



Photo: *Second Sunday Brunch*, Washington Park
Photographer: Maryann Bates

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1. Introduction and Update
College Hill in the Context of Other University-Led
Community Revitalization Partnerships
 2. The Work: College Hill Alliance
 3. An Emerging New Civic Infrastructure:
The People Driving the Work — Moving Toward Collective Action
 4. Summary Assessment of and Next Steps for the Work in College Hill
- Appendices



**Summary:
Interim Learning and Research Report**

**The College Hill Alliance and the Knight
Neighborhood Challenge, Macon, GA**

**For the College Hill Alliance,
the Community Foundation of Central Georgia and the John S. and James L.
Knight Foundation**

**By the OMG Center
April 2012**

Executive Summary

This interim evaluation report on the College Hill Alliance (CHA) and the Knight Neighborhood Challenge (KNC) in Macon, Ga. documents and presents the early progress of this initiative's first two years of implementation. Funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (Knight Foundation) for a total of \$5 million, this university/community partnership seeks to revitalize the College Hill community to turn it into a thriving place to live, work, study and play.

In fall 2009, the Knight Foundation funded the [College Hill Alliance](#) and a professional staff, through Mercer University, to guide the implementation of a community-created master plan over a three year period. In parallel, the Knight Foundation funded the Community Foundation of Central Georgia to administer the Knight Neighborhood Challenge, which would fund individuals and organizations to carry out aspects of the master plan thereby getting people involved in the community change process, through a competitive grant program.

Similar to many other university/community partnerships throughout the U.S., the CHA/KNC approach focuses on new development and the redevelopment of the built and natural infrastructure. However, unlike others, the CHA/KNC approach is unique in its integration of place-based improvements with those that nurture people and new leadership at all civic levels. Although early on, evidence from our evaluation thus far suggests that a new “can-do” culture of community change in College Hill and Macon overall has begun to emerge. The early success of this approach makes the CHA/KNC work important for Macon's future, and is a potential national model to watch in the world of university/community revitalization partnerships, and in the broader field of community development.

Early Progress

About the overall strategy

- The master planning process was a powerful regenerating tool for the College Hill and Macon community. It created a powerful, exciting image of what College Hill's new future might be, and through its broad engagement, it unleashed significant passion and hope among people seemingly attached to and living in the community.
- The master planning process created a good roadmap for the CHA, the KNC, and the community focusing their work, tasks and people on what to do to make it happen. The framework — The Look, The Vibe, The Basics, The Connection, and The Environment -- are understood by many, albeit at varying depths, allowing the people to take up and contribute in pieces.
- Evidence indicates that early successes have created momentum. The old adage, “nothing builds success like success,” is one that holds true in difficult, seemingly uphill community change processes. Among these early successes are the build-out of Mercer Village, and Phase I Mercer Lofts: each demonstrating physical, tangible changes in the

Mercer Village area and serving as an early anchor and destination for students and visitors. While these were on Mercer University’s drawing boards prior to CHA’s funding, their construction and now use are important signals of a new place. The construction of Phase II Mercer Lofts adds to the momentum.

- CHA steering committee and staff stayed focused on the master plan. Their ability to adapt appropriately to adjust to opportunities such as housing, jobs, and “success readiness” are hallmarks of early strategy success.
- The CHA strategy benefited from a sense of urgency as the Knight Foundation grant was initially intended to sunset after three years. While a great deal still needs to be done, the first several years have been very productive, in part, due to this urgency.

Very effective College Hill branding

- The CHA strategy benefited from a strong, effective branding and communications strategy implemented early on and throughout the work. These include very engaging PSAs, CHA logos, collateral and effective use of electronic communication and social media.
- The early implementation of very successful signature community-building CHA-branded events — such as *Second Sunday Brunch*, and *Movies in the Park* — contributed to the College Hill cool identify: “a people-oriented community with great events where you get to know and be with your neighbors.”

Early development wins

- As noted earlier, several early, tangible construction and development projects have created evidence for all to see that College Hill is changing. These have helped with continuing to fuel hope and energy for future change: the Mercer Village Shops, Phase I and II of Mercer Lofts, the new bike sharrows, the trail of bears, tree planting throughout the community through the KNC grant, the development of 15 new homes in Beall’s Hill, and the development of a new pharmacy (a long-needed service amenity) on the corner of College and Forsyth Streets.
- In addition, several development projects in a robust pipeline promise added momentum: (1) the acquisition of a Georgia Department of Transportation grant of \$1 million for the Tattnall Square renovation along College Avenue (a KNC grant is funding the design of the redesign/renovation); (2) new zoning plan under development, also funded by a KNC grant; (3) the Mercer/Knight down payment assistance program for homebuyers; (4) the Rebuilding Macon home improvement program to assure that current College Hill residents can take care of their homes through renovation and neighborhood stabilization; and (5) early planning for a neighborhood grocery store.

Emergence of a new “can do” civic infrastructure with activities that nurture them

- Most notably, and a hallmark of the CHA/KNC approach is the emergence of a significant group of new, young, dynamic, civic leaders, many supported by KNC.
- In addition, KNC and other Knight Foundation supported efforts have bolstered current community leaders including the leadership of Historic Macon, the Harriett Tubman African American Museum, Rebuilding Macon, the Macon Film Festival, and the Macon Art Alliance.
- Strong, effective CHA leadership has also been an important success factor. The staff leadership has been diligent in carrying out the master plan and adapting new strategy elements. How they are doing this is important. Pat Madison, Nadia Osman, and other CHA members have assumed the roles of social entrepreneurs making deals with other partners to get elements done, brokering new relationships to get work done, and weaving new networks across the community. Through their savvy leadership, CHA has been an event producer, neighborhood promoter/marketer, partnership builder, a think tank, a community research and development unit, and an accountability mechanism, all critical to making the work happen.
- The CHA Steering Committee has had important high-level community players at the table. They have successfully guided the big picture and direction, and stood out of the way of effective staff, not micro-managing day-to-day operations.
- The community has also benefited from visionary, yet practical, flexible foundation leadership under the aegis of Beverly Blake of the Knight Foundation. Blake knows the community intimately. She plays an important advisory role in the community and is a network weaver and broker connecting people and ideas to advance the agenda.
- The Community Foundation of Central Georgia has done a fine job directing the Knight Neighborhood Challenge. They have provided excellent leadership through foundation stewardship and financial accountability while providing guidance and capacity building for new grantees. The foundation has done this with enthusiasm, delight, and accessibility to all grantees.
- The farsighted institutional leadership of President Bill Underwood and his team at Mercer University has also been central. The leadership has remained committed and steadfast to this agenda, and provided significant in-kind support to CHA by covering a broad array of overhead expenses.
- New partnerships have been formed to carry out, or spin out from CHA, elements of the work. Among these to date include Historic Macon, Intown and Bealls Hill Neighborhood Associations, Rebuilding Macon, Ga., the Georgia Department of Transportation, Macon Arts Alliance, etc.
- City and county collaborators have been important to the work as well. For example, Bill Causey, Manager of City Engineering has championed the sharrow; Jim Thomas, Director of the Macon Planning and Zoning is leading the new zoning work; and John

Hiscox, Executive Director of the Macon Housing Authority has been a key partner of Historic Macon's housing work. And, Macon Mayor Robert Reichert and Bibb County Commission Chairman Sam Hart have supported public policy changes and governmental financial partnerships required to move the work forward. .

- And finally, others in Macon less involved in the current activities are beginning to notice the successes of CHA/KNC's new approach.
- Along with hopeful, committed attitudes about the future, the various elements detailed above add up to comprise the basis of a critical civic infrastructure necessary to drive a new agenda for CHA's and Macon's new future. These are the beginnings of collective action in Macon.

