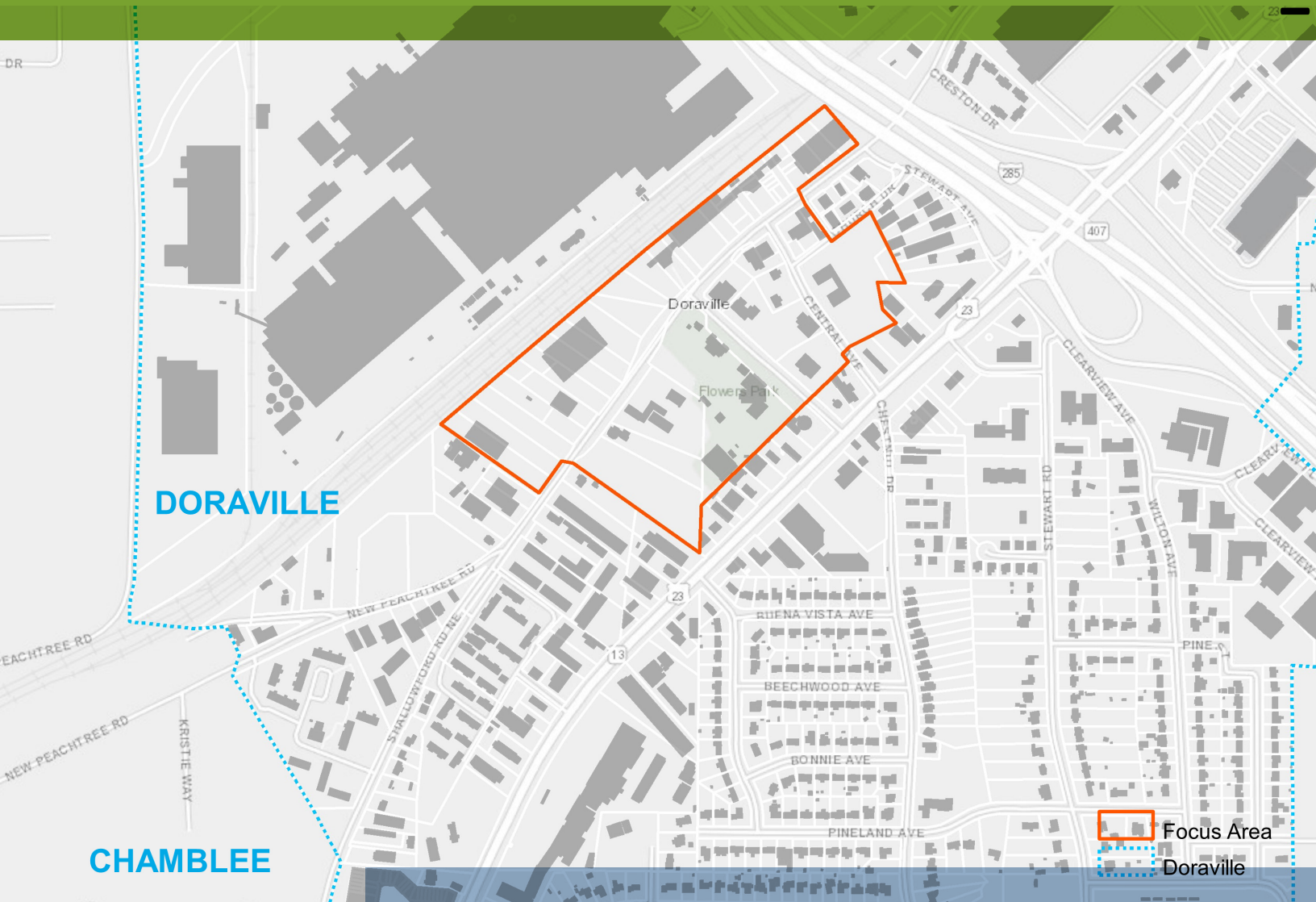


# ASSISTING THE CITY OF DORAVILLE'S REDEVELOPMENT VISION



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More information is available at [uli.org](http://uli.org). Follow ULI on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

## About ULI Atlanta

With over 1,400 members throughout the Atlanta District Council (Georgia, Alabama & Eastern Tennessee), ULI Atlanta is one of the largest and most active ULI District Councils worldwide. We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, electronic media, events, and programs.

### ULI District Council Leadership

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## ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics.

An additional national offering is the project analysis session (PAS) offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Learn more at [americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/](https://americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services/).

## Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

Since 1947, the Urban Land Institute has harnessed its members' technical expertise to help communities solve difficult land use, development, and redevelopment challenges. Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) provide expert, multidisciplinary, unbiased advice to local governments, public agencies, and nonprofit organizations facing complex land use and real estate issues in the Atlanta Region. Drawing from our seasoned professional membership base, ULI Atlanta offers objective and responsible guidance on various land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The sponsoring organization is responsible for gathering the background information necessary to understand the project and presenting it to the panel. TAP members typically spend two days developing an understanding of the problem, coming up with recommendations, and contributing those findings and recommendations to the sponsoring organization.

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Distinct from Advisory Services panels, TAPs leverage local expertise through a half-day to two-day process.

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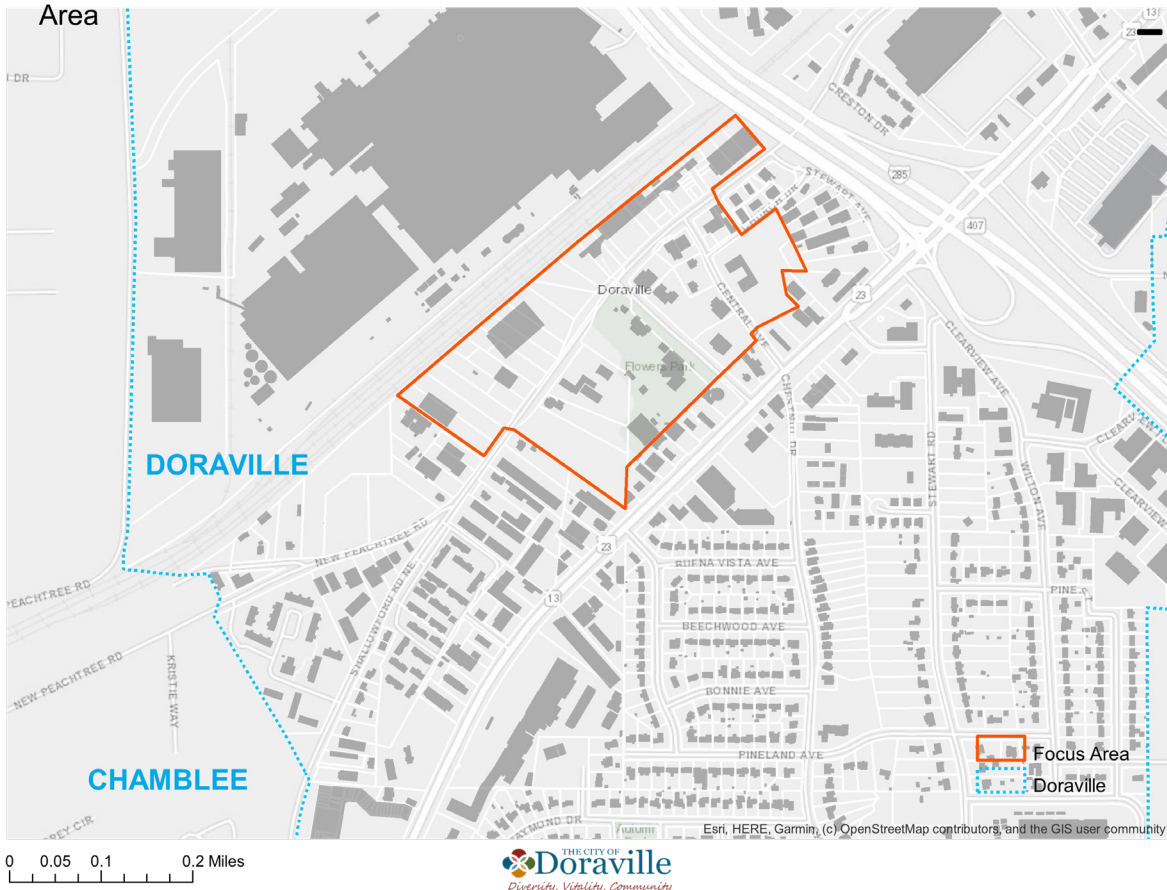
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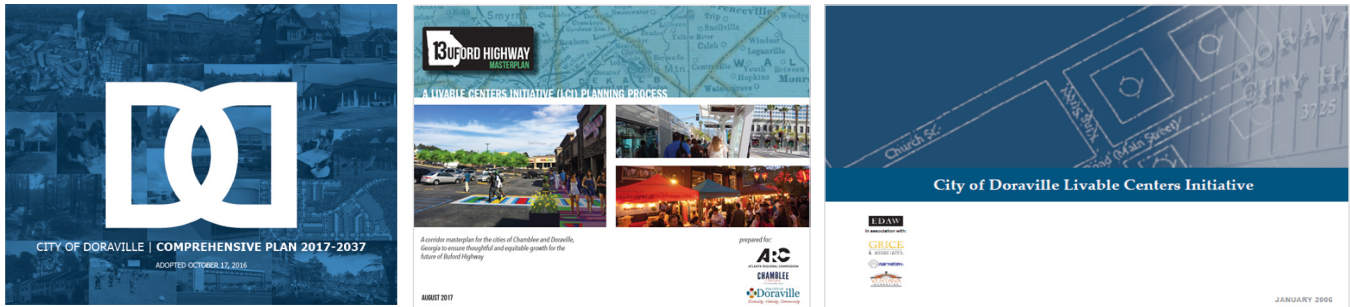
# INTRODUCTION

The Focus Area within the City of Doraville (Figure 1) is in a prime location. It is immediately adjacent to the last stop on the MARTA Gold Line, and serves as a transit gateway into the urban core of Atlanta for some of the most populated parts of the metropolitan area. It is also located near I-285 (the “Perimeter”) and I-85. Across the railroad tracks to the north is the site of the former General Motors (GM) Plant. Formerly known as Assembly (now Gray TV site), the site has been imagined as a massive mixed-use community hub, which, if brought to fruition, will have a catalytic regional and state significance. To the south is Buford Highway, which has a strong cultural reputation with cuisines that offer Doraville a unique identity and reputation. Even with this ideal location and nearly decades of planning and studies, both public and private, little redevelopment has occurred. Many properties are underutilized compared to what the City has envisioned and the nearby transit station and roadways that serve them remain underused as well. With both large-scale and even modest investment remaining illusive, Doraville seeks the assistance of ULI experts.

Figure 1. City of Doraville Focus Area



## Previous Efforts and Outcomes



Previous studies completed for the City of Doraville.

The City of Doraville has been working on a vision for its downtown since 2005 when the first Doraville Town Center Master Plan was created through ARC’s Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) program. The area of focus was south of the Assembly site, west of I-285, east of the Doraville Boundary and included businesses to the south along Buford Highway. Since then, the plan was updated to the 2010 Doraville Downtown Master Plan as a result of the closure of the General Motors (GM) site, which increased the area of focus north to include this property and more. Apart from the town center and downtown plans, additional plans such as the Buford Highway LCI and the City of Doraville Comprehensive Plan (2017-2037) have included supporting language and recommendations for downtown development.

