



THE AUBURN AREA  
MAIN STREET PROJECT

# The Auburn Action Plan

*On the Move!*

# **THE AUBURN AREA ACTION PLAN**

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The AUBURN AREA MAIN STREET PROJECT is funded by Community Development Block Grant funds provided by the City of Atlanta through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1988, nearly one million people visited the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center For Non-violent Social Change, but very few ventured out into the Auburn commercial district. Physical appearance, safety, lack of adequate parking and amenities are some of the reasons. The Auburn Area Action Plan will address these issues comprehensively.

The Auburn Area Action Plan is the consensus approach to the revitalization of the "Sweet Auburn" commercial corridor. The plan is both a road map and a vision which draws upon the community's rich heritage - commercial and cultural - to establish the framework of its revitalization.

The vision of a revitalized "Sweet Auburn" area is a cultural/heritage district which enhances the City's tourist and convention industry, provides new economic opportunities for local businesses, and supports the revitalization of Atlanta's central business district.

The process is one that requires the involvement of the entire Atlanta community in addressing the crime, physical decay and community apathy that currently impedes the progress that has been made to date.

The Auburn Area Revitalization Committee, Inc. (AARC), in conjunction with the governments of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and the State of Georgia, as well as, Central Atlanta Progress, has begun the process by creating the Auburn Area Main Street Project (AAMSP).

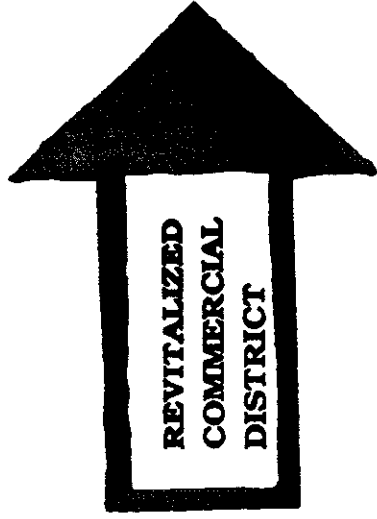
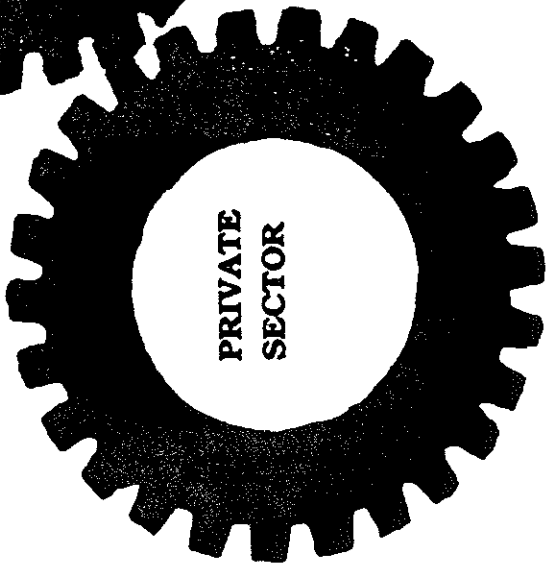
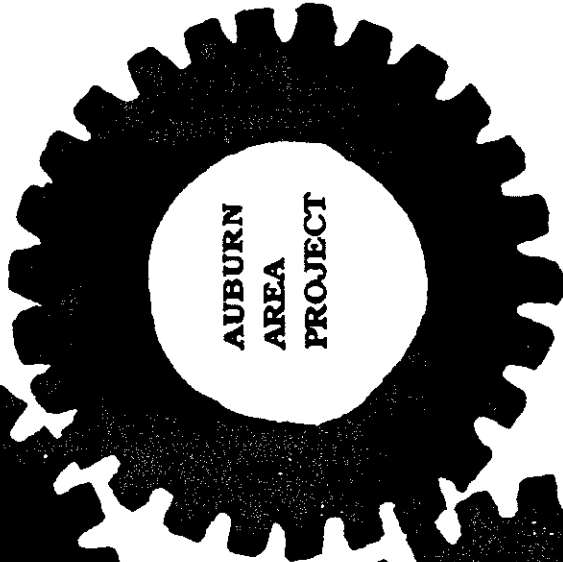
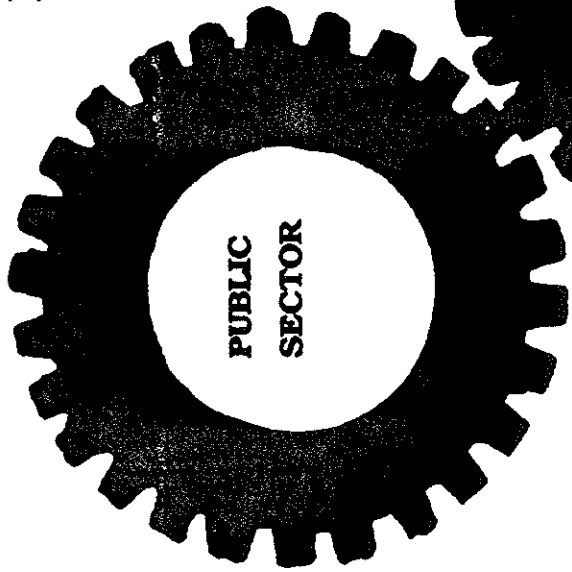
The AAMSP is the catalytic force that will drive the revitalization by providing on-site staff to implement the five year phased program of: (1) beautification and promotion; (2) small business retention and recruitment; and (3) increased public safety.

The AAMSP is enlisting the support and resources of the entire Atlanta community to assist in:

- (1) Creative financing for physical improvements;
- (2) Public space improvement, i.e. parking;
- (3) Innovative promotional efforts to raise visibility of the area in the eyes of customers, tourists, investors, etc.; and
- (4) on-going program support.

The successful revitalization of "Sweet Auburn" will be both a process and a product. The process will involve the entire Atlanta community; the product will be a 24 hour downtown district of national significance.

**MAIN STREET ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY  
SYSTEM**



## BACKGROUND

Historically, "Sweet Auburn" was the African American business capital of the South during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It later gave birth to the modern Civil Rights movement. Noted Atlanta institutions such as the Atlanta Life Insurance Company, Citizens Trust Bank, the Royal Peacock, Mutual Savings and Loan Association, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Non-violent Social Change and the Butler Street YMCA are located on or near Auburn Avenue. However, over the last 25 years the Auburn Avenue area has been in transition and despite its central location and the presence of viable "anchors" at both ends of the district, it is now an accepted fact that Auburn Avenue is not as "sweet" as it once was.

Over the past 25 years there have been many ill-fated attempts to resurrect the sagging fortunes of this once great center of commerce and culture. The City of Atlanta, private entrepreneurs and some civic organizations have at one time or another taken a stab at revitalizing "Sweet Auburn".

While there have been a plethora of plans and studies done on, about and for the Auburn area; none have met with a great deal of success. One of the common threads running throughout these efforts has been the lack of partnership between the Auburn Avenue community and those who sought to act in its interest. The motivation appears to have been to do something to Auburn Avenue rather than with the community.

In 1980, the Auburn Area Revitalization Committee, Inc. (AARC) was formed under the auspices of the late John Calhoun as a private 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit community development organization to work collectively for the community's interest. The membership includes area merchants, businesses, institutions and churches. The Auburn Area Revitalization Committee, Inc. is the lead organization in the effort to revitalize the Auburn area.

In 1987 AARC, Inc. made a bold move to end the inertia that was gripping the efforts to create positive changes in the economic and social climate of the Auburn Avenue area by seeking the support of the City of Atlanta, Fulton County and Central Atlanta Progress in bringing the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program to Auburn Avenue.

## **I. Program Accomplishments**

The Auburn Area Main Street Project (AAMSP) is the catalytic force that will drive the revitalization process. The AAMSP's objectives will be accomplished through a five year phased program of (1) beautification, (2) promotion, (3) small business retention and recruitment and (4) increased public safety.

Since its founding in April, 1989 the AAMSP has completed a number of important steps required to fulfill it's mission:

- Established an organization supported by both the public and private sectors. (see chart)
- Completed a market assessment that defines specific market opportunities.
- Completed a conceptual design plan
- Facilitated development projects for the Atlanta Economic Development Corporation's (AEDC) Business Improvement Loan Fund (BILF)
- Worked closely with the Atlanta Urban Design Commission (AUDC) on historic preservation in the area and with the Commission's Historic Facade Loan Program. Several projects have been funded since AAMSP's founding.
- An Auburn Avenue commercial district walking tour, beginning April, 1990, with the National Park Service and the Atlanta Preservation Center.
- Renovation of a landmark Auburn Avenue business.
- Published a quarterly newsletter that highlights community merchants.
- Published a directory of Auburn area businesses
- Established community wide "Block Captain" program to address crime prevention, beautification and community involvement.
- Established on-going Clean and Beautiful Program in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

In spite of these accomplishments, much more remains to be done.

## **II. Mission**

The Auburn Area Main Street Project's mission is to be a catalyst for positive change in "Sweet Auburn". Its primary goal is to facilitate the enhancement of the economic and physical environment. This goal is being accomplished through AAMSP's board, committees, task groups and staff with the support and encouragement of both the public and private sectors in Atlanta and Fulton County, as well as, other interested parties.

## **III. Strategy**

The comprehensive strategy being used by AAMSP to accomplish its mission is based on the successful Main Street approach to business district revitalization and management. This approach, created by the National Main Street Center (NMSC) has been proven in hundreds of communities across the country. The approach has been successfully adapted to neighborhood business districts in urban areas as diverse as Albuquerque, Boston and Pittsburgh.