Considerations for the Future

Progress and success has been impressive. Nonetheless, opportunities exist for CHA and KNC to address challenges and new prospects in the next phase of work. The following should be considered:

- Aggressively continue addressing job creation for new and current residents. While all aspects of the strategy remain important, being able to work in College Hill and Macon remains a fundamental issue for people choosing College Hill as a place to live.
- Continue to work at planning and attracting new development projects and dollars in the context of tough financial times. Many of the projects identified in the master plan remain critical. Although the economy is weak today, it will change. Use this down time to generate good plans that can be pursued in the future.
- Continue to nurture and mentor young leaders. The CHA/KNC work has generated a wonderful group of emerging young leaders. These people are Macon's future. While we heard that several opportunities currently exist for young leadership development, to assure that they truly have the skills to lead, a more intentional mentoring and support strategy would be helpful.
- Support efforts to make the downtown thrive. Indeed, continuing to focus on College Hill ought to remain a priority; however, College Hill's future is still very intertwined with that of the downtown. CHA and KNC leaders ought to play a supportive role in this work without draining time and financial resources from College Hill.
- Explore and implement more effective student engagement. One of the challenges for the university has been effective student engagement outside the university. Although Tattnell Square Park — the central park in the College Hill neighborhood — lies right outside Mercer University's gates, many students were described as reticent and scared to leave school grounds. While the anchor shops of Mercer Lofts pull students

- off campus, other draws (beyond downtown bars) and approaches are worth exploring more intentionally.
- To broaden civic leadership, continue efforts to engage more institutional leadership, most notably that of the Medical Center of Central Georgia. Representing an important growth industry and the largest employer in Macon, the heft of this organization's leadership would create significantly more resources and momentum for the work.
 - Find ways to engage more diverse leaders. Evidence suggests that current CHA/KNC leadership is invested in maintaining College Hill as a racially and economically diverse community, and strategies have been in place for minimizing gentrification and maintaining and enhancing the diversity of the community. Nonetheless, to date most of the leaders of the College Hill effort are white. These leaders themselves recognize both the importance and challenge of engaging and representing the full community. Strong, constructive African American leadership will strengthen the diversity thrust of the work.
 - Continue to expand and integrate the strategy in a broader sphere of public and private players to deepen civic leadership at all levels, to extend the reach and resources for the work, and to more broadly disseminate an effective approach to change.
 - Enhance the capacity of the College Hill Alliance with additional project staff. Even though dollars are limited in Macon, CHA would benefit from additional staff. It has proven very effective with a very lean staff, but, as a result of its success, its work has dramatically increased. Further, given that there are no other strong development organizations in Macon, CHA's work is not likely to be reduced in the near future. To assure that it can carry out the community's agenda and the additional items others have put on its plate as a result of CHA's success, it is important that it has the needed staff to meet its growing demands. In particular, CHA needs a strong development project manager.

1. Introduction

Building from the prior master planning process, in 2009, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (Knight Foundation) made a \$5 million investment in a strategy combining two grants integrating two efforts to revitalize the College Hill community in Macon, Georgia: the College Hill Alliance (CHA) and the Knight Neighborhood Challenge (KNC). These grants have built from the master plan's community-based, inspired vision for College Hill's future and thoughtfully harnessed the energies of institutions, CBOs, private partners, and current and new leaders to begin to create a great community in which to live, work, study and play and a new civic infrastructure and culture of change in the College Hill. The initial work of these two grantees together offer early lessons in the community development field about integrating place-based improvements that nurture people and new civic leadership at all levels.

Under the auspices of the College Hill Corridor Commission, comprised of public and private local community leaders, the original College Hill Master Plan focused on physical enhancements, and on branding the College Hill community as a cool place to be, creating a community buzz through unique events, community projects, and intentional communications efforts. A community-driven, Knight Foundation-funded master planning process in 2008 established five areas of focus for the College Hill community: The Look, The Vibe, The Basics, The Connection, and The Environment. Subsequently, housing and jobs and economic development have been added. Upon the master plan's completion, the Knight Foundation funded the College Hill Alliance and a professional staff through Mercer University to guide the plan's implementation over three years.

By demonstrating a new way of doing business in Macon, CHA and KNC catalyze community engagement and address community quality of life issues.

Also, the Knight Foundation funded the Community Foundation of Central Georgia (CFCG)) to administer the Knight Neighborhood Challenge. Through a competitive grant program to organizations and individuals, the KNC funds the best ideas, small and large, that reinforce elements of the master plan while getting people involved in the community change process. As the CFCG notes, "the goals of the Knight Neighborhood Challenge are to invest in creative ideas to restore the land, use, and social fabric of the College Hill neighborhood, and to reawaken the soul of the community through active participation in a wide array of community activities."

About this Report

In January 2010, the OMG Center for Collaborative Learning (OMG) was engaged as a research and learning partner to the CHA and KNC staffs and the Knight Foundation. After a planning phase in which OMG developed a theory of change and research and learning plan, OMG now provides ongoing feedback to project leaders, collects data about impact, and tracks how the work unfolds to share lessons underpinning its success for broader adaptation.

In this first integrated report, we highlight the early story of how the work in College Hill is evolving, as well as its early successes, challenges, and lessons learned. We also make suggestions for future directions.

The following questions guided our research to date:

- What aspects of the master plan are gaining the most traction, and why?
- Does the strategy evolve and adapt? And if so, is it appropriate, and why?
- What are the early impacts in the community?
- What role does CHA play in advancing the work?
- What is the effect of the Knight Neighborhood Challenge on community engagement, and what lessons are there for other communities?
- How do public and private partnerships develop to advance the strategy, and what kind of promise do they hold for sustainability?
- What aspects of the CHA strategy are working and what needs to change to be more effective?



Photo: *Second Sunday Brunch, Washington Park*
Photographer: Maryann Bates

2. College Hill in the Context of Other University-Led Community Revitalization Partnerships

A Bit about University-Led Community Revitalization Strategies

In the last decade, higher education has been one of the most robust sectors in the U.S. economy, and in some cities, it is the only growing sector. Not surprisingly, as former industrial cities throughout the U.S. rethink their futures, public and private urban leaders are planning and implementing revitalization strategies centered on their higher education assets. Often driven by university and community partnerships, these strategies focus on creating walkable, livable, affordable, culturally rich communities — those very kinds of places where students and faculty want to live, work, study and play.

The thriving, vibrant neighborhoods surrounding the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and Yale University in New Haven represent the fruits of two decades of focused public/private investments in new commercial and housing development, university sponsored mortgage programs, and job and business development. New arts and culture venues and public space renovation and animation also bring life and a broad range of visitors to these neighborhoods. Indeed, enlightened self-interest underpins university-led revitalization partners; however, many parties benefit as people move back into neighborhoods and millions of dollars of new revenues are brought into communities.

Today, in cities such as Akron Ohio, and St. Louis Mo. through the University of Akron and Washington University respectively, university-led partnerships have started driving similar revitalization agendas for their surrounding communities. Most of these partnerships initially focus predominantly on commercial and housing development, and on improving the sense of safety and the physical environment to make it more attractive to faculty, future students, and their families. In later phases of their life cycles, town-and-gown communities, such as West Philadelphia, became successful, market-driven communities of choice for a broad range of new residents and public and private investors.

Each partnership has a unique character based on who comprises the public and private institutional and community leadership. Many are successfully driven by strong university leadership, and often the community is missing from the partnership equation. In a number of neighborhoods adjacent to universities, “the community” hardly exists. Here, decades of property speculation have driven out most non-university residents, reducing surrounding neighborhoods to undesirable student ghettos.

Distinctive Aspects of the College Hill Approach

The College Hill Alliance is similar to other university-led revitalization partnerships in its strong emphasis on improving the physical environment. And, College Hill has a unique set of physical assets. It has wonderful, affordable housing, a strong green infrastructure of parks and tree-lined streets, and a defined downtown. Macon’s estimated population in 2010 is about 91,000. While some say it is “too close,” the Macon community is intimate and friendly as the

sixth largest city in Georgia. Approximately an hour south of Atlanta and two hours northwest of Savannah, Macon sits along major transportation corridors and serves as a gateway to the Atlanta-Piedmont mega-region. It is also rich in arts and cultural assets, in particular, a rich music history.

Macon's story is like other similarly-sized former industrial cities: years of disinvestment and white flight to the suburbs left Macon with a decreasing population and tax base. It struggles with external perceptions of crime, as well as often-articulated strong political, social, and economic racial divisions. These divisions, along with an historically aging and reportedly lackluster leadership structure with an inability to envision a new future, had left Macon with a sense of hopelessness about turning its future around.