Beyond planning, some additional steps have been taken to support redevelopment. In 2014, the City of Doraville adopted the Livable Community Code (LCC), which is a form-based code that accommodates a diverse array of uses through compatible design. In tandem with the adoption of the LCC zoning regulations, the Focus Area was rezoned to T-5 (Urban Center) and T-6 (Urban Core) to move away

from zoning districts that support single uses toward land uses that support quality design and mixed-use development as well as the vision for the Focus Area. Development is also underway for the redevelopment of the Gray TV site with a Special Area Plan approved on June 23, 2021, and a Development Booklet for The Yards and financing mechanisms in place including a Tax Allocation District and the Assembly Community Improvement District (CID). With this in mind, this Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) examines a Focus Area smaller in scope than the previous town center and downtown plans to focus on development adjacent to the Doraville MARTA train station. The Focus Area does not go south of the Doraville MARTA station and encompasses only a handful of stakeholders within the site itself. Smaller steps have also been taken such as in 2020, when the City of Doraville demolished vacant buildings on City property at the corner of New Peachtree Road and Park Avenue at 3760 Park Avenue to improve the potential for redevelopment. Lastly, the cooperation between the City, City Council, potential investors, and the Chamblee-Doraville CID, which was formed in May 2019, has sparked a new energy to realize the redevelopment of Doraville’s downtown.



## Challenge Questions

1. Until now, the City has been focusing on redeveloping this site as part of a master-planned development. How can Doraville support a more incremental approach to redevelopment that can still create and enhance the City's image and brand?
2. What type of partnership structures (public/private, joint venture, sale/lease, City as developer, etc.) would best support growth of the site?
3. How can we create a place that is both an economic driver for Doraville (business-oriented) and a place where people want to live (people-oriented) that can further attract young professionals to the City?

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Mayor Joseph Geierman rightfully notes, the City of Doraville has a long history of transformation—from its agrarian roots in the mid-1800s, to a railway center, to a factory town, to a hub for international and small businesses. “With each iteration, we’ve kept what makes us special, while making room for what comes next,” the mayor said earlier this year. Set to celebrate its sesquicentennial later this year, the City is also poised to begin its next transformation—one that could make Doraville an appealing regional destination.



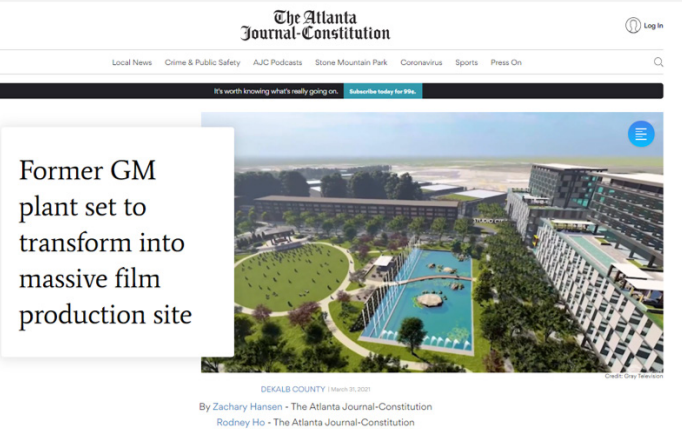
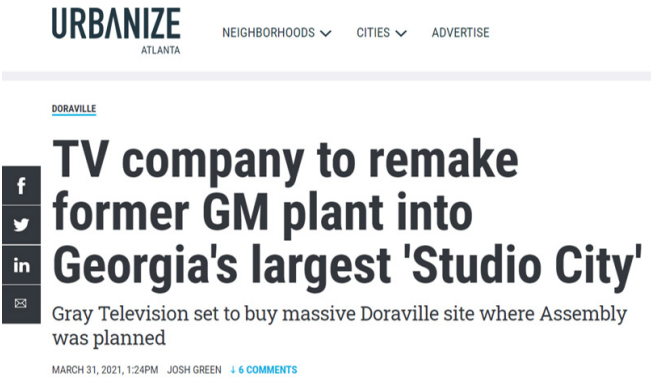
Top left, bottom left: Photos of Doraville’s historic downtown from the early 1900s. Photos provided by the City of Doraville.



Photo of Doraville MARTA Station.

Much has been written and said—rightfully so—about Gray Television’s ambitious plans to transform the old General Motors manufacturing site into one of Georgia’s largest film production companies. The plan, which would encompass roughly 128 acres, would include 10 film studios, along with a focus on e-gaming, digital media and robotics, all of which will be dubbed “Studio City”. The film site would eventually be surrounded by apartments, townhomes, a hotel, corporate offices, restaurants and retail space.

Gray Television’s plans are reason for excitement, but there’s an equally compelling story to be written just across the MARTA tracks from the old GM plant. The overlooked story is a proposed redevelopment of downtown Doraville, which was virtually erased in 1992 when MARTA built the last station on its Gold Line. Doraville’s location inside metro Atlanta’s I-285 perimeter, easy access to MARTA, I-85 and 285, and unique cultural diversity all combine to make what one metro Atlanta real estate blogger calls “a sleeping gem.” Those strategic assets—coupled with the City’s significant land ownership



in the historic downtown area demonstrate that Doraville is well primed to support the simultaneous development of two major properties on either side of the MARTA tracks. This report offers recommendations and a vision to help the City transform downtown Doraville into a *Village* where a mosaic of diverse cultures, food, and people come together in multiple ways to engage and experience everything this community has to offer.

**Recommendations**

In developing recommendations, the TAP was influenced by three critical success factors for any project—opportunity, will and resources. Opportunity and resources have long been in place to transform downtown Doraville. The desire has been there as well, but the effort has languished for more than a decade—a victim of starts and stops that leave stakeholders hesitant to get overly excited about new plans. “What’s different this time around?” is a legitimate question. However, the panel’s interviews with multiple stakeholders left us bullish on the question, convinced that desire has turned into a collective will to see progress once and for all. Given the level of enthusiasm, the TAP structured our recommendations in three major categories: Planning, Process and Visionary Thinking.

**Planning** is essential to the success of any project. This TAP heard a clear message about fatigue associated with planning for this redevelopment project. We understand the weariness, but it must be said that despite all the planning done so far, the project has failed to move forward. Meanwhile, the world has changed. Previous plans must be revisited, repurposed and expanded to move forward. Ultimately, the City will need a master plan—indeed, that is the TAP’s fourth recommendation—to guide the downtown redevelopment. If the City is serious, the master plan could be in place within six months.

The TAP’s remaining recommendations in the area of Planning are:

- **Create a shared vision, goals and public purpose.** The City has worked for more than a decade to define a vision for its downtown space, but City leaders are still not clear on a desired goal. This panel’s visionary thinking can influence the project, but the City itself must make the final determination.
- **Conduct a needs assessment to determine what the City of Doraville requires in terms of space, facilities and parking.** The TAP believes the project will be best served by having some City services located in the heart of the downtown

area. Onsite City offices will help with the project's financing and ensure the City retains control of and the ability to incentivize the development.

- **Conduct the necessary supportive studies to ensure vision and goals are feasible.** The panel identified several missing components that must be addressed as the City develops its overall vision for this project. The missing pieces includes feasibility studies that look at the market, site and engineering assessments, evaluation of financial tools, an economic impact study, and a review of ordinances.

Planning is essential in helping the City understand what it wants and can accomplish with a redevelopment project for the downtown area. Equally important is how the City will achieve its goals. The TAP offers five recommendations to facilitate the process and, hopefully, make it more effective. The five **Process** recommendations are:

- **Hire a full-time executive to run the Doraville Development Authority.** The most successful large-scale redevelopment projects have a full-time staff person dedicated to leading and managing the project. We recommend filling this position with a seasoned professional who has significant experience in real development, strong business and industry connections, and is committed to making this one project happen.
- **Position the Doraville Development Authority to lead the redevelopment plans for the City.** Current laws allow development authorities to operate more effectively and efficiently than City governments in managing real estate deals.
- **Choose a business model that will guide the redevelopment.** One of the fundamental questions asked of this panel was to recommend the best partnership structure to support this redevelopment proposal. The TAP identified and ranked four fundamental models that could be used on this project. In addition, this

recommendation outlines development controls the City can impose to meet its goals, community desires that could be overlooked, and public investments and incentives that the City could offer to sweeten the deal for developers.

- **Evaluate housing needs/options and incorporate in the City's master plan.** Housing—both in terms of availability and affordability—is viewed as a critical piece of any redevelopment project by virtually every stakeholder. This recommendation outlines options to provide more modern housing in the City and also raises a caution flag around issues that could diminish Doraville's multicultural identity—viewed as a major strength for the redevelopment proposal—and also overlook housing options for workers who could be priced out of the market without the City's oversight of this issue.
- **Evaluate financing options.** Once the vision has been cast and a master plan developed for the development of downtown Doraville, the City will need to develop a strategic financing plan for the project. This recommendation explores four options that offer immediate opportunities, including a Special Services District (SSD), Tax Allocation Districts (TAD), market-rate financing and tax credits, and ground leases.

## A Vision for the Future

As the TAP evaluated data and considered options for downtown Doraville, the idea of a mosaic—where different patterns, shapes, forms and colors are laid piece by piece to form something beautiful—kept coming to the forefront of our thinking. Mosaics require vision, the right resources and time to produce the desired outcome. That was true for this panel as well. A portion of our group actually reconvened after the initial two days of meetings and presentation to City leaders and refined the village model we envision for the downtown area. Obviously, the model we present toward the end of this report is not perfectly

scaled, but it does offer a realistic, doable vision for what could be achieved with this project.

In developing the model, the TAP defined six core principles that will be critical to the redevelopment's overall success. Those drivers are:

1. **Maximize the 15-minute trade area.** More than half a million people can access downtown Doraville within 15 minutes. From parking, shopping and dining to cultural experiences and connectivity, the needs of this larger group must be considered without neglecting the current community.
2. **Topography matters.** While past plans created by the City have merit, none have truly considered the significant topography issues associated with site. Our model does.
3. **Green space, recreation and culture can serve the existing community and set the stage for success.** The TAP envisions a literal and physical spine of green space running through the entirety of the redevelopment. This would incorporate a new town green anchoring the commercial district, an amphitheater surrounding the detention pond, and culminate in an improved Flowers Park on the south end. In its current state, the park has little to offer, but the TAP sensed a "strong nostalgic hope" for the park's preservation in the stakeholder interviews. Moreover, the panel believes the park can be revitalized and enhanced to become the base of the development's green spine—with improvements to the existing pool, a splash pad or water park, and other family amenities to serve Doraville's existing community.
4. **Establish Central and Park Avenues as authentic retail streets, but aggregate the actual shopping experience around the town green—with services at the street level east and west of the town green's**

**core.** The TAP model proposes a linear, one-acre town green that would be part of the "green spine" and the focal point for the town center. The town green should be anchored with restaurants and retail shopping at the street level—with housing and offices, including Doraville City offices and services, on upper floors—to make this redevelopment successful. All town green buildings—at the street level—should be zoned for retail or restaurants exclusively. The TAP believes services businesses, such as nail salons and dentist offices, should occupy the street-level spaces east and west of the town green core on the two key retail streets. Executive offices and housing can occupy the upper floors of these two key streets, along with all other portions of the 13-acre site, as illustrated in the site plan that is part of this report.

5. **The key to having a vibrant urban core is a successful and profitable commercial venture with curated experiences including retail and restaurants.** Ensure that the master plan provides an environment that supports these activities including parking, utilities, placemaking and design considerations.

