



Case Study: Manchester, Georgia



**Economic Development Analysis with Proposed Action Plan
Politics, Strategies, and Initiatives of Community Economic
Development**

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Table of Contents

Abstract2

Introduction.....3

Economic Development and Social Capital3

Manchester Georgia Community SWOT Analysis9

Strengths10

Weaknesses11

Opportunities.....12

Threats14

Summary.....15

Featured Project16

Manchester Georgia Community Development Project16

Action Plan.....21

Current Economic Development Projects and Phases23

Alternatives and Development Possibilities23

Manchester rail yard expansion into Industrial Park and Industrial Park expansion.....23

Possible future high-speed passenger rail from Atlanta to other Major Cities......24

Conclusion.....25

References.....27

Abstract

To understand how to support a community's economic development best, one should have some background information on economic development and social capital after formulating an overview of that community. Economic development scholars have had difficulty reaching a consensus on the best practices for development and how social capital plays its part. Though there is no consensus on the meaning of social capital, for this report, social capital is a community of people who cultivate an intrinsic value throughout the networks of that community to increase the overall welfare of their community (Sawhill, 2020) and pursue the betterment of the community through collective action (McDonald, 2018), enabling that community network to function and develop properly. Manchester, Georgia, is a small southern town being studied concerning its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, economic growth, development, social capital, and future development scenarios. This study was conducted using federal, state, and local resources. Interviews were conducted with key officials in Manchester who are involved with economic growth and development. Data collected was analyzed for development initiatives, policy proposals, best practices, gaps, governmental atmosphere, legal and policy issues, and what kind of solutions might aid Manchester in its development. An effort was made to highlight any solutions that had the potential to be a sustainable substantial economic development strategy. Closing remarks are made with an overall outlook on future events and the quality of life Manchester hopes to achieve. The author of this report hopes the report gives Manchester another tool to aid in its development and enjoys having Manchester as a case study. Liberty University and the author sincerely thank Manchester's administration for their assistance in developing the report.

Keywords: Economic development, community, Manchester, Georgia, social capital, quality of life, sustainable development, SWOT.



Introduction

Manchester, Georgia, is the largest town in a cluster of townships within Meriwether County. It has a rich history of industrial development that started in the early 1900s. Manchester began in 1909 when a railroad company (Atlanta, Birmingham, Atlantic Railroad or ABA) and Callaway Mills of LaGrange joined forces and developed in the Manchester area. They had shops, repair yards, assembly yards, housing, and other facilities that gave Manchester its humble beginnings (Georgia.Gov, 2008). As its development continued, in 1963, the Atlanta-based Newell-Rubbermaid company built a significant plant to make “Goody” products. This plant employed 1300 workers, but over the years, it got hit with cutbacks until it was eventually closed in 2006. Since that time, Manchester’s leaders have struggled to strengthen its economic development (Chapman, 2006) (Fine, 2024) .

Economic Development and Social Capital

To better serve Manchester in this case study, I thought an overview of economic development and social capital would be an excellent place to start. Social Capital is a defining part of economic development, yet it is often overlooked or misunderstood. The following research is a dive into the world of social capital, prominent theorists, and all the latest precepts

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

about social capital and how it relates to economic development. Manchester's administrative staff has indicated that social capital was one of their primary goals in advancing economic development. As such, I found it prudent in this case study to elaborate on social capital and all the ins and outs so that the Manchester authorities could evaluate the materials and use them to assist them in their strategic planning. In this case study, I aim to make it a living document that not only assesses Manchester's economic development but shares information that can improve and advance it by working as a collaborative stewardship (McDonald, 2018) aligned with Manchester's economic development strategy.

James Defilippis wrote an article about social capital that starts with relevant timelines and trends in social science relating to social capital. Social capital is then correlated with tragedy and the previous and present-day debates on issues of alienation and isolation. The author, James Defilippis (JD), presents his arguments concerning alienation and isolation, going into meanings and uses of social capital, impacts made by Robert Putnam (RP), and the proliferation of social capital theory (Fine, 2024).

JD further implies how those theories are related to others, those following and subscribing to RP's arguments, and the problems connected to the assumptions made. JD also gives his interpretations of RP, his arguments, and his rebuttals to those arguments. Finally, JD gives his philosophical views toward a new understanding of social capital and community development, both quantitative and qualitative data to support his arguments, and detailed explanations of the data given. From the start to the finish of the article, it has thorough introductions, a comprehensive balance of views (McDonald, 2018, p. 59), and conclusions all centered on the author's overall theme, which is "*Putnam's framework is fundamentally economically flawed*" (Defilippis, 2001) (Fine, 2024).

