

MACONBIBB
FORWARD

Mayoral Transition Team Report 2020

A BLUEPRINT FOR A RENEWED MACON-BIBB

Submitted to Mayor **Lester Miller**

A Project of OneMacon!

With Support From:
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Peyton Anderson Foundation
Community Foundation of Central Georgia
Macon-Bibb County Consolidated Government

Letter from the Mayor

My fellow citizens of Macon-Bibb County:

As the new year dawns, our community faces historic challenges and unlimited opportunities.

Though the global pandemic continues to impact the lives and livelihoods of every Macon-Bibb County citizen, we have come together to plan for a safe, prosperous and equitable future.

As the first new mayor in 13 years, I spent the last two years talking with citizens and visiting every part of Macon-Bibb County. I've heard your concerns, your suggestions and your hopes for our community. Now, it is time to translate these conversations into action.

Recognizing the potential for this moment, community and civic leaders came together to create Macon-Bibb Forward: a community-driven, forward-focused mayoral transition team that builds upon existing public engagement and visioning work to connect those plans with the priorities of our local government.

Between October 1 and November 30, 2020, the transition team encouraged public engagement and solicited public input regarding the priorities for the new administration through community-based public meetings, an online survey, social media engagement, digital advertising and "On the Table" virtual events. More than 2,000 local residents participated in this process, either virtually or through in-person meetings.

To complete their work, on November 16 and 17, 2020, the transition team participated in a two-day strategic visioning retreat facilitated by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. This report incorporates information from the session, along with the input from the community and the information from existing collaborative plans to create a roadmap for the new local administration.

Even as we face some of the most difficult challenges ever to confront our community, I am more optimistic than ever about our future. This process has proven that the people of Macon-Bibb County are able to put aside differences, overcome adversity and join together to plan for our shared future. I have always believed that Macon is the best place, with the best people on earth, and I know that as we work together, our best days are in front of us, not behind us.



LESTER MILLER
MAYOR, MACON-BIBB COUNTY

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A team of 31 community leaders and subject matter experts volunteered their time and talent to lead Macon-Bibb Forward. The dedication and expertise of this transition team, along with their ability to engage the larger community, was key to the success of this project.

Meet the team



Cpt. Michael Bittick

Captain, Bibb County Sheriff's Office



Cyndey Costello Busbee

Vice President of Public Affairs and Consumer Advocacy, Navicent Health



Jim Crisp

Retired, Theater Macon



Col. Henderson Carswell

Colonel of Special Operations, Bibb County Sheriff's Office



Andrea Cooke

Director of Development, Southern Center for Choice Theory



Jason Downey

Vice-Chairman, Georgia State Board of Education



Dr. Henry C. Ficklin

Community Leader and Activist



Lt. Garin Flanders

Vice President, Macon-Bibb Firefighters Association



Robby Fountain

Board Chairman, Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority



George Greer

Attorney, Spivey, Pope, Green, and Greer, LLC



Lisa Holmes-Hughes

Administrative Support Operations Director, Macon-Bibb County Fire Department



Tedra Huston

Executive Director, Macon-Bibb County Community Enhancement Authority



Leon Jones

Coroner, Macon-Bibb County



Tonja Khabir

Executive Director, Griffith Family Foundation



Dr. Tanzy Kilcrease

Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Bibb County School District



Darius Maynard

Program Officer, Community Foundation of Central Georgia



George McCanless

President and CEO, United Way of Central Georgia



Matthew McKenna

Chairman, SCORE Middle Georgia



Dr. Cassandra Miller-Washington

Executive Director of Career, Technical and Agricultural Education, Bibb County School District



Robin Parker

Market Director for Public Relations and Communications, HCA Healthcare



Katie Powers

Founder, Book 'Em, Inc.



Tony Rojas

Executive Director and President, Macon Water Authority



Ron Shipman

Retired Business Executive and Community Leader



Charise Stephens

Social Entrepreneur and Community Leader



Weston Stroud

Transit Planner, Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority



Gigi Weaver

Founder, Macon Vegans



Gary Wheat

President and CEO, Visit Macon



Marc Whitfield

Local Business Leader and Community Activist



Julie Wilkerson

Executive Director, Macon Arts Alliance



Brenda Sutton Williams

Director, Houston and Macon Judicial Circuit's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program