The Main Street approach to business district revitalization and management is based on four interlocking parts:

- Organization - Creating partnerships to initiate and implement the revitalization and management process.
- Promotion - Re-establishing the business district as a compelling place for tourists, shoppers, consumers, business people and investors.
- Design - Enhancing the visual quality of the building and public spaces in the business district by preserving the best of the old but encouraging quality new construction.
- Economic Restructuring - Strengthening the existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base of the business district and attracting new capital.



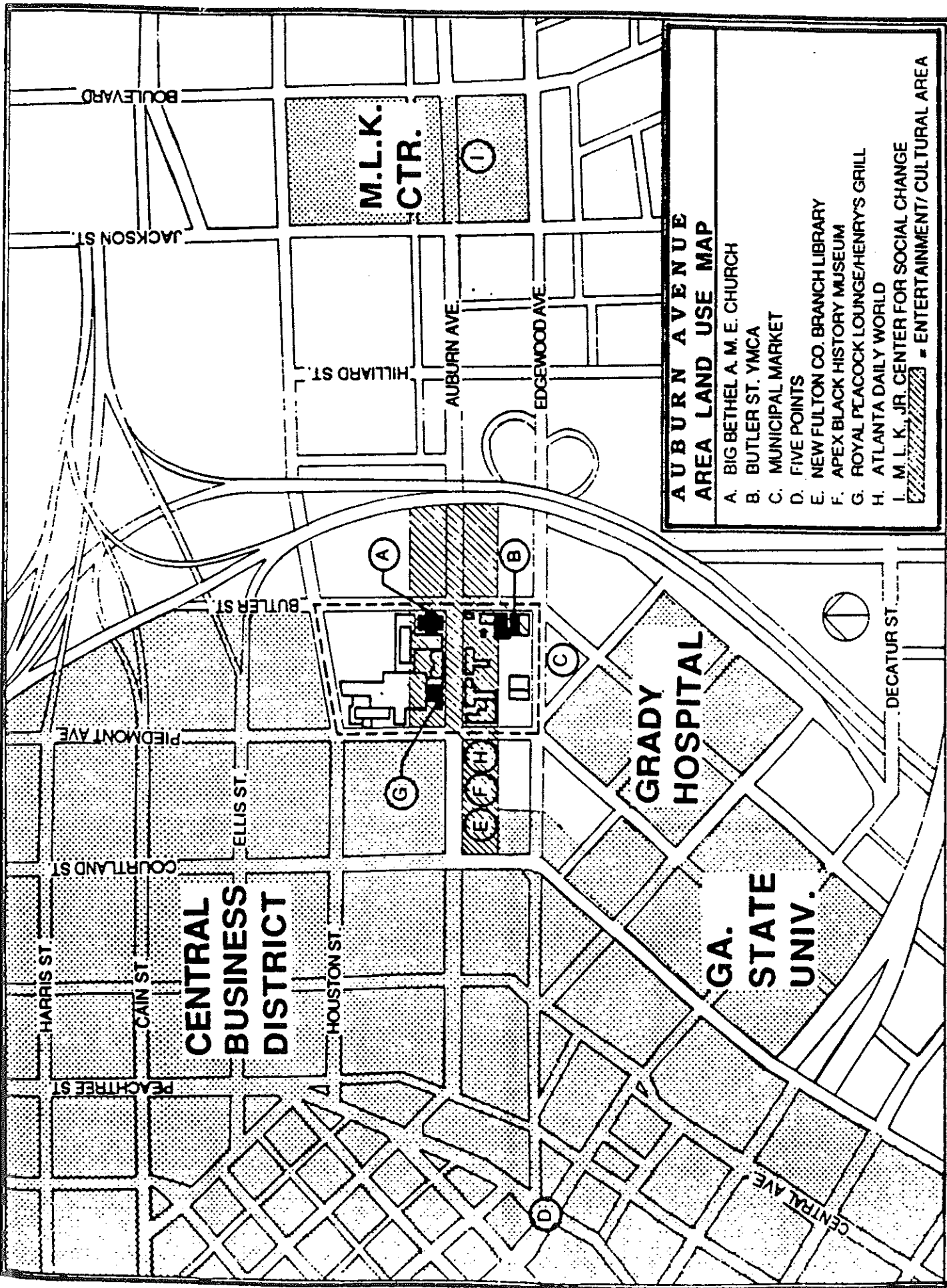
- Element 1: Promotion and beautification. The enhancement of the physical environment and the communication of sense of positive change and potential. (years 1-5)
- Element 2: Small business retention and recruitment. Identify and attract appropriate mix. (years 2-5)
- Element 3: Creating an organization strategy to effectively manage, promote and maintain the new and improved commercial district. (years 3-5)

## V. The Future

AARC, Inc. is optimistic about the Auburn Avenue area's future; i.e. the Fulton County library, the renovation and expansion of the Municipal Market, the expansion of the APEX museum, the expansion of the Butler Street YMCA and the opening of the several new businesses. These projects all indicate that Auburn is on the move. However, in order for the revitalization process to be successful, a unique market niche for the Auburn Avenue area must be identified as part of its development strategy.

Key initiatives in 1990 include:

- (1) Encouraging the redevelopment of the Herdon Building Block as a mixed use center for the community featuring an expanded city market, offices, parking and housing.
- (2) Promoting the area as a place to visit and invest is also a major AAMSP initiative. Based on the work accomplished to date, AAMSP will be developing a targeted retail recruitment plan for the district in conjunction with the Greater Atlanta Small Business Project (GRASP).
- (3) To develop consensus for its concept plan for the business district. This plan suggests a mix of uses for the area, appealing to all Atlantans. The plan is firmly rooted in preserving the rich cultural and architectural heritage of the district while providing for an expanded cultural, retail, office and housing opportunities. The plan calls for preserving and rehabilitating existing buildings of quality while



**AUBURN AVENUE  
AREA LAND USE MAP**

- A. BIG BETHEL A. M. E. CHURCH
- B. BUTLER ST. YMCA
- C. MUNICIPAL MARKET
- D. FIVE POINTS
- E. NEW FULTON CO. BRANCH LIBRARY
- F. APEX BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM
- G. ROYAL PEACOCK LOUNGE/HENRY'S GRILL
- H. ATLANTA DAILY WORLD
- I. M. L. K., JR. CENTER FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

**▨** - ENTERTAINMENT/ CULTURAL AREA

encouraging new construction compatible with the character of the area. Improvements to public spaces are to complement the architecture of the buildings, creating and exciting new urban center for Atlanta. The streets under Interstate I 75/85, are to receive special attention to reknit the neighborhood. Future plans include linking "Sweet Auburn" via trolley to other commercial business districts and tourist/convention venues. (See Appendix C)

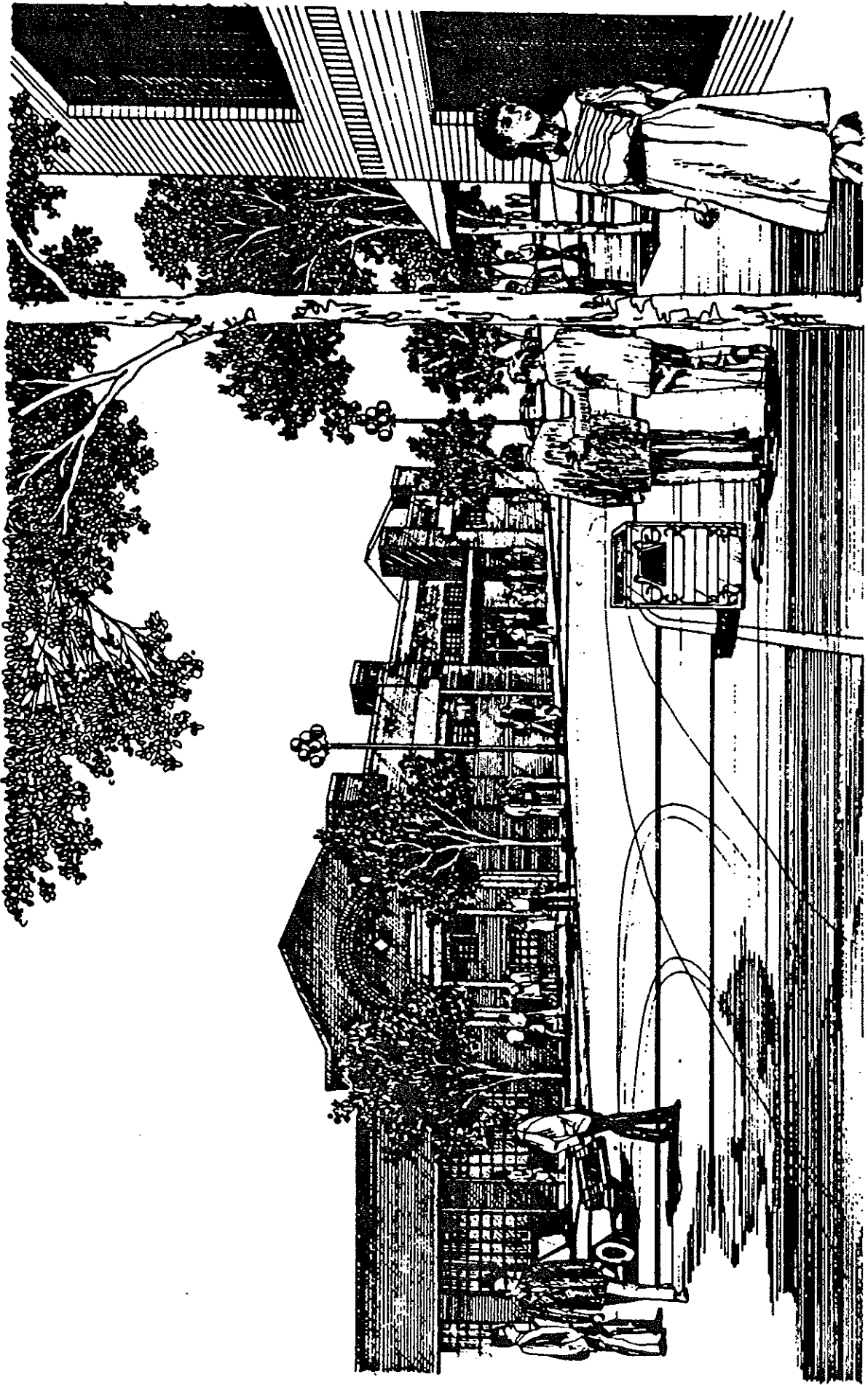
In 1988 tourism was the second largest industry in Atlanta. With Underground Atlanta and the Georgia Dome adding to the central business district's attractions, Atlanta's downtown is becoming a prime tourist and convention spot. However, the critical mass necessary for a 24 hour district is missing. If the Auburn Avenue area is developed in a comprehensive manner, using it's unique historic and cultural attractions and the potential housing needs of Georgia State University, Atlanta would have a 24 hour entertainment district.