RP made the following claims about social capital: *“There are several key transitions that occur when Putnam first uses the term social capital in Making Democracy Work (1993a), his book on Italian politics. And while he has expanded and developed his views since then, he has not fundamentally altered them. First, social capital is transformed from something realized by individuals to something possessed (or not possessed) by either individuals or groups of people in regions, communities, cities, countries, or continents. Second, it is conflated with civil society, or more accurately, with a particular neoTocquevillean view of civil society. Thus, voluntary, nongovernment associations based on trust become the institutions through which social capital is generated. Third, it becomes primarily a normatively good thing and is given credit for (a) promoting good, democratic government and (b) generating and sustaining economic growth and development. Finally, when Putnam brings this framework to the American context, he does so by making the argument that social capital and civil society are declining in the United States and have been since the mid-1960s. (1993b, 1995, 1996, 2000) and that this trend portends long-term economic and political trouble”* (Defilippis, 2001) (Fine, 2024).

Indeed, the way I understand the above quote is that it means that RP believes social capital is something managed by individuals related to regions, communities, cities, countries, or continents combined with a self-centered view of civil society and controlled by volunteer nongovernmental associations trusted to become the institutions through which social capital is generated as it becomes a standard way to promote good, democratic government, generating and sustaining economic growth, and development (Fine, 2024).

JD believes this description is disconnected because it fails to adequately address the powers within an entity, or lack thereof, of the different entities that can make up a social

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

construct that may or may not raise capital for a community. Communities are made up of many entities and are not all in the process of economic development for that community, nor are those living in the community in the process of improving economic development. Finally, not all communities are set up for economic development. That is to say, in that sense, I can see why JD makes his first argument. In backing up my claims, I found research that generally agrees with me. The first is titled “*Social Capital and Community Development: Where do we go from here?*” (Halstead et al., 2022) (Fine, 2024).

Basically, it implies that our understanding of social capital and community development is flawed due to the lack of cross-discipline interactions or multisectoral collaborations between scholars of those disciplines. Plus, some different groups and subgroups make up a community. It specifies subsets of social capital, which are bonding (homogeneous groups with similar goals), bridging (building relationships with dissimilar entities), and linking (building relationships with power institutions for access to jobs and resources) (Halstead et al., 2022) (Fine, 2024).

This view is not all that dissimilar, as Olivia McDonald describes in her book “Collaborative Stewardship” where she writes, “*Collaborative Stewardship: Analytical Approach to Improving Quality of Life in Communities rests upon the idea that community should be seen as a living organism.*” She also suggests that this collaborative stewardship is achievable through collective action or synergy among all involved (McDonald, 2018, pp. iii-vi). In the book of Acts chapter 2, verses 42-47, we are also given an example of synergy for community economic development and the same multisectoral collaborations where bonding, bridging, and linking occur (Holy Bible, NLT, 2004) (Fine, 2024).

Halstead et al. also give three examples of the interplay between social capital and community development: built environment, county information networks, poverty reduction, and business formation or entrepreneurship. They also suggest that scholars from various disciplines refuse to create a synergy of ideas and focus narrowly on their discipline. Their suggestions imply that combining many misconceptions and disagreements can be solved with a better understanding of all disciplines working together concerning social capital and community development (Halstead et al., 2022) (Fine, 2024).

Indeed, while this study is not like JD's assumptions or mine, it generally makes some of the same arguments from a broader perspective. The second article, "*Beyond Bridging and Bonding: The Role of Social Capital in Organizations*" (Williams et al., 2022), mainly builds on the other side of the equation: the organizations themselves. However, it makes two very distinctive claims. One is where it says, "*Though Putnam et al. (1994) definition is frequently used as the working definition of the term, it does little to illuminate how organizations leverage social capital to improve organizational performance*" (Williams et al., 2022). Indeed, it is saying RP's views are flawed because something is missing that will help to understand relationships concerning social capital and community development (Fine, 2024).

Secondly, it elaborates on the necessity of a multisectoral collaborative approach but implies, "*Hence, there is little consensus on the inputs, outputs, and outcomes associated with organizational social capital*" (Martinez-Perez et al., 2021). "*For this research, social capital is conceptualized through two different—but ultimately complementary—typologies: bridging or bonding*" (Williams et al., 2022). These views correspond with the first article and expand on JD's assumptions. To understand the second assumption of JD, we have to reference Loury and Bourdieu. Loury writes, "*The meritocratic notion that in a free society, each individual will rise*

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

to the level justified by his competence must be tempered with the observation that no one travels that road entirely on his own. The social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what equally competent individuals can achieve.... An individual's social origin has an obvious and important effect on the amount of resources which are ultimately invested in his development. It may thus be useful to employ a concept of "social capital" to represent the consequences of social position in facilitating individual acquisition of (say) the standard human capital characteristics" (Peterson, 2024) (Fine, 2024).