Another similarity in the world of university/community partnerships is the important role that Mercer University plays with its enlightened self-interested, committed leadership as an anchor institution. Mercer University has campuses in Atlanta, Savannah, and in the College Hill neighborhood of Macon. Mercer University has had a long commitment to Macon; however, to remain there, Mercer University's leadership is clear that it must create a stronger, more vibrant town-and-gown community to remain competitive. Their past and future investments and commitment to revitalizing College Hill have been critical to Mercer University and Macon. University President, Bill Underwood and his team are solidly leading their part of this work. Mercer University is on the steering committee, is fiscal agent to the CHA grant, and are facilitators of much of the College Hill development.

Along with these similarities, several things distinguish the College Hill Alliance approach in the world of university/community revitalization partnerships:

- **First is the partnership with CHA and the Knight Foundation and its strategic approach.** The Knight Foundation made an initial \$2 million, three-year investment in the CHA to support the planning and implementation of the master plan with the intention that successful projects will be spun out into the private sector for long term take-up. With an additional \$3 million, the Knight Foundation is supporting the Community Foundation of Central Georgia to manage the Knight Neighborhood Challenge.
- **And second, the CHA approach is significantly unique in its strong focus on nurturing people and new leadership at all civic levels to launch and drive a new, can-do culture of community change in Macon.** Integrating the goals of the College Hill master plan with the KNC, the work draws on people living and working in the community, including Mercer University faculty members, nonprofit leaders, business owners, and Mercer University graduates who have stayed in Macon. These leaders are critical in promoting an emerging new attitude and sense of experimentation and openness in the community.

While other university/community partnerships focus largely on place-based physical improvements, the CHA/KNC approach does this while also emphasizing the importance of building civic leadership at all levels, and thus, creating a new culture of community engagement and civic commitment. It is this emphasis that makes the CHA/KNC work important as a potential national model to watch in the world of university/community revitalization partnerships, and also in the field of community development as a whole.



Photo: Mercer I Lofts

More about the Demographics of Macon and College Hill

The recent 2010 census numbers highlight slight changes in demographics in the city of Macon between 2000 and 2010. The total population declined from 97,255 in 2000 to 91,351 in 2010. The black population increased by about five percentage points – from 62,027 in 2000 (representing 63% of the population) to 60,784 in 2010 (68% of the population). The white population declined, from 34,525 in 2000 (35%) to 26,126 in 2010 (28%), driving the overall decline in population. Although the Hispanic population remained small, it more than doubled, from 1,167 (1.2%) in 2000 to 2,284 (2.5%) in 2010. Over the ten year period, other race/ethnic groups have represented less than one percent of the Macon population.

Educational attainment levels^[1] in Macon remained approximately the same over the 2000s. About a quarter of the population (from 2005-2009) had earned less than a high school degree; a third of the population had a high school degree but no college; 22% had some college or an Associate's degree, and about 17% had a Bachelor's degree or higher.

A comparison of residents in the original College Hill^[2] footprint to residents in Macon based on 2000 census numbers shows a much larger white population (68%) in the College Hill community compared to Macon (36%) and a lower homeownership rate (16% compared to 50% across Macon). The presence of Mercer University in the College Hill community likely accounts in large part for the demographic makeup; the concentration of college housing likely

¹ Education attainment data is now collected through the annual American Community Survey (ACS) rather than the census. The comparison highlighted above reflects 2000 census numbers compared to 2005-2009 ACS data.

² The original master plan College Hill footprint did not include the Beall's Hill neighborhood and extended further into the downtown area.

drives the comparatively low home ownership rate; and higher levels of educational attainment would also be expected in this largely college community.

3. The Work: CHA and KNC

The idea for supporting revitalization in the College Hill community came out of a 2006 group project of Mercer University students. They articulated a vision of the “College Hill Corridor” and a commission that would oversee an effort to build on the assets of the community, particularly drawing stronger connections between the university and the rest of the community. This led to the creation of an all-volunteer College Hill Corridor Commission and the hiring of Interface Studios to drive a community-wide planning process that ultimately led to the development of the College Hill master plan.

Recognizing the need for a paid staff to support the implementation of this new community plan and vision, the Knight Foundation funded the College Hill Alliance with \$2 million over three years. In addition, they announced support for the Knight Neighborhood Challenge, \$3 million over five years to support a competitive grant program for funding the “best ideas” of local residents, nonprofit organizations, and others invested in the community to foster and enhance community engagement and civic participation.

The College Hill Alliance and Knight Neighborhood Challenge are both working towards the same strategic focus: “By demonstrating a new way of doing business in Macon, CHA and KNC catalyze community engagement and address community quality of life issues.” Starting with the master plan, the vision for the College Hill revitalization extended well beyond physical development in the community. The master plan included five elements for development:

- **The Basics:** clean, safe, and branded
- **The Vibe:** college town cool

By the Numbers*: Tracking Investment in College Hill

Foundation Dollars

\$6 million total

\$2 million= Knight investment in College Hill Alliance

\$3 million= Knight investment in Knight Neighborhood Challenges

\$1 million=Historic Macon revolving loan fund, Knight Foundation

New Development Investment

\$22.7 million total

\$19 million=Money leveraged for Mercer Village development in 2010

\$1 million=Money leveraged for pharmacy development

\$1 million=Ga. Dept. of Transportation for Tattnell Square renovations

\$400,000=Other Tattnell Square investments

\$250,000=Historic Hills and Heights for residential housing

\$1 million=Historic Macon residential housing profit reinvested

Leverage Factor (Non-Knight investment/Knight investment):

For every **\$1** invested by Knight, another **\$3.8** has been leveraged for investment in College Hill.

*Numbers are approximate; please see Appendix B for exact figures.

- **The Connection:** cooling the streets and connecting to downtown
- **The Environment:** a city within a park
- **The Look:** Macon's historic and urban center

Despite an economic downturn, the dual efforts of CHA and KNC to develop College Hill's physical and civic infrastructure has produced results even as federal, state, and private funding for physical development and infrastructure projects became scarcer. The KNC emphasis on leadership development has also been critical given the prior overwhelming sense of hopelessness about changing the community's future. Furthermore, the governance structure developed for the College Hill Alliance and the Knight Foundation's own approach to this work has allowed for an opportunistic and flexible approach to this work, which has in turn allowed this work to evolve and stretch in unique, but important ways.

Strategy Evolution Overview

Figure 1 is an overview of how the strategy in College Hill has evolved by maintaining a central focus on the master plan and also pursuing new opportunities such as development in Beall's Hill and a new business development strategy, KITE (knowledge, innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship). KNC has been an important resource that has continued to focus community leaders on implementing the master plan.

By the Numbers: Tracking Progress in College Hill

\$1 million=Total KNC grant money awarded in the community to date

68 KNC awards

15 housing units (7 rehabs, 8 new)=Number of housing units developed in Beall's Hill

