



CITY OF
Port Wentworth
GEORGIA

THE FUTURE OF EXPANDING CITIES

A DEEPER LOOK AT TWO CATALYST CITIES

Presented by:

James Touchton, Director of Economic Development

City of Port Wentworth Retreat: March 30 - April 1, 2026



OUR GOALS



1

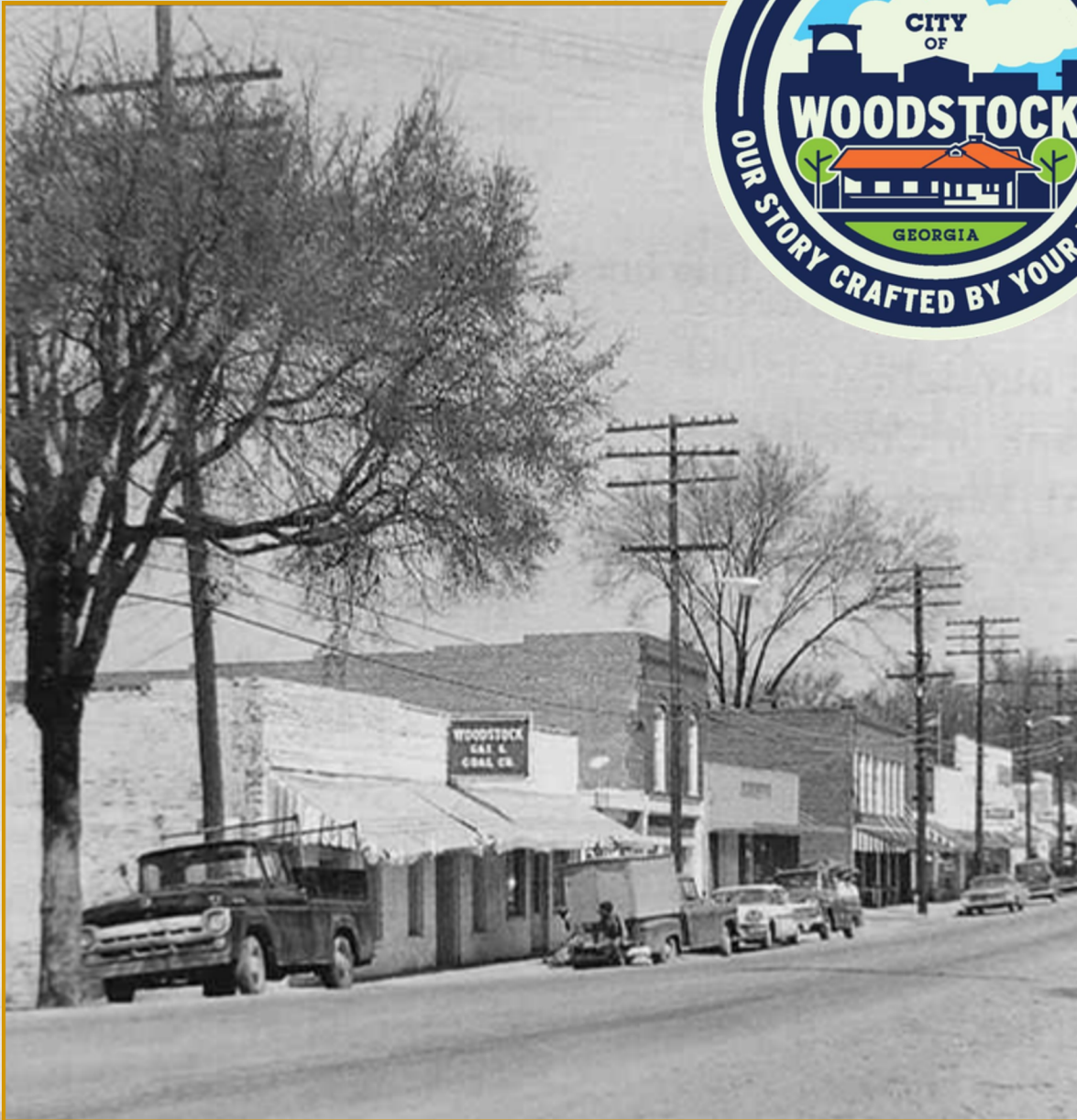
Examine how two Georgia cities have successfully transformed stagnant downtown districts into vibrant economic centers during periods of rapid regional growth.