For me, this means building an economically acceptable social capital network. However, you need not forget the uniqueness and complexities of human capital characteristics; if you do, everything you design will be flawed. Bourdieu identified social capital as the "*Aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition*" (Xu & Jiang, 2020) (Fine, 2024).

This implies that to achieve the whole, you must first figure out all the relationships and complexities that would form the whole. Indeed, JD, Loury, Bourdieu, and I agree that the sum is not greater than its parts, but its parts must have equal representation for the sum to be fully realized. RP has a narrow view that only factors in one part, and that is why JD assumes his views are flawed. For a community like Manchester to reach its economic development objectives, it must also define what social capital means to them and how that social capital will play a part in the development strategy. Without an accurate picture of the social capital, they, too, will have a flawed system that can work against itself. A city's social capital is as equally important as its financial, investment, political, and industrial capital (Fine, 2024).

Manchester Georgia Community SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is one creative tool a municipal administration can use to evaluate and inventory their departments and city. Understanding the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats can allow access to information to enhance economic development, identify gaps, and produce an information inventory that can be used to flesh out a strategic plan (McDonald, 2018, pp. 26-28). Your economic profile is the most significant item to address when doing a SWOT for economic development. There are categories an administrative staff would need to address they are demographics, quality of life, income, wages, labor force characteristics, business establishments by industry sector and employment size, international linkages, research base, higher education resources, transportation, utilities, taxes, land and building availability, environmental regulations (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 159-175). Of course, a leader should not even attempt to do this alone; they would want to gather the stakeholders together, brainstorm, create, and implement a plan of attack, something they use to tell us in the military, and it works.

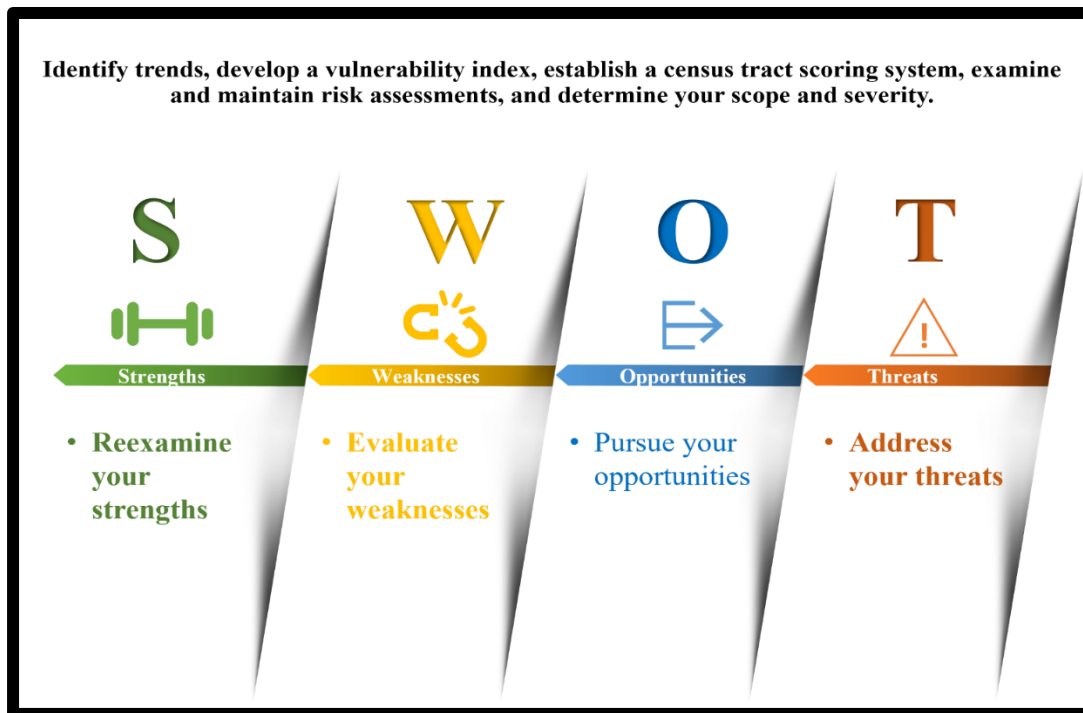


Figure 1

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The diagram in Figure 1 was designed as a helpful tool that can be used in doing a SWOT analysis. Furthermore, a SWOT analysis is not a one-time deal; your SWOT is a living document that will evolve and change, so you should always keep it updated.

