote priority redevelopment areas.
  - First priority: Area/project with greatest impact.
  - Concentrate resources.
- Develop professional plans:
  - Site Feasibility and Market Study.
  - Cost estimates, Financing strategy
  - Infrastructure
  - Implementation steps
- Facilitate key projects with incentives and public investment.
  - Public/institutional offices/facilities.

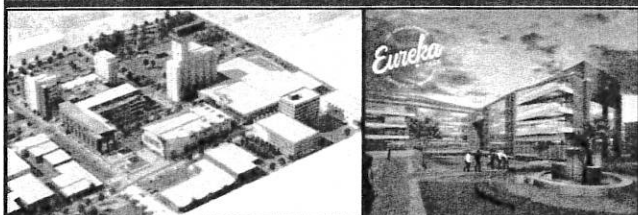
Recommendation #3

- City, Jonesboro Unlimited, the Jonesboro Chamber, the Land Bank, A-State, and other partners should identify and facilitate “catalytic” projects for high priority redevelopment areas.

Greenville, SC



Springfield Idea Commons



\$55 million - \$15 mil. Business Innovation Center expansion (MO State Univ.); \$25 mil. new office building; \$12 mil. Parking garage.

Innovation District of Chattanooga



INNOVATION DISTRICT OF CHATTANOOGA



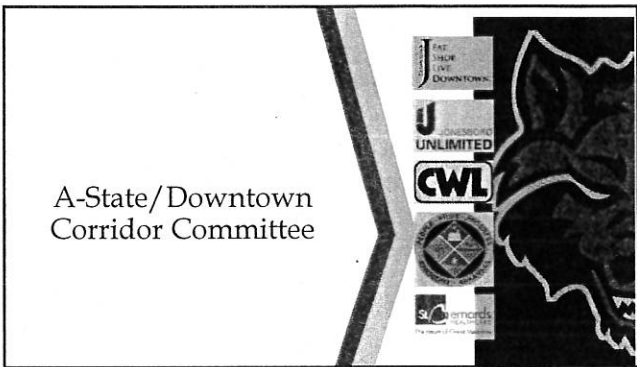
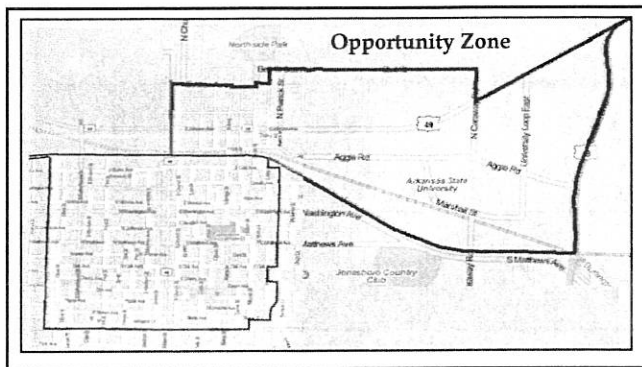
A designated section of the city where creative thinkers, entrepreneurs, students, and tech-savvy innovators can collide and collaborate to conceive and implement new ideas.

Recommendation #4

- City, the Downtown Jonesboro Association, and other economic development partners jointly develop a professional downtown redevelopment plan. Includes:
  - Comprehensive market research report.
  - Identifies priority projects and improvements.
  - Establishes a realistic and feasible implementation and financing plan.

Recommendation #5

- Seminar should be held to promote the Opportunity Zone incentive to facilitate redevelopment within the Corridor, Downtown, and other priority redevelopment areas.
  - Attract investors to projects in our Zones.





To learn more about Jonesboro Unlimited, go to [www.jonesborounlimited.com](http://www.jonesborounlimited.com)

## A-State to Downtown Corridor Committee: It's About the Talent

Published on September 17, 2018



Jonesboro Unlimited

Jonesboro Unlimited (JU) is a private partnership economic devel...



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By Mike Downing

I attended A-State in the mid-1970s. I don't recall going downtown except to go to the Coffee Cup a few times, primarily to see how thick the grease was on the windows. Going to a restaurant to have a beer (after I turned 21, of course) meant driving "down the line" or going to Memphis. Back then, students had very little connection with the community, and Jonesboro was not considered a cool place to want to start your career.

Studies show that a high percentage of young talent indicate that finding a "cool city" is more important to them than finding a good job. And having a cool downtown is a key. Downtowns make a city unique and quirky, and young professionals LOVE unique and quirky. Vibrant downtowns, with diverse restaurants, live music, arts, retail, festivals, walkable and bikeable paths, and places to hang out are keys to attracting and retaining young professionals, college students, and A-State faculty. The American Planning Association says that downtowns are "symbolic centers of cities and are unifying forces for their communities."

Jonesboro's downtown has changed considerably since I was here in the 1970's, and efforts continue to make it even cooler. However, just like it was 40 years ago, it's not easy to get from the campus to downtown. It's about 2 1/2 miles from the residence halls to downtown with nothing very cool in between. Contrast this to universities that are adjacent to downtown and the vibrancy that brings. In Columbia, MO, all three of its universities are within three blocks of Broadway Street, the downtown core. In

downtown Fayetteville, Dickson Street is adjacent to the university. In Baton Rouge, the North Gates area of LSU is right off campus. So, in July, Jonesboro Mayor Harold Perrin created the Corridor Committee (of which I am the Chairperson) to seek ways to redevelop the area. The premise behind the redevelopment is to connect the campus to downtown by creating an arts and entertainment district.

This proposed redevelopment is about creating high-paying jobs. That's the mission of Jonesboro Unlimited. We dedicate ourselves to the advancement of economic prosperity in Jonesboro and the region. The development of the downtown corridor will connect two of our city's most significant assets, downtown and A-State. Providing this connection and the "cool" factor that would come with it gives us one more way to market our growing city as the destination for investment and with it, the creation of new, high-paying jobs.

Endeavor Insight surveyed founders of the nation's fastest-growing companies to determine what primarily attracts innovative entrepreneurs. The #1 factor was "access to talented workers," and #2 was a "quality of life that the educated and ambitious have come to expect."

For decades, our community has prospered. To continue that growth, we must give priority to the development, attraction, and retention of the young talent, particularly, the talent that graduates from Arkansas State University every year.

The book "The New Geography of Jobs," states that "Education levels will determine which cities thrive in the future," and "to succeed, cities need a critical mass of highly educated workers engaged in the regular, often informal, exchange of ideas." City Observatory says that "The single most important factor driving economic success is the educational attainment of a city's population. No other single factor comes close." So, to attract and retain talent, we need to enhance the quality of life that young talent expects.

That's why creating a walkable and bikeable connection between Arkansas State University and downtown Jonesboro presents such an opportunity. Developing that 2.5 miles and filling it with those informal places to share ideas over a cup of coffee is millennial ventured capital. MSAs of all sizes are investing in this new way of developing business and retaining great talent. It's time Jonesboro does too.

Jonesboro has experienced a good economy in the past several years, but if we want the community to continue to prosper, we need to learn, adapt, and take action.

Students can't experience the Coffee Cup anymore, but we do have the Recovery Room downtown and The Edge near campus. It's time to sandwich something in between to stick them together, no grease needed.