#### SUMMARY

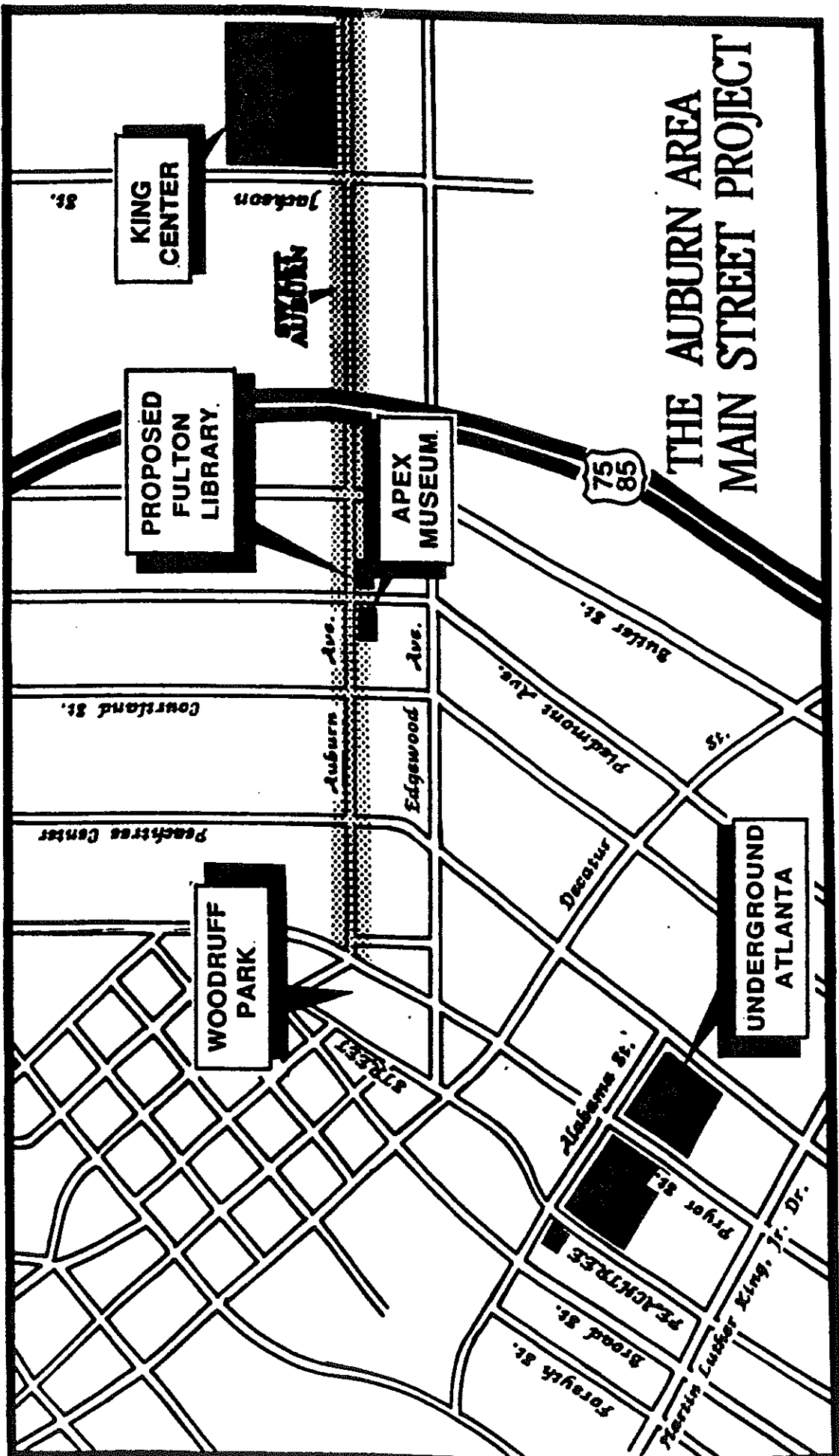
In its short existence, AAMSP has accomplished two specific key initiatives: A market assessment which defines specific business opportunities for the area; and a conceptual design plan to unite the two ends of the district and define how six proposed large projects should be incorporated into the existing fabric. By February 1990, AAMSP will have completed the initial work on a set of design guidelines for the area.

Atlanta, a future oriented city and a city of new construction, will benefit from the revitalization of the "Sweet Auburn" area. The corridor is the last major neighborhood in the country where the cultural and historic aspects are still intact as far as Black Americans are concerned. By forming a strong alliance between Atlanta's business, political and community leaders, the citizens of the City of Atlanta, the Metro Atlanta region and the State of Georgia will benefit.

The revitalization of Sweet Auburn has begun. The AAMSP and the community have a strategy to accomplish this task. Sweet Auburn can once more be a place worthy of its past, building toward its future.



MUNICIPAL MARKET ENTRANCE



KING CENTER

PROPOSED FULTON LIBRARY

APEX MUSEUM

WOODRUFF PARK

UNDERGROUND ATLANTA

THE AUBURN AREA  
MAIN STREET PROJECT

75  
85

St.

Jackson

AUBURN

Auburn Ave.

Edgewood Ave.

Courland St.

Peachtree Center

Butler St.

St.

Peachmont Ave.

Decatur

Alabama St.

Pryor St.

Broad St.

Forsyth St.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr.

# **APPENDIX**

## DESIGN

Design may be defined as the degree of livability, appeal and functional quality found in a particular area. In a business district, the interaction and integration of the storefront, the building facade and public spaces must be given careful attention and consideration. It is the interaction of these elements that provides the physical appeal of the business corridor. The stronger this appeal, the better the district's visual image, and the more enjoyable it is as an environment that attracts potential clientele (shoppers, merchants, investors, tourists, etc.). In other words, good design could serve as a very strong marketing tool for attracting people and money to the Auburn area.

The AAMSP's stated design goal is "to enhance the visual quality of the Auburn Avenue area through attention to buildings, signs, lighting, landscaping and public spaces. This portion of the report will focus recommended program objectives, associated land-use issues and specific Action Agenda items for the target area.

### Short Term Objectives

- 1) To identify and promote appropriate design changes in the Auburn Avenue area.
- 2) To identify simple, yet significant design image elements and actions that may provide visual continuity in the area.
- 3) To identify, promote and develop organized, phased clusters of function and activity that will serve to improve the physical image and utility of the area.
- 4) To develop and promote a design assistance/incentive program.

### Long Term Objectives

- 1) To develop a renewed design image for the Auburn Avenue area that reflects its unique and historically significant past.
- 2) To encourage the redevelopment of the Auburn Avenue area in a manner that appears and functions as a new retail and cultural center within downtown Atlanta.

## Land Use Recommendations

The following land use recommendations have been developed to provide a conceptual foundation for the Auburn Area Main Street Project's design program. Of course, the appropriateness of any land use recommendation should be confirmed by careful market analysis.

- 1) The Auburn Avenue area should function, in part, as a living black cultural village which will serve as a campus like extension of both the MLK center and the Apex Museum. The area should be a living community which combines residential, cultural and business activities against the backdrop of the historic streetscape.
- 2) The residential area immediately surrounding the MLK Center and birth home must be improved to provide a more appealing tourist environment. Through continued rehabilitation, the distinctive design of many of these buildings could complement and enhance the visitor's experience.
- 3) The Auburn Avenue area should be a multi-use district which services tourist, office, residential and neighborhood markets.
- 4) Increased retail services for tourists are required.
- 5) Active evening uses (arts, entertainment) should be introduced to complement day time visitor activity and to create a 24 hour district.
- 6) Neighborhood retail uses should become ancillary and secondary uses. Duplication of neighborhood retail uses should be minimized.
- 7) The mid-section of the district must be strengthened visually and functionally to unify the district's east and west ends and to encourage travel between the two anchors.
- 8) New residential development may be necessary in order to strengthen and support retail development. Tourism alone cannot support the district.
- 9) Historic tourist attractions and African American cultural activities and associated retail uses should serve as the "Economic Driver" from which the economic and/or market support for neighborhood based uses will be derived.

### Tourist Support Uses May Include:

- Family style restaurants
- Ice cream parlors
- Card & souvenir shops
- Photography and film processing shops
- Sundries stores
- Gift shops
- Flower shops
- Book stores



#### African American Cultural Arts Uses May Include:

- Formal night clubs
- Formal bars
- Jazz clubs
- Dinner theatres
- Small live theatre
- Art studios
- Dance studios

#### New Neighborhood Retail Uses May Include:

- Drug store
- Hardware store
- Grocery

#### Current Design Issues

A key element in the design objectives of the AAMSP will be the creation of a visual image that will project the district's unique cultural and historical character and attract tourists, customers and investors. In order to realize this objective a number of design issues involving individual buildings, the streetscape and public spaces and the district's gateways must be addressed.

