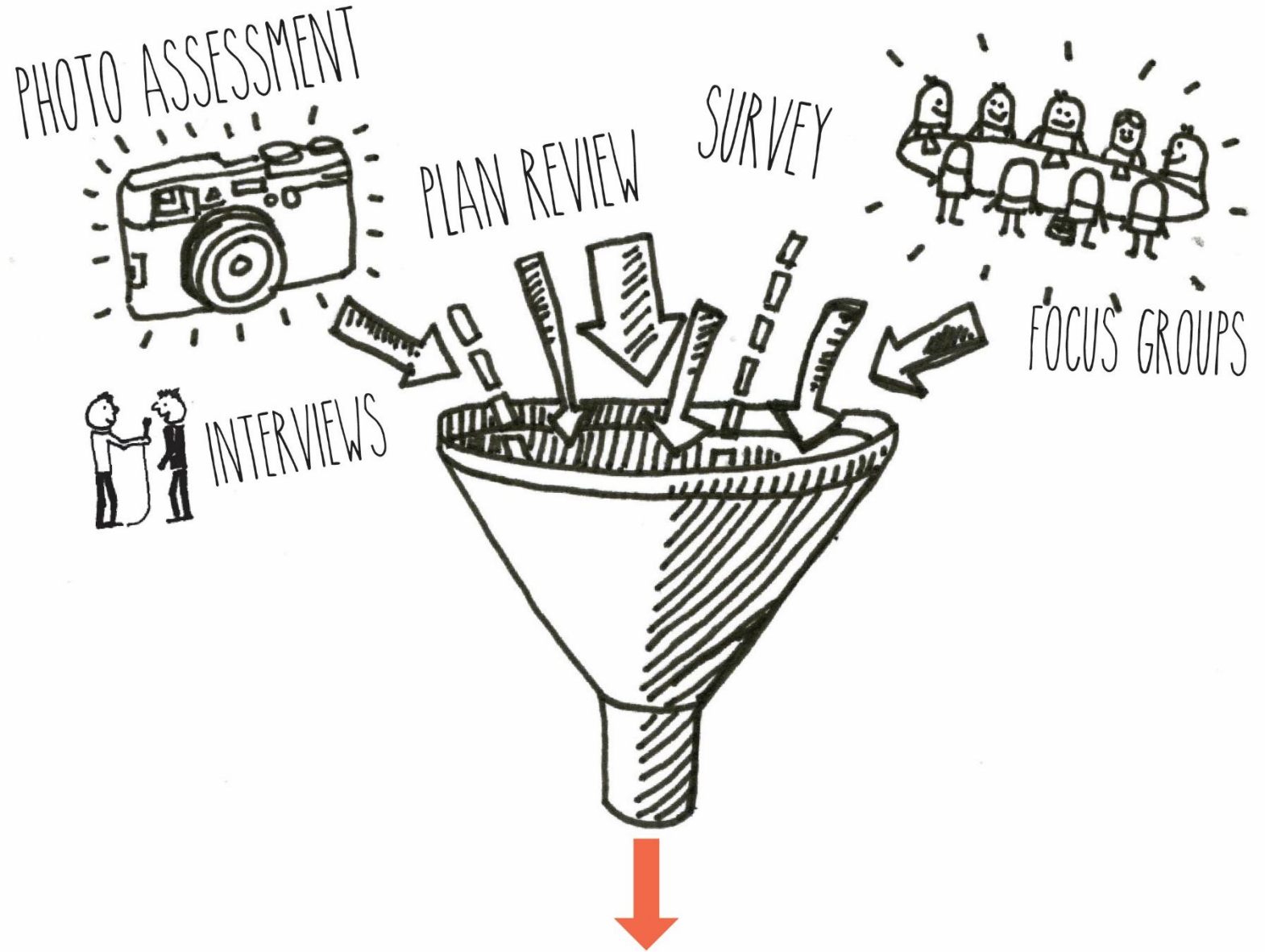


City of St. Marys

STRATEGIC VISIONING & PLANNING



STEP 1: WHERE WE ARE





PLANS REVIEWED

- **City of St. Marys Storm Water Master Plan, June 2008**
- **St. Marys Gateway Enhancement Project, August 2014**
- **St. Marys, GA Design Guidelines, August 2010**
- **St. Marys, Georgia Flood Resiliency Plan Draft, August 2014**
- **Camden Kings Bay Joint Land Use Study, May 2013**
- **Camden County, City of Kingsland, City of St. Marys, and City of Woodbine Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2007**