2

Identify strategies relevant to Port Wentworth's next decade of development.

3

Generate ideas for innovation and intentionality as we develop a plan to govern the future development in a way that enables our infrastructure to sustain the rapid growth in population.



A CITY UNEXPECTED

WOODSTOCK

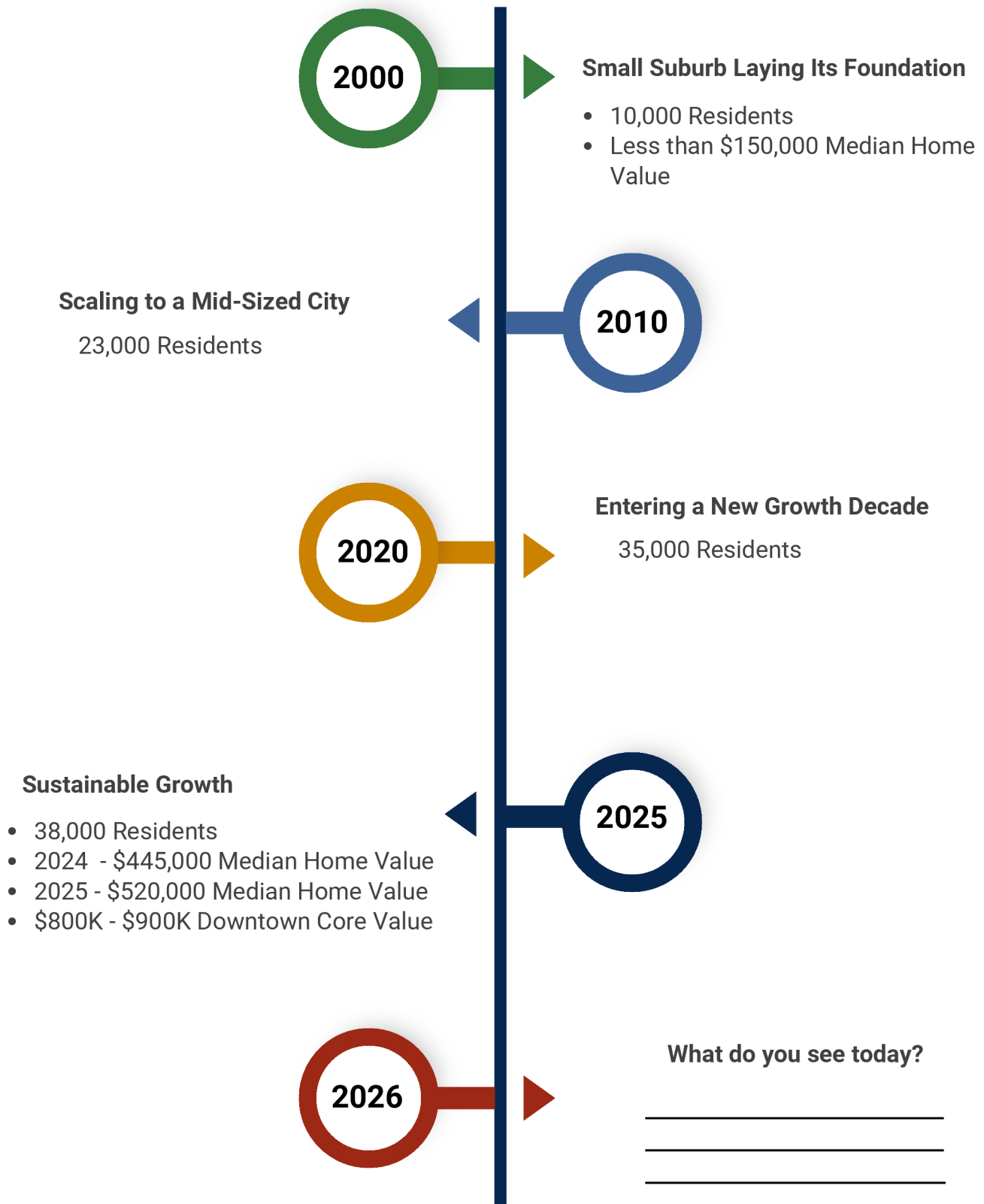
“

Boldly pursuing what's next to build a thriving community.