605 people=Average 2010 attendance for Second Sunday Brunch each week

1,200 people=Total attendance for 2010 Soap Box Derby

31,995=Number of CHA website page views in 2010

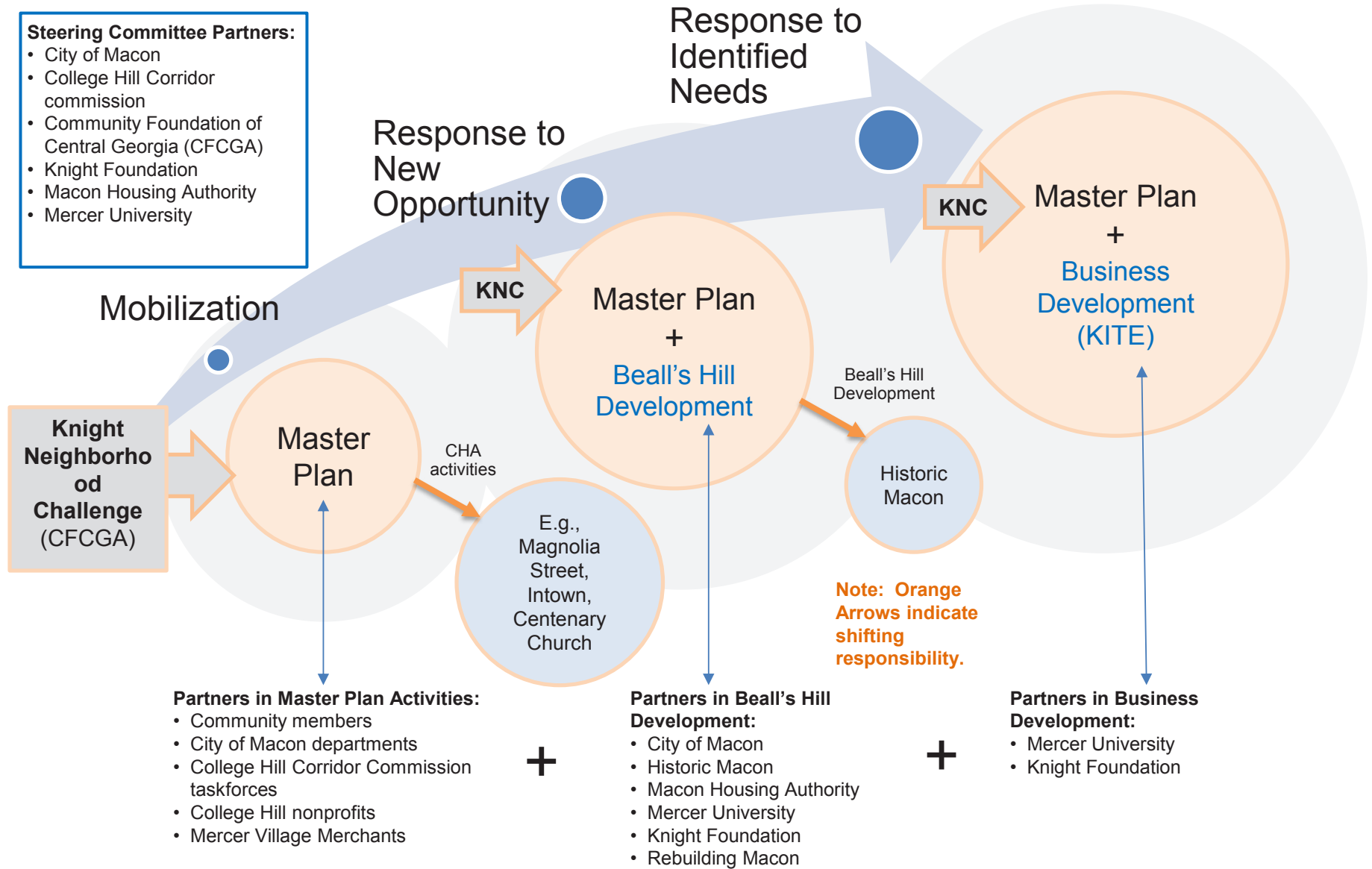
20,541=Number of 2010 e-newsletter recipients

27.34%=Average percentage of 2010 recipients opening newsletter

College Hill Alliance — Overview of Progress

In the two years since the Knight Foundation made its initial grant to the College Hill Alliance, a number of visible wins have been made in the College Hill community that have attracted the attention of not only the neighborhood, but other communities in Macon as well. CHA has worked at a fast pace and even in a time of economic uncertainty continued to show results and accomplishments. This pace seemed to be in the nature of its entrepreneurial leadership, and perhaps spurred on by the limited three-year timeframe of the Knight Foundation's original grant.

Figure 1: College Hill Alliance Strategy Evolution



As we highlight above, this work started and continues to hold the master plan as a central roadmap. However, an important aspect of College Hill Alliance's success has been the opportunistic and responsive nature of this work, which maintains its eye on progressing with the master plan, while also adding projects that the community needs, and that are likely to yield success. As a result, additional foci were added: Beall's Hill housing development, and now the focus on a broader economic development strategy, KITE, that seeks to create new job opportunities in College Hill and Macon.

In addition to its master plan focus and responsiveness, CHA early momentum can be attributed to early place branding and communications work, along with early visible, tangible built projects in the community of Mercer Village and Mercer Lofts I and II.

Progress on the Master Plan

Most of the progress towards the master plan over the last two years has been in the areas of The Look, The Vibe, and The Basics. College Hill has a "hip and cool" identity (the Vibe and the Basics) and is seen as a place where physical change (The Look) is happening. Changes to The Connection and The Environment have been more difficult to effect. Specifically, government resources for infrastructure projects have decreased significantly during the economic recession, and furthermore, from the beginning some of the identified projects in these areas were the most ambitious, e.g., burying the utilities. Below, we provide an overview of some of the key accomplishments across all five areas of the master plan:

The Look: Big visible changes in the community have gone a long way in establishing College Hill Alliance's work as making progress and as a success and asset for the community.

- *Original Mercer Village shops:* The first Mercer Village shops opened in 2009, offering shops and restaurants within walking distance of the university and many residents. Shops like Jittery Joe's and Francar's Buffalo Wings are now considered part of the fabric of the community.
- *Phase I of Mercer Lofts:* The successful completion of Phase I of Mercer Lofts is a highly visible win in the community. The project offers 13,350 new square feet of commercial space and 30 student housing units.
- *Phase II of Mercer Lofts:* CHA is working with development partners to develop a Phase II which includes plans to add 5,000 square feet of commercial space and 21 student housing units.

"It's impossible not to see what's happening. The timeline is astonishing, going from a master planning process to now a Barnes and Noble and three new restaurants [in two years]."

Community Interviewee

"Second Sunday is the coolest thing that happens, there are people that would never gather and are gathering together for this."

College Hill Resident

- *Pharmacy*: CHA has helped to broker a deal for a pharmacy development at College and Forsyth streets, a site specifically highlighted in the master plan.
- *Food Coop/Grocery Development*: Community meetings and market research have been conducted to explore siting a food-coop or grocery in the College Hill community. After much research and exploration funded by CHA, *Ocmulgee Traders*, a new grocery business led by two local College Hill residents, Steve Bell and Laura Puckett, is on its way to actualization. The site behind the Post Office on Hardeman is identified, and there is a market plan, a pro forma, and investor package. As a destination type of store, they intend to sell basic staples and to supplement it with local, regional somewhat more upscale products, including wine and beer. At the time of the interview, Bell and Puckett were optimistically identifying investors with six having already some expressed interest. They will need to raise \$600,000 and already had \$200,000 in hand at the time of our interview, with a large amount of that support coming from CHA. In addition, the landlord has agreed to make approximately \$95,000 in renovations to the building. With backgrounds in marketing, Bell and Puckett had already begun to create a community buzz around the market's future through Facebook and other communications.

The Vibe: A series of unique events are now part of the fabric of the College Hill community.

- *Second Sunday Brunch*: Held in Washington Park, this event has grown over the last couple of years, attracting not only College Hill residents but visitors from other Macon communities, as well. Vendors offer \$5 lunch boxes and CHA organizes a variety of musical acts to perform each month. Other organizations have added events to *Second Sunday Brunch* including Macon Arts Alliance, which runs an art table for kids at each event.
- *Big Screen Movie Nights*: a monthly movie series in Tattnell Square for families and students.
- *Soap Box Derby*: Each year, teams build soap box cars and compete in a race down Magnolia Street. The event is well-known across the community and now attracts a wide range of vendors and visitors including students, residents, and other Maconites, taking on a festival air.
- *Third Thursday*: On the third Thursday of the month the merchants of Mercer Village host a joint street party, offering special deals and bringing in other vendors and entertainment.
- *Performance Venue*: Although not widely known, CHA is also brokering the transfer of an unused church on Tattnell Square to Mercer University for the community to use as a venue for a variety of local community arts organizations.

The Basics: From the beginning, CHA invested resources in developing a “College Hill” brand that is recognized both inside and outside of the College Hill community.

- *Communications plan*: Early on, the College Hill Alliance invested resources in communications, branding both the College Hill community and the College Hill Alliance. They developed a logo for College Hill, produced PSAs, and introduced

signature College Hill events. Electronic communications and social media are central to the branding and communications strategy.

- *Branded materials:* Branded bike racks, reusable bags, and print materials — such as maps of College Hill — are among the tangible products that the College Hill Alliance has spread throughout the community.

The Connection and Environment: Although progress has been slower in these areas, CHA is still working to make progress where opportunities arise.