The design objectives of the AAMSP will be implemented by the Design Committee with the support of staff. Technical assistance should be acquired from the Georgia Trust and State Main Street Program, The Georgia State Historic Preservation Office, the Atlanta Urban Design Commission and various city agencies. The following recommendations should serve as an outline for the committee's Action Agenda.

#### Immediate Action

- 1) Promote the storefront design drawings completed in 1983 by the AUDC as good examples of historic preservation and retail design.
- 2) Continue to publicize and support the AUDC facade improvement program.
- 3) Completed facade renovations should be displayed in the AAMSP office. These projects should be highlighted in the AAMSP newsletter and any press releases.
- 4) A community outreach program should be established in which AAMSP staff, design committee members and owners of renovated properties should encourage other property owners to undertake rehabilitation projects. AUDC drawing should be used to help property owners envision the completed rehab.
- 5) Signs, flowers and banners should be placed in front of buildings undergoing rehabilitation. This activity should be coordinated with the Promotions Committee.

## 6-18 Months

- 1) The Main Street Design Committee, in cooperation with AUDC, should review the proposed MLK Cultural District Design Guidelines. The committee should determine the appropriate enforcement and review process for the guidelines. Once this is determined, the Committee should undertake a educational campaign to inform property owners and prospective developers about the guidelines and the design review process.
- 2) The Design Committee should identify facades that require minimal work and develop relatively inexpensive design strategies, such as new signage, painting or canopies. These strategies should be presented to property owners along with a discussion of the financing available through AUDC.
- 3) The possibility of a sign rebate or free paint program should be investigated. Corporate sponsors should be identified. These programs encourage property owner participation, are inexpensive and provide visible signs of change in the district.
- 4) Encourage the removal of inappropriate or incompatible design elements. Alternatives should be offered to burglar bars, chain link fences, metal awnings and other elements which currently detract from the district's image.

## 2. Streetscape

The existing and future streetscape design for the Auburn Avenue area constitutes one of the district's strongest unifying elements. Streetscape design elements consist of the basic public improvements found within the public right-of-way and includes the roadway, sidewalks, street furniture, lighting and signs. Public and private ancillary uses such as parking lots and vacant lots may also contribute to (or detract from) the character of the area. The following recommendations have been made to address the issue of establishing a complementary relationship between the streetscape and the buildings in the area.

- 1) The Design Committee should conduct a survey of streetscape elements noting their condition and utility. Redundant, obsolete and broken elements should be noted. The committee should work with appropriate agencies to ensure proper replacement.
- 2) Sidewalks in the district are currently in very poor condition. The committee should work with the responsible city agency to ascertain when re-paving is scheduled and to ensure new sidewalks of appropriate design and material are installed. Maintenance of the original hexagonal pavers is recommended.
- 3) Streetscape elements are currently painted silver. A more subdued color such as muted grey is recommended. This will help these elements blend into the background, allowing the building facades and landscaping to become more prominent.
- 4) Parking lots should have 3'-4' evergreen hedges along the periphery to soften edges and to screen cars.

5) Lighting of appropriate incandescence should be installed in all parking lots, beneath the underpass and other dark areas. Light standards of appropriate design should be installed.

6) Vacant lots fronting onto the street should be screened off at the building line by a standard 7' wood stockade fence. The fence may be painted grey or another mute color or used as a temporary public mural. Alternatively, the fence could be set back 2'-3', allowing for hedges or other plantings to be installed.

### Gateways

There are two principal gateway areas into the Auburn Avenue area--Courtland Street and the I-85 overpass at Fort Street. The following design treatments are recommended.

1) Banners should be hung along Auburn Avenue for a distance of one block from Courtland to Piedmont. Similar banners should be hung from Boulevard to Jackson Streets.

2) A banner may also be hung across the I-85 overpass.

3) "Welcome to Historic Auburn Avenue" signs should be placed at both gateways.

4) The state should be encouraged to landscape the lot at Fort Street until the land is developed.

### The Catalyst Block

The area referred to as the catalyst block is located on Auburn Avenue between Butler and Bell Streets. This area may serve as a major focal point for development. Development of the block should hinge upon an engineer's thorough investigation of the building's condition. Prior development strategies appear to hold demolition as a foregone conclusion. The following design/construction strategies should be considered:

1) Extensive rehabilitation of the building

2) Razing the entire building except for its front facade to the depth of one bay. A new superstructure would be erected behind the facade. Retail, office or residential spaces may be introduced, as well as parking.

3) Total demolition of the building. The scale, massing and design of the Herndon Building would then be replicated in a newly constructed facade. The design of an active, pedestrian oriented facade is strongly recommended. Street level storefronts and offices should be retained.

Appropriate development of the Herndon Block will provide a critical signal to future development within the Auburn Avenue district. The AAMSP should closely monitor the development process and participate whenever possible. If demolition of the building is necessary, the AAMSP should work with the AADC to ensure appropriate redevelopment. The AAMSP could encourage AADC to require the execution of a signed covenant agreement running with the land

indicating the owners' obligation to develop the block in accord with AIDC's approved design which would specify uses of mutual agreement. As an alternative, the proposed Auburn Avenue Development Corporation could become a partner in the development process and thus have some input in land use decisions. Both strategies have been successfully used by other community based revitalization organizations.

## ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

Economic restructuring is the process of adjusting the economic base of the Auburn Avenue area so that it better serves those who have an interest in its future. The stated economic restructuring goal of the Auburn Avenue Main Street Project is "to diversify and rebuild the economic base of the basic district by providing a balanced business/service mix, converting unused spaces and upgrading other spaces to viable uses, and improving the competitiveness of the district in the marketplace." Current property owners, potential investors, neighborhood residents, district business and social institutions, business owners and the City all have a stake in this process.

Change is taking place within the Auburn area district. It is up to those who care about Auburn Avenue to determine the nature of that change. The greatest challenge facing the district and its stakeholders is to ensure that the impending economic changes are channeled in a positive direction which will ensure increased economic stability.

Although Auburn Avenue holds a wealth of development potential both financial and cultural, this area has not attracted individual developers to initiate substantial revitalization projects. Its current predicament is due to lack of focus as to what the district should be and who it should serve.

The Auburn Avenue area will serve two primary markets; tourists and area residents. Secondary markets will include downtown workers, students and residents of other downtown neighborhoods. Therefore, Auburn Avenue should be a tourist and downtown oriented neighborhood, taking full advantage of tourist and traveler demand that will support area merchants. In turn, area merchants can continue to provide and expand services to the area residents.

While Auburn Avenue is a continuum from Courtland Street to the National Park site, there is a definite break in the economic flow of the area, west of the expressway located near the Herndon Building. This site, called the "catalyst block", should be viewed as a potential development site.

Additionally, the housing in and around the National Park site should be viewed as an economic asset and should be fully restored for two primary reasons; to provide better quality housing for area residents and to provide a more appealing environment for tourists.

Finally, with exceptions, area merchants and corporate Atlanta have not involved themselves with Auburn Avenue in any significant way. Without this support Auburn Avenue will flounder and its full potential will not be realized. Public dollars can not and should not be expected to carry the Auburn Avenue area revitalization effort alone.

There is enthusiastic support for Auburn Avenue's revitalization from both the public and private sectors, but it will take more than enthusiasm to ensure the district economic future. It will take the time and dollars of the entire Atlanta community to create a successful revitalization program.

## Immediate Action:

### 1. Business Enhancement

Within 30 days the Economic Restructuring Committee should assess area merchants within the district to determine which businesses should be enhanced and repositioned to better take advantage of the growing tourist market and the existing downtown neighborhood demand. Businesses should be enhanced by:

I. Strengthening ties to appropriate individual existing businesses by providing technical assistance and training in targeting customers, altering inventory, advertising, window display and customer service.

II. Once a business has been targeted for retention, the Committee should provide assistance and guidance in acquiring facade rehabilitation and business loans available through various city and state agencies.

### 2. Project Review and Refinement

Within 90 days develop a consensus within the community of how various capital expansion projects currently identified can proceed in a coordinated fashion. The Economic Restructuring Committee should review, recommend refinements and prioritize proposed projects to encourage the maximum positive economic impact on the Auburn Avenue area. These projects should include the municipal market, the Apex Museum, HDCC housing restoration activities and Ebenezer Baptist Church's plans for a new edifice. Also included should be plans for the YMCA's expansion and the Herndon building.

### 3. Organize a For-Profit Development Entity

Within 90 days a for-profit development organization should be formed to function as the implementing arm of the Auburn Area Revitalization Committee (AARC). A Board of Directors should be created and include representatives from AARC, HDCC, the Main Street program and other interests. (See Organization Section) This development entity would be charged with the responsibility of developing both residential and commercial projects and should assume the lead in the following areas:

#### 1. Commercial Strip Redevelopment

The commercial strips on both sides of Auburn Avenue closest to the King Center are currently owned and managed by the Wheat Street Baptist Church. This commercial area offers the most immediate opportunity for positive economic restructuring. The location clearly has the primary access to the approximate 1,000,000 annual visitors to the King Center and the National Park site.

The strip centers do not currently take advantage of the existing tourist market that has a need for restaurants, gift shops, ice cream parlors and

convenience stores. When these goods and services are offered, they are not presented in a manner appealing to the average tourist. In addition, the physical appearance of the area is conducive or inviting. As a result, the strip centers fail to capture the available tourist dollar.