## Conclusion

Much like the City of Doraville, the TAP assembled to study this project was a diverse group of professionals – with many different talents, skills and viewpoints. At the outset, some of us may have viewed this idea with a healthy dose of skepticism. Certainly, the group was influenced by preconceived notions, such as the necessity of linking the success of a downtown revitalization project to the proposed redevelopment planned across the MARTA line on the old GM site. However, as we listened to the City leaders and other stakeholders who were part of this process, as we pored over the data and shared our own experiences and expertise, this TAP became very bullish on the project.

The City of Doraville is sitting on a goldmine of opportunity to become one of metro Atlanta’s showcase communities. If the City—both its civic and business leaders and the community they serve—is serious about moving forward, it has all the pieces in hand to move forward. The project will require hard work, careful planning, attention to detail, creative thinking—all essential

elements of a beautiful community mosaic envisioned not just by this TAP but by the collective will of all those whose thoughts and hopes inspired this effort. Today, the City’s slogan is: “Doraville: A good place to live.” Tomorrow, it could be: “**Doraville: A good place to *live, work and play.***”



## DESCRIPTION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL

This project began with an outdoor, socially distant meeting at the City of Doraville's unassuming Flowers Park. With staff and leadership from the City of Doraville providing a brief overview of previous efforts, challenges and their commitment to seeing a redevelopment plan—long dreamed of—actually transform downtown Doraville. This meeting convened following all local and national health protocols, due to the ongoing global pandemic and the entire project was executed in a hybrid (virtual and in-person format). The virtual components of the TAP were conducted via Zoom, with additional collaboration being spurred by use of Miro – a virtual whiteboarding tool.

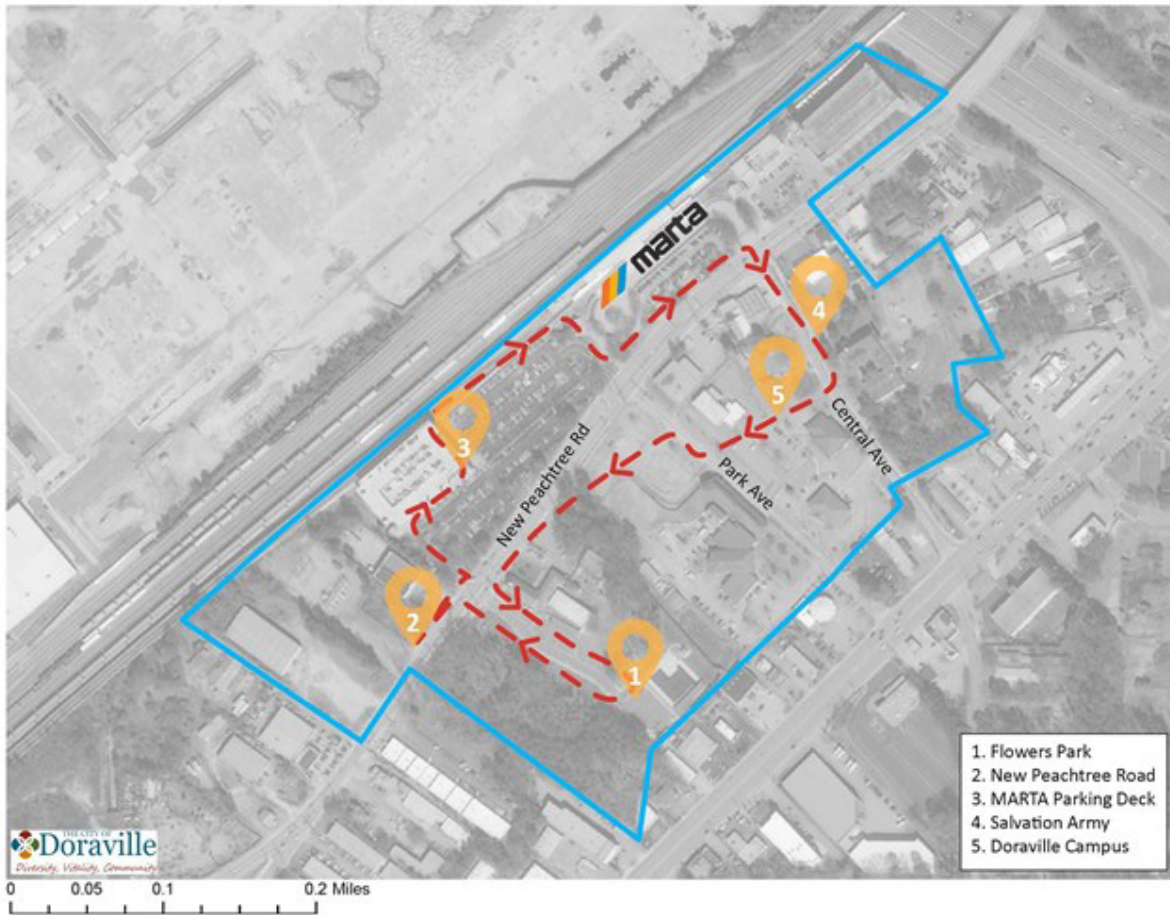


ULI TAP Panel and Doraville City Staff on April 21, 2021, for the project tour.

After this initial meeting, the panel took a 45-minute walking tour of the study area—pausing at key vantage points to ask questions and see the lay of the land. Our path took us from Flowers Park to the MARTA parking deck, down New Peachtree Road to Central Avenue and the Salvation Army regional site, across Park Avenue to see the City's municipal structures, and finally back to Flowers Park. A working lunch with the City's project team allowed us to ask targeted questions and get answers

to questions prompted by the walking tour—such as alcohol ordinances, current and planned water-quality and detention facilities, and current uses of existing facilities.

Following lunch, TAP participants returned to their respective homes and offices, and conducted multiple sets of stakeholder interviews, all via Zoom. The panel interviewed approximately 20 key stakeholders, including: developers; key economic development recruiters



TAP panel project tour highlighted 6 key stops.

such as Georgia Power and the Georgia Department of Economic Development; City council members and City staff; MARTA; the Community Improvement District; and civic and nonprofits such as Soccer in the Streets, the Salvation Army and the Latin American Association. Key findings from the interviews—summarized below—provided critical input that helped form the TAP’s overall recommendations.

Day two of the TAP was devoted exclusively to analyzing the input, analyzing the projects strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, brainstorming solutions, developing recommendations and, finally, presenting our report to Doraville Mayor Joseph Geierman and other City staff and leaders. The virtual whiteboarding tool Miro allowed for deeper collaboration during the SWOT analysis and collaborating over initial sketches of a ‘town center’.



# UNDERSTANDING THE LAY OF THE LAND

## Key themes from stakeholder interviews

- **The best-kept secret in metro Atlanta.** While a planned redevelopment of the closed General Motors site has energized the community, multiple stakeholders suggested the downtown area's strengths—intimacy, transportation connectivity and City-controlled land—made it a prime location for redevelopment. The unfortunate side effect is that Doraville is such a well-kept secret that it's not even on the radar of the state and City leaders who drive economic development opportunities.
- **Everyone wants a piece of the pie ...** From developers to social agencies, multiple stakeholders want to play an active role in any redevelopment plans. Their ideas run the gamut—from wiping the slate clean and starting over, to preserving existing businesses and services and proposing a diverse vision for retail, housing, offices, services and recreational spaces. Ironically, it was City leaders who showed the most sense of selflessness, demonstrating a willingness to relocate their offices outside the downtown area.
- **And everyone has an idea about the best way to make this happen.** Whether it's connecting downtown Doraville to the Gray TV site, going over or under MARTA—taking an incremental approach or choosing a master developer to manage the process—or leasing verses outright sales of property, different stakeholders have widely different thoughts on the best way forward.
- **Understanding demand for parking.** Understanding and addressing market demand for parking is one of the most important contributions the City can make in helping to catalyze redevelopment.
- **Allow temporary uses of existing City-owned property.** General consensus emerged that temporary uses of existing property could draw attention and generate energy in the downtown area, creating momentum that would drive and influence any future visioning and planning process for redevelopment.
- **A platform to celebrate diversity.** The area's unique multicultural heritage—and comfortable blending of ethnic groups—offer huge branding and marketing opportunities.
- **Here we go again.** Opportunity aside, stakeholders are taking a cautionary approach to this new redevelopment proposal. "Everyone envisions the potential Doraville has once the City is ready to act, but we've heard all this several times before," said one stakeholder. "There had been quite a few false starts and that creates fatigue around the whole idea of it. The same question keeps coming up over and over again: The opportunity is there but is the City ready to act on it?"

In addition to the stakeholder interviews, the SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) was an important tool in helping the TAP synthesize the wealth of information and formulate its recommendations. Moreover, this process enabled the panel to sift through and prioritize the best options for further study. The SWOT Analysis contains the TAP's complete list of downtown Doraville's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to maximize its development potential. All of these conclusions are expounded upon in greater detail in the recommendations contained in the report.

## Strengths

- City owns ~13 acres adjacent to MARTA zoned for dense mixed-use with other public, institutional and privately owned surrounding sites available for redevelopment.
- Doraville’s history as a transportation hub gives it tremendous access with MARTA, I-85, I-285, Buford Highway, New Peachtree, etc.
- Partial street grid connecting BuHi, MARTA and New Peachtree.
- New streetscape project along New Peachtree.
- Large target population and trade area within 15-minute travel range.
- Doraville’s existing multicultural fabric and rich restaurant identity.
- Gray Television puts Doraville on the map as a film capital.
- New staff and City leadership, both public and private, that can take a fresh, unencumbered approach.
- Existing multicultural businesses, especially restaurants, make Doraville a destination for Atlanta “hipsters.”

## Weaknesses

- Lack of brand identity for Doraville.
- No sense of “place” or arrival experience in downtown Doraville.
- Heavy topography issues in the study area.
- Challenged City-county dynamics (i.e., TAD, schools).
- Potential challenges transforming New Peachtree Road into pedestrian-friendly experience.
- Disconnected from Gray Television property.
- Current Tax Allocation District (TAD)/ Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between DeKalb County and the City of Doraville.

## Opportunities

- Opportunity to create a vibrant, mixed-use town center that serves the needs of the local community and an attraction for metro-regional visitors.
- Celebration of Doraville’s existing multicultural fabric in a new downtown.
- Significantly enhanced tax base.
- Reimagining the current MARTA footprint, including the primary station entrance.
- Obtaining better civic space/location for City of Doraville services and employees.
- Using underutilized City-owned land to generate jobs, housing, civic and cultural spaces.
- Shift from Assembly to Gray Television site removed competition for downtown Doraville to be the significant place and destination.

## Threats

- History of conflicting viewpoints.
- New development as a threat to existing businesses.
- Potential sewer capacity issues.
- City-county relationship.
- Market timing and cycle crucial for project initiation.

Panelists organized stakeholder feedback onto a SWOT chart on a virtual whiteboard.



## SETTING THE STAGE: THE MOSAIC CONCEPT

Before diving into the nuts and bolts of this report, take a moment to consider a mosaic—where different patterns, shapes, forms and colors are laid piece by piece to form something beautiful. Mosaics are not created by accident. It's a painstaking process requiring visionary thinking, the right resources, and a creative persistence to push forward.