”

TIMELINE OF PROGRESS

25 YEARS



A City Built By and For Its Residents



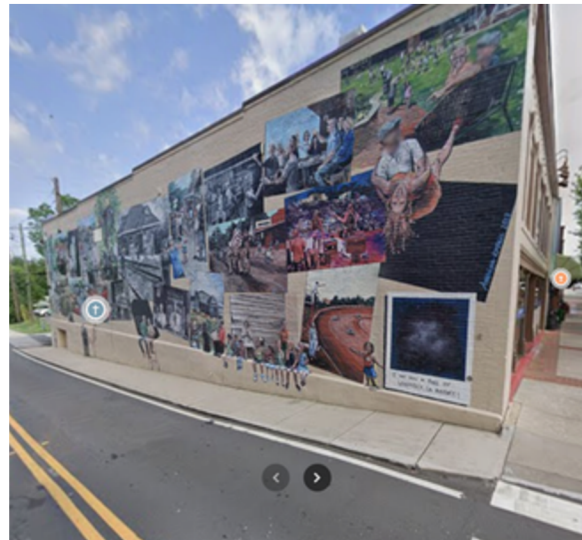
MIXED USE SPACE



FAMILY ACTIVITIES



SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS



NEW RETAIL SPACES

TRANSFORMING

INTO A DESTINATION

One of the most successful downtown development stories in Georgia.

**The Woodstock story is not offered as a template to be copied.
It is offered as evidence that**

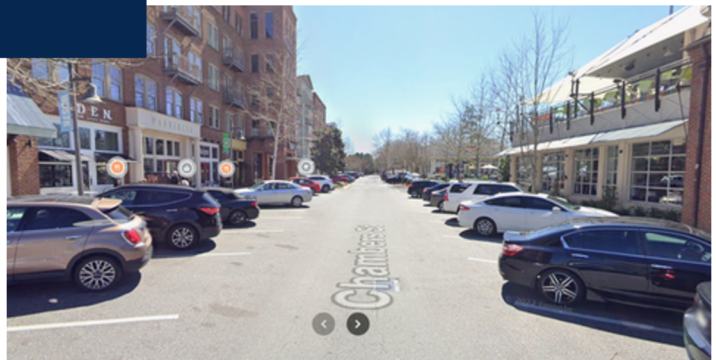
- 1** governance choices compound into outcomes
- 2** cities that make those choices deliberately create significantly more value than cities that do not

The downtown reinvestment and rising property values amplifies value creation.



-  **Intentional Zoning**
-  **Disciplined Infrastructure Investment**
-  **Coordinated Governance**

-  **A Booming Main Street**
-  **New Retailers**
-  **A Variety of Restaurants**





STRUCTURAL DRIVERS FOR SUCCESS

1

DENSITY & PRODUCT TYPE AUTHORIZATION

- Multi-family & Mixed-use development increased the number of residential units within walking distance of downtown.
- Foot traffic increased restaurant & retail viability.
- Produced higher assessed valuations per acre than lower density suburban alternatives.
- Higher value per acre directly enhanced municipal fiscal capacity. (same land base generates more revenue)

2

PRIVATE-PUBLIC CAPITAL ALIGNMENT

- Partnered with experienced developers capable of delivering urban-format products.
- Projects introduced hundreds of residential units and structured parking solutions.
- Increased valuation benchmarks that lifted surrounding properties.
- Public-sector clarity reduced developer risk.

3

SEQUENCING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

- Invested in streetscape improvements, pedestrian connectivity, traffic calming and civic spaces before full build-out occurred.
- Public realm investments signaled long-term commitment and reduced private development risk.
- When infrastructure exists, it creates credibility for developers and lenders - projects move faster.

Strategic Growth Factors

today's initiatives posture for long-term sustainability

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE ARTS

The downtown's continued vibrancy and success are due in large part to a strong relationship with the arts community, specifically Woodstock Arts.