PLAN REVIEW – KEY FINDINGS

■ **Historic Character:**

- Historic assets threatened by flooding
- Educate property owners on how to best protect their buildings
- Revise codes to allow flood-proofing
- Increase awareness of historic resources and properties

■ **Gateways/Streetscaping:**

- Gateways recommended at St. Marys Road and Haddock Road, Hwy 40
- Improve transportation/parking
- Encourage walkability
- Implement biking and walking trails

■ **Economic Development:**

- Build on ecotourism destination, 40,000+ Cumberland visitors
- Maintain and expand waterfront opportunities
- Promote St. Marys as an attractive place for business development
- Update ordinances, allow for mixed-use
- Promote design guidelines

PLAN REVIEW – A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

- From the Camden County Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2007:
 - *“The City of St. Marys is a friendly, reawakening community with great historical heritage, coastal amenities and promising economic opportunities. Our goals are to maintain our welcoming, small-town community atmosphere as a Georgia gateway and destination; and to remain committed to investing in our natural and cultural resources while proactively planning for continued myriad growth opportunities. Our priorities include: creating an open and engaging community that is committed to improving quality of life through expanding opportunities for economic development and implementing policies that will foster sustainable growth.”*

PHOTO ASSESSMENT – KEY FINDINGS

■ Top Assets:

- The waterfront
- Live oaks
- Natural environment
- History
- Architecture and traditional design

■ Top Issues:

- Streetscaping: St Marys and Osborne Street
- Commercial building maintenance
- Gateways: Osborne Street
- General clean up and beautification

17 FOCUS GROUPS + 21 PLUS INTERVIEWS

- City Council Members
- City of St. Marys Management Team
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Convention and Visitors Bureau Authority
- Downtown Development Authority
- Camden County Joint Development Authority
- Dave Southern and Camden Roundtable
- Steering Committee Applicants
- Longtime Residents
- FORUM Group
- Downtown Churches
- Express Scripts
- Submarine Museum Board
- The Camden Partnership Board
- Downtown Businesses and Waterfront
- Residents from Outside of Downtown
- Builders/Developers/Realtors



FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

- What We Heard

DOWNTOWN ASSETS

- The waterfront is overwhelmingly viewed as the community's most precious resource
- The NPS ferry to Cumberland is a key economic asset that brings activity to the waterfront
- Howard Gilman Memorial Waterfront Park is the community's favorite place downtown
- St. Marys' sense of history is a major asset and the city's live oaks are a community favorite
- Citizens throughout St. Marys cherish the city's safe small town atmosphere
- Many see St. Marys as a great place to raise a family and value the city's excellent schools
- Locals love the city's pedestrian, bicycle, golf cart, and other alternative mobility options
- The community supports the festivals and events that make downtown a local destination

DOWNTOWN ISSUES

- Capitalizing on Cumberland visitors is the community's most pressing issue
- Improving gateway experiences top community priority downtown
- The community widely desires more variety of dining and entertainment options
- Streetcaping improvements along St. Marys Street and Osborne are top priorities
- Many want more options for locals downtown
- Citizens support easing restrictions, incentivizing new businesses, and attracting jobs
- Improving building maintenance and the marina were commonly expressed desires
- Locals want a more youthful downtown with options for children and millennials

Friendly Potential Waterfront Unique

Pleasant Relaxing Picturesque Beautiful Underutilized
Lifeless Boring Steady
Walkable working
wonderland