As the TAP evaluated data and considered options for downtown Doraville, the mosaic concept kept coming to the forefront of our thinking. Closer to the end of this report, you will see a visionary approach to what downtown could one day look like. But for the moment, picture what we saw—multiple spaces that celebrate the multicultural dimensions of Doraville, thresholds where activity spills out of doorways into the community, and a mix of housing, restaurants, retail, recreation and commercial mixed-use properties that unite around open spaces. We envision a **Village** where different cultures come together and people have multiple ways to engage and experience everything this community has to offer.

The panel believes Doraville possesses the resources to build a beautiful mosaic. This town is sitting on a goldmine of assets that make the downtown area unique and primed for redevelopment.

For starters, Doraville has one of the last inside-perimeter downtowns that has not yet been developed in metro Atlanta. The City's significant land ownership—approximately 13 acres—provides an opportunity to control development and set clear expectation as it enters the marketplace in search of partners to facilitate the process.

The City of Atlanta has long been known as a melting pot, but Doraville's cultural diversity is unique to anywhere else in metro area. With large Hispanic and Asian communities—as well as more than 140 foreign languages spoken within the City limits—Doraville has an opportunity to create a downtown experience that sets it apart from traditional downtown redevelopments that are often cited as models for others to follow, such as Duluth and Woodstock.



Doraville's direct access to a MARTA train station and easy access to Interstates 85 and 285, and Buford Highway is a huge asset. Very few cities have such unencumbered access to so many transportation routes. Meanwhile, businesses pay millions to build their facilities near MARTA stations while the study focus area already sits next to one. Moreover, the City's transportation points put an estimated 144,000 people and almost 57,000 households within a 15-minute drive of downtown.

While the Gray Television project located on the former GM site represents a potential boom for the City, the proposed downtown development is not co-dependent on what happens across the MARTA tracks. The TAP heard many different viewpoints on this issue but, ultimately, concluded the downtown area has its own unique strengths and resources that make it desirable

for developers. For example, downtown Doraville has direct access to the MARTA station, in contrast to the Gray Television site, which will likely need to provide such access for their employees and other users. Because these two proposed developments have such different goals, we believe they can occur simultaneously.

Finally, the key stakeholders in this project are already on board. It's not an issue of selling the idea but rather managing expectations. The City's leadership and staff

appear aligned, poised and ready to move forward to solidify a vision and execute a plan to make it happen.

After years of starts and stops, Doraville now has all pieces—within its hands—to remake its downtown into a showcase place to live, work and play. On the next few pages, this TAP will attempt to outline the initial steps and priorities—and a visionary model—to transform the City's long-stated goal into a reality that in essence will be a community mosaic.



A view of the forthcoming Gray TV site (formerly known as The Assembly site) from the top floor of the MARTA parking deck.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In developing recommendations, the TAP was influenced by three critical success factors for any project—opportunity, will and resources. The panel believes the City of Doraville is well positioned to bring all of these elements together for a successful redevelopment of the downtown area. Our recommendations are structured in three major categories:

- Planning
- Process
- Visionary thinking

## Planning

### **Recommendation 1 – Create a shared vision, goals and public purpose.**

All successful projects start with a vision. The City of Doraville has worked for more than a decade to define a vision for its downtown space, but City leaders are still not clear on a desired goal.

To date, the TAP identified these shared goals among City leaders and virtually all stakeholders:

- You seek incremental development.
- You want downtown revitalization without losing the unique cultural diversity that brands Doraville.
- You are committed to finding the right balance for the use of City-owned property and public funds to make this project happen, and you want the surrounding spaces privately financed.

On the flip side, further consensus is needed to gain clarity in these areas:

- Identify a clear vision of how success will be defined.
- Define and prioritize goals for the projects.
- Understand and prioritize redevelopment initiatives.
- Refine your branding—what makes Doraville a desirable place to live, work or play?

FIGURE 3-1

### Elements of a Successful Project



All successful projects start with a vision. Without a vision, the project will most likely fail. The vision is the framework for project goals and serves as the benchmark to ensure the realization of joint objectives.

This shared vision, goals and public purpose for downtown Doraville is a missing—yet the most important—component in moving the redevelopment process forward. Much work has been done, and the TAP believes the process could be finished within six months. The City team

needs to go through a facilitated process to evaluate the economic feasibility, site goals and community goals for redevelopment of downtown Doraville. To illustrate this point: Most successful downtown developments in the metro Atlanta area have public gathering places, but almost all have their own unique twists. For example, the City of Sandy Springs tied its downtown redevelopment to a performing arts space, while, the City of Alpharetta opted for a retail- and housing-oriented approach. The TAP believes Doraville’s multicultural aspects could be the unique driving force for your development plans, but City and community leaders will need to come to an ultimate agreement.

**Recommendation 2 – Conduct a needs assessment to determine what the City of Doraville requires in terms of space, facilities and parking.**

One of the most appreciated observations in our stakeholder interviews was the willingness of City services—to a person—to have their offices moved away from downtown to avoid any interference with development plans. The TAP appreciates the selflessness but actually believes some City services-management might be better served to remain onsite—perhaps occupying office space on an upper floor, reserving the marketable first floor for retail space.

Having City offices onsite offers several advantages to move this project forward—both in terms of securing

financing and in maintaining the City’s control of and ability to incentive the development. In addition, it could be beneficial to have a police substation onsite to enhance public perceptions of safety. Given these potential advantages, one of the first orders of business in the planning process is to conduct a needs assessment to determine what the City needs in terms of office space, facilities and parking.

**Recommendation 3 – Conduct the necessary supportive studies to ensure vision and goals are feasible.**

Given the long history and number of studies previously done, the TAP understands the weariness that can be associated with continued studies. However, the panel identified several missing components that must be addressed as the City develops its overall vision for this project. They include:

- **Market analysis** to determine if a sufficient base of customer, business, retail, office and residential users exist to support a new development in downtown Doraville. The TAP believes this to be the case, but a market analysis will confirm this and provide detailed information to use in building your vision and goals.
- **Site and engineering assessments** to assess the topography issues, identify environmental impacts, stormwater issues and the area’s overall ability to support the City’s development plans.



City of Doraville Courthouse.

- **Assessment of available financial tools**, including tax allocations and bonding capacity. Obviously, the City will have to make a significant financial commitment to incentive any downtown redevelopment project. City leaders will have to determine the level of their financial commitment based on the available financial tools—we discuss options later in this report—and the projected economic impact of the project. (The TAP refers to this assessment as a Sources and Uses of Funds Analysis in the implementation plan for these recommendations.)
- **Economic impact study** to understand the potential revenues, jobs and taxes—including taxes on property not currently generating revenue—that could be produced by the project to, at a minimum, offset the City's costs and, ultimately, increase the tax base.
- **Ordinance review** to ensure the appropriate conditions are in place to support the vision. At a minimum, the review should examine the City's policies related to alcohol, retail zoning, noise, signage and façade requirements to maintain the project's overall look and feel.

#### **Recommendation 4 – Create a master plan to guide the City's redevelopment plans.**

A master plan—developed within the next six months—is vital to getting and keeping this project on track. It will ensure development proceeds effectively and allow the City to maximize opportunities for its various pieces of property. The TAP's recommendations are designed to inform a larger, strategic master plan.

### Process

#### **Recommendation 5 – Hire a full-time executive to run the Doraville Development Authority.**

Large scale redevelopment projects are complicated, difficult and costly. We have seen many smaller cities try to manage these projects, but the most successful efforts have been those where a full-time staff person is dedicated to managing the project. Currently, the Doraville Development Authority is led by an executive director who

serves only part-time in the role. We believe the City needs to hire a full-time professional executive to fill this role. The position should be filled by a seasoned professional who has significant experience in real development, strong business and industry connections, and is committed to making this one project happen. We see three credible options to fill this position. The TAP's preference would be to either pay the necessary competitive salary to hire an experienced professional or identify a recent retiree willing to tackle the job. A third option would be to hire a consultant to advise and represent the City's interests in negotiations with development partners. Should the City use a consultant, the TAP still strongly recommends appointing a staff person to serve as the interface between the consultant and the City.

#### **Recommendation 6 – Position the Doraville Development Authority to lead the redevelopment plans for the City.**

Once the City has finalized its master plan for the downtown redevelopment, the TAP recommends turning this project over to the Development Authority to execute the plan. Current laws simply allow development authorities to operate more effectively and efficiently than city governments in managing real estate deals. In addition to hiring a full-time executive to run the development authority, the City would need to take these two additional steps:

- Convey the City-owned properties to DDA ownership—with the exception of any property needed for City-owned facilities.
- Designate the DDA to execute all redevelopment tasks and agreements—under City oversight as outlined in an intergovernmental agency agreement.

#### **Recommendation 7 – Choose a business model that will guide the redevelopment.**

One of the fundamental questions asked of this panel was to recommend the best partnership structure to support this redevelopment proposal. The TAP identified four fundamental models that could be used on this project.

## Case Study: Alpharetta City Center

The success of revitalizing downtown Doraville will depend on the City's ability to define a vision for the project, but an award-winning redevelopment effort in the City of Alpharetta offers a model for achieving transformational change.

In 2003, residents and business owners came together with City leaders to craft a vision for transforming Alpharetta's historic city center. Their ideas gave rise to Alpharetta City Center, changes to the Highway 9 and Haynes Bridge Road streetscapes, new parking opportunities, and the expansion of special events that are now enjoyed by residents and visitors every week.

Alpharetta City Center is a 26-acre walkable, mixed-use development

After building City Hall, a library, a 445-vehicle parking deck, and five acres of park, the City enlisted a team

of four private developers to work together to fulfill a cohesive vision to expand the existing historic district by six city blocks. The development includes: 168 multifamily units with 37,600 square feet of street level retail; a 36,000 square foot office building with an additional 7,400 square feet of ground floor retail; 55,000 square feet of freestanding restaurant buildings scattered throughout 2.5 acres of parks and greenspace; and 42 single-family homes.

### **Town green provides connectivity**

The town green acts as a central meeting hub, connecting restaurants, retail and park space. The development includes a restaurant area called "The Gardens" and street-level shops in another area called "The District." The area also includes a corporate headquarters of a major technology company as one of its tenants.



Alpharetta City Center. Photo courtesy of Morris & Fellows.



The Gardens spans three city blocks of Main Street, featuring 10 distinctive buildings sitting amid flower gardens and flanking the grassy Town Center. The old-school buildings are based on the history of buildings that stood in downtown Alpharetta in the last century.

Shopping and restaurant slots in the 26-acre district are fully leased.

The thoughtfulness given to the town center design embraces the history of Alpharetta by effortlessly weaving into the historic downtown fabric, creating a project that is walkable and engaging. The project has become a catalyst for the area, shifting development patterns away from the car-dependent sprawl of the Georgia 400 Highway Corridor.

In an effort to better connect the neighborhoods, the development team worked with the City to visualize the

new Alpha Loop, a 5-mile walking and biking path that will begin at City Center and provide 20-plus miles of non-vehicular connectivity for North Fulton.

#### **An award-winning project**

Alpharetta City Center demonstrates how suburban places can urbanize in a thoughtful way and create a vibrant and walkable city center.

ULI Atlanta honored the Alpharetta City Center Project as the winner of the 2019 Excellence In Town Center Development and the People's Choice for the Public Realm Awards. The project also won the 2018 Development of Excellence Award from the Atlanta Regional Commission.

[See Alpharetta's downtown master plan](#)



Alpharetta City Center. Photo courtesy of Morris & Fellows.