Recently, I interviewed Manchester's current administration to learn about their economic development and vision for the future. From those interviews, I discovered Manchester was redefining itself from an industrial town to a heavy commercial town (Trimble, 2024). Mayor Trimble is leading the charge to make Manchester an "Innovative District" (Katz & Wagner, 2014), modeled after the New Markets Model (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 100-101). I also asked questions to help me establish Manchester's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). I then compared that information to a 2018 – 2038 Joint Comprehensive Economic Development Plan for Meriwether County (TRRC, 2018). Finally, I compared those findings to US statistical data to get an accurate picture of the current and future economic growth and development, then used that picture to make my SWOT analysis (Fine, 2024).

Strengths

- 1. Location-small town character.*
- 2. Multi-sector growth abilities.*
- 3. Collaborative networks between city leadership and citizen groups.*
- 4. Modern schools and a fire station with the entire staff.*
- 5. Nearby Hospital, nearby technical college, nearby airport.*
- 6. Industrial Park, renovated warehouse rental/leasing, and downtown property availability.*
- 7. Innovative district model comprehensive plan restructuring.*
- 8. 60% workforce availability.*

9. Access to rail expansion.

10. Multiple faith-based facilities.

When deciding the strengths of Manchester, the interviews I did provided the most helpful information. The location and small-town feel were something both the county and Manchester administration agreed on. In touring the city, I, too, got that small-town feel as I drove through it. This feeling was a sense of community often found in the Bible, as expressed in Ephesians 4:2: “Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults” (Holy Bible, NLT, 2004). Manchester also had plenty of room for growth and a community that was willing and wanting growth (Fine, 2024).

What it needed most was direction, and I believe their new Mayor was deeply concerned about developing that direction with a “Collaborative Stewardship” (McDonald, 2018) that recognized Manchester’s stakeholder configuration by engaging in conversation that uncovered significant events, significant actors, major issues, turning points, lessons learned, security issues, organizational constraints, future projections, monitoring matrixes and variables, and the overall impact (McDonald, 2018, pp. 57-58). Manchester has all the pieces needed to assemble a productive, sustainable, substantial economic growth and development puzzle; now, with their current administration and eager stakeholders, they are systematically separating the pieces and putting them in place (Fine, 2024).

Weaknesses

- 1. Limited resources for planned projects.**
- 2. No industrial sector and compromised commercial sector.**
- 3. Manchester's state (road) infrastructure is insufficient -limited access exists.**
- 4. The available workforce needs rehabilitation education and training.**

5. *Downtown and entrances to the city need increased beautification efforts.*
6. *Outdated codes, policies, and ordinances.*
7. *Industrial parks are only 10% utilized.*
8. *Broadband infrastructure needs to be updated.*
9. *Water and sewer functionalities are undersized, outdated, dilapidated, and/or contaminated.*

Manchester's weaknesses resulted from losing significant tax revenue from its major industries. This problem started in the late 1900s and continued into the early 2000s. Previous administrations were overwhelmed, and no clear direction was given to revitalize their economic resources. The lack of renewable economic resources created a domino effect that reached all corners of the city, which it is still trying to recover from today (Trimble, 2024). Fortunately, Manchester has chosen to reinvent itself with a vision that aims more at future innovations, renewable revenue streams, and sustainable revenue streams by utilizing the four strategic approaches of physical, business, human resources, and community-based development (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 233-242). “Manchester is planting the seeds that will grow into an increase in economic growth and development” (Sharpe, 2024). Something their Executive Director firmly believes, and after doing my interviews, I would have to agree (Fine, 2024).

Opportunities

1. *Manchester rail yard expansion into Industrial park.*
2. *Strong citizen support volunteerism.*
3. *Possible future high-speed passenger rail from Atlanta to Columbus.*
4. *Industrial park expansion.*
5. *Bray Senior Village Project.*

6. *Mountain Springs Development Project.*
7. *Community Building renovations.*
8. *Downtown revitalization efforts.*
9. *State and federal road infrastructure projects.*
10. *Social media and film industry presence.*
11. *Goody Building warehouse rental and leasing.*
12. *Water and Sewer restoration grant.*
13. *Railroad days expansion project.*

Manchester opportunities have either been implemented or are currently being planned.

Using state, county, and local initiatives, Manchester has set opportunities to turn its weaknesses into strengths. The Mayor and Development Authority Executive Director confirmed that projects like the Bray Senior Village, Mountain Springs Development, Downtown revitalization, community building renovations, Goody building warehouse rental, and leasing have started and continue to show progress (Fine, 2024).