- *Ga. Dept. of Transportation Grant:* CHA played a central role in helping to secure a \$1 million Georgia transportation grant for the renovation of the Alexander School side of Tattnell Square Park. This side of the park is a critical public pedestrian connection to the downtown and a visible automobile edge. Renovations aim to renew the landscape and to make the edges more pedestrian friendly and safe for children.
- *Tattnell Square Park redesign plan:* CHA has hired a firm to develop a complete redesign plan for Tattnell Square Park.
- *Bike Sharrows:* Bike sharrows have been painted along Coleman Avenue, College Avenue, and Forsyth Street from Mercer Village to Macon City Hall. Although these are modest interventions, they do signal that the corridor is bike friendly.

Development in Beall's Hill

Although Beall's Hill was not part of the original master plan study area, an important success has been adding this neighborhood to the study area and the progress that has been made in developing housing, at a profit, in this community. The work in Beall's Hill is strongly aligned with the master plan, helping to positively impact The Look in College Hill, by both rehabbing historic homes and developing new homes that fit into the character of the neighborhood. To date, 15 houses have been developed in Beall's Hill – seven rehabs and eight new constructions. Seven more houses are in progress.

Housing development in Beall's Hill has resulted from a strong and innovative partnership between CHA and Historic Macon. In 2010, CHA and Historic Macon came together to begin redevelopment in the area of Beall's Hill, re-energizing the pre-existing Beall's Hill CDC, which had a troubled financial and political history, as the Historic Hills and Heights CDC (HHH). An existing Historic Macon revolving loan fund (RLF) funded by the Knight Foundation was repurposed to support development in Beall's Hill through HHH. Three board-level partners — the City of Macon, Macon Housing Authority, and Mercer University — augmented the Knight Foundation resources and continue to do so through annual dues to HHH. The RLF started with \$1 million for development.

To help HHH transition, CHA provided senior staff leadership and technical assistance, and served as the HHH executive director at no cost. Historic Macon has served as the housing developer. Together, they created a development strategy that included housing rehabs, preserving key historic housing in the community, and building new infill housing on vacant lots where the housing precondition was too far gone for preservation.

Prior to their involvement in HHH, Historic Macon had been completing two to three houses per year; however, the new HHH model provided them with the resources and support to complete eight new houses and seven rehabs between May 2010 and May 2011. Historic Macon turned the \$1 million fund over twice in one year, supporting a total investment of \$2 million in the Beall's Hill community and providing Historic Macon with the opportunity to develop a critical mass of new housing opportunities at an average price of \$138,000 for residents.

Although HHH's rehab development has operated at a loss, profits on new construction have made the model profitable and the RLF ended the first year with a \$48,000 net profit. HHH's goal from the beginning was financial sustainability and to protect the \$1 million in the fund. This profit has provided an opportunity for Historic Macon, as a nonprofit and mission-driven organization, to invest in street cleaning and lighting and also a charette to explore the design of a \$100,000 house.

In acknowledgement of its fine work, in November 2010 at the National Preservation Conference, Historic Macon was recognized as the most active Revolving Loan Fund in the nation. This attracted national attention to the model and the unprecedented scale of preservation and development they have been able to achieve in the Beall's Hill community.

In addition to highlighting the key CHA activities, on the next page we mapped the various CHA activities according to the particular master plan area, as well as development in Beall's Hill, to provide an overall sense of where and how CHA's work is beginning to take root in the College Hill community.

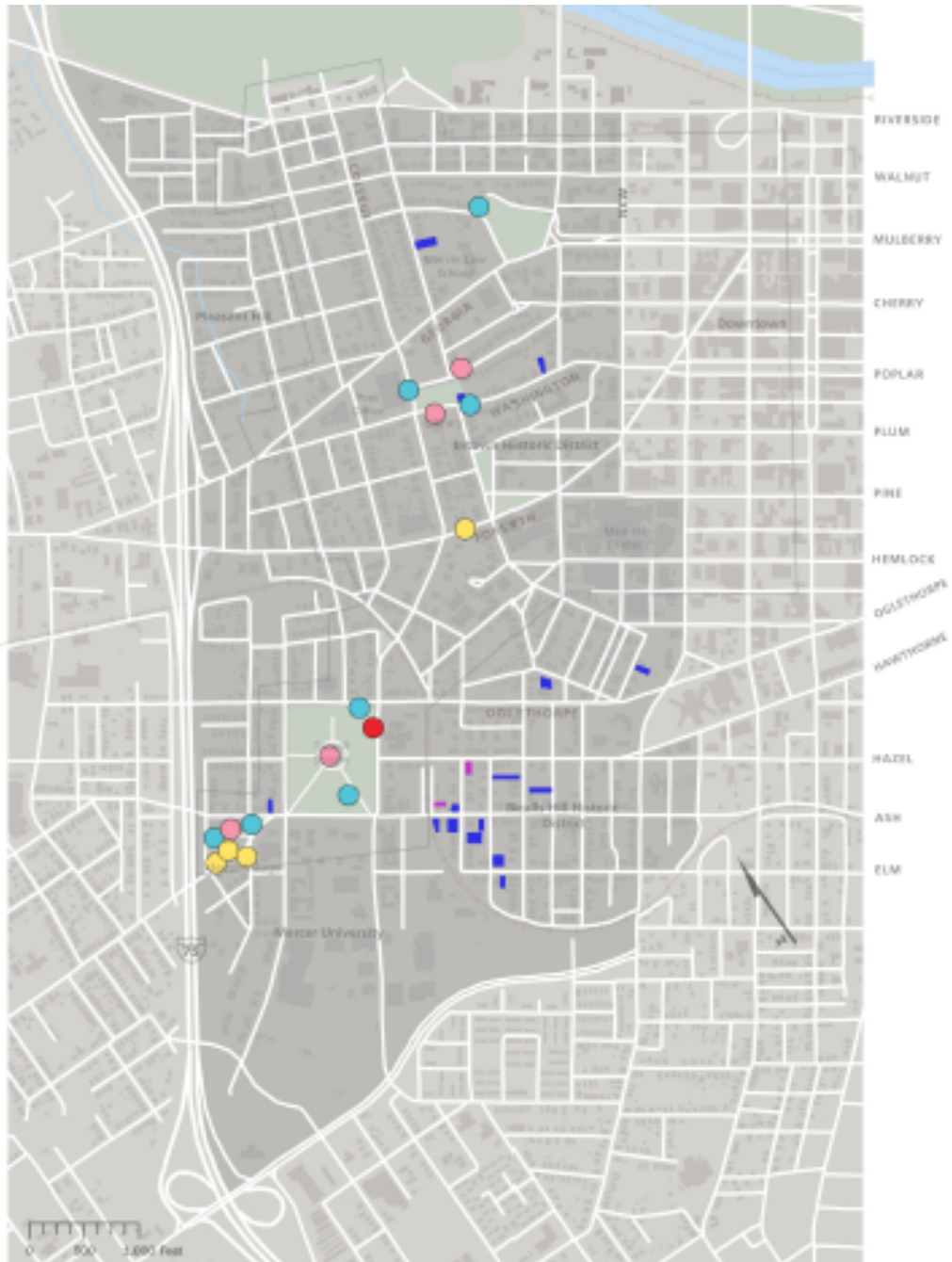
Business Development: KITE

Most recently, CHA has taken on a new effort, KITE (knowledge, innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship) that seeks to embrace "the concept of community-driven collaborative business partnerships linking technology, capital, and know-how and leveraging local, entrepreneurial talent to create a competitive and sustainable local economy." CHA staff has moved toward building a new economic development strategy for College Hill and Macon, recognizing the limits of their work to date if broader job creation in Macon is not addressed. A strong community and place can only keep people if they have the jobs to stay there.

Recognizing that there are many assets at Mercer University that could be leveraged to support a more entrepreneurial business and economic development strategy in Macon, CHA put together and presented a strategic plan to the steering committee. In the spring of 2011, the steering committee approved this work to move forward.