Ultimately, the City’s choice will depend on a variety of factors—its tolerance for risk, the project timeline and goals, and a careful balance between those areas where the City wants to retain control and what it’s willing to give up to make the project feasible. The four partnership options for this type of largescale project are presented here in the order recommended by the panelists.

- **Fee-based Master Developer** – In which the City hires a professional development firm on a fee basis to manage the demolition and site preparation process, the costs of which would be paid for by the City. Once established, individual blocks or parcels can be sold through an RFP. Conditions on use should be established as part of the sale conditions. While the City may incur more upfront costs in this scenario, being able to offer a clean site, ready for vertical development, should increase the value of the property exponentially.
- **Public-Private Partnership** – In which the City partners directly with a master developer to redevelop the site. This is most useful if the City intends to retain a significant portion of the site for a public use, such as a municipal government center or cultural facility. The City could sell to a private developer but maintain some part of the site as a municipal facility for job training or some other civic use.
- **Hybrid** – In which the City hires a master developer to manage the master and develop the core town-center portion of the development, including public spaces and mixed-use opportunities. Remaining parcels would be spun off incrementally by the City to third-party developers through the RFP process—subordinate to the master plan and development agreements. Under this scenario, the private developers would cover most or all of their infrastructure costs, and the City would obtain funds to support its project costs.
- **Ground Lease** – In which the City retains ownership of the land. This gives the City more leverage to impose conditions on public benefits, such as workforce housing, as well as eventual ownership of

the improvements. However, this option may hamper efforts to attract development partners. It can also lead to eventual structural neglect: Property owners are hesitant to improve properties with less than 10 years left on the leasehold. *Please note: While the TAP does not believe this would be the best option as the overall model guiding downtown Doraville’s redevelopment, it is most certainly a viable financing option for parts of the project. It will be discussed in a forthcoming recommendation about financing options for the project.*

**Overarching considerations: Getting everything you want versus getting something done**

Regardless of the partnership structure chosen to support this deal, the City will need to give careful consideration to level of control it requires in the project. You will need to consider benefits, limitations and trade-offs that fulfill the City’s goals while providing its partners an opportunity to make a reasonable profit on the deal. Obviously, the City will begin with a dream list of must-haves—a smorgasbord of proposals ranging from the type of retail tenants and housing options to restaurants and dog parks. One word of caution: The more must-haves on the list, the harder it becomes to get to the finish line.

To help the City prioritize its wish list, the TAP identified key priority areas that should be considered in negotiating a deal. We categorized these areas as “sticks”—developmental controls the City imposes to meet its goals; “wishes”—community desires that could be overlooked if not addressed in an agreement; and “carrots”—public investments and incentives that the City could offer to sweeten the deal for developers.

**Sticks (Development controls)**

- Uses (Retail, housing types, office, community, recreation, etc.)
- Building heights and densities
- Design requirements and building materials
- Streetscapes and infrastructure

**Wishes (Community desires)**

- Open space
- Community space
- Affordable and workforce housing

**Carrots: (Public investment and incentives)**

- Public Space
- Shared Parking
- Shared stormwater detention
- Infrastructure (Roads, site prep, stormwater, etc.)
- Land prep and assembly
- Direct subsidies and abatements

**Recommendation 8 – Evaluate housing needs/options and incorporate in the City’s master plan.**

The TAP heard feedback from multiple stakeholders about the lack of diversity of housing options in Doraville—not to mention concerns about the gentrification that often occurs when significant redevelopment projects increase the value of a neighborhood and prices longtime, lower-income residents out of the community. Both concerns are valid and must be addressed in the City’s visioning and master planning processes.

With regard to existing housing stock, a quick assessment of statistical evidence confirms that the community’s primary resources are lower-income apartments and traditional three-bedroom, two-bath ranch homes built in the 1950s and 1960. The downtown redevelopment plan presents the perfect opportunity to add more modern, housing—multifamily homes, townhomes and even a small number of single-family homes. The TAP believes the 13 acres owned by the City provides sufficient space to add all of these types of housing—in addition to the proposed mix of retail, office and recreational uses.

The TAP recommends providing this new housing in two different forms: Market-rate prices and what is traditionally known as workforce, or affordable housing.

Not much explanation is needed to support the opportunity for market-rate housing construction. You

don’t have to look far to see the incredible housing boom occurring in metro Atlanta to meet pent-up demand. Given the current housing climate, the TAP cannot imagine any scenario where townhomes and new single-family homes could not find occupants in Doraville. Likewise, we believe there is a need for market-driven multifamily housing. It would be a grave mistake and disservice to the community, however, to let market rates alone drive the housing supply in Doraville.

The TAP understands the negative connotations associated with affordable housing, but the panel also believes these concerns are increasingly outdated and out of touch with today’s world. We encourage you to read the sidebar in this report called *Understanding Affordable Housing*.

While this TAP did not have the capacity to analyze the area’s income and housing expenses, even a quick look at the data suggests that a large number of the community’s households are cost-burdened—meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their total income on housing costs.

Almost 23 percent of the City’s residents had an income below the poverty level in 2019, according to U.S. Census estimates. And a general estimate suggests roughly 27 percent of the City’s median household incomes of \$51,643 go toward housing costs—very near the 30-percent threshold the federal government uses to define as “cost-burdened.”

Without special attention, new development could make housing affordability even harder to come by in the community, as more affluent residents and business locate in the area. Moreover, it could diminish Doraville’s multicultural identity—a strength identified by the TAP to influence and brand the City’s development efforts as something distinctly different from anyplace else in metro Atlanta. Gentrification is a controversial subject in urban planning, but it often shifts a neighborhood’s racial and ethnic composition through the development of new, more expensive houses and businesses.

If affordable housing is important to the City of Doraville—the TAP believes it is, and should be—this is an issue that needs to be addressed early in the visioning and planning

process, so that an area can be set aside to build this type of housing. Doing so will preserve housing options for the workers such as teachers, police officers and others who would like to live in the area but could otherwise be priced out of the market without the City's intervention. This report identifies one potential financing option for affordable housing—the Georgia Housing Tax Credit Program—in the next recommendation.

### **Recommendation 9 – Evaluate financing options**

Once the vision has been cast and a master plan developed for the development of downtown Doraville, the

City will need to develop a strategic financing plan for the project. Of course, this will not be possible without the input of your development partner(s). Before a partner is picked, the TAP encourages the Doraville Development Authority to begin evaluating financing options for the project. In the scope of two days, this panel's ability was limited in terms of offering specific plans in this area. However, we have pinpointed four options that offer immediate opportunities.

### **Special Services District (SSD)**

A Special Services District (SSD) is a tax district where commercial and property owners pay slightly more in

## **Understanding Affordable Housing**

Affordable and well-located housing options are at the heart of individual economic opportunities and strong local economies, not to mention strong families. Research “has shown the value of quality, affordable housing well beyond the provision of shelter: It improves school performance, diminishes health problems for both children and adults, and decreases psychological stress—among other benefits,” according to HowHousingMatters.org, an online resource managed by the Urban Institute with the latest housing research and trends.

And yet, despite mounting evidence that supports the importance of affordable housing, it has become a need increasingly slipping further away for more Americans. Over a recent 10-year period, the demand for affordable housing increased 38 percent, but affordable options increased only 7 percent. It's what a 2015 Urban Land Institute report labeled the “worst housing crisis for lower- and middle-income renters (the country) has ever known.”

### **What is affordable housing?**

The rule of thumb is that a monthly housing payment (rent or mortgage plus utilities) should cost no more than 30 percent of a family's income. This definition is a longstanding federal housing metric

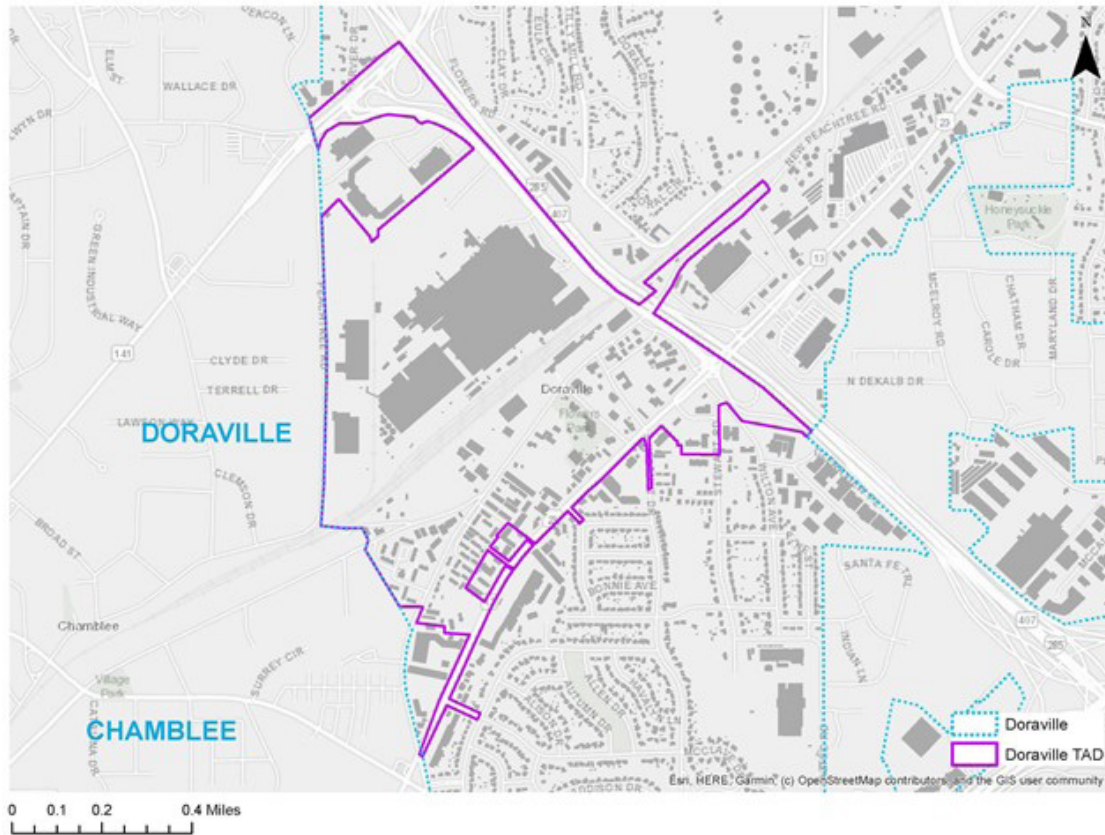
based on the assumption that maximum housing costs at 30 percent leaves enough income to pay for other essentials of living (primarily transportation, healthcare, and food).

Another key concept in affordable housing is determining the number of cost-burdened households in a region. This is the most widely used standard in national research on affordable housing.

A cost-burdened household is any household that is spending more than 30 percent of total income on housing costs. Severely cost-burdened households have been described as those spending at least half of their income on housing costs (greater than 50 percent).

While much of the discussion around affordable housing focuses on lower-income households, it's worth noting that housing shortages and housing affordability are not just problems for people who are barely getting by. Millennials, professionals such as teachers, nurses and law enforcement, the elderly, and workers who want housing near their work have a hard time finding it. This is a trend occurring across metro Atlanta and in many other parts of the nation as well.