They also envisioned starting projects like social media and film industry, rail system expansions, industrial park expansions, and railroad days expansions for their long-term goals. The county is exploring future high-speed passenger rail and road upgrade projects. Manchester also has applied for a 1.6 million dollar grant through state/federal processes to upgrade its water and sewage systems. The one opportunity that Manchester administrators focused on the most was how they felt they had strong community support. The county listed this as a weakness and a lack thereof. However, Manchester officials felt that trend was inaccurate for Manchester as it had a dedicated group of citizens fully engaged in collaborative stewardship (McDonald, 2018) to improve Manchester's quality of life (Trimble, 2024) (Sharpe, 2024) (Fine, 2024).

Threats

1. *Law enforcement procedures are outdated.*
2. *Understaffing, underfunded, limited budgeting.*
3. *Crime rate scoring insufficient.*
4. *Declining population*
5. *Medium income insufficient.*
6. *Rising poverty.*
7. *Vacancies in the downtown district*
8. *Declining tax base.*
9. *Predatory illegal rentals.*
10. *Increasing housing dilapidated, in need of repairs, or overgrown with vegetation.*

When assessing threats, I tried to visualize what might prevent Manchester's leadership from reaching its goals. The ten areas I chose are factors that cause a city to decline. I would say it started with the deindustrialization of Manchester, and the others resulted from that factor (LibreTexts, 2021). From the interviews, I assessed several threats: law enforcement procedures, understaffing, underfunding, limited budgeting, vacancies in the downtown district, a declining tax base, predatory rentals, and housing issues (Trimble, 2024) (Sharpe, 2024) (Fine, 2024).

Most of these issues are currently being addressed by the administration, and plans are moving forward. Manchester has experienced a 5.15 % increase in medium income at \$36,537, but that is 70.513% below the median household income for the United States in 2021, which was \$76,330. Manchester has a poverty rate of 23.9%, a 15.3% increase from the previous year, with the nation coming in at 11.6% using 2021 census data. Using that same data shows Manchester has experienced an 8.41% population decline (Manchester Georgia, 2021).

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Crimegrade.org, Manchester received a (B-) overall crime grade. Crime like murder, rape, and robbery was at 0%; however, assault and drug-related crime was at almost 2%. In property crime, arson was at 0%, where theft was at 11.75%, vehicle theft was at 1.472%, and burglary was at 6.886%. Overall, Manchester was safer than 58% of all cities studied and more dangerous than 42% of the cities studied (CrimeGrade, 2021) (Fine, 2024).

While some may feel a (B-) is sufficient for a crime, it can lead to losing attraction from businesses and people. They understand how crime can be costly and dangerous when establishing a safe place for themselves (Saylor Academy, 2014). Therefore, I would want at least an (A) for areas I would consider, just like I will not eat at a restaurant that gets below a 96% health grade. Nevertheless, that is me. An (A) grade may seem impossible for a city, but out of the ten cities comparable to Manchester, 3 had a grade of (A), and 3 had a (B+), so it is achievable. While I agree with the Mayor in saying it is not a weakness, I still think it falls within a threat because if it goes unchecked, it could be disastrous for their economic development vision (Fine, 2024).

Summary

Using the resources available, I was able to conduct a SWOT analysis. I have identified the unique traits associated with Manchester, Georgia's economic growth and development (McDonald, 2018, p. 88). I used federal, state, county, and local resources to confirm my data and researched appropriate materials to explain specific areas. Overall, Manchester's strengths and opportunities far outweigh its weaknesses and threats, mainly because its leadership has developed strategic plans, assessments, and implementation strategies that should prepare Manchester for a substantial, sustainable, productive economic growth and development future (Fine, 2024).

Featured Project

I have chosen one project Manchester is currently implementing as its featured project. This project, I believe, has all the earmarks of a sustainable way for Manchester to revolutionize its economic development that will continue to bring economic growth to Manchester indefinitely. It falls under a public-private partnership that will engage planning and building, financial management, public works, zoning, public safety, and the fire and police departments of the city, all being spearheaded through their development authority and city hall. On the private side, they have a private investor to develop the land with the best market, environmental, historical, and community strategies with the highest potential for sustainable development (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 402-404). This project has already left the planning phase (although that phase is ongoing as each planned step is completed) and started the implementation phase. From the information I gathered, Manchester's leadership is earnestly involved in this project and works hard to ensure its success.

Manchester Georgia Community Development Project



I have always enjoyed living in rural areas; as such, it was always acceptable that resources for a good quality of life were not always readily available. In recent years, however, that trend has shifted for the better as new technologies and better communications continue to find their way into our lives. As communities connect better, so does the need for quality-of-life projects. Manchester, GA, is the largest city in Merriweather County, with a population of 3,551 (2020), with a steady decline from year to year from its peak in 2010, when the population was estimated at 4,215 (Neilsburg Research, 2023) (Fine, 2024).