A lot of governmental entities and groups are focused on economic development work in Macon; however, they are focused on more traditional strategies. In the signature fashion of CHA, staff is looking for new ways to approach and support economic development in College Hill and Macon. This work represents more of a departure from the master plan than the Beall's Hill work, but is recognized as an important evolution if the gains made in the physical and social environment are to be sustained. Moving forward, it will be important that others in the

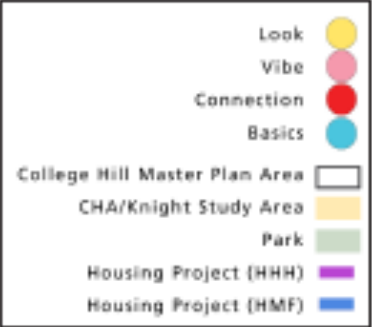
community recognize this work in the spirit in which it is offered: an opportunity to supplement existing economic development strategies in the community rather than supplant them.



COLLEGE HILL PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

College Hill Alliance Projects

Appendix C provides a map highlighting both CHA and KNC accomplishments.



4. An Emerging New Civic Infrastructure: The People Driving the Work — Moving Toward Collective Action

Although we have already spoken of the people involved in this work in the sections above, the people doing, driving, and leading this work are recognized in the community as a critical component of the success of both the College Hill Alliance and Knight Neighborhood Challenge. At multiple levels of leadership from the institutions involved, to implementation staff, to the community level, and not least of all the foundation itself, a level of flexibility and investment in the success of this effort have been key characteristics in ensuring progress on the ground. Many other Macon leaders and neighborhoods are beginning to look, to understand, and to replicate what College Hill has been able to accomplish. A major lesson is the importance of nurturing new leadership at multiple levels across the public and private arena of the Macon community to begin to work together toward a common goal, or collective action.

Foundations in Macon

The Knight Foundation

The Knight Foundation has been investing in the Macon community for many years. One of the critical components of its most recent grantmaking strategies in Macon and College Hill is the linked nature of activities that the foundation is funding. The Knight Foundation has also supported a strong future-oriented plan, but one that is practical building off the strengths of strong people and organizations. Further, it has exhibited flexibility by allowing its grantees to take advantage of opportunities where they exist.

The Knight Foundation's current investments in the College Hill Alliance and Knight Neighborhood Challenge are central. However other recent activities like Macon Money are well aligned with CHA and KNC. Furthermore, CHA and KNC build on prior investments in the community such as the communitywide master planning process supported by the Knight Foundation and Historic Macon's Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) which has become a central resource in supporting the development in Beall's Hill.

An example of Knight's flexibility is evident through the work in Beall's Hill. Although this work was initially outside of the scope of the master plan and footprint, and initially there was some skepticism about mission drift, the foundation ultimately supported CHA in pursuing this effort. Furthermore, the foundation allowed Historic Macon to repurpose the RLF to support the work in Beall's Hill. As a result, the development in Beall's Hill has turned out to be a major success, drawing national attention to the revitalization efforts in College Hill.

It is important to note that the Knight Foundation program officer in Macon is not only flexible but also a strong visionary. She knows the community intimately, is invested in the success of the Knight Foundation's grantmaking in Macon, and plays an important advisory as well as network weaver and broker role in the community, connecting people and ideas to advance the agenda.

Community Foundation of Central Georgia

The CFCG staff's administrative role in the Knight Neighborhood Challenge is recognized by many KNC grantees and College Hill community members as playing an important role in the success of KNC to date. Kathryn Dennis and her talented staff, particularly Julia Wood, have done much more than act as a grants administrator. For example, they are providing guidance to unsuccessful applicants to develop better applications, and are shifting the focus of different rounds of KNC grant rounds to spotlight different specific master plan areas that have not had targeted projects. In addition, the staff members demonstrate a refreshing openness to learning and interest in continually improving the KNC process. Perhaps most importantly, the visibility of CFCG staff members in the community at various KNC-funded events and activities demonstrates a commitment to this work that signals to the community that they are an invested partner and much more than a grants administrator.

The College Hill Alliance

The structure of the College Hill Alliance is multi-tiered, drawing expertise at several different levels. The College Hill Corridor Commission was the original body created to oversee this work and was a critical player in managing and overseeing the community master planning process. As the work evolved, the necessity of moving the stewardship of this work from an all-volunteer commission to a paid staff became evident. The College Hill Alliance was formed and three full-time staff members were hired to direct and manage progress towards the master plan. The commission however, maintained its role as a community advisory board. In addition, a steering committee was formed — including leaders from the City of Macon, Bibb County, College Hill Corridor Commission, Community Foundation of Central Georgia (CFCG), the Knight Foundation, Macon Housing Authority, and Mercer University — to provide formal oversight. As the work has evolved, other nonprofits and groups have partnered with CHA to support aspects of the plan.

Governance Partners

The steering committee and the College Hill Corridor Commission are both big-picture entities that the College Hill Alliance staff have been able to tap to support and advise them in their work. Although the steering committee has oversight of the College Hill Alliance's activities, they have demonstrated a great deal of trust in the current executive director and, not micro-managing, have allowed him and his staff a great deal of latitude in guiding the work. Projects like the housing development in Beall's Hill and KITE have been supported by the steering committee not with a rubber stamp, but rather as a set of thought partners who help to raise questions about direction but ultimately trust and support the leadership of CHA.

The College Hill Corridor Commission had to navigate a shift in roles as new CHA staff came on and the role of the commission morphed. At first, some growing pains existed. Out of necessity, the all-volunteer commission ceded more of the day-to-day stewardship of the master plan to the CHA, recognizing the capacity of the new CHA staff to lead and guide this work. The commission continues to meet and serves as a critical community engagement and advisory arm for the CHA staff. The commission has organized ad-hoc committees around specific projects like wayfaring and signage, and engagement and recruiting for College Hill events and activities.

In addition, they review Knight Neighborhood Challenge grant applications and make recommendations about which projects to fund.

A key strength of the governance model in College Hill is its fluidity and collegially. Many of the players across the steering committee, commission, and the staff know each other well, recognize the stake each other has in the success of this work, and as a result demonstrate strong trust in one another.

Staff

The CHA staff started out with three full-time employees. They recently weathered the transition of one of their staff members, the director of communication and outreach. This could have been a major blow to the organization. However, due to the collaborative nature of the staff, CHA promoted another staff member internally to the director's position and the transition has been very successful. In addition, CHA has increased its staff to four full-time employees.

Even with a staff of four (Pat Madison, and his team of Nadia Osman, Amanda Vaughn, and Reshanda Walker) the CHA is a very lean organization. They are recognized as having accomplishing a lot, especially given their size. We identified a number of characteristics of the CHA staff's approach that have helped them to work efficiently and effectively: (1) in many instances they have used external research and consultants to supplement and advance their work; (2) they have deliberately focused on remaining neutral politically and have made intentional efforts to extend outreach across multiple constituencies; (3) they have embodied a "can do" entrepreneurial approach; (4) they have operated as a think tank for new ideas; (5) they have been flexible enough to pursue opportunities and adjust to contextual challenges like the economic downturn; and (6) they have benefited from some early tangible successes that have helped to generate early momentum.

External research and consultants: CHA used resources to bring in a market research firm to conduct analyses regarding bringing a food coop or grocery to College Hill, helping to launch community conversations based on realistic goals about what might be possible. In addition, through a grant from KNC, CHA hired a design firm to develop a redesign plan for Tattnell Square Park.

Neutrality/broad outreach: From early on, communications efforts focused on extending the brand of College Hill across different communities – incorporating a diverse community in PSAs and presenting their work through media outlets with different constituencies. In addition, they have mostly worked outside of the municipal and political structure in Macon, seeking to supplement existing work and goals of political officials rather than influence or supplant existing structures. Recognizing the importance of working together rather than competing, they have explored and found ways to develop a collaborative relationship with Newtown Macon, a CDC operating in the downtown.

"Can do" entrepreneurial approach: The staff is recognized as being a "yes" organization, figuring out what can be done in the community and doing it. This is bolstered by the capacities that the staff brings to this work, whether around communications or development. They see and seek solutions rather than focus on problems.

Operating as a think tank: Along with carrying out the master plan, staff listen to the community and generate ideas of their own. In many of these situations with consultants and on their own, they have done the homework and background work necessary to test the feasibility and develop viable responses before advancing to implementation with partners.

Flexibility: Although the master plan has remained central to the work of College Hill Alliance, they have recognized other projects that align with the plan and spirit of the community vision for College Hill. The economic downturn made many projects in the plan less realistic and instead of dwelling on the specifics of the plan, CHA staff have identified other ways to move forward, for example pursuing the work in Beall's Hill and KITE.