A for-profit development corporation could master lease the strip commercial area over the long term and undertake the financing and management of the commercial property. The Wheat Street Church would receive the proceeds for the master leasing. The development corporation would be responsible for the rehabilitation of the properties and the recruitment of an appropriate mix of businesses to provide goods and services to tourists as well as neighborhood residents. In return for its management services, the development corporation would receive a profit for their efforts and investment.

## II. The Herndon Block

The Herndon Block, or the "catalyst block as it is often referred to, has been the subject of redevelopment planning over the past several years. Up to this point, developers have not implemented any of the planned projects. The for-profit development corporation could be instrumental in leading the efforts to:

- A. Determine the most viable, ultimate uses among the alternatives of housing, parking and commercial, by assessing the market potential, and programming the project in terms space utilization and function.
- B. Bring financial feasibility to the project by accessing all appropriate public and private resources including private loans, public subsidy, tax credits and equity.
- C. Act as the developer to implement the project and oversee its operations.

## III. Housing Restoration

Within the National Park Site and in the immediate surrounding area, housing rehabilitation has been difficult to accomplish. This has been due to the scarcity of public funding sources available for full-time staff and capital improvements. A for-profit development corporation can assist the process by taking full advantage of all resources available.

For example, the for-profit development corporation would work in partnership with the existing non-profit, the HDCC. Any grants from the government, corporations or foundations to the HDCC would be placed into the for-profit entity in the form of equity. Low interest loans and other forms of government subsidy would be made available directly to the for-profit. In addition, the for-profit would be able to take advantage of tax credits that accrue to the private sector only. These would include historic tax credits totaling 20% of the redevelopment costs, annual low-income tax credits of 4-9% for a period of 10 years, and tax credits for the donations of facade easements. These credits can be made available to individuals or corporations who are in ownership positions, through participation in the for-profit development corporation or through a limited partnership where the for-profit acts as the general partner and an individuals or corporation acts as a limited partner.

As in all limited partnerships, the limited partner assumes no decision making responsibilities and carries limited liability.

#### 14. Business Recruitment

Finally, within 120 days, an on-going recruitment strategy should be developed that focuses on those types of businesses that can market to tourists, those interested in African American heritage and culture, and those that will serve the needs of the neighborhood. The Economic Restructuring Committee should compile relevant marketing and financial assistance information as the basis for recruitment and promotion materials. The resources of the Atlanta Economic Development Corporation and other appropriate public and private contacts should be fully utilized in the recruitment effort.



## PROMOTION

The promotion component of the Auburn Area Main Street Project must have a number of elements--promotion of the Main Street project, promotion of the business district, special events and public relations. A common thread must run through all of these activities--the IMAGE of the Auburn Avenue community. The overall strategy must be based on a thorough understanding of the community's assets and liabilities.

A successful promotion program creates a positive environment for investment. A promotion program can not stand alone, however. It must be combined with economic restructuring strategies, complemented by design activities and guided by a sound organization.

The goal of the Auburn Area Main Street Project is "to create a new image for the district to retain/attract customers, clients, investors and businesses." With this goal and the project's stated objectives as a framework, the Resource Team has attempted to define a realistic image, identify its markets and develop an Action Agenda with a recommended timetable for implementation.

### I. Image Assets and Liabilities

The following are the Auburn Avenue area's image assets:

1. The area's status as an historic district of national significance. With its adjacent residential community, the commercial district should function as part of a larger "cultural village."
2. Association of the community with Martin Luther King, Jr.
3. The presence of two major tourist draws in the community--the MLK properties and the APEX museum.
4. Proximity to a vital downtown that is expanding. Auburn Avenue is identified as being part of downtown but is also recognized as a distinct neighborhood.
5. The district is accessible from both downtown and the highway.
6. Quality special events are already occurring in Sweet Auburn. The events are associated directly with the district and have a common theme reinforcing the image of African American culture.
7. Major corporate sponsors have participated in Sweet Auburn area events. Media sponsors have also participated.

The following are liabilities which AANSP must take into account when developing its promotion strategy.

1. Visible presence of vacant buildings.
2. Significant number of buildings in disrepair.
3. The perception of high crime in the neighborhood.
4. Very few quality retail or service businesses for residents or visitors.
5. Little sense of time or place in the district. Without benefit of being told, the historic importance of the district is not immediately apparent to most visitors.

## II. Target Markets

There are five target markets for the Auburn Area business district.

1. Tourists--The tourist market currently offers the greatest area of opportunity for the Auburn Area. Tourists are primarily concerned with convenience, service, variety and distinctive activities. If the Auburn Area can successfully tap this market, the district would be better positioned to serve its other markets.
2. Neighborhood Residents--Neighborhood residents are most often concerned with convenience, quality, service and a familiar atmosphere. District retailers currently fail to offer quality and service to their neighborhood customers.
3. Downtown Workers--There are approximately 158,000 workers in Central Atlanta. Workers from Grady Hospital, neighborhood banks and other locations are within a few blocks of the Auburn Area. Workers are primarily interested in convenience and service.
4. Students--Georgia State University offers approximately 30,000 students a day as part of Auburn Avenue's potential market. Students are concerned with activities, selection and the manner in which they are treated.
5. Other Downtown Residents--Generally more affluent than the residents of the Auburn Avenue area, other downtown residents are concerned with convenience, service and activities.

Servicing one market within the district should not preclude servicing another market. Instead, the ultimate goal of the revitalization effort should be for the Auburn Area district to function as of multi-use district which services a number of customer markets. The variety of potential markets should be kept in mind as the program's promotional strategy is developed. Promotions should be targeted to appeal to directly to these potential customers.

### III. Action Plan

The following promotion Action Agenda addresses tasks which require immediate attention within six months, those to be completed within six to eighteen months and those to be undertaken during after eighteen months.

#### Immediate Action

The immediate priority of the AAMSP should be to promote an image for the district that indicates that positive change is occurring. The program must begin to develop relationships which will ensure successful promotions in the long run. Promoting the Main Street project is one of the most important tasks.

1. Assemble a media kit and schedule informational meetings with key media people.
2. Use the AAMSP newsletter as a tool to inform the community about program activities. The newsletter may also illustrate for potential funders the type and variety of programs offered.
3. Assemble a twenty minute, easily adaptable slide presentation and accompanying information packet. Schedule one presentation a week with community groups, potential funders, fraternal and beneficent associations etc. Get the word out about the Auburn Area Main Street Project.
4. Establish and distribute a one page calendar of events that includes all the events in the district.
5. Make use of the National Park Service Auburn Avenue walking tour brochure. There is no need to re-invent the wheel. Walking tours will acquaint visitors, investors and potential funders with the unique qualities of the district.
6. The Promotion and Design Committees should work together to establish uniform graphics for brochures, banners, informational pieces etc. When appropriate, the logos of other organizations, such as the Atlanta Visitors and Convention Bureau or the National Main Street Center, may also be incorporated into the layout design. Corporate sponsors should also be given recognition on any printed materials.
7. Join the Convention Bureau and make sure they have information and materials on the district.
8. Board members must be knowledgeable enough about the AAMSP to serve as ambassadors for the program. This will help change the perception that this is "another city project." Such board commitment and broad range support also helps in fundraising.

Physical change is what the public will notice first. AARC board members and AAMSP Task Force members should demonstrate their confidence in the district by setting the example in building improvements. Additionally, the corporate community is looking for specific visible projects to fund and to promote.

The following are some critically important first steps to signal that physical change is occurring and confidence is building:

9. Signs incorporating the AAMSP logo should be placed in the windows of successfully completed facades.
10. Banners should be placed in front of rehabilitated buildings to catch the eye of those traveling by car.
11. Flowers and landscaping will contribute positively to the district's "spruced up" image.

It should be emphasized that virtually all of the "Immediate Action" tasks are on-going activities. They, therefore, need to be approached in such a manner that they become institutionalized activities of the Main Street office. Clear staff assignments need to be made, and "how to" files maintained so the future new staff learn the process easily.

#### 6 to 18 Months

1. Establish a welcome wagon for new businesses. This will strengthen Main Street's constituency. Staff and board should both be involved in welcoming new businesses. A special information kit on the district, the program and the services offered to businesses should be developed.
2. Print a Visitor's Guide brochure for distribution at the local tourist hubs. The guide should show the location of sites, restrooms, parking and other conveniences.
3. There is a need to improve communications and coordinate tourist oriented activities in the Auburn Area district. An attempt should be made to coordinate the activities of the Merchant's Association, the National Park Service, the Martin Luther King Center for Social Change, Apex and other entities sponsoring promotional activities. A joint promotion strategy should result. Joint projects and tie-ins should be identified, with each organization aware of the other's goals and capacity.
4. Continue efforts to promote physical change within the district. The AAMSP should prepare an easy reference brochure that summarizes all available technical assistance and financial incentives. Development projects should be promoted to the media.
5. Strengthen ties with the media. A special effort must be made to establish a working rapport with reporters covering downtown and business activities. Press releases should be developed for all activities and the media invited to all appropriate events. Make it easy for the press to give good coverage.

Three major special events are currently occurring in the Auburn Area district.

- o Sweet Auburn Good Times Summit Festival  
3 day event  
Sponsored by the Merchants' Association

- o Blues and Barbeque Bust  
bi-annual  
National Black Arts Festival  
cooperation of Merchants' Association
- o King Fest  
alternate weekends June-August  
M.L.K. Center

The AAMSP's role in these should be to provide assistance to enhance the events. A special effort should be made to work with area businesses to ensure their knowledge of the events and to develop possible tie-ins so that they benefit from the traffic generated during the festivals. AAMSP assistance can include:

- o Provide information on advertising opportunities
- o Conduct visitor surveys during the festival to provide an information base for merchants and other groups
- o Assist in the evaluation of events
- o AAMSP supporters should be visible volunteers during the festivals
- o Work with appropriate committees in planning and coordinating the events'
- o Help identify possible funding sources

Other special events and festivals may call for technical assistance from the AAMSP as they become larger and more popular. The AAMSP could help identify sponsors, provide financial management and coordinate merchant involvement.