2020, the Manchester government initiated the Mountain Springs Retreat Community Development Project. According to Mayor Mark Trimble, *“This project will have the most significant economic, population, and defining nature impact that will only be surpassed by the town’s original founding when the Calloway Cotton Mill was opened in 1907 and 3-5 houses per day were completed for two years straight”* (Trimble, 2024). This project will usher in a new era for Manchester, and the benefits should be staggering (Fine, 2024).

Ms. Jodi Sharpe, the executive director for Manchester Development Authority, said this project has three main goals: to increase quality of life, increase business opportunities, and increase revenue for the city; however, increasing quality of life was at the top of her list. She says, *“Manchester’s population will most likely more than double, and that revenue will be generated by an increased tax base both on the residential and business side”* (Sharpe, 2024). Mayor Trimble also confirmed similar information (Fine, 2024).

The Project is privately funded; however, consulting experts from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), the Georgia Governor's office, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA), and other consulting agencies have been used during development. Ms. Sharpe also sent me an information packet concerning the development

that goes over the entire development plan. I will share some finer details that make this a quality development plan (Fine, 2024).

1. Residential Development (400 to 500 housing units).
2. Agritourism- Small-scale vegetable farm.
3. Retail location with produce and locally produced food products.
4. Farm-to-table restaurant with an events center.
5. Outdoor Activities.
6. Preservation of a large portion of the forested land.
7. Hiking trails with a possible extension of the Pine Mountain Trail along with an extension into downtown Manchester.
8. Arts and the "Makers Movement"-An artist-in-residence house and gallery with a possible companion gallery in downtown Manchester.
9. An outdoor performance venue- "Makers Spaces" - could include a furniture builder, stained-glass artist, soap maker, brewery, winery, or cidery.
10. Film Industry- Buildings designed with varied architecture and marketed as potential filming locations.
11. Spring Retreat targets people from larger cities or new residents looking for a rural lifestyle; second homes target Metro Atlanta residents.
12. Benefits to the City of Manchester: direct income from selling land, developer donation to beautification in the existing areas of town for each home sold, increased tax base, increased population, additional disposable income to attract and support retail and restaurants, positive momentum for the community.

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The film industry, tourism, and the city beautification initiative caught my eye. The packet also mentions that this development will connect Manchester to other successful tourism sites within a 30-minute drive (Fine, 2024).

In talking with Ms. Sharpe, our conversation seemed to be focused on the growth-defined objectives (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, p. 87), which would relate to the extended defined definition of economic development (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, p. 85). However, reviewing the entire package and seeing all the residual revenue and quality of life advantages, sustainable growth, equality, an increased standard of living, and sustainable uses of resources and production (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, p. 87) look achievable (Fine, 2024).

Furthermore, there is an added value some may not have seen, which is the “*City Beautiful philosophy*” (Carlino & Saiz, 2019) and the “*Power of Community Beauty*” (Carroll, 2023). Carlino and Saiz studied past and present methodologies on what happens when an area's beautification process is used. The objective of their paper was to “*propose and validate the number of tourist trips and the number of crowdsourced picturesque locations as measures of consumer-revealed preferences for local lifestyle amenities*” (Carlino & Saiz, 2019). The paper reveals that there seems to be a chain reaction occurring when the community (both leadership and citizens) engages in the beautification process that leads to sustainable, positive developmental growth (Fine, 2024).

Nikki Carroll says, “*Community beauty refers to the visual appeal of a city, including the cleanliness of streets, the availability of public green spaces, and the overall aesthetic of streets and architecture. While it may seem like a superficial concern, a growing body of evidence suggests that beautification plays a significant role in a city and its residents’*

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

success” (Carroll, 2023). Indeed, she correlates success with economic development in the interim, implementation, and fruition. Which says that once you get that ball rolling, it stays rolling, and economic development is assured (Fine, 2024).

Therefore, when you mix tourism, the movie industry, and beautification, you open yourself up for even more modern-day markets, such as social media. Of course, there will be hurdles to jump and bridges to cross before any such thing comes to fruition, but as Ms. Sharpe said in our interview, *“We are planting seeds today that will grow into a more robust economic development reality for the future”* (Sharpe, 2024) (Fine, 2024).

While this is a privately funded project, the implementation process has a collaborative stewardship approach (McDonald, 2018). There is a plan of stages that employs the shared vision, milestones have been outlined, and a specific outcome will bring the project to fruition (McDonald, 2018, p. 3). Additionally, the objectives have been itemized within all orientation stages, giving us accountability. At the same time, an evaluation process that evaluates each stage for pitfalls that deviate from the original plan is needed to facilitate overcoming those pitfalls and putting things back on track (McDonald, 2018, pp. 32-33) (Fine, 2024).