Focusing and benefiting from early success, creating momentum: Several activities have created strong momentum: particularly the signature events of *Second Sunday Brunch* and early physical developments. Although in planning prior to the formation of CHA, the build-out of Mercer Village and the Phase I and II Mercer Lofts have created quick tangible results in the community, signaling progress and change.

Overall, the executive director and CHA staff members are recognized as major catalyzers, connectors, and facilitators. They nurture networks, do what needs to be done, and keep moving. This approach has been critical to the success of the work in College Hill.

Implementation Partners

Another important aspect of the College Hill approach has been its interest in developing partnerships to sustain efforts. Since their work started, they have approached it with the idea that College Hill Alliance would work to put itself out of business, building the capacity of other partners to maintain CHA efforts rather than having CHA itself continue to play this role.

CHA has worked with a variety of partners in the community and in turn these partners have stepped up to lead new strands of work. For example, Historic Macon has been a critical partner in the Beall's Hill development. Centenary Church is now leading community efforts to bring in a food coop or grocery. CHA has also turned over signature College Hill events to other partners including *Big Screen Nights* in Tattnall Square Park (now led by the Intown Neighborhood Association) and the *Soap Box Derby* (now led by neighbors on Magnolia Street). In addition, while *Third Thursday* continues to receive marketing support from CHA, these events are organized by the Mercer Village merchants. And finally, Friends of Tattnall Square is a newly emerged community group that intends to raise money to support smaller park development projects, as well as implement projects that can be done on a volunteer basis.

Overall, community interviewees recognize the executive director and CHA staff members as major catalyzers, connectors, and facilitators. They nurture networks, do what needs to be done, and keep moving. This approach has been critical to the success of the work in College Hill.

College Hill Community

Last but not least, in highlighting the people driving revitalization efforts in College Hill, the community itself and specifically those largely new leaders receiving KNC grants have been important drivers of change in the community. Individuals living and working in College Hill have generated ideas for change, and have stepped up to make change. For example, the KNC funding of small projects has allowed individual residents unaffiliated with a larger organization to become involved in their communities in ways that they acknowledge they otherwise would have not, providing them with a specific and clear pathway to become agents of change in their community. They have also mobilized neighbors, friends, and family to be part of the change. Interviewees also indicate that the KNC process has generated an excitement and buzz about influencing change, and that getting one is an honor. Their ideas and leadership are affirmed.

Interviewees also indicate that the KNC process has generated an excitement and buzz about influencing change, and that getting one is an honor: their ideas and leadership are affirmed.

In other words, the leadership and network of those seeking to change the community extends well beyond those whose job is connected to change in College Hill, for example the institutional partners supporting this work and the staff at CHA and CFCG that have been hired to lead and manage College Hill changes. The community itself has an authentic role that is unique and different from many other community-change initiatives and different from prior efforts in Macon.

5. Summary Assessment of and Next Steps for the Work in College Hill

Progress to Date

About the overall strategy

Combining a CHA place-based focus along with the KNC leadership development focus has been effective to date. Many programmatic aspects of the plan need strong institutional and development leadership under the guidance of CHA. Simultaneously, through KNC, the strategy wisely continued to nurture a new breed of community leadership that was engaged during the planning process. Together these investments have been more than the sum of their parts thus far.

The master planning process was a powerful regenerating tool for the College Hill and Macon community. It not only created a powerful, exciting image of what College Hill's new future might be, through its broad engagement, it unleashed passion and hope among people attached to and living in their community. Indeed, evidence from all of our interviews strongly suggests that there is a cluster of people who are strongly attached to Macon and its future.

The master planning process created a good roadmap for the CHA, KNC, and the community, focusing their work, tasks, and people on what to do to make it happen. The framework — The Look, The Vibe, The Basics, The Connection, and The Environment — were understood by most interviewees, albeit at varying depths. Nonetheless, the roadmap was clear, with elements articulated in ways that allowed the necessary parties to take up and contribute in pieces.

Some early successes were important in creating added momentum. Among these were the build-out of Mercer Village and Phase I Mercer Lofts: each demonstrating physical, tangible changes in the Mercer Village area, and serving as an early anchor and destination for students and visitors. In fairness, these were in the planning stages prior to the CHA grant. Nonetheless, their build-out signaled important change. College Hill branding and several significant signature events were also early successes that gained resonance with the larger Macon community.

CHA steering committee and staff stayed focused on the master plan; however, their ability to adapt appropriately to adjust to opportunity, need, and “success readiness” are hallmarks of early strategy success. For example, although housing was not initially in the master plan, CHA quickly realized that affordable housing was essential to build-out a mixed neighborhood. They were able to respond when an opportunity with Historic Hills and Heights, and later, Rebuilding Macon presented itself. The more recent integration of the KITE Alliance is another strategy adaption.

The CHA strategy benefited from a sense of urgency as the Knight Foundation grant was initially intended to sunset after three years. While a great deal still needs to be done, the first several years have been very productive, in part, due to this urgency.

Very effective College Hill branding

The CHA strategy benefited from a strong, effective branding and communications strategy implemented early on and then throughout. The CHA logo, the newsletter, and branded bike racks, reusable bags, and print material became identified with the place and were consistent and attractive. Notably, CHA launched an early set of very strong, catchy PSAs featuring known Maconites living, working, and playing in the College Hill corridor. These created a buzz and excitement about College Hill, identifying it as cool. Social media and internet-based communications continue to be central to the CHA communications strategy.

The early implementation of very successful signature community-building CHA-branded events helped to add to the College Hill cool identify, and that it is a people oriented community that has great events where you get to know and be with your neighbors. *Second Sunday Brunch, Big Screen Movie Nights* and the *Soapbox Derby* are among the activities most talked about by residents and visitors alike. The *Third Thursday* sponsored by Mercer Village Merchants is also hailed as a good event for the merchants and residents alike.

Early development wins

As noted earlier, several early, tangible construction and development projects have created evidence for all to see that College Hill is changing. These have helped fuel hope and energy for future change: the Mercer Village Shops; Phase I and II of Mercer Lofts; the new bike sharrows; the trail of bears; tree planting throughout the community through the KNC grant; the development of 15 new homes in Beall's Hill; and the development of a new pharmacy, a long needed service amenity, on College and Forsyth.

In addition, several development projects are in a robust pipeline with less visibility to date are considered significant progress including: (1) the acquisition of a Georgia Department of Transportation grant of \$1 million for the Tattnall Square renovation on the College Street edge, and the redesign/renovation plan for the park funded by a KNC grant; (2) a new zoning plan is under development, also funded by a KNC grant; (3) the Mercer/Knight down payment assistance program; (4) the Rebuilding Macon home improvement program to assure that current College Hill residents can take care of their homes through renovation and neighborhood stabilization; and (5) early planning for a neighborhood grocery store.

An emerging new “can do” civic infrastructure and activities that nurture them

Most notably, and a hallmark of the CHA/KNC approach is the emergence of a significant group of new, young, dynamic civic leaders, many of whom many have been supported by KNC. These new leaders range from the heads of Friends of Tattnall Square Park and the Façade Squad to paid staff of the Urban Development Authority, Main Street, and CHA itself and include young leadership comprising CHA's steering committee. All are enthusiastic, committed urbanists, and passionately invested in making College Hill a place to live, work, and play. Investing in the long-term, several have bought new homes in the neighborhood.

In addition, KNC and other Knight Foundation supported efforts have bolstered current community leaders, including the leadership of Historic Macon, the Tubman African American Museum, Rebuilding Macon, the Macon Film Festival, and the Macon Art Alliance.

Strong, effective CHA leadership has also been an important success factor. Staff leadership has been diligent in carrying out the master plan and adapting new strategy elements, and how they are doing it is important. Pat Madison, Nadia Osman, and other CHA staff have assumed the roles of social entrepreneurs making deals with other partners to get elements done, brokers of new relationships also to get work done, and weavers of new networks across the community. Through the savvy leadership, CHA has also been an event producer, neighborhood promoter, partnership builder, a think tank, a community research and development unit, and an accountability mechanism, all critical to making the work happen.