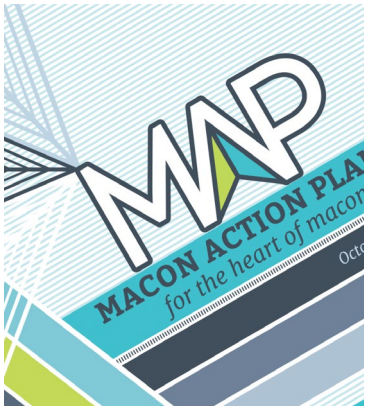
Yvonne Williams

President & CEO, Greater Macon Chamber of Commerce

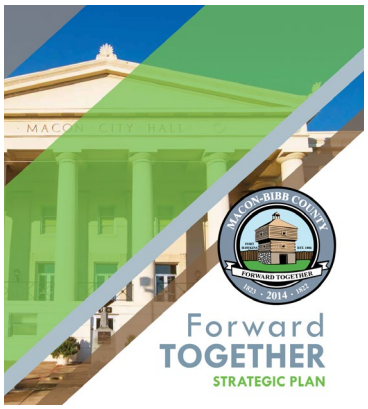
Executive Summary

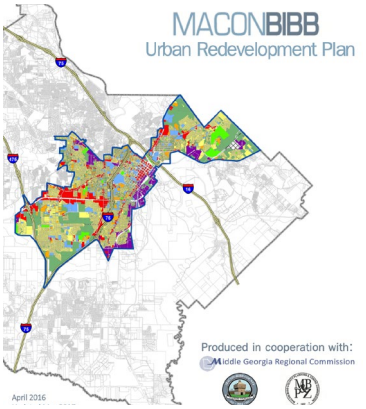
Planning for success is the “Macon Way.” These community-based collaborative plans and reports provided a firm foundation for the work of the Macon-Bibb Forward Transition Team, resulting in 20 goals and 58 action items for the new administration.

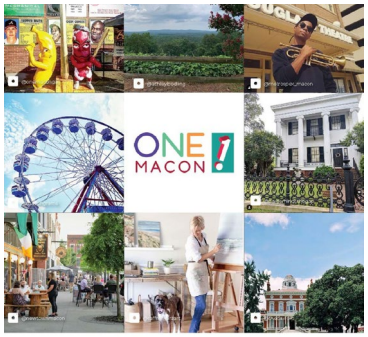
Click an image to download a PDF of the full report











ONEMACON! 2.0

Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan (2020-2025)
Executive Summary and Full Report



Community Engagement

5

Public Meetings or Virtual “On the Table” Events

140+

Attended Public Meetings

2,072

Completed Online Surveys

131,347

People Reached on Social Media

5,294

Unique Visitors to the Educational Website

24,540

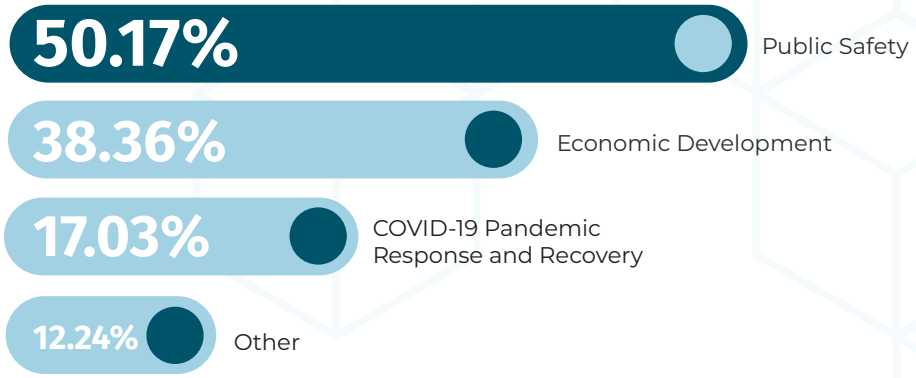
Page Views on Website

Coverage by WMAZ, WGXA, WMGT, Middle Georgia Informer, Qué Pasa and the Macon Telegraph

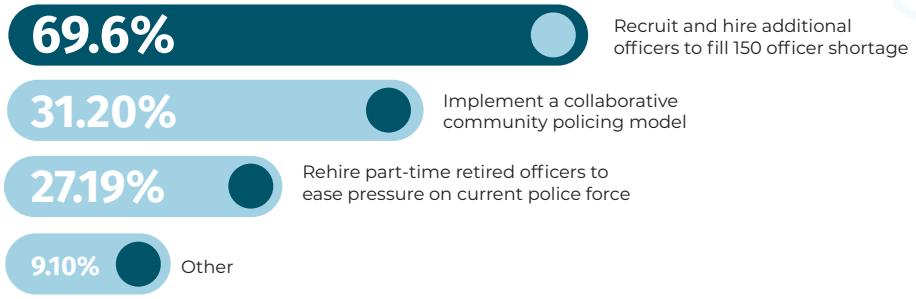
Survey Response Visual Summary

To encourage community engagement, Macon-Bibb Forward created a webpage and online survey while leveraging digital advertising, earned media and social media to share opportunities for engagement and encourage public response. As a result, 2,072 citizens completed the online survey.