When comparing the project to theoretical approaches that might support it, two came to mind: the neo-classical and location (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 90-101). However, the neo-classical is slightly modified to a demographic for a rural hometown setting, which, with the rippling effect, should help diminish inequality. While the private funder stands to make substantial revenue from the project, a residual revenue of countless proportions will also come to fruition as the project's overall objectives cause a ripple effect throughout the entire community of Manchester (Fine, 2024).

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The location theory is in play through the attraction and new market models (Leigh & Blakely, 2017, pp. 98-101). The private funder and the municipality are invested in the attraction model, and the new market model will come because of those investments. As such, the community benefits as much as them from the rippling effect. My thoughts about economic development are the flow of all economic development resources, both external and internal. When you have substantial flow, you have substantial development. No flow, no development. In other words, the flow is equal to the development. Manchester has had low to moderate flow; however, once this project comes to fruition, I predict that flow will become substantial (Fine, 2024).

Action Plan

Of course, producing a project action plan is essential to economic development. Planning is vital to any operation, and the first step to developing an action plan is specifying the goods and services that a proposed project will produce or sell. Everything else in your action plan will be related to those two items. An action plan should match your economic strategy and provide sufficient information to test the viability of a project.

In Figure 2, I have created a diagram showing the components of an action plan. Using this guide should ensure that there will be adequate support for the plan. Support systems, like financial and technical, are vital to your plan. Other project outputs to address will be employment impacts, linkages and spin-offs, and community improvements.

For your action plan to work and produce real economic growth, you must have five essential elements: materials, labor force, markets, management, and money. The most important thing to remember is that strategic development and program design form the basis of localized economic development planning. Thus, planning can foster relationships, secure finances, and

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

form private partnerships, significantly allowing economic practitioners to achieve measurable success (Leigh & Blakely, 2017).