### Tax Allocation District



property taxes to fund specific projects. The tax increases are usually short-term in nature but result in long-term benefits for a community. Creating SSDs for development purposes is permissible. An SSD currently exists to pay for site work associated with redevelopment of the old General Motors assembly plant in Doraville. This option would be an excellent opportunity for the 13-acre downtown Doraville site, providing the City an opportunity to fund consistent design and development and provide joint infrastructure, including streets and lighting, that would make the district a better asset for homeowners. One of the most successful SSDs in metro Atlanta is the Atlanta BeltLine Planning Area. In that SSD, commercial and multifamily property owners are paying an extra 1 percent in property taxes to fund the 22-mile trail loop. The SSD will provide approximately \$100 million to complete the BeltLine trail. In addition, passage of the SSD unlocked an additional \$100 million in philanthropic contributions and an estimated \$50 million from grants and other sources.

### Tax Allocation District

**Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)** are defined areas where real estate property taxes are collected above a certain threshold for a certain period of time to be used for specified improvements. TADs have become a popular tool for local governments to fund revitalization and complete commercial redevelopment projects within the TAD boundaries. The assistance can be used to pay infrastructure costs or certain private development costs and is primarily done through the issuance of tax allocation district bonds.

One of the most significant weaknesses—and an impediment to funding a development project for downtown Doraville is the current TAD that the City is part of with DeKalb County and the DeKalb County school board. When the TAD was created originally, the City, county and school board could not reach a mutual accord on how the TAD dollars would be allocated. As a

result, the City controlled only its proportional share of the monies generated. In 2017—under pressure to secure TAD dollars to help pay for the Assembly site redevelopment—Doraville renegotiated the TAD and entered into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the county. However, the agreement requires Doraville to use TAD dollars for development costs related to the Assembly site. This means no TAD funding is available to assist with the City’s portion of any downtown development costs—contrary to the original intent when Doraville first created the TAD.

Given the new leadership in the City and county, the TAP believes this is an excellent time to renegotiate this deal and free up TAD dollars to help with the financing of the downtown development. Given the complex history and nature of the TAD, the panel suggests a TAD consultant be hired to renegotiate a new deal for the City.

**Market-rate financing and tax credits**

We strongly encourage the City to rely on the financial strength of a master developer or firms that buy parcels for development and other partners to secure significant financing for the project. They should be encouraged to bring traditional sources of equity and capital to the bargaining table. **Market-rate financing** is extremely important in today’s low-interest-rate environment, which most analysts project could extend for another three years. Today’s market could benefit downtown Doraville’s development plans by providing long-term, low-cost capital that makes new construction affordable and a great investment. It’s important, however, to remember that this is a time-sensitive and cyclical opportunity. If the City allows the process to bog down, it could lose out on potentially transformational opportunities to see the vision and plans come to fruition in the next decade.

With regards to tax credits, timing is also crucial—especially if the City wants to take advantage of incentives for workforce and affordable housing. Obviously, the City will need to decide on the housing inventory it hopes to attract, but we would expect a push for workforce and affordable housing.



Image of a tax credit recipient, Parkside Apartments on Donald L. Hollowell. Photo courtesy of Prestwick Development.

One opportunity would be to take advantage of the **Georgia Housing Tax Credit Program**—offered through the state Department of Community Affairs. This program allocates federal and state tax credits to owners of qualified rental properties who reserve all or a portion of their units for occupancy for low-income tenants. The program allows investors to claim tax credits on their federal income tax returns. The tax credit is calculated as a percentage of costs incurred in developing the affordable housing property and claimed annually over a 10-year period. The tax credits provide equity equal to the present value of either 30 percent (known as the 4 percent credit) or 70 percent (known as the 9 percent credit) of the eligible costs of a low-income housing project. The 9 percent credit uses conventional debt without federal subsidies; the 4 percent credit is used in projects financed with tax-exempt bonds. To qualify for the credit, a project must meet the requirements of a qualified low-income project. While implementation varies by state, in Georgia, typically 90 percent to 100 percent of the units in these developments end up classified as affordable. Georgia has a number of potential development partners who are very experienced in this area. Again, timing matters. The application process has a structured timeline, and missed deadlines mean missed opportunities.

## Ground leases

A ground lease is an agreement in which a tenant is permitted to develop and use property during a long lease period, after which the land and all improvements are turned over to the property owner. Ground leases are popular financing instruments for commercial space. Tenants generally assume responsibility for all financial aspects in a ground lease including rent, taxes, construction, insurance, and financing.

A ground lease benefits both the tenant and the landlord. The tenant gets an opportunity to build on property in a prime location they could not themselves purchase—making them attractive to large retail chain stores. Under the arrangement, the tenant does not have to buy the land, which frees up cash for other purposes. In addition, any rents paid on a ground lease may be deductible for state and federal income taxes, meaning a reduction in the tenant’s overall tax burden. Meanwhile, the landlord enjoys a stream of income from the tenant while retaining ownership of the property. For example, the City of Doraville could enjoy both rental income and tax revenues from a ground lease.

In creating a ground lease, the parties need to consider:

- Terms of the lease
- Rights of both the landlord and tenant
- Conditions on financing
- Use provisions
- Fees
- Title insurance

## A Vision for the Future

At the beginning of this report, we presented the idea of a Mosaic Concept—a way to think about transforming downtown Doraville into spaces that celebrate the multicultural dimensions of the City. In presenting the concept, we focused on the many strengths and opportunities the City has at its disposal to shape and guide a redevelopment process. Moreover, our recommendations, to this point, have focused on the nuts and bolts necessary to make the project work—the planning and processes that will drive redevelopment and

build the mosaic. Now, it’s time to think about the finished project—what this community mosaic community could ultimately look like.

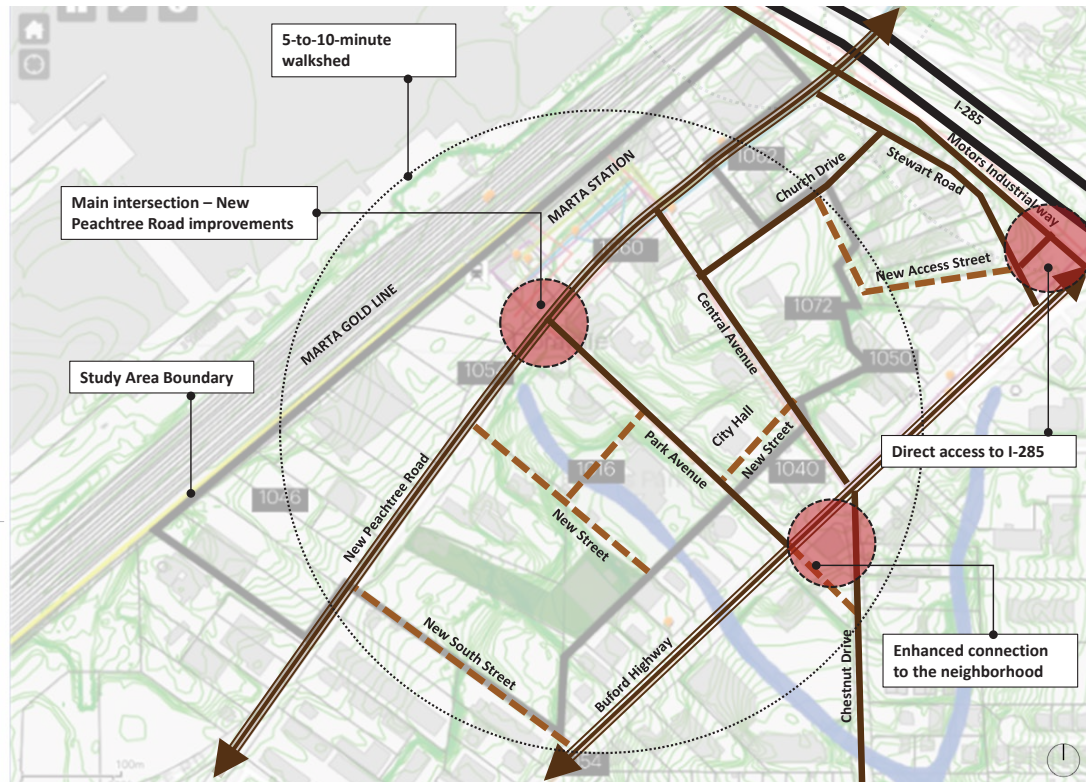
As stated in the beginning, the TAP envisions a **Village** where different cultures come together and people have multiple ways to engage and experience everything this community has to offer. On this page, you will see a drawing that illustrates the vision we have in mind. Before reviewing the illustration, however, it’s necessary to consider the core principles that drove the TAP’s visionary thinking. The panel considers these drivers critical to the ultimate success of any redevelopment—regardless of the final model or vision that the City adheres to. The six core principals to help build this mosaic are:

1. **Maximize the 15-minute trade area.** As noted earlier, some 500,000 people can access downtown Doraville within 15 minutes—whether they’re walking, biking, taking MARTA or driving. The TAP notes this fact for two reasons:
  - » It is a well-proven phenomenon that people will travel 15 minutes to access the amenities and services provided in well-done city centers. Consider the potential of your full audience when planning the development and aim for a mix of experiences that will accommodate a broad range of people.
  - » Don’t neglect your current community. Remember the people who can get to downtown Doraville in 15 minutes by walking or biking. Consider a connected network of thoroughfares (streets, passages, paths) and small blocks knitting together the neighborhoods. For example, it would be remiss to do a huge downtown redevelopment and fail to provide connectivity to the Northwood Communities located directly across Buford Highway.
2. **Topography matters.** While past plans created by the City have merit, none have truly considered the significant topography issues associated with site. The grade change in certain areas of the site is almost 40 feet. Our plan addresses the site’s



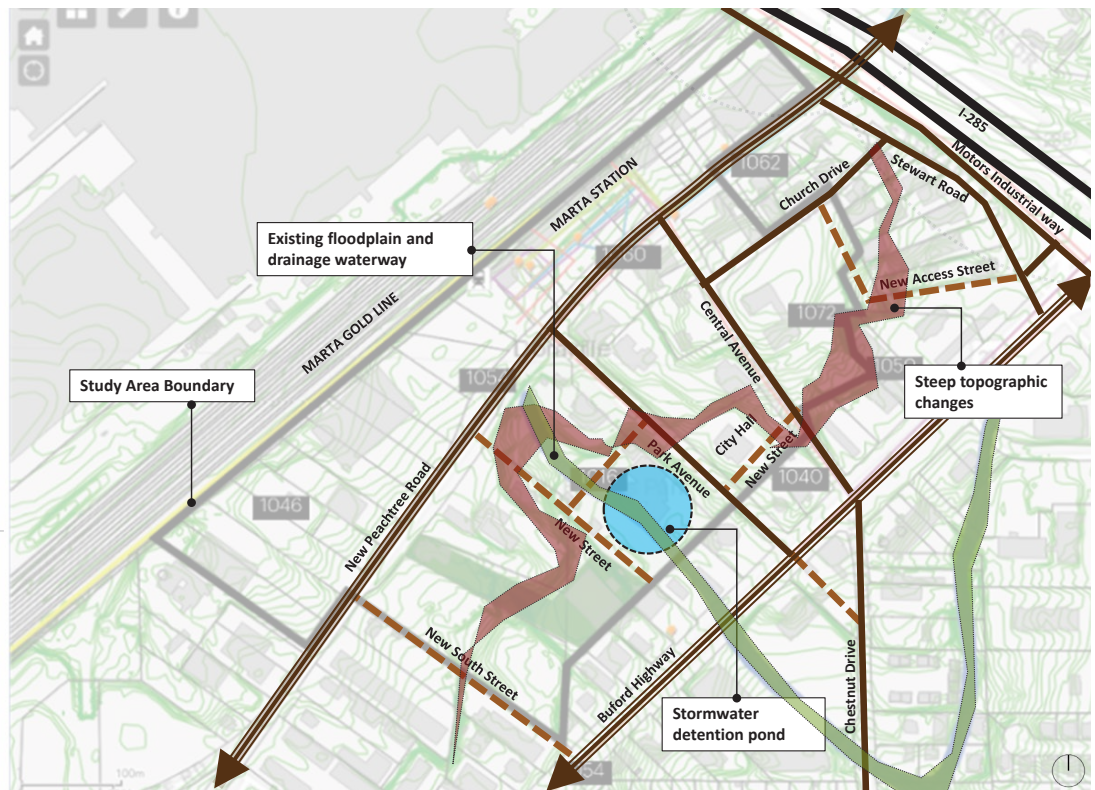
### Connectivity Concepts

- Create connections to the neighborhood
- Develop street grid to bridge gaps
- Improve access to I-285



### Site Influencers

- Stormwater and drainage
- Topographic changes
- Floodplain





topography—tucking parking decks into hills, using the retention to create an amenity area, and reimagining existing assets like Flowers Park.