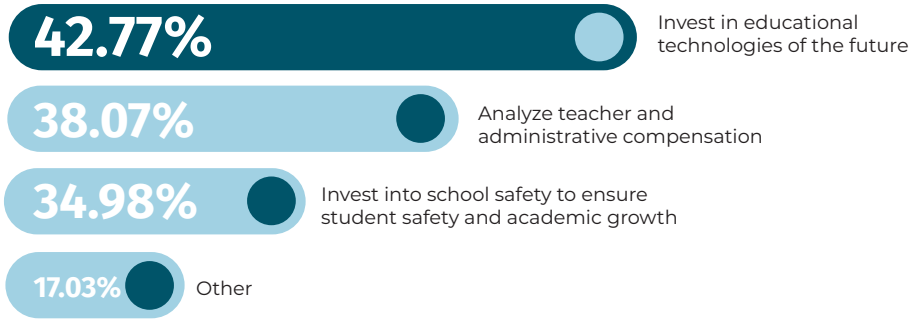
Question 1: In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue that Macon-Bibb County faces today?



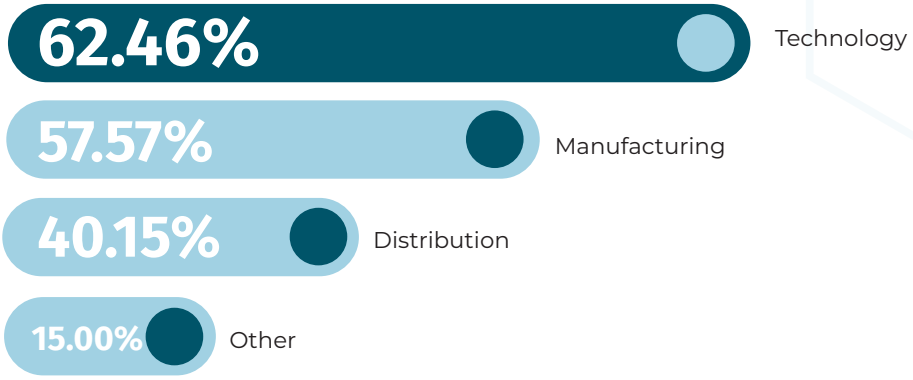
Question 2: What strategies should Macon-Bibb County implement to solve our public safety crisis?



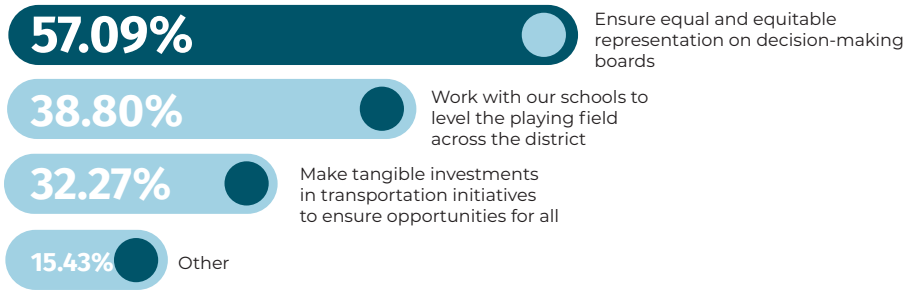
Question 3: How would you like to see Macon-Bibb County build on the progress our education system has made?



Question 4: What types of new businesses would you like to see Macon-Bibb County attract to our community?



Question 5: How can Macon-Bibb County create a more inclusive and equitable place for all of us to live, work and play?



Macon-Bibb Forward Committee Reports

Based on preference and expertise, the 31 transition team members were divided into five committees: **1) Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; 2) Public Safety; 3) Economic Development; 4) Education and Workforce Development; and 5) Recreation and Tourism.** During a two-day strategic visioning session facilitated by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, these committees developed goals and action steps for the new administration. This is a summary of their work. The full report is available on our website, www.maconbibbforward.com.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The diversity of our community is our strength. Working together, we can ensure that our future will include more intentional opportunities for people of all backgrounds, including new faces on leadership and policy-making boards, and elimination of institutional barriers to create equitable opportunities, a sense of accountability, unity and a sense of belonging in all sectors.