Action Plan Development Chart

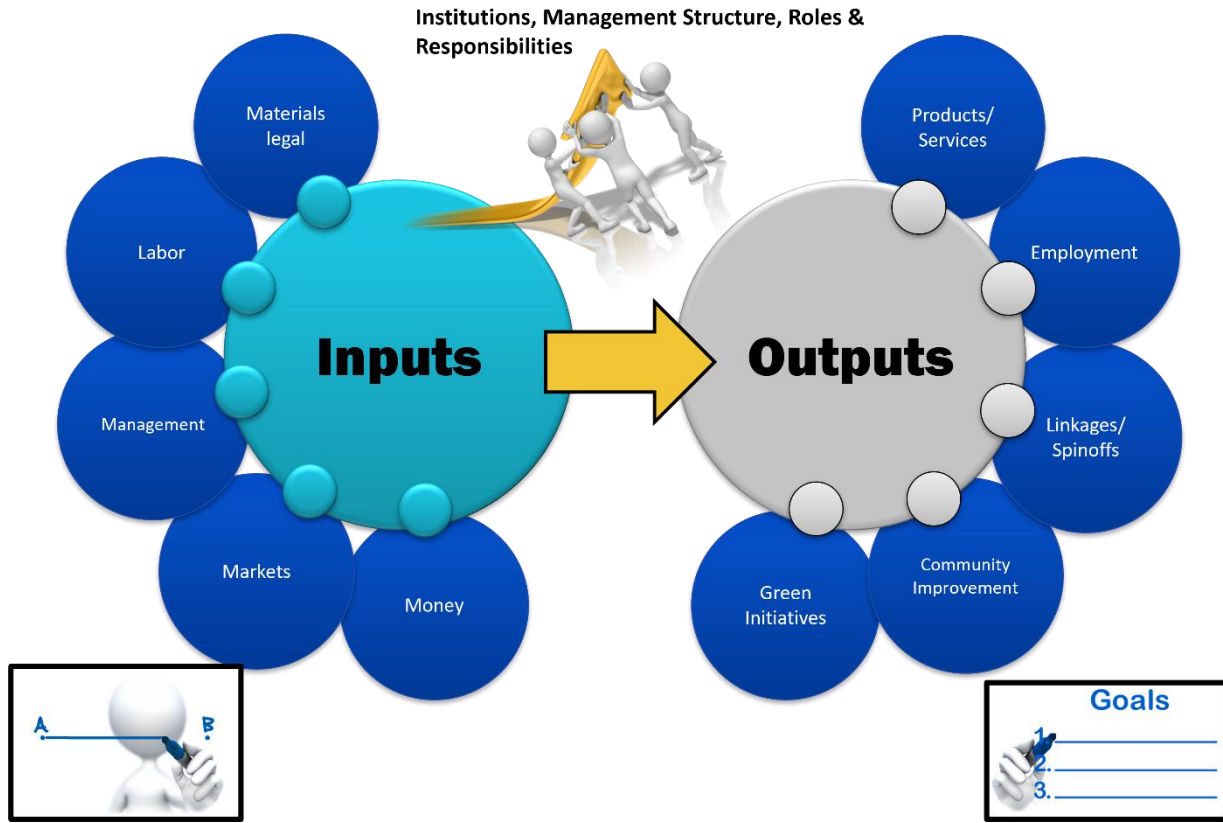


Figure 2

Current Economic Development Projects and Phases

This is a list of projects Manchester is currently working on and the phases each is in. (See Figure 3 below)

Manchester	Planning	Implemented	Grant filed	Grant Received	Private Funding	Completed
Community Building Renovation	X		X			
Bray Senior Village	X	X	X	X		
Mountain Springs Development	X	X			X	
Goody Plant Warehouse rental and leasing	X	X				
Railroad Days Expansion	X					
Water and Sewer Restoration	X		X			
Downtown Revitalization	X	X				

Figure 3

Alternatives and Development Possibilities

For this section, I will elaborate on some of the opportunities from the SWOT analysis.

Manchester rail yard expansion into Industrial Park and Industrial Park expansion.

A rail expansion system into the industrial park has multiple advantages. It will allow more access to the industrial park for transporting goods and services in and out of Manchester, it will allow a more extensive base of businesses, manufacturers, and industries to set up in the industrial park, and it will give Manchester more selling points to those interested in locating their businesses to the Manchester area. Expanding the Industrial Park may also be necessary to accommodate the rail expansion. Manchester is rezoning the industrial park for a broader range

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

of commercial entities to help encourage those entities to develop in Manchester. With the rezoning and the rail expansion, Manchester may also want to explore expanding the current industrial park or building additional if the efforts maximize a substantial revenue and customer base. It would be something to be put in their long-term goals. Some governments similar to Manchester have already done proof of concept reports on an industrial park expansion rail project. Significant points brought out in the plan were:

1. It will attract new investment and jobs.
2. Open the door for the industry sector of manufacturers, suppliers, and other businesses.
3. Potential of bringing manufacturing jobs back into the city.

These cities approved the measure and are moving through the phases of development (Riley, 2018).

A study on the industrial park expansion system found that Service Industrial Parks (SIPs) benefit the city more than Manufacturing Industrial Parks (MIPs). The report's findings say the MIPs harmed a city's economy more than they did to help it. However, SIPs help the city economy substantially (Zhou & Zhang, 2021). The assumption is that if a city considered expanding a rail system into its industrial park, it would also want the industrial park to house the service industry rather than manufacturing. Multiple rail expansion systems throughout the South are being developed, all of which expect high returns once the systems are up and running (Southern Rail, 2023).

Possible future high-speed passenger rail from Atlanta to other Major Cities.

Manchester may also want to consider becoming part of the High-Speed Rail (HSR) system exploratory study. Georgia and other connecting states received 1.5 million dollars to

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

explore creating an HSR service that connects Atlanta to Savannah, Charlotte, NC, and major cities in Tennessee like Chattanooga and Nashville (GDOT, 2024) (Greer, 2023). Having a high-speed rail go through Manchester could aid in its economic development. A study by Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI) indicates that even though more studies need to be conducted on the impacts of HSR, they found HSR has micro-, meso-, and macro-economic impacts on job creation and increased economic outputs.

However, their study was inconclusive regarding the impacts on tourism, housing affordability, station area development, and broader regional location decisions because there is insufficient data to analyze those areas (Cohen, 2022). I read several other studies, and they all had a consensus with the MTI study. I predict HSR would benefit Manchester and would be worth exploring. It also seems HSR would work well with the new urban economic development strategy the Mayor of Manchester has planned.

Conclusion

This case study has gone over an overview of the study and the municipality that is the subject of the study. It presented various background information into specific areas designed especially for the recipient, Manchester, Georgia. Accumulated data from interviews and online sources to flesh out and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing Manchester and how they may approach those areas for economic development. A featured project was explored and analyzed for best practices, future endeavors, and other adventures Manchester may want to explore to affect its economic growth and development. Finally, this study included graphs, diagrams, and other materials Manchester can use to further its economic development strategies as it pursues an innovative urban developmental plan. On behalf of

CASE STUDY: MANCHESTER, GEORGIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Liberty University and the author of this case study, they wish Manchester much success and blessings and extend their sincere gratitude for participating in the study.

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