The AAMSP should consider sponsoring two smaller annual events itself. These events should be immediately identifiable with the program and its mission.

#### National Historic Preservation Week (May)

- o Walking Tours
- o Building Rehab Awards
- o Coordinated activities with city and state-wide preservation groups

#### Annual Clean Sweep Campaign

- o Free dust pans and brooms to merchants
- o Volunteers clean lots and public spaces
- o Plant flowers
- o Celebration afterwards

#### 18 Months and Beyond

The project's second and third years should see further institutionalization and enhancement of the previous year's activities. Concentration should be on improving what is already being done.

Depending on the level of success in the area of retail recruitment, however, planning for retail promotions may become necessary during the program's third year. A retail promotions strategy should take into account different compo-

nents for each of the different markets being served. The strategy could include:

- o coupon books for tourists, visitors and students
- o targeted cooperative advertising
- o coordinated hours of operation
- o retail tie-ins to special events

Finally, a joint promotion committee should be formed to oversee the tourism, retailing and special events programming being offered by various organizations and entities. The committee should examine:

- o An Auburn area shuttle providing convenient transportation from downtown tourist hubs to the Apex and the MLK properties.
- o Improved directional signage leading to the district from downtown and major highways
- o Better signage within the district
- o Joint entertainment/cultural/restaurant promotions to encourage multiple destinations.

## ORGANIZATION

Organization is the key to business district revitalization and the foundation of every successful Main Street Project. As such, organization is not merely one of the four points of the Main Street approach, it is the most important of the points.

In the early stages of a Main Street project, two things must happen simultaneously. First, activities that improve the image of the business district must be identified and implemented. At the same time, a strong organization must guide the revitalization process. The primary function of a Main Street organization is to ensure that the program makes active progress in addressing the issues and needs within the target community.

Atlanta has a fresh history of revitalization successes, such as Underground Atlanta, upon which to build for the Auburn Avenue redevelopment effort. This type of cooperative effort involving the public and private sectors may provide a development model for the current task of redeveloping Auburn Avenue.

The Auburn Avenue Revitalization Committee (AARC) and its Main Street Task Force have made important strides in implementing a cooperative, consensus based revitalization strategy for the Auburn area. The manner in which the strategy is organized and activated will dictate the level of success and the rapidity with which change will occur. This section of the report will offer recommendations for further progress.

### Current Organizational Issues

Many of the issues discussed below have been thoughtfully included in the dynamics of the AAMSP's present organizational model. They are outlined here simply to urge the program stakeholders to keep them in the forefront of all deliberations. Although there are many variables that impact the success and failure of revitalization efforts, national and international experiences have proven that when the issues outline below are given primary consideration, the targeted redevelopment activity succeeds. When they are not addressed, the redevelopment activity, in the long term, fails.

The question remains--What is to happen? The findings of the Resource Team indicate that the most viable future use of the Auburn Avenue district is likely to be a multi-use district with a strong tourism/cultural/entertainment overlay to the residential district. Realization of this concept will, no doubt, result in some displacement of current retail and residential occupants. The issue of "who goes and who stays" will be a major point of consideration as the revitalization process unfolds.

Who makes this and other decisions will, in large part, determine the AAMSP's acceptance, support and ultimate success. Ongoing considerations regarding the decision making process must include the voices of those who will be most directly affected by the revitalization activities, i.e., the current business owners and the current residents. It is essential to forge a critical mass of consistent opinion regarding AAMSP's strategy. The opinions represented must include property owners, financiers, developers, residents and city representatives.

Who will lead the effort? A group comprised of local stakeholders with direct ties to the Auburn area district and city-wide corporate officials must be involved. The broad based input and variety of capital investments these players may provide will give the project city-wide significance. In addition, the group's composition will lend credibility to the program. With the support of the city's enlightened leadership and the energy of local entrepreneurs, the revitalization of the Auburn Avenue district will be viewed as a viable business venture rather than an act of charity.

How should this effort be structured? An organizational chart is attached which graphically presents a suggested structure for the revitalization and redevelopment effort. The entities, their membership composition and the roles that are integral to the process are outlined below.

**Auburn Avenue Revitalization Committee (AARC):**

**Membership:** Retain the current composition of the committee. Members include CECS, community residents, local merchants and local institutions. A representative from Georgia State University and Grady Memorial Hospital might be added.

- Roles:**
1. Create a for-profit development corporation. Appoint members to a board of directors and raise capital.
  2. Approve the development timetable.
  3. Create development standards and criteria.
  4. Review detailed work plans and schedules for land acquisition, financing and construction.
  5. Monitor and direct the AAMSP via the AAMSP Task Force.
  6. Serve as liaison to the community at-large and to government representatives regarding all issues, negotiations and announcements involving the total Auburn area revitalization plan and specific development projects.



**Auburn Avenue Development Corporation (AADC):**

**Membership:** The board of directors of the AADC should have the following composition:

- A representative of the Historic District Development Corporation (HDDC).
- Chairmen of the AAMSP Design and Economic Restructuring Committees and three additional AAMSP representatives
- 3 representatives of Atlanta's corporate community
- 2 Auburn Avenue residents and/or business owners

**Roles:** The AADC should be the prime developer for the Auburn Avenue area. Like most development corporations, the AADC will facilitate the development process by targeting high-risk properties and encouraging appropriate private development. It should perform the following functions:

1. Attract the capital necessary for the acquisition and subsequent development of designated parcels. This includes structuring the public/private partnerships that can serve as capital accumulation vehicles.
2. Serve as interim land owner until end users/developers are in place.
3. Recruit developers for individual projects.
4. Masterlease and manage district strip centers.
5. Provide for housing rehabilitation and new construction through the affiliate, HDDC.
6. Recruit staff:
  - Development Manager
  - Clerical
  - Interns

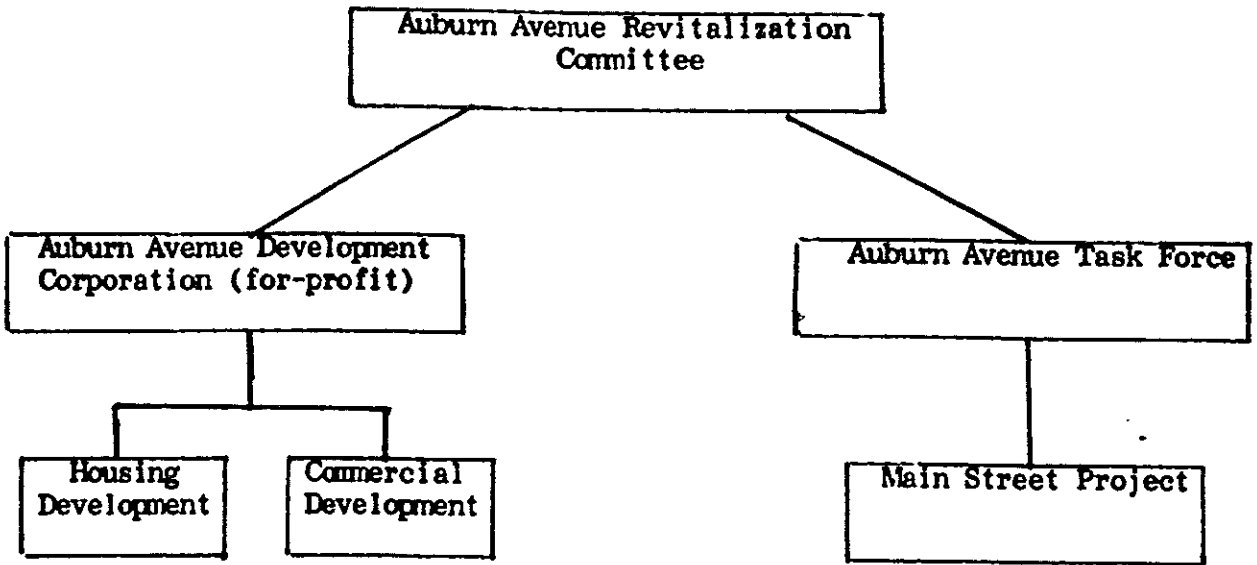
## Auburn Avenue Task Force

- Membership:** Current membership of the Task Force should be retained. The Promotions Committee should be broadened to include representatives of the APEX, the MLK Center and other local entities with promotional interests.
- Roles:** The primary function of the Task Force is to conduct the AAMSP. In accord with the Main Street approach, the Task Force should direct the following functions:
1. **Organization of the broad-based local leadership.** In addition to the decision-making inputs mentioned above, the Main Street staff should provide direct staff assistance to the Auburn Avenue Merchants' Association. This would facilitate the day-to-day exchange of ideas and feedback while enhancing the capacity of the Merchants' Association to provide its members access to financial and technical assistance.  
  
Important to this function is the ongoing orientation and training of the Task Force members. This includes:
    - a. constant reviews of the Main Street approach and evaluation of the progress of the Auburn Avenue project within that context.
    - b. updates on other models and activities that may provide valuable insights for all of the parties participating in the Auburn Avenue revitalization process.
  2. Coordinate the Design, Promotion and Economic Restructuring elements of the program Action Agenda.
  3. Internal capacity building is critical to the success of the project. The existing staffing pattern appears to be appropriate. Staff must be provided opportunities for training and skill development. Sources such as the NMSC conferences and the Baltimore based Development Training Institute could be valuable toward this end.
  4. Fundraising in conjunction with the Main Street operating budget is an function of the Task Force. Staff should play a supportive role in implementing an ongoing fundraising strategy.