Action Items

- Create a toolkit that provides a consistent, common message for mindset shift.
- Conduct an Equity Assessment.
- Create a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force.
- Promote community outreach to encourage leadership and mentorship.
- Encourage, support and strengthen partnerships, grassroots energy and alliances that support a collective capacity for racial, gender and sexual identity equity.
- Create an action plan that addresses inequitable access to opportunities including jobs, education, housing, childcare, board diversity, business contracts, banking and justice.
- Study creation of an Office of Resilience to respond to chronic stressors and acute shocks that will affect all residents, institutions and businesses.
- Leverage grants to support external social impact organizations.
- Create a Small Business Fund using bonds and public/private partnerships.
- Encourage programs that hire former felons and those with criminal records.
- Create programs that examine homelessness and wandering mentally ill.
- Identify high-need areas and service gaps and prioritize approach to address needs.
- Create a director of resource or office of community wealth-building
- Complete a Directory of Organizations and their assets to support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- Create and use universal platforms to serve as an opportunity to shine a light on marginalized communities.
- Utilize existing arts infrastructure to more fully engage and create community partnerships.

GOALS

- **Mindset Shift:** Create deep, consistent and integrated actions to promote a shared understanding of the bias, inequity and power asymmetry that lead to inequitable outcomes, while enhancing a sense of community growth and belonging.
- **Leadership and Power Sharing:** Nurture and encourage collaborative leadership and accountability while incentivizing mentorship and power sharing for individuals from all communities, emphasizing Black, Indigenous and People of Color, LGBTQ+, Women, Emerging Leaders and Elder Leaders.
- **Diversity:** Liberate all Macon-Bibb County residents by providing equitable access to opportunities within an environment of self-determination.
- **Resources:** Decrease barriers to basic needs and resources to ensure that all residents have access to achieve equitable self-determined outcomes.
- **Arts and Culture:** Engage our unique identities, histories and values to tell holistic/shared stories of our lives and places to support a mindset shift.

Committee Members
Jim Crisp | Tonja Khabir | Matt McKenna
Charise Stephens | Weston Stroud | Brenda Williams

PUBLIC SAFETY

Addressing our public safety crisis is the top priority for the new administration. By creating a safer community, we will make Macon-Bibb a destination of choice for visitors, new businesses/industries and a home for families for generations to come. To accomplish this, we will invest in better training and community policing to improve relationships between the public and law enforcement, implement the recent pay scale study to attract and retain the best talent and prioritize code enforcement.

GOALS

- **Community Needs and Outreach:** Create equal opportunities for all individuals by investing in education, technology and mental health services, while bringing citizens/ neighborhoods together to create an open line of communication between citizens, public safety officials and government.
- **Workforce:** Recruit and retain talent with state-of-the-art training facilities, fair pay and compensation, while creating opportunities for advancement for our state certified sheriff's office and ISO Class 1 rated fire department.
- **Public Perception:** Collaborate with our governmental leaders and employees to improve public perception, trust and support. This can be accomplished through transparency and holding our officials and employees accountable.
- **Funding:** Invest in leadership and development by searching for outside funding sources, while being fiscally accountable for the revenue spent by elected officials and department heads.
- **Leadership:** Earn and maintain the public trust through consistent, transparent leadership.

Action Items

- Reintroduce and fund successful programs to combat blight.
- Issue Request for Proposal (RFP) for mental health services (for citizens and employees).
- Fund a Public Information Officer (PIO) for public safety.
- Seek funding for a Restorative Justice Center.
- Improve pay (true pay scale), training facilities and Fast Track Program.
- Recruit and retain public safety professionals.
- Modernize public safety equipment including vehicles.
- Launch an aggressive and targeted social media campaign.
- Become more actively involved in community events.
- Support a positive campaign for passage of the OLOST.
- Collaborate with the Bibb County Sheriff's Office to create a Public Safety Grant Division.
- Support the establishment of a communication protocol between public safety leadership and the community.
- Create quarterly opportunities for recreational engagement between public safety agencies to facilitate relationship building.