Peaceful Quiet Kitschy Charming
setting Traditional Slow
Small
Peace town Comfortable
Sunsets
Home
Family-friendly
Tranquil
Declining
Unplanned
Clean

Water Empty Quaint
Hot together
Opportunity Tired
Dead
Natural Decaying Undeveloped
Restrictive
Non-responsive

Historic Undiscovered
Park People Inaccessible



COMMUNITY SURVEY — KEY FINDINGS

- A total of 1,653 surveys were submitted
- 994 respondents identified as residents of St. Marys.
- Respondents were 87% white
- The most common income ranges were from \$50,000 to \$150,000
- The Waterfront is easily the community's "favorite thing"
- Respondents valued St. Marys' history, potential, small-town charm, and accessibility
- 81.8% of respondents primarily drive downtown, 7% walk, 4.1% use a golf cart
- More business, dining, lodging, transportation, marina, and entertainment options would bring more people downtown
- Fernandina is the favorite downtown to visit
- Savannah, St. Augustine, and Charleston were also very popular

COMMUNITY SURVEY — KEY FINDINGS

- **90% of participants had a positive opinion of downtown. Positive aspects included:**
 - Beautiful, peaceful waterfront
 - The waterfront park
 - Downtown's quaint small town atmosphere
 - Restaurants and retail options
 - Walkability and accessibility

Those with a negative opinion of downtown don't like:

- Lack of retail and dining options/early closing hours
- Absence of an attraction
- Need for better uses on the waterfront
- Unattractive streetscapes and gateways
- Unmaintained/vacant buildings

COMMUNITY SURVEY – TOP ASSETS

- **Waterfront:** The most common “favorite thing”
- **History:** Important to the city’s sense of place
- **Potential:** Plenty of opportunities for improvement
- **Small-town charm:** A great place to raise a family
- **Accessibility:** Safe for pedestrians, bikers, and golf carts

COMMUNITY SURVEY – TOP ISSUES

- **Variety in shopping and dining:** More quality stores and restaurants open during convenient hours
- **Attractions/draws:** Residents and visitors need more to do downtown
- **Use of the waterfront:** People love it, so use it!
- **Expanding special events:** Wide support for growing festivals and events
- **Clean up/streetscape:** Downtown T.L.C.
- **Marketing/advertising:** Lack of promotion for the downtown area





Community Survey: 10-15 Years

TOP ISSUES

Capitalize on Cumberland visitors

- Build on ecotourism & environmental attractions
- Outdoor recreation, boating, and alternative transportation options