5. Incentives must be provided to the various volunteer participants. For example, design and merchandizing awards could be presented to the owners who have demonstrated notable improvements, design innovations or voluntary service contributions. It is also important to provide positive feedback to Task Force members by publicly recognizing individual contributions.

### Conclusion

It appears that the essential elements necessary for the revitalization of the Auburn Avenue area are available. The talent and financial resources needed for the task are in evidence and are buttressed by the positive redevelopment track record of the greater Atlanta community. These recommendations on the organizational structure and roles should be used as the implementation vehicle for the AAMSP's Action Agenda.



AUBURN AREA MAIN STREET PROJECT  
MARKET ASSESSMENT REPORT

October 6, 1989

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## Market Assessment Team Visit

The Auburn Area Main Street Project Market Assessment Team Visit was conducted September 25-27, 1989. The Market Assessment Team visit is a technique developed by the National Main Street Center to provide information on the economic realities and opportunities facing a Main Street community. A team of experts was assembled to visit Auburn Avenue and to provide recommendations for future activities that may be integrated into the Auburn Area Main Street Project's overall revitalization strategy and program workplan.

The Auburn Area Market Assessment Team sought to refine the recommendations provided by the earlier Resource Team visit. Specifically, the team examined issues relating to small business enhancement and recruitment, tourism and related business development, and the possible role of a development corporation in the revitalization process. The team's findings, as presented in this report, are based upon the research conducted during the team visit. During that time the team toured the district and neighboring commercial areas and conducted several interviews. Finally, a presentation of their preliminary findings was made to the Auburn Area Main Street Project's staff and Economic Restructuring Committee.

The Auburn Area Main Street Project Market Assessment Team included:

Robert Boyd  
Boyd and Associates  
Dallas Texas

Doyle Hyett  
Hyett-Palma, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

Kenneth Morgan  
Business Opportunities Systems  
Indianapolis, Indiana

## Mission

While conducting its investigation of the Auburn Area target district, the Market Assessment team found that although much planning and a tremendous level of thought have been expended in the effort to enhance the commercial district, there is currently no clear direction, or broad based agreement on a specific course of action for its comprehensive redevelopment. The team also found that a high level of political and social will now supports the enhancement of the Auburn Area district. The team concluded that with the successful completion of Underground, the impending development of the Georgia Dome and the anticipated 1996 Olympics, a window of opportunity has been opened for the revitalization of the Sweet Auburn area. The success of the city's cooperative development efforts and the positive political climate must be captured and used to focus and leverage the Auburn Area revitalization effort. With this in mind, the team identified its mission and developed its strategy.

The team concluded that it is imperative to finalize the Auburn Area Main Street Project's planning process and begin the program's transition to the development phase. In this respect, four critical program initiatives should be addressed immediately:

1. Resolution of the composition, structure and role of the proposed development corporation in the revitalization process.
2. The initiation of a comprehensive development and implementation strategy.
3. The initiation of strategies needed to enhance existing small businesses and recruit additional businesses.
4. The initiation of appropriate strategies need to attract a greater number of visitors/tourists to support existing businesses, attractions and new businesses.

It is recommended that these four broad initiatives be brought together under the umbrella of a "Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy" (CDIS). This report outlines the concept of the CDIS and details its component parts.

## Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy

The proposed Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy should be considered as the overall process for the instigation of the revitalization process for the Auburn Area district. It is proposed as the strategy through which all contributing elements are prioritized, coordinated and implemented. In short, it is the "big picture" that frames all other activities. It involves five incremental steps:

- I. Identification of a Champion - The Auburn Area district's revitalization may depend upon a leader or "champion" who will bring leadership, credibility and power to the process. The champion's support of the revitalization effort is key to gathering city wide support for implementation.
- II. Preparation of Component Parts of Revitalization Strategy - Steps should be taken to summarize and refine prior plans and studies to the level of specificity needed for the revitalization plan to be implemented:
  - Real Estate Development Strategy
  - Small Business Development Strategy
  - Area Marketing and Promotion Strategy
- III. Presentation of Revitalization Strategy for Formal Adoption - In order to obtain required consensus and approval, the component strategies listed above must be packaged and presented to the public sector, private commercial sector and the community.
- IV. Implementation of Revitalization Strategy - The three components of the development strategy should be implemented simultaneously to ensure comprehensive redevelopment.
- V. Monitoring and Evaluation - Progress of the implementation efforts should be reviewed based on predetermined timetables to evaluate effectiveness of these initiatives.

## Real Estate Development Strategy

The National Main Street Center's Resource Team found that the redevelopment of Auburn Area properties would require private sector, public sector, and community based involvement. Specifically, they predicted that, in instances, public sector and community based development initiatives would be required to encourage broader private sector investment. To this end, the Resource team recommended the organization of the Auburn Area Community Development Corporation. The Market Assessment team concurred with this finding.

While the Auburn Area Main Street Project would continue its efforts to enhance the district through small business development, marketing and promotions, the Auburn Area Community Development Corporation would oversee property development within the district. This partnership would ensure that the tradition of small business is continued during Auburn



Avenue's inevitable redevelopment. It is also in recognition that the two efforts--small business development and property development--are mutually supportive. In fact, the district's long term economic stability depends upon the development of both.

The specific function of the Community Development Corporation (CDC) would be to facilitate and coordinate the real estate component of the Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy (CDIS). Functions should include:

1. An Updated Market Analysis To obtain current market information in consideration of the Underground and other recent developments. The report should outline market demand for residential, office, retail, hotel, and cultural developments. This should be contract to a market assessment/urban planning firm. The resulting report should provide a synopsis of prior studies and a concise final opinion. The cost and time allotted for production of the report should be determined accordingly. The report should not be considered to be yet another market analysis.
2. Preparation of a Land Use Plan To identify the current inventory of developable land and recommend appropriate land uses based upon market demand and redevelopment objectives.
3. Confirmation of Development Design Guidelines To summarize information concerning desired design guidelines for development.
4. Identification of Early Opportunity/Priority Development Projects To target initial projects for development based on market demands and appropriate land use.
5. Preparation of Preliminary Financial Analysis for Recommended Development Projects To determine the general financial feasibility for early opportunity development projects and the possibility of others.
6. Identification of Public Financial Assistance and Incentives To identify public sector support and financial incentives needed for physical improvements, land acquisition and other development.
7. Acquisition of Land for Development To acquire land through the creation of a Real Estate Investment Trust or Land Development Corporation (both which allow for pooling resources for joint land acquisition). The CDC may also obtain options and work with individual land owners to make land available for development.
8. Identification of Developers To identify and solicit developers for specific projects, including targeting high risk projects or those in need of gap financing. Participation of the CDC would attract the unconventional financing (City, State, Federal Government and Foundation grants or low interest loans) these projects may require.

9. To Participate as Developer or Co-Developer in Selected Projects

The Auburn Avenue Community Development Corporation will require a professional staff with experience in non-profit land development ventures. The CDC effort should not be run by or staffed by the Main Street Project. Instead the Main Street Project board and staff should be represented on the CDC board. The two organizations should be considered as a coordinated team with distinctive goals and duties.

The CDC's activities should be guided by a board composed of representatives of the district's small business, the city's financial institutions, the Main Street Program and public agencies. Specifically the board should include:

- 3 representatives from AARC
- 3 representatives from AAMSP (project manager, Chairs of Design and Economic Restructuring Committees)
- 1 representatives from HDDC
- 3 representatives from Atlanta's Corporate community
- 1 resident
- 1 small business owner

Three staff persons will be required, a president, vice-president and executive assistant. The possibility of loaned executives from local corporations should be investigated.

The advantages of a not-for-profit development corporation should be weighed against those offered by a for-profit. Advantages of not-for-profit status include:

1. Revenue is not subject to taxes within certain limitations
2. Opportunities to directly attract grants and contributions
3. Affirms organization's public service identity

There will be a need for a funding commitment of approximately \$150-200,000 for 2-5 years to ensure on-going administrative support for the CDC. After revenues from development projects are generated, the need for grant funding would be reduced. Development takes a long time, therefore, strong initial support for the CDC is critical.

## Small Business Development and Assistance Strategy

As indicated above, the second component of the Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy is a Small Business Development and Assistance Strategy. This activity should be overseen by the Auburn Area Main Street Project. The Small Business Development and Assistance Strategy should consist of the following seven steps:

1. Define Target Market -- Small business must understand their appropriate market orientation or stated more appropriately, a target market for their businesses. In association with the Comprehensive Development and Implementation Strategy's recommended market analysis described above, a better understanding of the area's market potentials/orientations must be gained. Specifically, the suggested market piece should:

- o identify specific market niches
- o identify specific types of uses
- o identify specific products
- o identify target customer groups

The market piece should be strategic. It should entail the use of all previously completed market research and stress conclusions, not simply restate previously known or disclosed findings. The market piece should be given--one-on-one--to each existing business owner within the district. (by professionals with input by Economic Restructuring Committee or Main Street staff).

2. Business Placement Strategy (clustering) -- A Business Placement Strategy or clustering strategy should be prepared for the district. This entails the identification of specific locations for the placement of specific businesses -- with emphasis on the placement of new businesses or the repositioning of existing businesses to enable them to share customers. This should be completed in conjunction with market analysis and economic restructuring committee.

3. Technical/Financial Assistance -- Utilizing existing local resources -- including GRASP, the Community Investment Fund of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, and all other appropriate local technical/financial resources -- the Main Street program should arrange for or broker technical services and financial assistance for small businesses. These services should be designed to enhance the physical condition of the businesses and better orient them to serve the identified market segments. Main Street staff should coordinate.