There are ongoing beautification efforts that include public art initiatives. The strategy includes installations that add to the energy and character of the core downtown district.

NOONDAY CREEK TRAILHEAD

Sitting at the nexus of the brewery, Woodstock Arts green, the playground and the farmers market, the trail serves as an anchor for activity, connectivity and community life.

The impact of a trail extends far beyond its physical footprint.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH DDA

The City committed to remit 100% of hotel/motel tax revenues to the DDA, ensuring sustained funding for programming that keeps downtown active year-round.

STRATEGIC

PLANNING

Key Strategic Moves

- 01 Creation of The Green Downtown Park
- 02 Recruitment of Brewery & Restaurant Anchors
- 03 Trail Connectivity & Pedestrian Infrastructure
- 04 Mixed use Residential Near Downtown

Results

- 01 Major Civic Gathering Space Anchoring Events
- 02 Regional Dining Destination
- 03 High Walkability & Sustained Foot Traffic
- 04 Built-in Customer Base for Retail

Are there components we could implement?

What would our results be?



Honoring Our Heritage - Forging Our Future



STRUCTURED GROWTH WHILE PROTECTING CHARACTER

KENNESAW

“

Kennesaw is no longer defined by what it once was, but by what it is becoming.

Mayor Easterling

”

TIMELINE OF PROGRESS

25 YEARS

2000

Small Suburb Laying Its Foundation

- 21,675 Residents
- 900 Homes - Housing Stock
- 6.2% Latino Residents

Scaling to a Mid-Sized City

29,783 Residents ↑ 37%

2010

2020

Entering a New Growth Decade

- 33,036 Residents
- \$83,356 - Median Household Income
- \$335,400 - Median Home Value
- 13.2% Latino Residents (recorded in 2014)

International Acceleration & a Visible Pipeline

- City is Operating as an Ecosystem Builder
- 37,740 Residents
- 1,200 Apartments in 2024
- 1,584 Active Businesses

2025

2026

What do you see today?

What Began Simply

has become a space where community thrives



LOCAL BUSINESSES



WALKABLE COMMUNITY



COMMUNITY EVENTS



NEW RETAILERS

TRANSFORMING

INTO A DESTINATION

Illustration of how institutional discipline and structured planning can mature a downtown over time.

Kennesaw's apparent "overnight success" is the cumulative result of what might be called a ***civic flywheel***:

- plan alignment
- governance capacity
- public realm investment
- programming
- private reinvestment

each reinforcing the next, across multiple administrations and market cycles.

Over roughly twenty-five years, the city layered adopted plans, built governance capacity, made disciplined investments in public space, and continuously managed its downtown as a product, actively programming it and supporting businesses.

These compounding choices made private investment both predictable and financeable.



2000 vs. 2026

- **\$200M Completed Projects**
- **\$350M Nearing Completion**
- **\$300M Breaking Ground 2026**

- **A Welcoming Entry Point**
- **A Source of Pride**
- **A Gathering Place**





STRUCTURAL DRIVERS FOR SUCCESS

1

CLEAR LANES

Governance that separates district stewardship from deal-making capacity.

Key Players:

- Downtown Development Authority
- Development Authority
- Town Center Community Improvement District

2

INFRASTRUCTURE

Investment in public space and civic infrastructure.

Halo Affect:

Does not appear on any one project's pro forma.

It's a culmination of repeating the system.

3

PARTNERSHIPS

Strategic relationship with Kennesaw State University.

Economic Impact:

\$2.3 billion in FY2024

- Increased programming
- Increased classes for small businesses
- Paved the way for accessible investment pathways

Governance by Design

clearly defined roles and responsibilities

KENNESAW DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

KDDA - chartered to create a vibrant downtown to unite and establish viable businesses while maintaining community and historic heritage.

In practice: place management, business mix stewardship, branding, and reinvestment support with the downtown core.

KENNESAW DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

KDA - dedicated to 'sound economic development', focused on business retention, expansion, and incentive structuring, the traditional economic development function.

Tax abatements are structured through bond-financed, sale-leaseback arrangements, reducing friction for private investment without drawing on general fund cash.