Committee Members

Michael Bittick | Henderson Carswell | Andrea Cooke
Garin Flanders | Leon Jones | Katie Powers

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support for economic development that brings new jobs and opportunity for Macon-Bibb County is a priority for local government. By completing the Middle Georgia Regional Airport Runway extension and reforming the governance of the airports, we will grow high-tech industries and companies. Aviation companies, such as Delta, will use the airport for all maintenance and repair work. We will attract a growing workforce and population, contributing to a clean, beautiful and safe community with a restored sense of pride that attracts economic development prospects. Together, we will ensure that Macon-Bibb County is a proven leader and reliable partner for all of Central Georgia, filling the gap between Atlanta and the coast and helping the entire state.

Action Items

- Confirm existing business survey data/feedback.
- Streamline local government by reallocating resources (people and processes).
- Advocate for OLOST & Justice Works Program.
- Ensure cleanliness of gatherings and arterial roads.
- Create a comprehensive Macon-Bibb County and workforce development plan (talent, retention and career paths).
- Advocate for runway extension/MGRA governance.
- Create megasite in Central Georgia through joint development authority.
- Identify and gather Macon-Bibb County under one “brand”.
- Develop a comprehensive marketing plan/agenda.
- Hire professional lobbyists for Macon-Bibb County at state and federal levels.

GOALS

- **Business Climate:** Create a streamlined pro-business climate through lower taxes and increased services and safety.
- **Quality of Life:** Ensure the majority of citizens are experiencing a higher standard of prosperity.
- **Location and Regionalism:** Continue to promote our community’s strengths of transportation/infrastructure and location through regional approach.
- **Marketing and Advocacy of Macon-Bibb County:** Develop a unified and comprehensive approach to market Macon-Bibb County.



Committee Members

Cyndey Costello Busbee | Robby Fountain | George Greer
Tony Rojas | Ron Shipman | Yvonne Williams

GOALS

- Leverage our collective assets to develop strong partnerships among schools, businesses, governmental entities and community organizations to foster a future-ready pipeline.



EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

At the core of a thriving community is a workforce that meets the needs of 21st century industries. The business and education communities will work in full partnership with the local government to ensure that our students have the opportunity to gain the skills needed for the jobs of the future. In doing so, we will make our local educational system the standard of excellence for the nation, thereby increasing positive public perception and inspiring entrepreneurship.

Action Items

- Promote and hold a summit for community organizations to have conversations about college and career readiness.
- Develop an ongoing Education and Workforce Development Committee.
- Identify gaps in needed services, eliminate overlap and develop a strategic plan to create a pipeline for a future-ready workforce.
- Host annual strategic planning sessions with the Bibb County Board of Education, the Mayor and the Macon-Bibb Commission.
- Work with the business community to increase opportunities for internships for high school students.



Committee Members

Jason Downey | Lisa Holmes-Hughes | Tedra Huston | Darius Maynard | George McCanless | Tanzy Kilcrease | Cassandra Miller-Washington

RECREATION AND TOURISM

Local government will join with partners to ensure that Macon-Bibb County becomes a creative, unique and inclusive destination, which will support economic development, workforce, residency and continued growth of tourism and recreational assets.

Action Items

- Educate the public on the economic benefits of the TSPLOST.
- Provide appropriate amenities and resources to ensure safe streets.
- Request a feasibility study on developing an amphitheater.
- Inventory and celebrate our neighborhood diversity.
- Expand Visit Macon's wayfinding and signage into all of Macon-Bibb.
- Follow hotel study recommendations to create strategic lodging development.
- Implement a performance review for recipients of revenue from the Hotel Motel Tax.
- Conduct and complete a study to leverage our music assets and history.
- Expand and maintain greenspace, including neighborhood parks, Ocmulgee National Historic Park and riverfront property.
- Engage Keep Macon-Bibb Beautiful on a comprehensive cleanup plan for Macon-Bibb including establishing convenience centers to combat illegal dumping.
- Implement strong code enforcement.
- Support efforts to attract business and industry by creating an inviting destination.
- Incentivize and facilitate small business, creative industry, entrepreneurship and film production.
- Facilitate recreational tournaments and festivals.