4. Business Recruitment -- As a first recruitment initiative, the Main Street Program should contract with GRASP for the recruitment of businesses to the Auburn Area district. Initially, GRASP should recruit at least six new businesses. Specific businesses to be recruited should be identified by the market analysis previously described. Businesses should be placed in accordance with the clustering strategy. [note: It is anticipated that recruitment for new development projects will be undertaken on a project - by project basis by individual developers.]

5. Enhanced Promotion of District -- All promotions should place emphasis on the "unique" or "special" character of the existing small businesses. Every effort should be made to encourage collective advertising by existing businesses to promote the areas as one economic unit.

6. Small Business Policy Issues -- The City of Atlanta should address the following small business assistance policy concerns:

- o Transfer a maximum degree of revenue generated by the businesses within the Sweet Auburn area back into the district via infrastructure improvements -- streets, sidewalks, parking, street lighting, etc.
- o Transfer a maximum amount from UDAG repayments, profits from the sale of city singular properties, and CDBG loan repayments to assistance programs/loans to enhance low income and minority owned businesses.

7. Repositioning of Existing Small Business to new projects -- Every effort must be made to avoid the displacement of viable existing businesses when new projects are introduced to the area. Maximum technical assistance should be extended to the viable small businesses desire to relocate the newer, quality or enhanced space, if such moves are consistent with the clustering strategy. The economic restructuring committee must define viability with assistance of GRASP.

## Tourism Visitors and Related Development and Marketing

Visitors to Atlanta are no different than any major market. They are conventioners, business travelers, organized tour groups and individual visitors.

For the most part the entertainment, retail, and lodging needs of these groups have already been satisfied by the city's overall development strategy. The Underground, regional malls, the Dome, the Congress Center and others serve the entertainment and retail needs of many of these people. Ample hotel rooms appear to exist to satisfy the demand. Although new rooms are planned to satisfy growing demand, there appears to be a gap in the affordable \$35 to \$75 rooms in the downtown area, particularly during peak demand times.

While many of the needs or demands of these groups appear to be satisfied, there is one obvious need that everyone agrees is not being adequately met or capitalized upon - - the cultural need. The demand is particularly acute with regard to one of Atlanta's biggest assets, its Black or African American cultural heritage.

One only needs to look at the staggering one million visitors who travel down Sweet Auburn to the King Center to know the level of the demand. Arguably, to many visitors the King Center is the most prominent of the city's cultural attractions. Please note the following:

- o The recent re-opening of the Underground is a clear indication of the spending power which can gather in the downtown area if there is the critical mass to attract them. ("Critical mass" may be defined as the concentration of many types of uses which serve as an attraction). Underground has a critical mass of retail/food and beverage.
- o Underground has already attracted over 6 million visitors in only three months. Sweet Auburn draws over one million visitors to the King Center alone, and it is many blocks away.
- o Simplistically, Underground has grossed \$35 million in its first 100 days. Divided by 6 million visitors, that is almost six dollars per capita spending. (This is not the proper way to compute per capita spending. A computation of the actual sales average would be more accurate.)

Using the same formula, with the proper critical mass, Sweet Auburn could already be generating some \$5-6 million in gross sales based solely on the King Center traffic.

- o Conclusion: Any place you start with a base of 1 million visitors, you have a built-in market.

The Auburn Area Main Street Project must develop a strategy to capture that market. Several steps, some fairly obvious and easily undertaken, are recommended. Some of these ideas require little or no costs. Others are a reiteration of the Resource Team's Promotions recommendations.

A. Linkages - your visitors come from:

- o the airport on layovers
- o the convention centers
- o tour groups (organized)
- o hotels

You need presence at each of these venues (i.e., a booth or booths prominently located). You also need a regular transportation link from key places. These transportation link needs to be highly publicized.

The Main Street Project may also need to develop more detailed tours (preferably walking). Anyone who goes to the King Center should go to Apex. Join the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau in a prominent way. The ACVB should be selling you. The Main Street office should serve as Visitors Information Center.

- B. Signage - In addition to a prominent Visitors Information Center you need some warm, friendly signs welcoming visitors to Sweet Auburn. The area is not hostile, but you don't welcome visitors either. The best opportunity is NEON signs on the highway which could be seen from the heart of downtown.

Flags, color (paint), and good lighting would all help increase the feeling of a warm, friendly, and safe place.

- C. Local Promotion - Do more to get your locals down to Sweet Auburn. If they don't say nice things about the area, nobody will. Plan additional free concerts, street fairs, parties, something. Anything that is quality and draws people. These are also good sponsorship and fundraising opportunities.

D. Public Improvements

Public or Municipal Market - Clean it up now. One person said that he is distrustful of expanding it when no efforts have been made to clean it up. There is no excuse for this. Present plans for new management are great, but the police need to help also.

Parking - Inventory all of the parking now (number of spaces, price point, and locations).

Erect lighting, fencing, and cut the curbs underneath the highway to provide additional parking immediately. Lease the space to a parking operator as a parking lot. This is the easiest opportunity for covered, secured and well lighted parking.

Lighting, Sidewalks, other Public Spaces - Fix them up. Use the local tax revenue if necessary. The best way to sell a special assessment in the future is to show the taxpayer where the money is going. Tax increment financing is a good option here.

Security - Provide a Police Substation and extend the scope and visability of the Park Rangers. Put them on horseback as well.

E. Major Construction/Development - Several new anchors are needed.

Expanded Public Market - (also called the catalyst block). This concept should be expanded to become a celebration of the city's multi-culturalism (particularly given the Olympics 1996 campaign). In addition to produce, crafts, arts, food, and cultural need to be included. The Public Market should be linked to Auburn Avenue. The reuse of the Herndon block should encourage retail and pedestrian activity. This could be a major draw filled with retail, food, vendors, and cultural exhibitions. The Apex Museum may be promoted by providing small exhibitions within the new market complex.

Apex Museum - expand it. This is a great anchor but cannot help the area in its present size. The concept is strongly supportive of the Avenue's revitalized image.

Hotels - Three markets appear to be available:

Business traveler  
Families  
Tour groups

Although this recommendation will require further study, factors indicate that if the price point were moderate (\$35 to \$75) per night, the competitive factor would be substantial. These facilities must be considered anchors and should be dispersed throughout the district. This will give the area life 24 hours per day and improve the sense of security.

Logical locations include the existing motel site across from Atlanta Life, near the King Center, and near the Public Market.

Parking Facilities - The city and landowners should combine to build parking facilities with architecturally sensitive street level retail.

The facilities should be structurally strong enough to support future development (hotels, residential, or office) above the parking, if higher and more dense development is allowable under zoning regulations.

The parking is needed now to ensure the success of the Municipal Market, property development and small business enhancement.

Locations on both sides of Bell and Auburn should be explored.

Parking structures should take advantage of the existing topography to hide them from view.

Existing Retail Sites and Uses - Some of these businesses lend flavor and character to the area. They should be preserved. This area should not become a fantasy land.

#### F. Marketing

- o Marketing should be comprehensive and tie together the various components of the redevelopment strategy under one image. It should not be fragmented or separated. It should be coordinated by one entity even though its parts could be implemented by different ones.
- o All parts should tie into one theme. If not, much money will be wasted.
- o Depending on sales and state laws, sponsorships could be raised from local corporations.
- o Linkages are the key. Whenever possible, Sweet Auburn should be promoted at through venues such as the Airport, Dome, Congress Center, Underground, CVB, Georgia Tourism, etc.

Public Relations - once the Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy is underway, hire professionals to position it. Tenants, Main Street staff, and associates must get out into the community and talk about the project.

Advertising - once you have something to sell (i.e., a new success or public market), you need a good slogan, logo, strategy.

A sustained advertising program is recommended rather than spot ads. You do, however, need to support your promotions. Public Service Announcements may be used as face advertising.



### Conclusion

The success of the Comprehensive Development Implementation Strategy depends upon the careful orchestration of its three component parts. The revitalization of the Auburn Area district will hinge upon small business enhancement, marketing strategies to attract tourist and other visitors and the involvement of a Community Development Corporation in the development process. These components are mutually dependent and will require close coordination by the staff and associated boards. This strategy will take the Auburn Area Main Street Project from the planning stage toward implementation.

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN FOR REVITALIZATION  
OF THE AUBURN AREA

Paper compiled by Katherine Pringle

Background:

The Auburn Area Main Street Project (AAMSP), together with design professionals from the National Main Street Center office and in consultation with Area merchants, property owners and various City and State agencies, have produced a conceptual design for the rehabilitation of the Auburn Area. (see Attached)

The Design team's concept makes recommendations as to how new construction, rehabilitations, landscaping and public improvements may be utilized in providing for the economic and physical revitalization of the Auburn Area.

The Design Team stressed that in order to maintain "Sweet" Auburn's integrity, all new construction and renovation need to be consistent with the character of existing resources. It is important to understand that the collective image of the buildings within the Area are products of Sweet Auburn's evolution. These existing buildings serve as emblems of the Area's achievements and potential; as visual monuments to the people who commissioned them, constructed them and worked within them. Any new construction needs to reflect this image on its design, scale and materials.

Approach:

In working out the conceptual design for the Auburn Area, a number of major issues were taken into account:

- 1.) Establishing an "entry " with a cultural anchor at Courtland and Auburn, plus reinforcing the street edge by defining the Area;
- 2.) Transforming the I-75/85 viaduct into a functional/cultural/aesthetic link;
- 3.) Creating additional parking;
- 4.) Meeting Georgia State University's housing needs;
- 5.) Composition of a multi-functional complex for the "Catalyst Block".