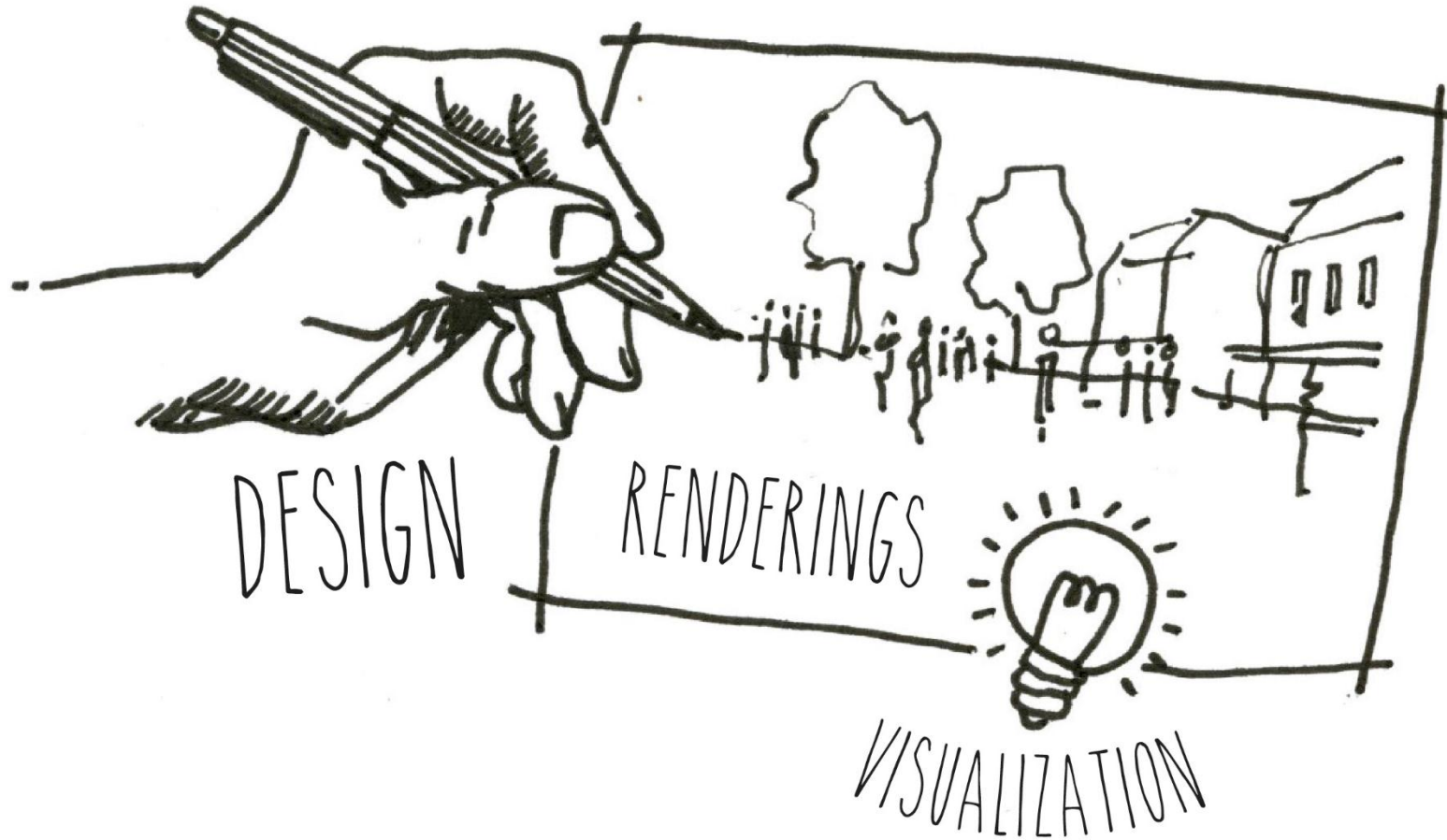
Grow the destination

- Variety of retail and dining options
- Create art and entertainment for locals/visitors
- Incentivize business development

Streetscaping

- St. Marys and Osborne Street
- Improve downtown gateways
- Maintain great sense of place, friendly and safe small town feel, history, and natural environment