**3. Green space, recreation and culture can serve the existing community and set the stage for success.** The TAP envisions a literal and physical spine of green space running through the entirety of the redevelopment. This spine would unfold as three distinct pieces:

- » A linear green—the focal point for the town center—anchored by restaurants on every corner and lined with a combination of street-level retail and more restaurants.
- » An event lawn and amphitheater that flows naturally into a focal point built around the existing retention pond.
- » Connective trails to Flowers Park—which should be updated and enhanced to serve the existing community—and to the pedestrian and bike path proposed by the Atlanta Regional Commission’s [“Walk. Bike. Thrive!” initiative](#).

In its current state, Flowers Park has little to offer, but the TAP sensed a “strong nostalgic hope” for the park’s preservation in the stakeholder interviews. Moreover, the panel believes the park can be revitalized and enhanced to become the base of the development’s green spine, with improvements to the existing pool, a splash pad or water park, and other family amenities to serve Doraville’s existing community.

Meanwhile, we also recommend amplifying the City’s current combined parks, recreational and cultural programs to both serve the City’s current residents and attract visitors. Imagine free or modestly priced concerts on weekends in the amphitheater, pottery classes, ballet lessons, yoga and fitness programs on the town green, and cultural events celebrating and promoting the City’s diversity.

**4. Establish Central and Park Avenues as authentic retail streets, but aggregate the shopping experience around the town green—with service**

## Reimagining Flowers Park

The best public parks provide escape and calm and a chance to recover with friends and family or by yourself. You can go for a stroll, take a deep breath of clean air, sunbathe, play ball, sit on a bench, read for hours, anything that is simple and fulfilling.

As the City refurbishes Flowers Park, the TAP recommends this short list of things to think about:

- Doraville’s children and families should be the focus of this effort.
- There needs to be lots of nature—trees, water and grass.
- Safety is paramount. This should be a place where people can go to hang out without being threatened.
- Walking paths will make the park attractive and link it to the town green and retail-restaurant offerings.
- Parks give an opportunity to feature public art—both permanent and periodic installations, ideally from local artists.
- Urban parks should be celebrations of civic life, with vibrant event schedules, including local musicians, plays, readings, biking groups, yoga and more.

**businesses at the street level east and west of the town green core.** The town green should be anchored with restaurants and retail shopping at the street level—with offices and residential on upper floors—to make this redevelopment successful. Indeed, all buildings on Central and Park Avenues—at the street level—should be zoned for retail or restaurants

exclusively. As you move out toward the edges of the development, these two key retail streets can house service businesses, such as nail salons and dentist offices. Executive offices and housing also can occupy the upper floors of these two key streets, as well as other portions of the 13-acre site. The panel also recommends extending this kind of zoning from New Peachtree Road to Buford Highway. Obviously, Buford Highway has a unique character and the City should preserve that flavor along the stretch of road that borders the Focus Area of this study. But as redevelopment occurs, the City should make sure that ground floors are reserved for retail—even highway retail such as fast-food restaurants, drive-through services, tire shops, pharmacies, gyms and the like.

To complement this idea, the TAP recommends locating Doraville City offices and services—determined by the needs’ assessment in our second recommendation—on an upper level, leaving the bottom floor for retail use and community amenities. Having Doraville’s City offices and recreational facilities as an anchor tenant would provide a level of financial security for the project and make it easier to offer friendly lease rates to attract the type of boutique retail outlets that will draw the shopping public. In addition, the City offices must be coupled with a parking deck that can meet public demand.

- 5. The key to having a vibrant urban core is a successful and profitable commercial venture with curated experiences including retail and restaurants.** Ensure that the master plan provides an environment that supports these activities including parking, utilities, placemaking and design considerations.

Ultimately, the City will have to develop its vision for this project. This TAP simply offers constructive ideas to shape your thinking. As you peruse the model of our visionary thinking, this TAP again encourages City leaders and others to realize the tremendous opportunity at hand to make the downtown area an appealing regional destination. It’s an opportunity to attract the “cool crowd,” the young professionals, the creative class and the diverse community that already calls Doraville home.

To ensure the City achieves its goals, a master plan will be essential. A master plan will allow the City to control the project and sell parcels incrementally for speed of change, while avoiding the ad hoc development that often derail great visions. Build your master plan around the town center—the beating, energetic heart that will give life and sustain this effort. The town center—and the City’s ability to control it—will determine the ultimate success of this project. Build the Village first; build it well, and expand the project incrementally to private developers for the remaining pieces—the housing, offices and other amenities that will make downtown Doraville a true showcase place to live, work and play.

## Master Plan Vision

The start of the master plan vision includes developable blocks, a physical green spine (town green), thoughtful building configuration and distribution of land uses.



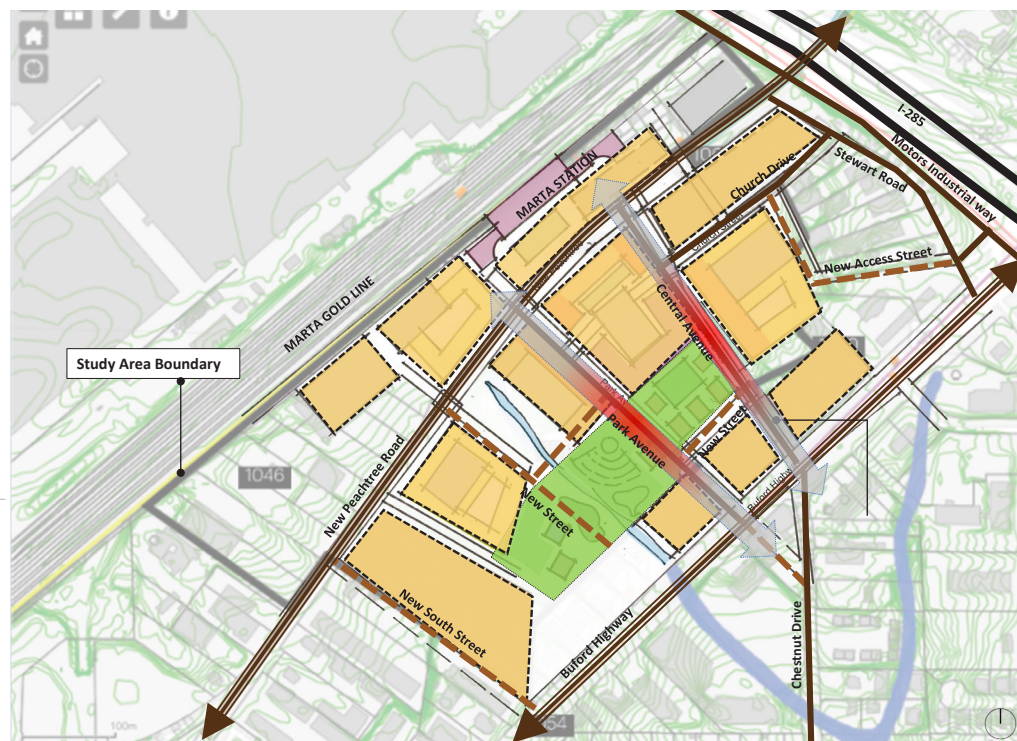
### The Big Idea

- Public Realm ■
- Retail Street ↔
- Retail & Restaurant Zones ■
- Service Zones ■



### Master Plan Vision

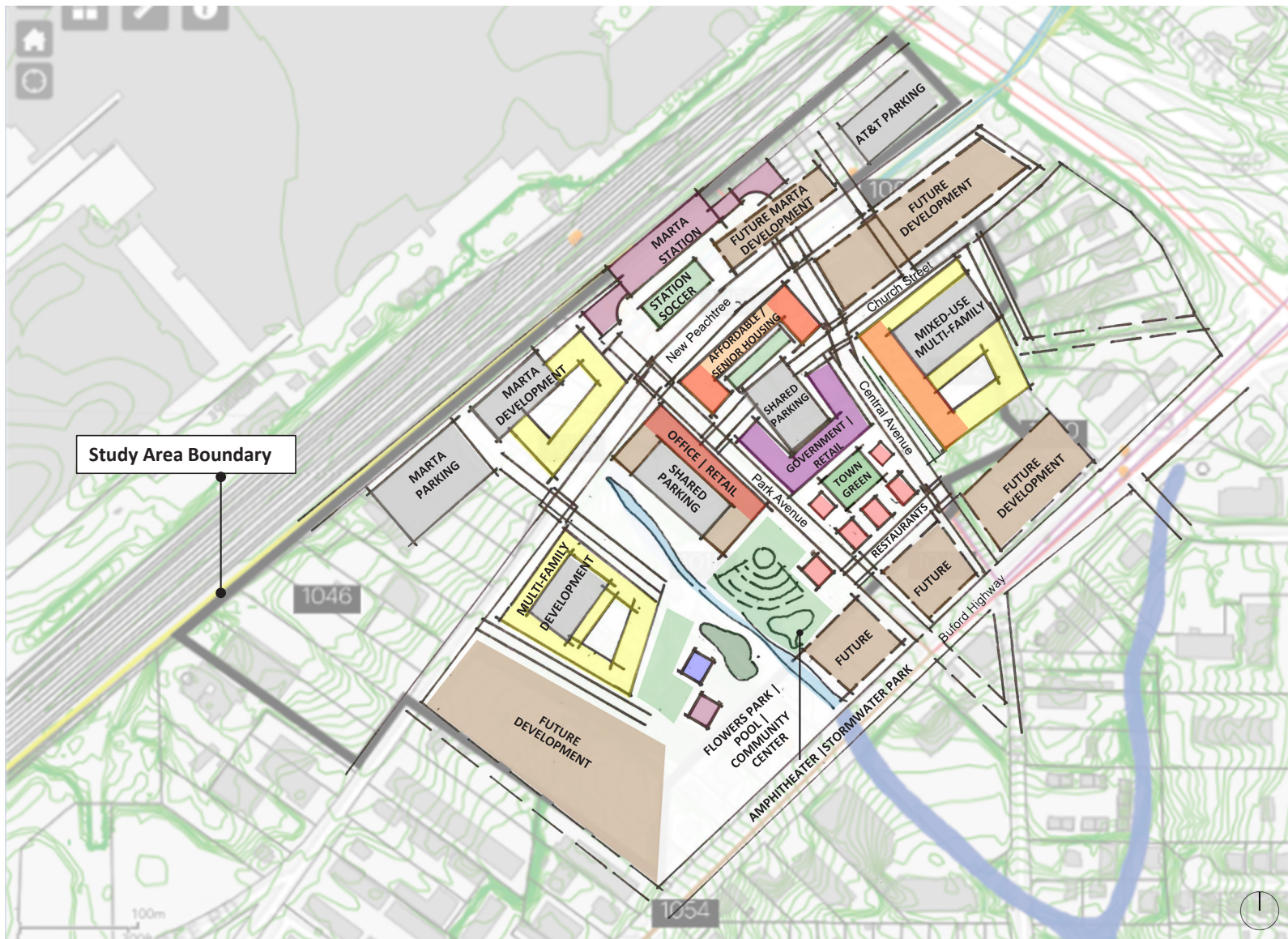
Developable Blocks





# Master Plan Illustration

- Program and Layout
- Building configuration
- Distribution of program and parking



# IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

<b>Short-term Action Items</b> (0–6 months)	<b>Mid-term Action Items</b> (6–18 months)	<b>Long-term Action Items</b> (18 months plus)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake visioning process</li> <li>• Conduct internal needs assessment</li> <li>• Conduct a Sources and Uses of Funds analysis to tie project costs to specific City revenues, financing methods, grants and federal and state funds.</li> <li>• Commission supportive studies                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Market analysis</li> <li>› Site and engineering assessment (terrain, street grid, stormwater)</li> <li>› Financial status and potential assessment (TAD, CID, SSD, SPLOST, bonding capacity)</li> <li>› Economic impact &amp; revenues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Develop the master plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate development model(s)</li> <li>• Hire dedicated staff for Doraville Development Authority and/or hire consultant</li> <li>• Evaluate financing options</li> <li>• Complete and assess impact of supportive studies</li> <li>• Start developer selection process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convey key public parcels to Doraville Development Authority</li> <li>• Execute redevelopment                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Issue RFP/RFQ</li> <li>› Select development partner(s)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## ABOUT THE PANEL



**Janet Bozeman**  
**Attorney**  
**Hyatt & Stubblefield**

Jan Bozeman is a principal of Hyatt & Stubblefield, P.C. She is a 1989 graduate of Auburn University and received her law degree from Georgia State University in 2000. She assists developers throughout the country in creating the governance structure for their planned communities, condominiums, and destination resorts and in establishing club membership programs for project amenities. Her experience includes small and large scale residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects, as well as age-qualified communities. She also counsel's clients on community association governance and operations. More information on Jan's professional expertise [here](#).

Jan has been a member of the Urban Land Institute since 2005 and a member of ULI Atlanta's local Technical Assistance Programs (TAPs) Committee since 2008 and has served as a former Vice- Chair and Chair of the committee from 2012 - 2015. She has extensive experience with TAP projects and has served on approximately 13 panels touching projects all across the state of Georgia.



**Scott Cullen**  
**Managing Director**  
**JLL**

Scott Cullen is a Managing Director in JLL's Southeast Land Investment Advisory Team in Atlanta and is responsible for growing the practice in the southeastern United States. The Land Investment Advisory practice advises corporate and investor clients on land and development transactions, conducts market research, performs financial and development analysis, values land and underutilized assets, and conducts site searches. He has experience with acquisition, disposition and advisory projects for clients such as Georgia Power, AT&T, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, General Motors, Bank of America, Comcast, Georgia-Pacific and Whirlpool Corporation.

Scott earned an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, with concentrations in real estate and finance. He earned a Juris Doctorate and a BS in Accounting from Louisiana State University.

Scott currently serves as ULI Atlanta's Sponsorship Chair for 2020-2021 and is a member of the Advisory Board. He has previous TAP experience, and volunteers as a facilitator for ULI Atlanta's UrbanPlan program.

Read a recent member interview of Scott [here](#).



**Jonathan Gelber**  
**Vice President**  
**KB Advisory**

Jonathan Gelber has been a real estate and planning consultant with KB Advisory (formerly Bleakly Advisory Group) since 2008. He specializes in consulting for public and private clients

in areas where real estate, public policy, and public finance overlap. Recently he has had the pleasure of working on the several major urban revitalization projects, including the Doraville GM site redevelopment, the longterm redevelopment of the Gwinnett Place area and several suburban town centers and MARTA transit-oriented development projects.

Prior to his current role, Jonathan was a Senior Planner for the City of Atlanta's Department of Planning and Community Development. He was responsible for managing long-range planning studies, economic development, and special projects. Before that he worked as an urban planning consultant in Atlanta and Portland, and as a transportation and transit planner with the City of New York and the State of North Carolina. He earned a Master's Degree in Real Estate from Georgia State University, a Master's Degree in Urban Planning from Columbia University, and a BA in Art History from Reed College.

He is a member of the Urban Land Institute and currently Co-Chairs the Technical Assistance Programs (TAPs) Committee and serves on the Advisory Board.



**Edrick Harris**  
**Senior Vice President**  
**Prestwick Development**

With a Bachelor Degree in Environmental (Real Estate) Development from Southern Polytechnic State University and

a Master Degree in City Planning from Georgia Tech, Edrick Harris brings expertise and experience to his role as a Senior Vice President of Development for the Prestwick Development Company. Edrick focuses on new development and redevelopment opportunities throughout the Southeast and leads the team responsible for development of affordable multifamily, independent senior living, and tax credit acquisition and rehabilitation. Edrick has more than 15 years of experience in real estate development, and has worked under industry giants, including Herman J. Russell. His experience has necessitated the ability to manage multiple elements in a single project and his portfolio holds several key mixed income and mixed-use, and revitalization projects. Read more on Edrick’s development experience [here](#).



**Faron Hill**  
**President**  
**Peregrine Oak**

As Managing Principal, Mr. Hill is responsible for originations, client development, and the overall direction of the firm. Before starting the firm in 2007, Mr. Hill held positions in various

commercial real estate and corporate firms. Most immediate, he served as a Director with IRE Capital (formerly NetFunding.com) originating and closing complex transactions. Working in various roles, he shared in the origination, and closing of more than \$1 billion in transactions. Before his tenure with IRE Mr. Hill served in various roles with BellSouth Business Systems (AT&T), The Birmingham Metropolitan Development Board (MDB), and Regions Financial Corp.

Mr. Hill is an active member of the Urban Land Institute. He is the incoming Chair of the ULI Foundation and serves as a Global Governing Trustee. A member of ULI since 2004, has been active in the Atlanta District Council in a variety of capacities. He has served as vice chair of the Young Leaders Group (YLG), a founding member and chair of the Capital Markets Council, member of the Center for Leadership, and member of the Advisory Board.



**Cheri Morris**  
**President**  
**Morris & Fellows**

Cheri Morris develops and owns upscale mixed-use communities, with a focus on downtown revitalizations. Morris recently completed Alpharetta

City Center, and is underway with Woodstock City Center, both as public-private partnerships with their host cities.

Alpharetta City Center and Morris’ earlier Woodstock Downtown project both garnered international attention as unprecedented financial successes and drivers of immediate economic booms in their downtown environs.

Morris & Fellows’ development projects have been awarded the “Development of Excellence” by the Urban Land Institute and the Atlanta Regional Commission, received the CNU International Charter Award for Best Neighborhood-Scale District, named “America’s Best Smart Growth Community” by the National Homebuilders Association, and “America’s Neighborhood” by Better Homes and Gardens Magazine.



**Sheba Ross**  
**Principal**  
**HKS**

Sheba Ross is a Principal and Senior Urban Designer at HKS where she creates culturally defined and environmentally driven projects, which

reflect her commitment to buildings and the spaces between them. In the past two decades, Sheba’s focus has been master planning the built environment by leveraging the design of the community story and the details. She actively engages public participation in projects that revitalize their communities by linking health with the urban realm. She played a pivotal role in transformative projects like the Healthcare Action Plan for the country of Qatar, the Brookhaven Buford Highway Corridor Vision, StationSoccer at MARTA stations, Piedmont Atlanta Hospital master plan, and has authored articles that connect the power of research and the pragmatics of urban planning.

Sheba is a highly engaged member of the Urban Land Institute and has served as mTAP chair for the 2020 class of ULI Atlanta’s Center for Leadership Program. She now co-chairs the Center for Leadership Class of 2021 and was nominated and accepted into ULI Atlanta’s inaugural cohort of The Leaders 2020 – an initiative aimed at elevating women of influence in real estate and land use industries.



**Jay Silverman**  
**Managing Principal**  
**Dwell Design Studio**

Jay has over 25 years of experience working on a wide variety of project types including housing and mixed-use, retail, government, office, interiors,

and single-family residential design across the country. He has a reputation for the design of high-rise mixed-use towers and multi-building residential projects, as well as complex urban infill mixed-use developments, including new construction and the rehabilitation and adaptive use of older buildings. He takes pride in directing all phases of a project from master planning and schematic design through construction and completion, creating great places, as well as finding creative solutions to complex design challenges associated with mixed-use and urban-infill development.

Jay has a strong legacy of service to the community and the architectural profession. He is a former President of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a recipient of the prestigious Ivan Allen Award for service to the profession, and currently serves as Treasurer of the Architecture Foundation of Georgia. He is also active in the Urban Land Institute Atlanta, and as a 2009 graduate of the ULI Center for Regional Leadership, has previously served two terms as Chair of the ULI Technical Assistance Program Committee and as a member of the ULI Atlanta Advisory Board.



**Jetha Wagner**  
**Vice President**  
**Avila Development**

As Vice President of Avila, Jetha oversees daily development activities and establishes risk management policy and procedure. She is also

responsible for managing lender and partner relations and reporting, monitoring development and construction budgets, cost management and procurement. Jetha has 25+ years in the real estate industry, with an emphasis on the multifamily market.

She began her career with Avila as a paralegal and from there, moved into the development and management side of the business. During her tenure with Avila, Jetha has been intimately involved in the construction and development of numerous Atlanta

area multifamily communities, as well as retail centers. She coordinates all refinancing, operations and disposition of assets, both commercial and residential, as well as the acquisition and repositioning of single asset purchases. Moreover, Jetha has overseen legal affairs for Avila since 1996. Jetha graduated from the National Center for Paralegal Training in Atlanta, Georgia and holds both the Certified Apartment Manager (CAM) and Certified Apartment Property Supervisor (CAPS) designations.



**Andrea Worthy**  
**Economic Development Director**  
**City of Smyrna**

Andrea Worthy is currently the Economic Development Director for the City of Smyrna, Georgia, where she is responsible for business retention

and recruiting efforts, as well managing redevelopment efforts for the suburban community of 58,000 residents. She has experience working with a variety of economic development programs including Tax Allocation Districts, development authorities and other public-private partnership tools.

Andrea previously served as the Economic Development Director for the City of Sandy Springs for eight years, where she was responsible for facilitating the location and expansion of businesses in the City. In this role, she was responsible for a recruitment strategy to attract regional and national companies to the region. Also under her direction, the City established a formal Business Retention program.

Ms. Worthy is a member of the International Economic Development Council, the Urban Land Institute and the Georgia Economic Developers Association. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Urban Studies from Georgia State University and a Master in City Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology.





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