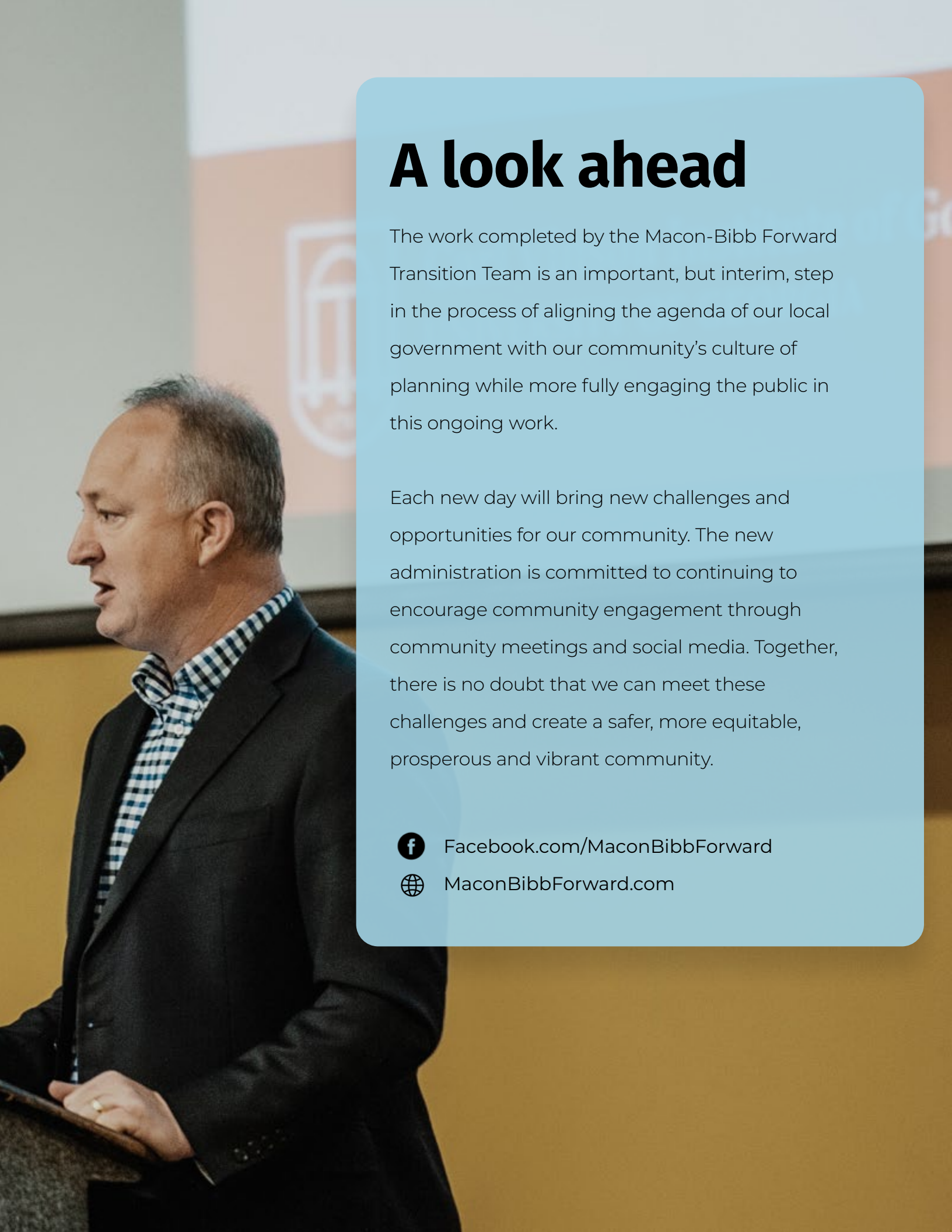


GOALS

- **Transportation:** Ensure affordable and accessible transportation to and from Macon and within Macon-Bibb County.
- **Community:** Create and project a mindset that embraces our diversity and encourages a welcoming, open and inclusive sense of place.
- **Infrastructure:** Develop a cultural and recreational infrastructure that cultivates tourism and promotes livability across Macon-Bibb.
- **Social Issues:** Create a collaborative environment that is safe, clean and inclusive.
- **Finance:** Grow the tax base by creating a visitor and business-friendly environment that maximizes our human and capital resources.



Committee Members
Henry Ficklin | Robin Parker | Gary Wheat
Marc Whitfield | Gigi Weaver | Julie Wilkerson



A look ahead

The work completed by the Macon-Bibb Forward Transition Team is an important, but interim, step in the process of aligning the agenda of our local government with our community's culture of planning while more fully engaging the public in this ongoing work.

Each new day will bring new challenges and opportunities for our community. The new administration is committed to continuing to encourage community engagement through community meetings and social media. Together, there is no doubt that we can meet these challenges and create a safer, more equitable, prosperous and vibrant community.

Facebook.com/MaconBibbForward

MaconBibbForward.com


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MACON-BIBB COUNTY
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