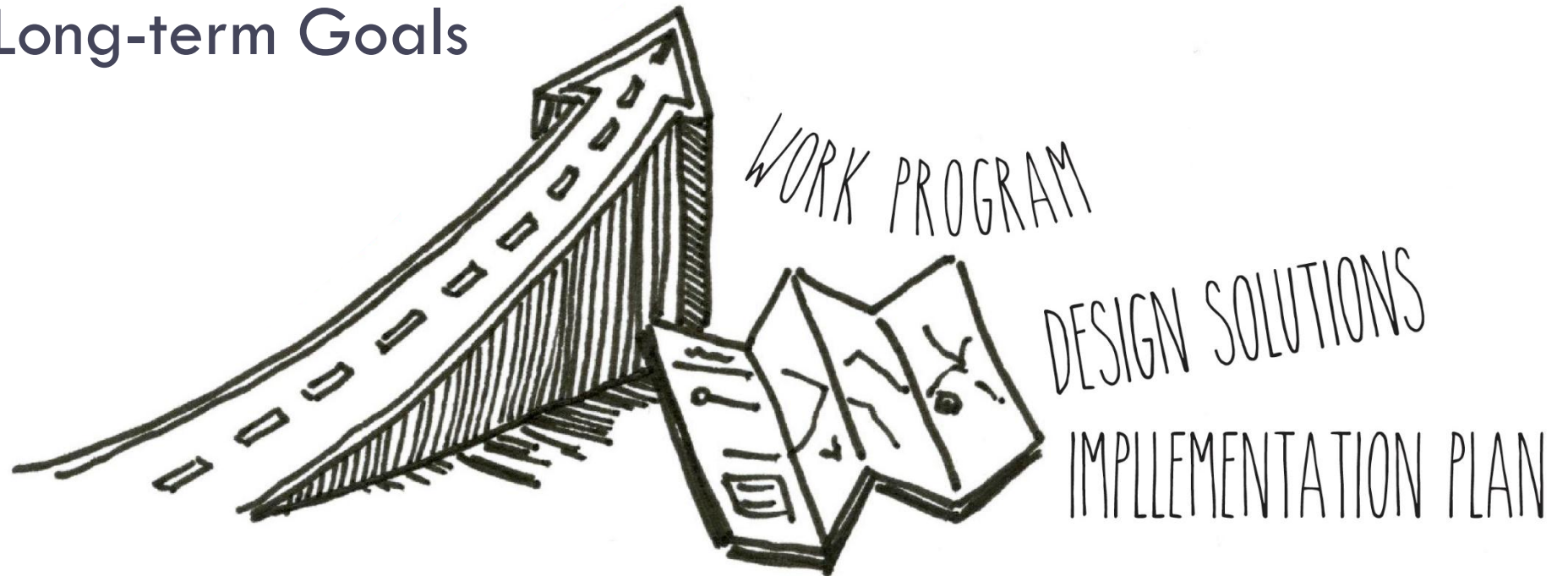
STEP 2: WHERE ARE WE GOING?



STEP 3: HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Work Program and Action Items:

- Short-term Solutions
- Long-term Goals



FOUR POINT APPROACH

Organization

Establishing accord and co-action among the diverse groups that have a stake in the downtown district. Bringing stakeholders together to work toward a unified goal.

Promotion

Creating a positive image of downtown will both ignite community pride and improve consumer and investor confidence in the downtown.

Design

Re-imagining downtown to create a safe, beautiful, and welcoming space for all who visit, work, and live there.

Economic Development

Building on and strengthening a community's existing economic assets while diversifying the economic base.

WORK PROGRAM EXAMPLE

Promotion:

- **Downtown Ambassador Program**

- St. Marys citizens repeatedly cited their neighbors and the city's friendly people as one of the city's greatest assets. To help promote downtown businesses and retain more Cumberland visitors downtown, several community members suggested reviving the downtown ambassadors program. As a team of dedicated volunteers, the downtown ambassadors should be present at ferry boarding and disembarking to provide visitors with information about downtown businesses, events, and amenities. Downtown ambassadors could even provide coffee to guests at a designated stand or food cart. First and last impressions are critical for a community's image. Greeting Cumberland Island tourists—the lifeblood of downtown—could go a long way to boosting downtown business.

DOWNTOWN AMBASSADORS-BEFORE



DOWNTOWN AMBASSADORS-AFTER



ACTION ITEM

Action Item I: Downtown Ambassador Program

- **Lead:**
- **Partners:**
- **Timeline:**
- **Funding:**
- **Obstacles:**
- **Steps:**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



OUTDOOR ANTIQUE MARKET-BEFORE



OUTDOOR ANTIQUE MARKET-AFTER



OSBORNE GATEWAY-BEFORE



AFTER-OPTION 1



AFTER-OPTION 2



AFTER-OPTION 3

Next Steps

■ Institute of Government Next Steps:

- Develop Draft Work Plan (10-23-15)
- Create Corresponding Possible Design Solutions

■ Steering Committee Nest Steps:

- Steering Committee Add Work Plan Items
- Steering Committee Member Commit to Lead One Action Item
- Steering Committee Member Complete Action Item Form
- Determine Other Key Action Items and Recruit Action Item Leaders