The CHA Steering Committee has had important high level community players at the table. They have successfully guided the big picture and directions, and stood out of the way of effective staff, not micro-managing day to day operations.

The community has also benefited from visionary, yet practical, flexible foundation leadership under the aegis of Beverly Blake of the Knight Foundation. Blake saw the opportunity, and quickly responded to capture the early energy by supporting the community planning. She was then able to be a part of a larger group of community leaders who created a lead organization to take on the work with appropriate dollars without over directing. For a community without a lot of foundation dollars, strategic guiding while also listening and responding to the community is often difficult. She has also supported the work effectively with the KNC grant to the Community Foundation of Central Georgia , and flexibly supplemented the work with support to Historic Macon with a revolving loan fund and the Macon Money game. As a strong community player, she provided direction but let the community lead.

The Community Foundation of Central Georgia has done a very fine job directing the KNC. They have provided good foundation stewardship and accountability of the dollars while also providing leadership, guidance, and capacity-building for largely new grantees. They have done it with enthusiasm, delight, and accessibility to all grantees. They too have played invaluable roles as network weavers and relationship builders across the community.

The farsighted institutional leadership of Bill Underwood and his team at Mercer University has also been central. The leadership has remained committed and steadfast to this agenda, and provided significant in-kind support to CHA by covering a broad array of overhead expenses.

New partnerships have been formed to carry out, or spin out from CHA, elements of the work. Among these to date include Historic Macon, Intown, Rebuilding Macon, the Georgia Department of Transportation, Macon Arts Alliance, etc.

City and County collaborators are important to the work as well. For example, Bill Causey, Manager of City Engineering has championed the sharrow; Jim Thomas, Director of the Macon Planning and Zoning is leading the new zoning work; and John Hiscox, Executive Director of the

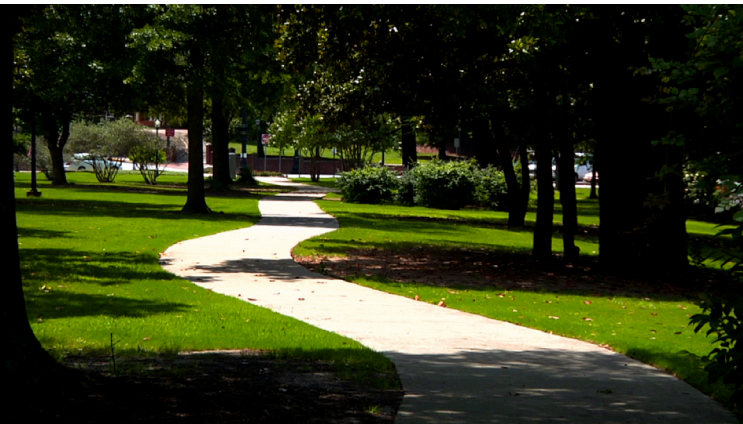
Macon Housing Authority has been a key partner of Historic Macon’s housing work. And, Macon Mayor Robert Reichert and Bibb County Commission Chairman Sam Hart have provided important public policy and financial leadership.

And finally, others who are less involved in the current activities are beginning to notice the successes of the CHA/KNC approach. Several interviewees noted they are still somewhat skeptical, yet nonetheless, they acknowledge this work is hopeful and different for Macon.

Along with hopeful, committed attitudes about the future, the various elements detailed above add up to comprise the basis and foundation of a critical infrastructure necessary to drive a new agenda for CHA and Macon’s new future. These are the beginnings of collective action in Macon.

Considerations for Next Steps in College Hill

The early successes of the College Hill Alliance and Knight Neighborhood Challenge make them well positioned to continue making progress in the community. While the economic downturn has challenged certain paths forward, the master plan and adapted strategy provide a broad enough vision for expanding and aligning new initiatives, specifically the new work that CHA is pursuing around job creation and economic development.



Tattnall Square: the College Hill Living Room

As the original grant to the College Hill Alliance nears its final year (the KNC grant has three years left), now is a good time to reflect on what College Hill has accomplished and the work that still needs to be done. Important groundwork is laid in the College Hill community for change, and although the CHA started this work with a message of urgency, highlighting a defined three-year timeline for their own existence, all partners recognize that there is still a vital role for CHA to play in the community. Building on the progress that has been made and the assets in the community will remain important.

In closing, we would like to highlight some of the critical areas we see for moving forward:

Aggressively address job creation for new and current residents. While all aspects of the strategy remain important, being able to work in CHA and Macon remains a fundamental issue for people choosing College Hill as a desirable place to live.

Continue to work at planning and attracting new development projects and dollars in the context of tough financial times. Many of the projects identified in the master plan remain critical. Although the economy is weak today, that will change. Use this down time to generate good plans that can be seized in the future when the economy improves.

Make the grocery store happen. By far, this was one of the needed amenities people most often mentioned.

Continue to nurture and mentor young leaders. The CHA/KNC work has generated a wonderful group of emerging young leaders. These people are Macon's future. While we heard that several opportunities currently exist for young leadership development, to assure that they truly have the skills to lead hoped for change in the future, a more intentional mentoring and support strategy is advisable.

Support those leading efforts to make downtown thrive. Indeed, continuing to focus on College Hill ought to remain a priority; however, College Hill's future is still very intertwined with that of the downtown. CHA and KNC leaders ought to play a supportive role in this work without draining time and financial resources for College Hill.

Explore and implement more effective student engagement. One of the challenges for the university has been to effectively engage students in activities and opportunities off campus. Although Tattnell Square Park, the central park in the College Hill neighborhood, lies right outside of Mercer University's gates, many students were described as reticent and scared to leave school grounds.

Continue efforts to engage more institutional leadership, most notably that of the Medical Center of Central Georgia. Representing an important growth industry and the largest employer in Macon, the heft of this organization's leadership would create significantly more resources and momentum for the work.

Find ways to engage more diverse leaders. Questions have arisen about what constitutes a diverse community. Evidence suggests that the current CHA/KNC leadership is invested in maintaining College Hill as a racially and economically diverse community. Further, specific strategies have been in place for minimizing gentrification and maintaining and enhancing the diversity of the community. Many KNC grantees have explicitly — and to a large degree successfully — worked to attract diverse audiences to College Hill events. CHA has been intentional in its communication strategies to include media outlets that reach different groups. We remain concerned that most of the leaders of the College Hill effort are white, and that while these leaders themselves recognize both the importance and challenges of engaging and representing the full community in revitalization efforts, strong, constructive African American voices at the leadership level will only strengthen the diversity thrust of the work.

Continue to expand and integrate the strategy. The success of CHA and KNC have largely centered on doing things differently than things have been done in Macon before. While CHA, especially, has forged many strong relationships with various city departments and municipal leads, the efforts of CHA are often recognized as an additional resource and supplemental to the

city's work. In other words, many in the city welcome partnering with CHA because they are doing and supporting projects that otherwise would not be possible. Some KNC funds are being used to shift policies (for example zoning regulations), however for the most part shifting resources, policies, and/or the way things are done at the city level has not been an emphasis of CHA or KNC. Especially as CHA enters the business and economic development sphere through KITE, opportunities may exist for not only demonstrating an innovative approach to job creation, but also leveraging and working with existing entities to change the way they do business. In other words, what are the larger lessons from the successes of CHA and KNC that might have policy implications at a city level that could lead to broader community benefits?

Enhance the capacity of the College Hill Alliance with additional project staff. Even though dollars are limited in Macon, CHA would benefit from additional staff. It has proven very effective with a very lean staff, but, as a result of its success, its work has dramatically increased. Further, given that there are no other strong development organizations in Macon, CHA's work is not likely to be reduced in the near future. To assure that it can carry out the community's agenda and the additional items others have put on its plate as a result of CHA's success, it is important that it has the needed staff to meet its growing demands. In particular, CHA needs a strong development project manager.

With regard to evaluation and learning, in the next year the OMG team will continue to track the progress of the CHA and KNC work, documenting and assessing interviews and quantitative data about community change and the KNC work. Notably, we will be more deeply assessing the KNC's impact on leadership through survey data and additional focus groups. In this third year of the work, we will also emphasize documenting how the work gets done and the unique contribution and lessons learned about the CHA/Macon approach.