



Dan Porta  
Cartersville City Manager  
10 N. Public Square  
Cartersville, GA 30120

March 28, 2023

Re: Downtown 10-Year Plan Funding Request

Dear Mr. Porta,

First, I would like to extend my thanks to you and the City Council for your support of our program during the last fiscal year. Downtown had a strong year in 2023, with five new business openings, over 95% occupancy, more than \$58,000 invested into capital improvements, the installation of five new murals, plus concerts, promotions, loyalty programs, and other initiatives. Downtown Cartersville is a GEMS designated community (Georgia's Exceptional Main Streets) and we have just entered the UGA Archway Partnership Program to pursue Connected Resilient Community designation for the city.

In 2014 the DDA produced a 10-year plan for downtown which is set to expire in 2024. The plan was well utilized and produced strong results for downtown over the last decade. The DDA would like to pursue a new ten-year plan and has applied to the Appalachian Regional Commission to obtain a 50% funding match for this endeavor (\$47,500 from ARC and \$47,500 from local funds). The DDA is requesting \$15,000 from the City of Cartersville as a contribution towards the cost of this plan. This will match a generous contribution of \$15,000 from Bartow County, which they provided in addition to their annual funding.

As you know, the Downtown Development Authority works across city-county lines to forge partnerships that create economic multipliers for the community as a whole. As director, I serve on multiple boards, including Keep Bartow Beautiful, Art in Bartow, the Family and Consumer Science Advisory Committee, and the Farmers Market Advisory Committee. I work at the state level with the Georgia Downtown Association and at the national level with the Appalachian Regional Commission and Main Street America, Inc. The DDA also leverages downtown to support many community organizations such as Advocates for Children, Backpack Buddies, Cartersville City and Bartow County School System, Black Bartow Events, Intercultural Festival, and others.

Downtown is a proven economic engine, a tourism destination, a recruitment tool, and a resource for the entire community. I have attached a brief summary of our accomplishments for your review, and I hope they will make a compelling case for the work that we are doing to benefit the community at large. The DDA appreciates the City's support, and we are eager to continue building downtown through this partnership. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

In public service,  
*Lillie Read*  
Lillie Read, Director  
Cartersville Downtown Development Authority



Since 2016

Maintained 95% building occupancy – or better – throughout downtown.

Reinvested over \$113,000 in façade and signage grants to downtown business and property owners.

Raised over \$56,600 for downtown businesses through our annual Pub Crawl events.

Raised over \$180,000 on behalf of Backpack Buddies through creation of Backpack Buddies 5K.

- Founding partner of event in 2017

Assisted Bartow County Schools with free book giveaway at Christmas Tree Lighting event.

- 6,000 books since 2019

Project manager for creation of Shakespeare Garden in alley next to Ross Diner – in partnership with Keep Bartow Beautiful.

Wrote two successful grants to Georgia Council for the Arts resulting in:

- Installation of 3 sculptures downtown
  - Leveraged \$5,000 match into \$10,000 project, which gained the community three permanent sculpture installations valued at over \$30,000.
- Installation of 5 panel (600+ sq. ft.) mural in Friendship Plaza
  - Leveraged \$5,000 match into \$17,000 project

Successful application to Georgia Humanities for a Project Grant.

- Leveraged \$2,000 of in-kind work into \$4,500 grant project.
- Created Downtown Walking Tour of African American History 1870-1940.

Created Bartow County African American Heritage Trail in partnership with 11 different civic and non-profit organizations across Bartow County.

- Project received Georgia Downtown Association *Award for Excellence in Organization* (statewide).
- Northwest Georgia Travel Association *Tourism Product Development of the Year Award* (regional).
- Heritage Trail archived for free and in perpetuity at Emory Center for Digital Scholarship.

Hosted more than 45 free music events for community.

Worked with CVB to develop and support creation of Public Art Coordinator position.

Worked with UGA Agriculture Extension and Bartow County Health Coalition to develop and support creation of a Farmers Market Manager position.

Conducted AARP Walkability Assessment of downtown with over 25 citizens and Tom Sills, Bartow County MPO.

Secured donation of community Christmas tree (\$26,000 value) and \$6,500 sponsorship to purchase holiday Photo-Op (lighted arch).

In 2017, top 20 national finalist in Deluxe Small Business Revolution competition.

In 2018, Cartersville receives award for best Live, Work, Play Cities from *Georgia Trend Magazine*.

In 2019, Travel Channel features Cartersville in article: "50 of the Most Charming Small Towns in America." (In other words, one per state, and we represented Georgia!)

In 2019, featured on Channel 11, ATL & Co., in an interview with Mayor Santini on historic downtown.

In 2020, Spoke on "Creating an Inclusive Downtown" at DCA Fall Conference with GA Main Street Director and Director of African American Programs at the Georgia Historic Preservation Division.

In 2020, spoke at Georgia Walks Summit on topic of "Creating an Award Winning African American Heritage Trail".

In 2021, Downtown Cartersville given GEMS (Georgia Exceptional Main Street) designation by Department of Community Affairs.

In 2022, installed over \$59,000 worth of capital improvements through use of Business Improvement District Funds. Saw 20% growth in Holiday Punch Card Campaign tracking holiday sales.

In 2023, chosen for participation in UGA Archway Partnership program for Connected Resilient Communities designation on behalf of the City of Cartersville.

Ongoing assistance coordinating event rentals & downtown usage for:

Dancers Against Cancer, Iron Order ride benefitting Good Neighbor Shelter, Can-A-Thon, Advocates for Children, Anchor Ministries, Music for Hope, Etowah Scholarship Fund, Daughters of the American Revolution, Cartersville-Bartow Chamber of Commerce, Bartow Rotary Club, Dixie Olds Car Show, Black Bartow Events, Intercultural Festival, Exchange Club, Etowah Valley Historical Society, Etowah Valley Humane Society, and others.