TOWN CENTER COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Designed to coordinate corridor-scale infrastructure as a partnership organization, with a master plan framework currently outlining 15 projects totaling over \$100 million, according to a recent SaportaReport column.

STRATEGIC

PLANNING

Key Strategic Moves

01

Development of
Depot Park & Amphitheater

02

Alignment of
Main Street Program & DDA

03

Targeted
Small Business Support Programs

04

Public Realm Investments

Results

01

Regional Events & Concert Venue

02

Coordinated Downtown Management

03

Healthy Retail Ecosystem

04

Stronger Downtown Identity

Are there components we could implement?

What would our results be?

CHOOSE
*Port
Wentworth*



CHOOSE PORT WENTWORTH TO LIVE, EXPERIENCE, AND THRIVE

“

PORT WENTWORTH

We have an opportunity to decide what we'll
be known for.

”

Population Growth

At-a-glance Comparison

Population growth is the foundational indicator of a city's economic trajectory.

Year	Woodstock	Kennesaw	Port Wentworth
	Est. 1897 13.1 sq. miles	Est. 1887 9.4 sq. miles	Est. 1957 16.4 sq. miles
2000	10,050	21,675	3,276
2010	23,896	29,783	5,359
2020	35,065	33,036	10,878
2024	39,381	37,740	14,865
2026	41,454	40,822	16,838
Growth	+313%	+88%	+413%

*2024 data is estimated and 2026 data is projected.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census 2000, 2010, 2020; ACS Population Estimates 2024; WorldPopulationReview.com.

Median Age

At-a-glance Comparison

Median age reflects a community's life stage, workforce composition, and service needs. A younger or stable median age in a growing city typically signals strong household formation, school-age children, and active consumer demand.

U.S. Average in 2024 - 38.9 yrs

Year	Woodstock	Kennesaw	Port Wentworth
2000	~33 yrs	~32 yrs	~30.5 yrs
2010	~34 yrs	~32 yrs	~31 yrs
2020	~35 yrs	~34 yrs	~34 yrs
2023-24	36.6 yrs	35.4 yrs	35.8 yrs

*2000/2010 figures are approximated from ACS and Census data. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, WorldPopulationReview.com.

Median Household Income

At-a-glance Comparison

Median household income reflects purchasing power, quality of life, and the potential tax base available to support city services and infrastructure investment.

Year	Woodstock	Kennesaw	Port Wentworth
2000	\$58,506	\$60,404	\$42,241
2010	\$72,000	\$65,000	\$50,000
2020	\$90,000	\$73,000	\$68,000
2023	\$103,646	\$79,759	\$80,367
Growth 2000-2023	+77%	+32%	+90%

*2010 and 2020 figures are approximated from ACS 5-year estimates and city-data.com. 2023 figures: city-data.com ACS estimates. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Wikipedia.

Median Home Values

At-a-glance Comparison

Home values are a direct indicator of market confidence, neighborhood investment, and the wealth-building potential available to residents. They also influence tax revenue and the overall economic health of the city.

Year	Woodstock	Kennesaw	Port Wentworth
2000	\$134,000	\$129,000	\$66,100
2010	\$175,000	\$155,000	\$100,000
2020	\$310,000	\$220,000	\$170,000
2023	\$447,909	\$336,745	\$297,000 (in 2025)
Growth 2000-2023	+234%	+161%	+264%

*2010 and 2020 figures estimated from ACS and market data. 2023 figures: city-data.com ACS estimates. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, city-data.com.

MIXED-USE RESIDENTIAL

DOWNTOWN ECOSYSTEM

*The next decade will be defined not by whether growth occurs,
but by how deliberately it is structured.*

Community Activities

Dedicated Events &
Consistent Attendance
Creates:

- Resident Happiness
- Resident Retention

Apartments

Each development brings
300 - 500 residents

People are looking for:

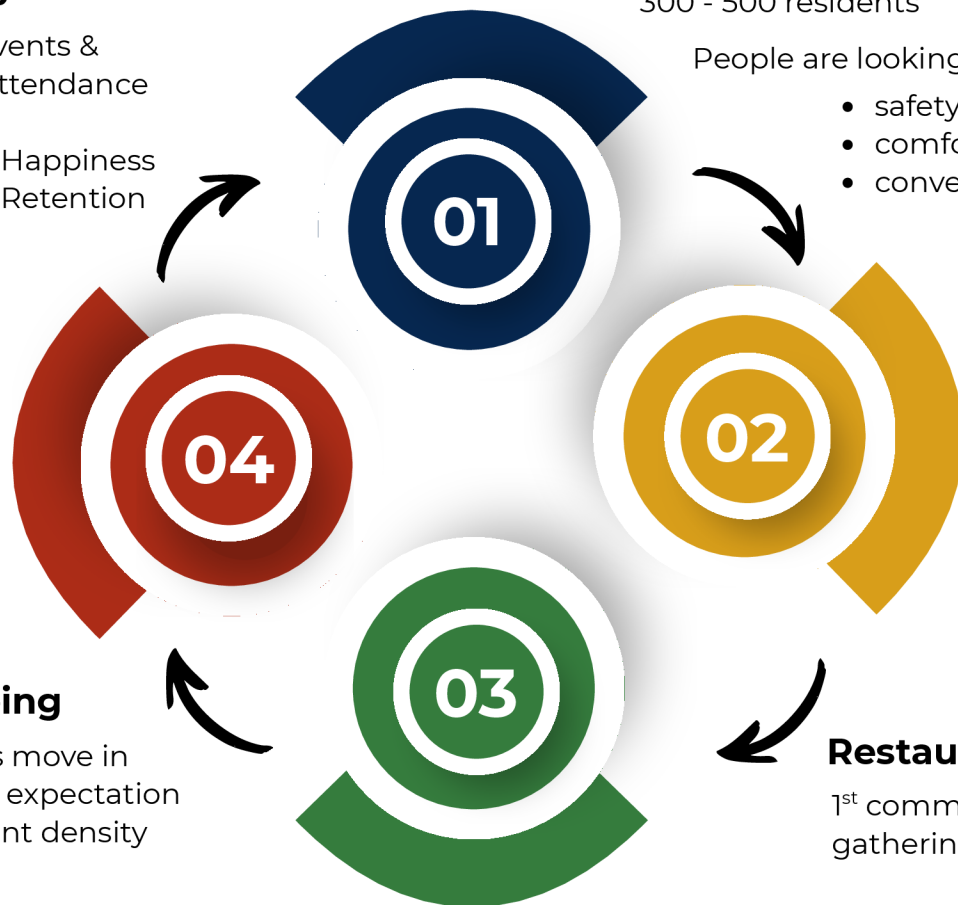
- safety
- comfort
- convenience

Shopping

Retailers move in
with the expectation
of resident density

Restaurants

1st community
gathering place



Port Wentworth's Governance

our opportunity for alignment

City Council + Downtown Development Authority + Development Authority

1

Are we prepared to invest in what is needed to spur private development?
Do we have a consensus on what that means in terms of dollars and timelines?

2

What level of public infrastructure investment is fiscally justified to unlock private capital?
How do we measure that return?

3

How should the City Council, Development Authority and Downtown Development Authority
align decision-making authority to avoid conflicting signals to the private market?

Port Wentworth's Governance our opportunity for alignment

City Council + Downtown Development Authority + Development Authority

4

What incentive framework ensures Port Wentworth remains competitive for quality development while preserving long-term tax base growth?

5

How should transportation investments along with State Route 25 be sequenced to support mixed-use activation rather than simply accommodating traffic flow?

6

What additional questions should this body be asking as it shapes the governance posture for the next decade?

PORT WENTWORTH'S

OPPORTUNITY

A successful downtown emerges from deliberate decisions about infrastructure timing, governance alignment and catalytic investments create momentum for private development.

Strategic Principle

01

Invest Early
in Catalytic Public Spaces

02

Empower
Downtown Focused Governance

03

Use Incentives Selectively

04

Sequence Infrastructure
Before Development

Application for Port Wentworth

01

Waterfront, Park or Civic Gathering
Anchor

02

Strong Downtown Development Authority

03

Target Projects Aligned with
Long Term Vision

04

Ensure Roads, Drainage, and Utilities
Support Growth



Thank You for Your Commitment to the City of Port Wentworth

Key Takeaways:
