

August 2015

Economic Development Strategic Plan City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

Prepared For:

The City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

Economic and Community Development Department
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

August 31, 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RKG Associates, Inc. wants to acknowledge the leadership and vision of the Lawrenceville City Council for engaging in the process of formalizing the City's economic development efforts.

Ms. Judy Johnson	Mayor
Mr. Keith Roche	Councilmember
Ms. Marie Beiser	Councilmember
Mr. Tony Powell	Councilmember
Mr. Bob Clark	Councilmember

The City of Lawrenceville and RKG Associates, Inc. would like to thank the members Strategy Committee for their time and unwavering dedication to the meetings and discussions that led this effort:

Phil Wolfe	Gwinnett Medical Center
Stas Preczewski	Georgia Gwinnett College
Jennifer Stephens	Georgia Gwinnett College
Anthony Rodriguez	Aurora Theatre
Bryan Lackey	Gwinnett County Planning & Development
Nick Masino	Partnership Gwinnett
Clint Dixon	US Auto Sales
Beverly Dryden	Lawrenceville Neighborhood Alliance
Carolyn Wright	Historic Lawrenceville Business Alliance
David Still	Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority
Kevin Cleveland	RACO General Contractors
Brad Cox	Brad Cox Inc.
Maryanne Grimes	Central Gwinnett High School
Allen Hoskyn	Impact 46
Herman Pennamon, Jr.	Pennamon Consulting
Leijla Slowinski	Lawrenceville Housing Authority
Ronnie Ford	Atlanta Attachment Company
Joanie Perry	Georgia Department of Community Affairs

RKG Associates, Inc. wishes to particularly acknowledge the substantial engagement and technical support of City staff in the development of this Study, especially Ms. Lisa Sherman, Executive Director of the Economic and Community Development Department



1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

Lawrenceville’s original purpose in seeking an Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) was to promote job creation, private investment and tax base expansion while maintaining a high quality of life, including preservation of the City’s cultural and historic assets. The City is to be commended on its economic development efforts to date through an active business retention and expansion program, managed by the combined efforts of the City of Lawrenceville and Partnership Gwinnett, a community and economic development initiative of the Gwinnett Chamber. Therefore, the main objective of the EDSP was to build upon previous efforts by the City and Partnership Gwinnett to provide a vision and action plan to guide economic development activity in Lawrenceville over the next 15 years.

RKG Associates, Inc. was selected through a competitive bidding process to assist Lawrenceville in crafting the strategic economic development plan. In the course of the work program, RKG professionals reviewed relevant plans and documents, and interacted with key stakeholders including municipal staff, local real estate professionals and developers, business leaders, economic development practitioners, and others.

From the outset of the project and throughout the initial work program, specific focus was placed on the future disposition of various opportunity sites in Lawrenceville, comprising both publicly owned and privately owned properties. The opportunity sites were initially brought to the attention to the Consultant by the Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority (LDDA), whose charge is to promote economic development within the City’s historic Downtown by facilitating the development of real property. As the work program progressed, the importance of the subject opportunity sites emerged as a priority, particularly sites where investor interest was evident. During a scheduled Economic Development Strategy Committee meeting, the Consultant and the Strategy Committee agreed that a course correction in the preparation of the EDSP was warranted. Group consensus shifted the project emphasis from traditional economic development and a target industry strategy to a combined community and economic development strategic growth plan to retain and expand the City’s employment base through strategic marketing and real estate investments.

The findings of the work program informed the synthesis of a systematic and methodical process that ensures the integrity of the vision for Lawrenceville’s economic development efforts while positioning the City to encourage continued reinvestment and revitalization of its economic opportunity areas.

B. SOCIOECONOMIC SUMMARY

The socioeconomic chapter analyzes demographic trends and projections in areas such as population, households, income, education attainment, and employment data. The analysis focuses on trends and conditions within the City of Lawrenceville, but includes comparative data for Gwinnett County and the surrounding region. The surrounding region (referred to as the “North Atlanta Region”) that was selected for comparative analysis includes the Counties of Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas,



Fayette, Fulton, Henry, and Rockdale (Map 3-1). For the purposes of this analysis, selected socioeconomic characteristics for the area of Fulton County that is north of the City of Atlanta and I-285 are analyzed separately for comparison purposes. The analysis provides insight into local and regional growth trends as well as projected future growth patterns. The following narrative highlights the most salient findings:

- ***Perceptions and realities of Lawrenceville is impacting household formations.*** The demographic data indicate that the City has different fundamentals than the rest of Gwinnett County and the greater North Atlanta area. Unfortunately, some of these differences make the City relatively less attractive to prospective businesses and residents. Most notably, the City's median income level is below the County-wide and regional median. The impact of these facts are compounded by perceptions of the City's school systems, public safety, and available amenities. However, these isolated data points do not "tell the story" of the City. To this point, the City should engage in an aggressive marketing and outreach efforts to provide facts about the assets and opportunities in Lawrenceville.
- ***Growth areas in older households and modest-income households.*** The perceptions of Lawrenceville as a place to live has limited the household growth areas to empty nesters, retirees, and modest-income households. That said, the success of the Cornerstone development in Downtown is evidence that the lack of diversity in new household formations is as much a factor as the views of the City's education system and safety. Given the City is an employment hub within Gwinnett County, there is potential to attract the Millennial cohort and additional professional households if a greater variety of more urban-style housing (i.e. townhouses and investment-grade apartments) were made available. This is particularly true in the Downtown area.
- ***There are opportunities for the City to 'grow from within.'*** The analysis identifies a number of potential growth areas that the City can pursue a recruitment strategy to strengthen and expand the City's economic base. However, there are a number of internal strategies that can engage existing City residents while provide opportunities to expand the City's quality of life. Most notably, much of the City's employment base is transient, choosing to live elsewhere while working in Lawrenceville. The growth of Georgia Gwinnett College has brought thousands of commuter students to the City. Strategies to encourage these individuals to stay in Lawrenceville should be a priority.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed the potential for a joint City-County-Board of Education effort to develop entry-level, apprenticeship opportunities for the City's youth. Providing the City's at-risk youth base access to jobs and a potential career path could help address perceptions about the local schools while enriching and encouraging potential entrepreneurs. Along this line, there is an untapped resource to promote ethnic and culturally-based business development for the City's diverse population. Finally, the beginnings of an entertainment and cultural hub already exist in Downtown. There is value to providing support and opportunities for local entrepreneurs to build upon this asset.

- ***Growth of college may or may not impact demand.*** Georgia Gwinnet College is a substantial economic engine and asset to the City of Lawrenceville. However, the school's existing enrollment is concentrated in commuter students. Some of the City's vision to capture this market is dependent on Georgia Gwinnett College expanding its live-away enrollment numbers. To this point, the City needs to continue to build its relationship with the College to encourage and support any future growth, while adjusting its strategies based on the manner in which the school grows and adapts.



- ***Lawrenceville job growth has been focused on its existing clusters.*** Lawrenceville is the County Seat, and center for government and healthcare employment. Unfortunately, most of the City’s employment growth has been in these sectors, creating a greater dependency on them for the City’s economic strength. While there are a number of opportunities to encourage and support these sectors so the City can sustain its economic base, there is a need to diversify the City’s economy and expand the number and type of jobs.
- ***Gwinnett steadily transitioning into service-based economy.*** Gwinnett County is experiencing similar economic growth to the rest of the U.S., steadily transitioning from a production-based to a service-based economy. While Partnership Gwinnett has experienced substantial success in attracting production companies, the majority of the County’s growth has been in service-base industries. This has benefits and challenges for Lawrenceville. On the positive side, it creates opportunity for Lawrenceville to expand its office development footprint. However, there are a number of City residents that are not well prepared for service-based jobs, particularly ones that require higher education attainment. The strategy identifies opportunities to capitalize on the opportunities while recommending approaches to ensure all Lawrenceville residents can benefit from these opportunities.
- ***Production-based opportunities should not be ignored.*** Despite the local and national economic shifts towards a more service-based economy, Lawrenceville still has a substantial and viable industrial base near Highway 316. To this point, the City’s economic development efforts should include industrial retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts and make sure this important segment continues to success in Lawrenceville.

C. REAL ESTATE SUMMARY

The real estate chapter examines recent real estate trends within the City and surrounding area, with a focus on non-residential and residential market forces that are shaping the City’s development environment. The analysis includes factors such as existing inventory of buildings and units, development trends within selected time frames, vacancy and absorption rates, and sales values/lease rates. In addition, RKG Associates conducted a number of interviews with local development and real estate professionals in order to understand the nuances of the market and to gain an “in-the-field” perspective on the potential demand and speculative investment climate. The following narrative highlights the most salient findings:

- ***The City’s retail opportunities are focused on destination and community-based businesses.*** The market analysis reveals that the greater central Gwinnett area is well served with larger retail businesses. Simply put, the growth of retail centers around the Mall of Georgia, in Snellville, and power centers around Lawrenceville attract shoppers from the City. It is not likely that the City will be able to attract larger retailers to compete within this market. That said, the data indicate that smaller, neighborhood-scale needs still exist in the City. Most notably, Downtown has not reached its full potential. The data indicate there is current potential to support additional specialty food, apparel, and restaurants. The continued development of residential space in and around Downtown will help support this increased activity. However, priority should be given to leasing up existing space before adding inventory.
- ***Office demand is concentrated in relatively small blocks of space.*** The office market in Lawrenceville historically has catered to smaller businesses, particularly legal firms seeking to



locate near the Courts. Although current supply in the City is comparatively strong to the local submarket and region, the distribution of businesses is not ideal for the long-term success of meeting the City's Downtown vision. One of the goals of the strategy is to retain and recruit more professional businesses. To be effective in this, the City will need to encourage new office space to accommodate the growth. That said, delivery of space needs to be realistic. Development goals should focus on historic market absorption levels to avoid undermining the existing market.

- ***Reclaiming Downtown neighborhoods is achievable.*** A substantial number of residences in Downtown have been converted to office use. There was interest expressed by the community and through the Strategy Committee to reclaim these units as housing. To accomplish this, the City needs to work with the businesses occupying these structures to identify suitable alternatives. One concept provided in this, and other, plans is to accommodate office development as part of the larger Jackson Street Park concept. It will be critical that the City engage these business owners to ensure this alternative is feasible.
- ***The City's industrial base has been transitioning from production to logistics.*** Much of the City's existing industrial supply is no longer conducive to large-scale production of goods. Market demand for manufacturing space has changed, focusing on larger and more efficient buildings (i.e. taller buildings). Despite this market change, the City's industrial base has remained strong being backfilled by warehousing, transportation and logistics companies. The strength of this market indicates Lawrenceville remains a viable location for industrial uses. Given there are few sites left for new industrial development, the City should ensure new projects for these sites expand the employment and economic goals of the City.
- ***There are a few keys sites that can accommodate signature industrial projects.*** The real market analysis revealed that there are a few sites located adjacent to Highway 316 that could accommodate signature industrial projects. The City should work with Partnership Gwinnett to determine the interest in pursuing these opportunities and marketing them.
- ***The economic downturn effectively stopped housing development in Lawrenceville.*** Residential deliveries dropped from 139 units each year from 2005 to 2009 to 10 units each year from 2010 to 2014. However, the economic downturn is not the only factor in the potential for new residential development in Lawrenceville. There are few development sites in the City left to accommodate new development. Furthermore, the existing regulatory environment does not encourage the redevelopment of underutilized commercial sites. Given the stated goal of diversifying the City's housing stock, new strategies on how to accommodate more urban form housing and mixed-use development need to be considered. The success of the Cornerstone project is an indication of the potential for Lawrenceville.
- ***As Lawrenceville's Downtown continues to revitalize, its reputation as an attractive place to live will grow.*** The market potential for new Downtown residential development is evident. However, development pace should be considered for the initial projects. The analysis indicates that providing too much supply too soon could undermine the intent of diversifying housing types and incomes in Lawrenceville. That said, new successes in the City will enhance perceptions of Lawrenceville as a place to live and enhance the potential annual absorption over time.



D. OPPORTUNITY SITES

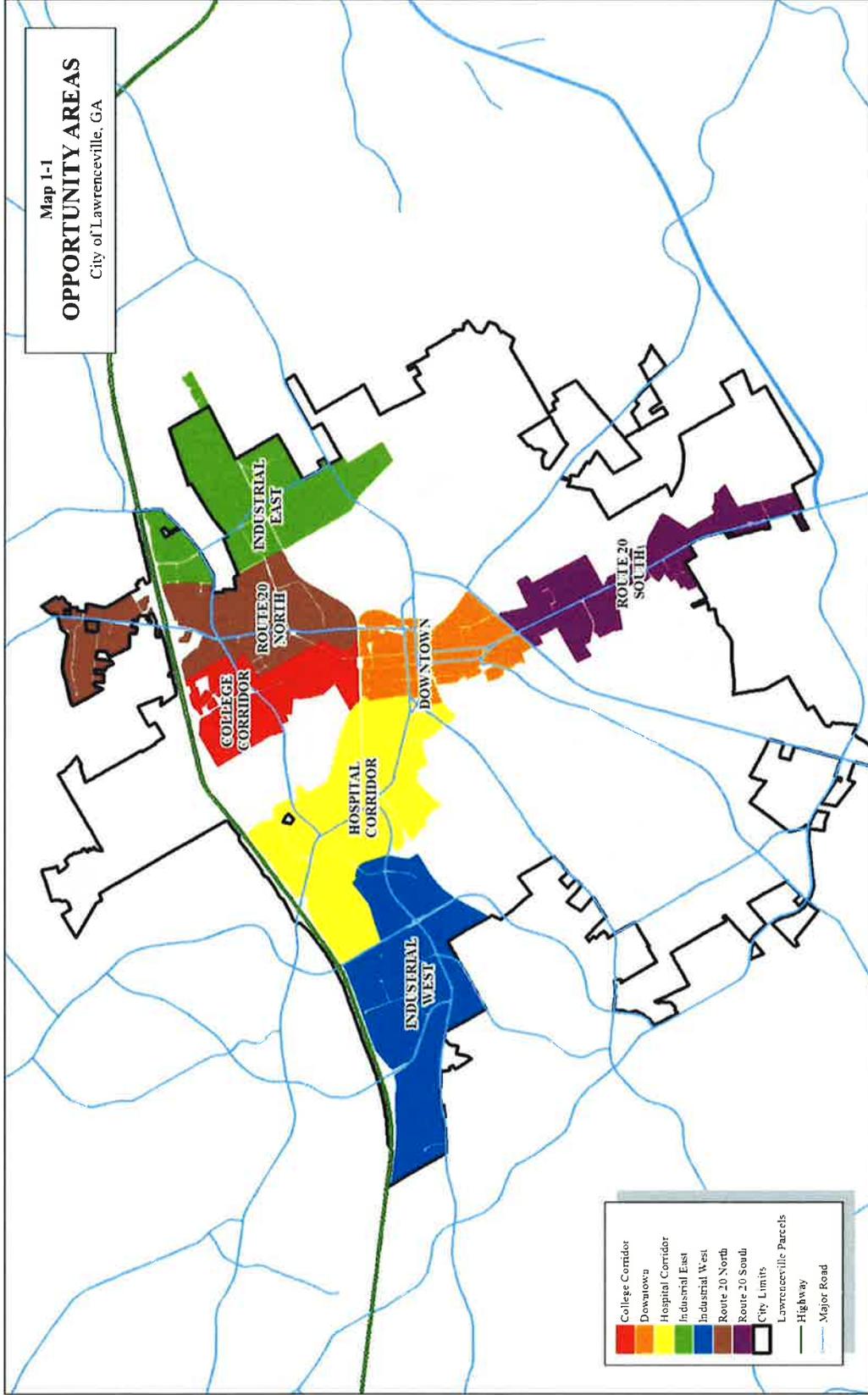
During the course of the analysis, the City staff, the Strategy Committee and RKG Associates collectively recognized that the economic development plan needed to provide an analysis and prioritization of real estate assets that can accommodate the development envisioned for the City's future. It was noted that the City's existing real estate investment and implementation efforts have been more reactive to market opportunities rather than proactive towards reaching a specific economic development goal. While this approach has produced many positive results, not all efforts have been as effective and efficient as possible. Simply put, this analysis is intended to provide the City a more strategic approach to siting various economic development efforts. To complete this effort, the Strategy Committee established guidelines for identifying and prioritizing the opportunity sites. These include:

- Ensure consistency in community vision and preference.
- Understand the City's current land use patterns.
- Define opportunity areas and their specific focus.
- Ensure activity maximizes the area's development potential, and sustains and enhances existing assets within that area.
- Identify sites with the greatest potential to accommodate economic development efforts.
- Prioritize and phase implementation efforts.

While the identification process was a comprehensive collaboration between key public, civic, and governmental representatives to identify a preferred approach to the City's real estate-based efforts, the Strategy Committee was unanimous in its position on the City maintaining a level of flexibility when implementing this strategy. Economic development—particularly the real estate investment component—is a fluid endeavor that requires compromise and adaptability to reach its full potential. Simply put, the concepts and strategies presented in this Chapter are intended to be guides for future efforts, and not mandates. It is the Strategy Committee's intent that the City consider the principles detailed in this section when making decisions regarding economic development efforts and investments.

Most notably, the Strategy Committee recognizes that a number of the opportunity sites are privately owned. The scope of this effort did not allow for the City's staff or the RKG Team to reach out to each property owner to determine their long-term investment interest and/or willingness to engage in the preferred development concepts. To this point, it will be critical for the City to engage these entities as partners in the implementation effort. The City's economic development staff should establish a relationship with owners that have conflicting investment plans and/or are hesitant to engage in this effort. The cultivation of trust and buy-in may take time. As noted, the preferred strategy should be used as a guide. In cases where there is initial resistance, the prioritization presented herein may need to be adjusted. Furthermore, the City's initial investigation may reveal opportunities not envisioned during this process.

The opportunity sites are contained within the City's commercial core areas. This was done for three reasons. First, there was consensus that the City should preserve and protect its residential communities. Second, the commercial areas have the greatest infrastructure support (i.e. transportation, water, sewer...), which will minimize potential costs. Finally, the changing economic climate of the City has created a number of redevelopment sites that will require greater City coordination and support to implement. It is important to note that other opportunities outside these areas may exist. However, the Strategy Committee encourages the City to focus and prioritize its efforts on projects that may have the greatest catalytic impact on additional investment. The map on the following page shows the opportunity areas considered.





E. IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategy Committee's intent for this implementation strategy is to build upon the vision established for the City and the successes already achieved by providing a more holistic plan that can guide future City endeavors. This implementation strategy provides the City of Lawrenceville with a "road map" to economic development implementation that prioritizes City efforts based on the goals established through a series of community and stakeholder input sessions. The Strategy Committee encourages the City's leadership to support a more deliberate implementation approach that considers the costs and benefits of distributing staff and financial resources too thin. As stated during this effort, the Strategy Committee prefers a "rifle approach" to economic development rather than a "shotgun approach." The implementation recommendations include a phasing recommendation intended to maintain deliberate focus, particularly in the short-term.

During the course of this effort, the focus for this effort transitioned from a traditional economic development strategy to a more community driven, real estate focused economic growth and sustainability strategy. The need to shift the analysis focus became evident as the City staff, the Strategy Committee and the Consulting Team processed the City's assets, challenges, and opportunities. At a base level, the more substantial industry retention and recruitment effort is well underway through Partnership Gwinnett. Dedicating substantial City staff time to this effort would be duplicative. The analysis indicated the City resources would be better used to support and expand community-based businesses and start-up opportunities. Furthermore, the analysis indicated there is greater interest and opportunity for the Lawrenceville administration to focus on project-based economic development that supports and enhances the larger business recruitment and retention effort.

The Strategy Committee provided preliminary goals to be considered during the course of this analysis. These goals were revisited and refined throughout this effort as new market data, stakeholder input, and group discussion was presented. The final set of goals are intended to guide implementation decisions by the City staff and elected leadership within context of policies, regulations and investments that will impact the City's economic development efforts. While the Strategy Committee recognizes that individual decisions will have a number of implications across many City efforts and services, the state economic development goals should act as a checklist for decision makers when weighing the pros and cons of said action. The following goals are not listed in any particular order.

- Fill the Downtown with viable businesses.
- Make sure the City's forward progress follows a plan.
- Create a "live, work & play" environment in Downtown.
- Develop underutilized properties to a highest and best use.
- Create more diverse housing opportunities.
- Develop, attract and retain diverse array of professional businesses.
- Develop, maximize and retain talented local workforce.

The following implementation matrix presents the full range of objectives and corresponding action items for consideration when creating the implementation entity's first year business plan. The time lines, estimated costing, and implementation partners for each action item identified in the matrix reflect of the level of effort desired by the Strategy Committee and assessment by the Consultant. The final business plan established by the implementation entity should be heavily influenced by the Strategy Committee's established strategy, but refined based on the available strategic and capital resources available to this effort. The final timing, focus, and potential costs will be better determined by the formal implementation entity representatives and the dedicated participation from various public and private sources.



Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix ASSET DEVELOPMENT	Implementation Lead	Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost						
		Public/NP		Private		1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10		
Objective #1: Expand the City's proactive business retention visit efforts																		
Action 1: Create a comprehensive business database for all businesses in Lawrenceville; update annually	ED, GC																	A
Action 2: Develop and implement an annual web-based survey for all businesses, focusing on identifying needs, emerging market trends and potential obstacles to success	ED, PG																	B
Action 3: Host an annual forum with local workforce training providers and education leaders to share results of initial survey results	ED, GW, GG, GT																	A
Action 4: Present survey's market findings at industry roundtables relevant to that industry, soliciting response and advice on addressing specific needs/opportunities; use this data to inform an annual economic development planning retreat	ED, LV																	A
Action 5: Coordinate with local and state entities also performing retention activities to eliminate duplicative efforts and avoid inconveniencing local businesses	ED, PG, GE																	A
Action 6: Provide monthly newsletter to the business community, using the database to distribute electronically	ED																	B
Action 7: Develop a business lecture series, hosting 1-2 event per year, establishing topic areas based on the responses to the annual business survey and interacting with the industry roundtables	ED, PG, LV																	C
Objective #2: Develop City-focused entrepreneurial initiatives																		
Action 1: Identify 3-4 local business leaders willing to serve as mentors under the SDBC/implementation entity, expand number as needed/talent allows	ED, LV																	A
Action 2: Provide formal training to selected mentors (i.e. the SBA's Mentor-Protégé Program)	ED, US																	C
Action 3: Implement mentorship program in coordination with the Small Business Development Center, bringing entrepreneurs together with implementation entity mentors	ED, SB, PG																	B
Action 4: Monitor success/effectiveness of existing programs and modify as needed based on changes in marketing and recruitment efforts/market conditions	ED, LV, SB, PG																	A
Action 5: Expand/market business development programs including: [1] writing a business plan; [2] how to finance a business; [3] how to identify, hire and manage staff; and [4] how to market to clients	BT, GG, SB																	D
Action 6: Tie mentorship program to enrollment in business development programs	ED, SB																	A
Action 7: Establish incentives to accommodate home-based businesses; including business license fee waivers and business financing packages (tied to development program attendance)	LV, GC, PG, ED																	D
Action 8: Implement a program conclusion and follow up survey of program participants to track effectiveness and success rate	ED, PG																	A
Action 9: Work with existing entities to market and expand co-work and incubator opportunities (i.e. retail incubator) for Downtown	ED, PG, LV																	E
Action 10: Explore the potential to develop an angel investor network; host an annual "Shark Tank" event enabling local entrepreneurs to pitch their business strategy	ED, PG																F, B, Z	B
Objective #3: Market and recruit additional health care businesses to Lawrenceville																		
Action 1: Work with the healthcare industry roundtable to define market opportunities and identify potential target markets in context of the target industry clusters	ED, PG																	A
Action 2: Perform a medical services market opportunity analysis, identifying specializations/sectors currently underrepresented in Lawrenceville/Gwinnett County	ED, PG, AR																	C





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10									
ASSET DEVELOPMENT	Objective	Action	Description	Implementation Lead		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Estimated Cost		
				Public/NP	Private															
Objective #3: Market and recruit additional health care businesses to Lawrenceville	Action 3:	Inventories businesses operating in these industries, developing relationships to identify opportunities for them to expand (retention) or name potential targets (recruitment)	ED, PG, LV, GC	B															A	
	Action 4:	Work with the Gwinnett Medical Center to define future of health care opportunities. Develop recruitment/incentive programs to assist in meeting the defined strategy	ED, PG, LV, GC	B															A	
	Action 5:	Coordinate recruitment marketing efforts with Partnership Gwinnett, identifying opportunities to joint market	ED, PG																	C
																				A
Objective #4: Develop a locally-maintained inventory of land and buildings available for sale/lease	Action 1:	Maintain an Excel database on all available non-residential properties, including asking prices (for rent and for sale) in the City; work with local brokers and property owners to update database regularly	ED	R, O, D															A	
	Action 2:	Develop on-line data entry capability for property owners and real estate brokers to submit property information data for all available assets within the City. Use this information to update the City's database	ED	C															C	
	Action 3:	Develop a "property assemblage book" that highlights all development/redemption properties from the opportunity sites analysis; advertise the book on the economic development website	ED, PG	R, O, D																B
	Action 4:	Implement a recurring outreach initiative to property owners who currently are marketing their assets OR are identified as opportunity sites; use this data to update the City's database and property assemblage book	ED	O																A
Objective #5: Establish formulaic measures to guide real estate investing/partnership development	Action 1:	Create a financial pro forma model that can be used to measure the financial feasibility of a property acquisition/redemption plan	ED	C															B	
	Action 2:	Establish minimum return of investment and return on investment guidelines based on the economic development goals to be achieved for all property acquisition	ED, LV, BE, GC																A	
	Action 3:	When appropriate, work with existing property owners to be development partners rather than acquiring the property; use acquisition as a "last resort" rather than the preferred method	ED, LV, GC	O, D																A
	Action 4:	Create a new entity/reconstitute an existing entity to be the City's economic development implementation lead for the entire City; ideally the entity would be a public-private partnership housing the City's community and economic development staff	ED, LV, DD, DA, PG	B, R																A
Objective #6: Develop a Lawrenceville Land Bank	Action 1:	Identify parcels considered to be strategic in the implementation of the opportunity site plans, specifically ones that are part of necessary property assemblage	ED, LV, PG																A	
	Action 2:	Acquire only those properties that meet the defined criteria with the intent to package for resale to an investor seeking to implement the City's economic development strategy	ED, LV																F	
	Action 3:	Utilize the new/reconstituted implementation entity as a land bank, enabling it to implement transactions on behalf of the City	ED, LV																	Included in Above
	Action 4:	Establish a real estate investment fund for economic development property acquisition where sale of existing assets replenish the investment fund	ED, LV, GC																	Included in Above
Objective #7: Partner with education leaders to expand school-to-work opportunities	Action 1:	Establish an education and workforce roundtable that brings the Gwinnett Tech, Georgia Gwinnett College, Gwinnett County Board of Education and private businesses together with City leadership on a quarterly or semi-annual basis	ED, GG, GT, BE, LV, GC																A	
	Action 2:	Actively promote existing workforce/continuing education programs available to Lawrenceville residents	ED, PG, GG, GT, BE																B	
	Action 3:	Identify new education/continuing education programs that can be developed based on the results of the business survey and interactions with the industry roundtables	ED, PG, GG, GT, BE	B																Unk.





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix	Implementation Lead	Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
ASSET DEVELOPMENT														
Objective #8: Work with local partner to develop an employment exposition fair for school-aged children and their families Co-sponsor an annual career exposition for school-aged children (12-19) and their families with the Partnership Gwinnett, bringing together education partners, local economic development entities, and regional employers for an annual event	Public/NP													
Action 1:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												E
Action 2:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 3:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 4:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 5:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 6:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 7:	BE													Included in Above
Action 8:	ED, PG, CG, BE, GT, LV, GC	B												Included in Above
Action 9:	ED, PG	B, C												Included in Above
Objective #9: Expand the Downtown's live-work-play opportunities														B
Action 1:	ED, DD, LV, AU	B, Z												A
Action 2:	ED, AU	C												C
Action 3:	ED, DD, AU	B												B
Action 4:	LV, GC, ST													A
Action 5:	ED, SB, PG	B												A
Action 6:	LV, GC	O												F
Action 7:	ED, LV	D, F, B												F
Action 8:	ED													B
Action 9:	ED, CV													B
Action 10:	ED, PG, CV, GC, LV													A





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix ASSET DEVELOPMENT	Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Objective #10: Diversify the City's housing supply, both by housing type and price point												
Action 1: Create and implement a citywide housing master plan to identify areas for redevelopment, revitalization and infill development	ED, LV, AR											D
Action 2: Encourage urban-style housing development and mixed use projects in the Downtown opportunity area	LV											A
Action 3: Encourage repositioning of vacant commercial assets within the Route 20 South opportunity area to be townhouse/mixed-use, town center style developments	LV											A
Action 4: Encourage development of age-restricted housing within the Hospital Corridor opportunity area	LV											A
Action 5: Consider the implementation of an upper-story rehabilitation grant program to encourage residential conversions within the Downtown opportunity area	LV, GC, BE, ED											E
Action 6: Consider programs to encourage empty nester and near-retirement households to locate in Lawrenceville, such as modernization and weatherization matching grants and property tax freezes for age-qualified households	LV, GC, BE											E
Action 7: Consider a first-time buyer housing rehabilitation grant/loan program to attract young households to targeted neighborhoods	LV, GC, BE											E
Objective #11: Formalize and execute the marketing and development of the City's opportunity sites/opportunity areas												
Action 1: Finalize the creation of the City's implementation entity, including the capacity to own real estate (preferably through the land bank concept)	LV, ED											A
Action 2: Transfer ownership of city-owned land asset to be enacted for economic development, as determined through coordination between the City Council and the new implementation entity Board of Directors	LV, ED											A
Action 3: Develop a business plan for land assets, including a financial analysis of any proposed projects	ED, LV, DD											A
Action 4: Create a request for qualifications to solicit development interest from private firms/investment partners that detail the development program and expected deliverables through the public private partnership	ED, LV, GC, DD											C
Action 5: Select potential partners to request a more detailed proposal for the development program, financing/funding strategies, and public private partnership details	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 5: Score and select preferred partner for the development project	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 6: Negotiate development agreement with development partner, detailing phasing and deliverable expectations of the project	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 7: Implement development and marketing strategy (if applicable) for the development project(s)	ED											A
Action 8: Provide regular progress reports to the City Council/community	ED, LV											A
Action 9: Use and development proceeds (if applicable) to develop future investment/partnership projects between the City, implementation entity, and private sector through the Land Bank/implementation entity	LV, ED											A
ORGANIZATIONAL AND REGULATORY												
Objective #1: Empower the City's community and economic development staff for success												
Action 1: Constitute an Advisory Board to work with City staff on implementation of the strategic plan, preferably through extending the life of the Strategy Committee	ED, LV											A
Action 2: Create an economic development business plan based on this strategic plan to transition the City's economic development effort from predominantly reactive to proactive	ED, LV											A





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix	Implementation Lead	Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
ORGANIZATIONAL AND REGULATORY													
Objective #3: Leverage the talents and vision of the Lawrenceville community													
Action 4: Develop an ombudsman program, bringing free/reduced cost technical assistance services for entities investing in the City	ED												B
Action 5: Identify and train community 4-6 advocates, empowering them to interact with individual citizens, community groups, and local elected bodies; candidates should be individuals well respected in the community	ED												A
Action 6: Identify and coordinate existing business leaders within various industry sectors (i.e. healthcare, manufacturing...) to become marketing ambassadors, actively participating in business recruitment and retention	ED												A
Objective #4: Enhance the City's economic development toolbox to encourage investment and growth													
Action 1: Consider overlay zones and/or farm based codes for each of the opportunity areas to enhance development flexibility in exchange for aesthetic controls	ED, LV, GC												A
Action 2: Consider guaranteed expedited/concurrent review processes for priority projects	LV												A
Action 3: Allow administrative approvals for investments/projects of a certain scale/type that meet specified economic development goals/thresholds (i.e. facade improvement)	ED, LV, GC												A
Action 4: Hold bi-monthly or quarterly department head strategy meetings to discuss proposed, initiated and ongoing economic development efforts and how to best integrate cross-department needs/opportunities	ED, LV, GC												A
Action 5: Expand/create Tax Allocation Districts to align with the City's opportunity area boundaries (either multiple TADs or one single TAD)	ED, LV, ST												C
Action 6: Create community improvement districts for each opportunity area (or combine opportunity areas into a single CID)	ED, LV, ST												Included in Above
Action 7: Formalize permitting/development fee reductions that meet defined thresholds for economic development	ED, LV, GC												A
Action 8: Consider density bonuses in and near downtown in exchange for favorable land use programs (i.e. mixed income developments)	ED, LV												A
Objective #4: Enhance the City's economic development toolbox to encourage investment and growth													
Action 9: Continue to provide land acquisition cost mitigation or reimbursement (tied to the land bank concept)	LV												F
Action 10: Work with financial institutions to offer City-backed loan guarantees and/or interest rate write downs for start-up or home based businesses; consider formalizing this program in a City-sponsored loan pool	ED, LV, GC												D
Action 11: Create formulaic incentive structure for all incentive programs, defining the job creation, tax base enhancement, economic development goal thresholds to access those programs	ED, LV, GC, BE												A
Action 12: Frame incentives based on the intended target/recipient (i.e. loan assistance for start-up businesses vs. tax reimbursement for large job creation vs. forgivable grants for Downtown residential reclamation)	ED, LV, GC, BE												A
Action 13: Review effectiveness of incentive programs and refine as necessary	ED, LV, GC, BE												A
MARKETING AND OUTREACH													
Objective #1: Create a dialogue with community stakeholders													
Action 1: Provide bi-monthly or quarterly progress updates to the City Council through an in-person presentation, preferably at a scheduled elected body meeting	ED, LV												A
Action 2: Hold semi-annual town hall events to debrief community members on current economic development efforts, trends and projections in the market, and likely future opportunities/efforts	ED, LV												B





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost		
Implementation Matrix		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10
MARKETING AND OUTREACH														
Action 3:	Develop and distribute community versions of the economic development monthly newsletter that focuses stories and information on economic development education and highlighting the benefits/activities	ED												A
Action 4:	Create an open-source community database for City residents and interested parties to sign up to receive the economic development monthly bulletin	ED	C											A
Action 5:	Host annual surveys for [1] residents; [2] event attendees; and [3] daytime workers to garner information on the perceptions of Lawrenceville as a place to live, shop, dine, and recreate	ED												B
Action 6:	Establish materials and implementation protocol for interacting with community stakeholder groups (i.e., HOAs, civic groups...) using staff or trained advocates	ED												B
Objective #2: Create an economic development website, preferably outside the City's main page														
Action 1:	Create a Lawrenceville economic development website to provide access to all materials, events, incentives and education materials	ED	C											C
Action 2:	Provide web-based, downloadable incentives sheet detailing programs available by industry and location	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 3:	Host business and community surveys on the website	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 4:	Create a comprehensive calendar of events for community and economic development activities and meetings	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 5:	Post electronic marketing materials and newsletters on the site	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 6:	Create a community engagement/outreach section with all educational materials	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 7:	Establish links to regional and state economic development partners	ED	C											Included in Above
Objective #3: Develop professional marketing collateral for the City														
Action 1:	Create a quality of life brochure highlighting Lawrenceville's unique characteristics (i.e. Downtown), amenities (Rhodes Jordan Park, Lawrenceville Lawn), and cultural attractions (i.e. Aurora Theatre, summer concert series)	ED, PG												B
Action 2:	Develop a community "highlights" document including market fundamentals, local and regional business climate, labor force data, etc.	ED, PG												Included in Above
Action 3:	Develop a detailed incentives document that details all local, county, state and federal incentive programs	ED, PG												Included in Above
Action 4:	Craft a business testimonials book with written statements from existing Lawrenceville business leaders on topics ranging from business climate, market performance, and choosing the City to do business	ED	B, D											Included in Above
Action 5:	Develop each of these materials in print, digital and internet format, connecting them to the City's economic development website	ED	C											Included in Above
Action 6:	Create opportunity area concept materials highlighting the vision and opportunities in each area; do not market specific parcels where the property owner has expressed no interest	ED												Included in Above
Action 7:	Develop land and building asset marketing sheets for the property assemblage book, focusing information about size, location, cost, and amenities	ED												Included in Above
Action 8:	Regularly update the materials as market/business climate changes in the City	ED												A



Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN											
Implementation Matrix											
Objective #4: Take advantage of digital marketing and communication techniques	Implementation Lead	Implementation Timing (Year)									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>Action 1: Create and regularly maintain a Twitter account</p> <p>Action 2: Develop and produce a monthly public access news show/webcast highlighting the pertinent pieces from the newsletter</p> <p>Action 3: Develop a comprehensive digital outreach list to publish regular eNewsletters and make necessary eBlast messages</p> <p>Action 4: Build relationships with all local print, digital and social media outlets and create a regular communication strategy</p> <p>Action 5: Get a Quick Response code developed for the economic development website</p> <p>Action 6: Have all materials translated into other languages, starting with Spanish</p> <p>Action 7: Dedicate staff time to consistently and frequently update and maintain these efforts and relationships</p>	ED										A
	M										B
	ED										A
	M										A
	C										B
	ED										B
	C										A

LEGEND

Implementation Leaders

- Public:**
 BE - Gwinnett County Board of Education
 ED - Lawrenceville Economic Development Staff
 GC - Gwinnett County Government
 GE - Georgia Department of Economic Development
 GG - Georgia Gwinnett College
 GT - Gwinnett Tech
 LV - Lawrenceville City Council
 US - Federal entities (i.e. SBA, EDA...)
 ST - State of Georgia

Partners:

- AU - Aurora Theatre
 DD - Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority
 DA - Lawrenceville Development Authority
 PG - Partnership Gwinnett
 UT - Utilities
 SB - UGA Small Business Development Center
 AR - Atlanta Regional Commission
 CV - Gwinnett County Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Private

- C - Consultant
 D - Development Community
 F - Financial Institutions
 B - Business Leaders
 M - Local Media
 O - Property Owners
 R - Realtors/Brokers
 S - Site Selection Professionals
 Z - City of Lawrenceville Residents

Cost Estimate Legend:

- A - Under \$1,000
 B - \$1,000 to \$10,000
 C - \$10,000 to \$50,000
 D - \$50,000 to \$100,000
 E - \$100,000 to \$500,000
 F - Over \$500,000
 Unk. - Unknown





2 INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

Lawrenceville's original purpose in seeking an Economic Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) was to promote job creation, private investment and tax base expansion while maintaining a high quality of life, including preservation of the City's cultural and historic assets. The City is to be commended on its economic development efforts to date through an active business retention and expansion program, managed by the combined efforts of the City of Lawrenceville and Partnership Gwinnett, a community and economic development initiative of the Gwinnett Chamber. Therefore, the main objective of the EDSP was to build upon previous efforts by the City and Partnership Gwinnett to provide a vision and action plan to guide economic development activity in Lawrenceville over the next 15 years.

RKG Associates, Inc. was selected through a competitive bidding process to assist Lawrenceville in crafting the strategic economic development plan. In the course of the work program, RKG professionals reviewed relevant plans and documents, and interacted with key stakeholders including municipal staff, local real estate professionals and developers, business leaders, economic development practitioners, and others.

From the outset of the project and throughout the initial work program, specific focus was placed on the future disposition of various opportunity sites in Lawrenceville, comprising both publicly owned and privately owned properties. The opportunity sites were initially brought to the attention to the Consultant by the Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority (LDDA), whose charge is to promote economic development within the City's historic Downtown by facilitating the development of real property. As the work program progressed, the importance of the subject opportunity sites emerged as a priority, particularly sites where investor interest was evident. During a scheduled Economic Development Strategy Committee meeting, the Consultant and the Strategy Committee agreed that a course correction in the preparation of the EDSP was warranted. Group consensus shifted the project emphasis from traditional economic development and a target industry strategy to a combined community and economic development strategic growth plan to retain and expand the City's employment base through strategic marketing and real estate investments.

The findings of the work program informed the synthesis of a systematic and methodical process that ensures the integrity of the vision for Lawrenceville's economic development efforts while positioning the City to encourage continued reinvestment and revitalization of its economic opportunity areas. The report includes the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Executive Summary
- Chapter 2 – Introduction
- Chapter 3 – Socioeconomic Analysis
- Chapter 4 – Real Estate Market Analysis
- Chapter 5 – Competitive Position Analysis
- Chapter 6 – Opportunity Sites Analysis
- Chapter 7 – Implementation Strategy



3 SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

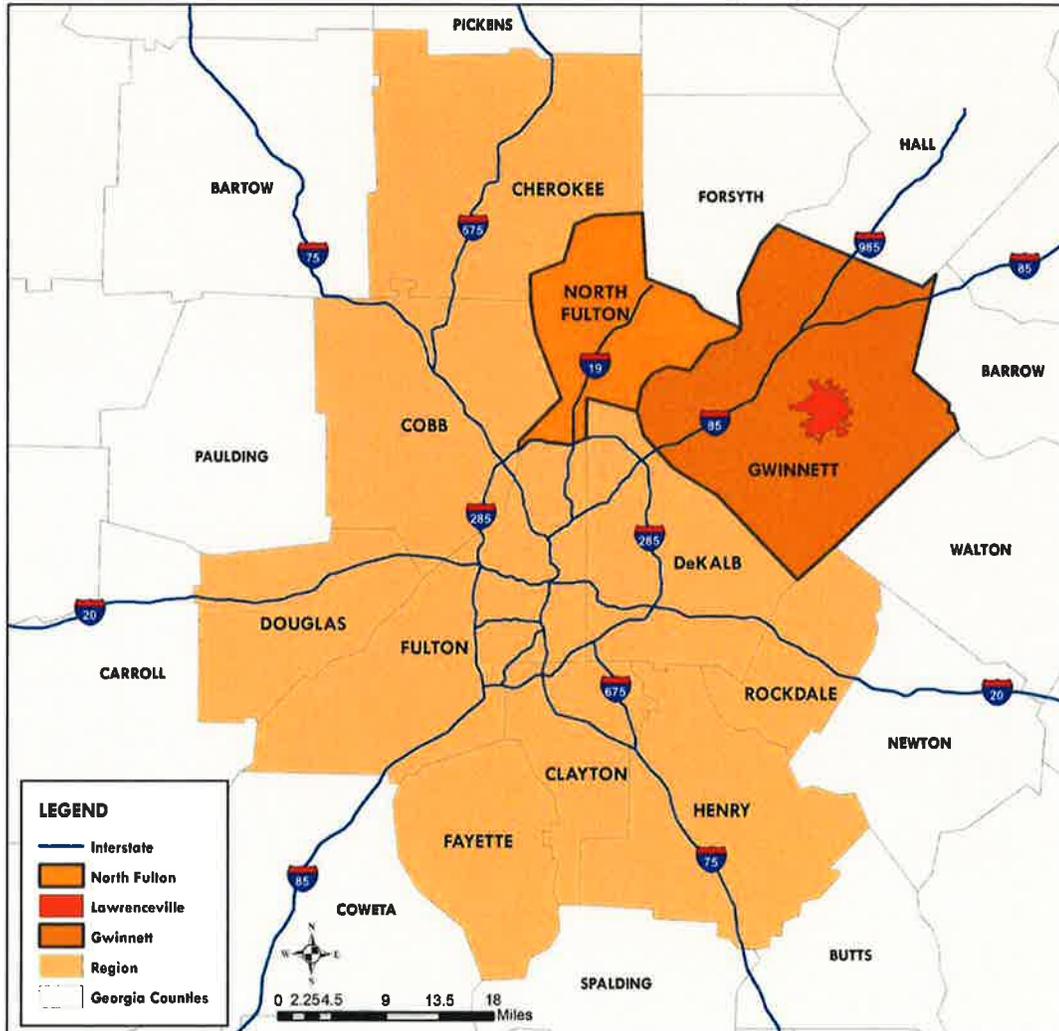
The following chapter analyzes demographic trends and projections in areas such as population, households, income, education attainment, and employment data. The analysis focuses on trends and conditions within the City of Lawrenceville, but includes comparative data for Gwinnett County and the surrounding region. The surrounding region (referred to as the “North Atlanta Region”) that was selected for comparative analysis includes the Counties of Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Henry, and Rockdale (Map 3-1). For the purposes of this analysis, selected socioeconomic characteristics for the area of Fulton County that is north of the City of Atlanta and I-285 are analyzed separately for comparison purposes, based on its adjacency to Gwinnett County. The data presented in this section provides insight into local and regional growth trends as well as projected future growth patterns. These factors provide the framework for understanding the economic activity in the City. The consultant utilized several public and private data sources to complete the analysis including the U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI (Site to Do Business)¹, and Demographics Now.

Population, household, and income trend data provided by ESRI includes decennial data from the U.S. Census Bureau summarized for users in the real estate industry. ESRI incorporates projection data developed by their proprietary approach. RKG Associates uses this data unless otherwise noted. Data in tables is generally categorized by geographic area, with the City of Lawrenceville, Gwinnett County and the North Atlanta Region listed separately for comparison purposes.

¹ ESRI is an internationally renowned data vendor of socioeconomic and market data.



Map 3-1
Lawrenceville, Georgia and Surrounding Region





B. DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

1. Population Trends and Projections

Information from the U.S. Census indicates that Lawrenceville has experienced significant population growth since 2000. The City's population increased from 22,705 residents in 2000 to 30,927 in 2014 according to estimates. The City's population increased by nearly 28% from 2000 to 2010, and an additional 6.5% from 2010 to 2014. Projections by ESRI indicate that the population of Lawrenceville will increase to approximately 34,100 residents by 2019.

Despite these notable gains, the City remains behind growth rates for Gwinnett County as a whole. Gwinnett County experienced a very robust population increase of approximately 276,000 residents, or 36.9% from 2000 to 2010 and 7.4% from 2010 to 2014.

However, Lawrenceville experienced a similar or higher growth rate to both North Fulton County and the entire North Atlanta Region during the study period. The North Atlanta Region's population grew approximately 27% during the same period, equating to an increase of approximately 812,000 residents. North Fulton County's population increased 31% from 2000 to 2014, at a rate of 31%.

Like many southern and Sunbelt States, the North Atlanta Region experienced strong population growth in recent decades. The continued relocation of jobs from other parts of the U.S. in addition to the influx of retiring Baby Boomers has swelled the region's population base. Although Gwinnett

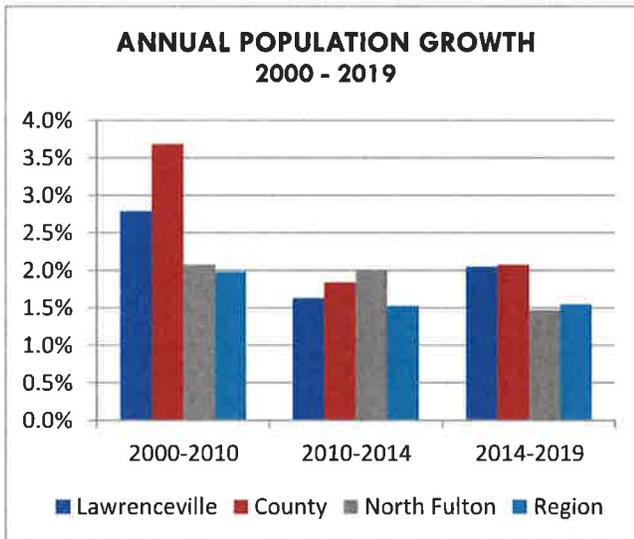
County saw a reduction in the work force in 2009 and a spike in unemployment in 2010 (see Section C), the workforce has nonetheless continued to increase each year since 2009. The regional success in metro Atlanta in attracting jobs and retirees combined with the ability of Lawrenceville to absorb demand, population grew at an annual rate of 2.8% from 2000 to 2010 and 1.6% from 2010 through

Table 3-1
Population Trends
2000-2019

	2000	2010	2014	2019
POPULATION COUNT				
Lawrenceville	22,705	29,037	30,927	34,093
Gwinnett County	588,403	805,321	864,587	954,279
North Fulton County	266,041	321,374	347,244	372,747
North Atlanta Region	3,430,082	4,107,750	4,358,286	4,695,590
PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION				
Lawrenceville	—	27.9%	6.5%	10.2%
Gwinnett County	—	36.9%	7.4%	10.4%
North Fulton County	—	20.8%	8.0%	7.3%
North Atlanta Region	—	19.8%	6.1%	7.7%
ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION				
Lawrenceville	—	2.8%	1.6%	2.0%
Gwinnett County	—	3.7%	1.8%	2.1%
North Fulton County	—	2.1%	2.0%	1.5%
North Atlanta Region	—	2.0%	1.5%	1.5%

Source: Site to Do Business; RKG Associates 2015

Figure 3-1



Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc., 2014



2014. Population growth in Lawrenceville and Gwinnett County is projected to proceed at annual rates of 2.0% and 2.1%, respectively, through 2019, compared to 1.6% for the region (Figure 3-1).

2. Household Trends

Household growth trends typically parallel population trends. In Lawrenceville, the number of households grew 32% from 2000 to 2014, adding 2,671. An additional 1,500 households are projected to be added by 2019. Gwinnett County saw an increase in households of 86,523, or 43%, from 2000 to 2014, showing just how strong a factor regional growth has been. Indeed, the rest of the region grew 29% during this time period. By comparison, North Fulton County’s households increased by a slightly higher rate of 30% (Table 3-2, Figure 3-2).

Average household sizes increased slightly from 2000 to 2014 in Gwinnett County (2.91 and 2.99, respectively) and Lawrenceville (2.76 and 2.84, respectively).

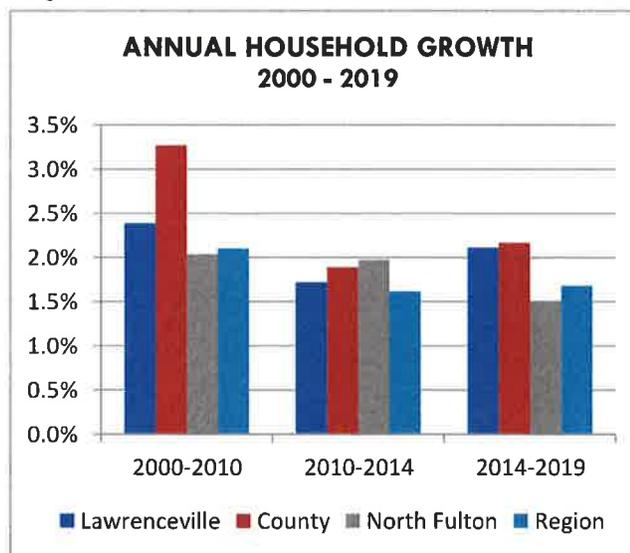
Contrary to household trends in the subject geographies, a general decline in average household size has been observed nationally, as there are increasing numbers of single-adult households, one-parent households, and generally lower fertility rates than in the past. Smaller household size could also be the result of an increase in the “empty-nest” retirement age population consisting largely of couples who no longer have children living with them. To this point, the attractiveness of Gwinnett County and Lawrenceville as a place to raise children make them popular destinations for family households.

Table 3-2
Household Trends
2000-2019

	2000	2010	2014	2019
HOUSEHOLD COUNT				
Lawrenceville	8,237	10,206	10,908	12,061
Gwinnett County	202,290	268,519	288,813	320,126
North Fulton County	103,612	124,749	134,603	144,760
North Atlanta Region	1,365,739	1,653,152	1,759,929	1,907,869
PERCENT CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLDS				
Lawrenceville		23.9%	6.9%	10.6%
Gwinnett County		32.7%	7.6%	10.8%
North Fulton County		20.4%	7.9%	7.5%
North Atlanta Region		21.0%	6.5%	8.4%
ANNUAL PERCENT CHANGE IN HOUSEHOLDS				
Lawrenceville		2.4%	1.7%	2.1%
Gwinnett County		3.3%	1.9%	2.2%
North Fulton County		2.0%	2.0%	1.5%
North Atlanta Region		2.1%	1.6%	1.7%

Source: Site to Do Business; RKG Associates 2015

Figure 3-2



Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc., 2015

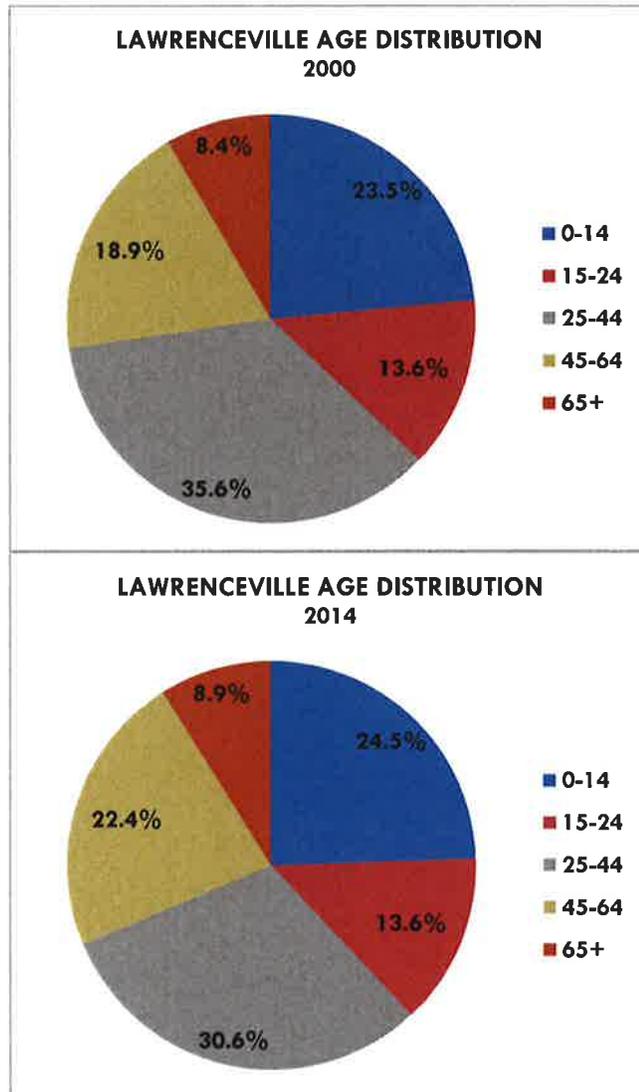


3. Population by Age

Lawrenceville’s median age has remained fairly consistent for the past fifteen years, rising from 32.5 in 2000 to 32.8 in 2014. It is among the lowest in the North Atlanta Region, compared to 34.2 in the county overall and 37.3 in North Fulton County.

Lawrenceville has seen an increase of 1% in the 0-14 age group and has maintained a 13.6% proportion in the 15-24 age group since 2000. Although the young working age group of 25 to 44 year olds showed a smaller proportion in 2014 compared to 2000, the higher income earning 45 to 64 year old age group increased its proportionate size from 18.9% in 2000 to 22.4% in 2014. The 65-plus retirement age group increased its proportion only slightly during this period, from 8.4% to 8.9%, suggesting that Lawrenceville is not, in and of itself, a retirement destination. However, the data indicate that Lawrenceville is attractive for more established households. Given the perceptions of Lawrenceville schools, it is likely that a number of these households do not have school-aged children.

Figure 3-3



Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc., 2015



4. Racial and Ethnic Composition

Race and ethnicity are considered two separate traits by the U.S. Census Bureau. Race refers to White, Black, Asian, etc. Ethnicity refers to a person's country of origin. For example, Hispanic means people from Central America, South America, and other Hispanic or Latino countries. Both race and ethnicity are self-reported and are based upon individual preferences. Race and ethnicity are not mutually exclusive. A person could be of Hispanic ethnicity and fit into any of the racial categories. Simply put, the race and ethnicity percentages do not equal 100% because a person can be both Hispanic and White.

The racial composition shifted in both Lawrenceville and Gwinnett County from 2000 to 2014. In Lawrenceville, the proportion of Asians increased from 3% to 6%, the proportion of Blacks increased from 14% to 32%, the proportion of Whites decreased from 76% to 48%, the proportion of Other Races increased from 5% to 10%, and the proportion of Multi-Race increased from 2% to 3%. During the same period, the proportion of Hispanics increased from 12% to 22%.

In Gwinnett County, the proportion of Asians increased from 7% to 11%, the proportion of Blacks increased from 13% to 25%, the proportion of Whites decreased from 73% to 52%, the proportion of Other Races increased from 4% to 9%, and the proportion of Multi-Race increased from 2% to 3%. During the same period, the proportion of Hispanics increased from 11% to 21%.

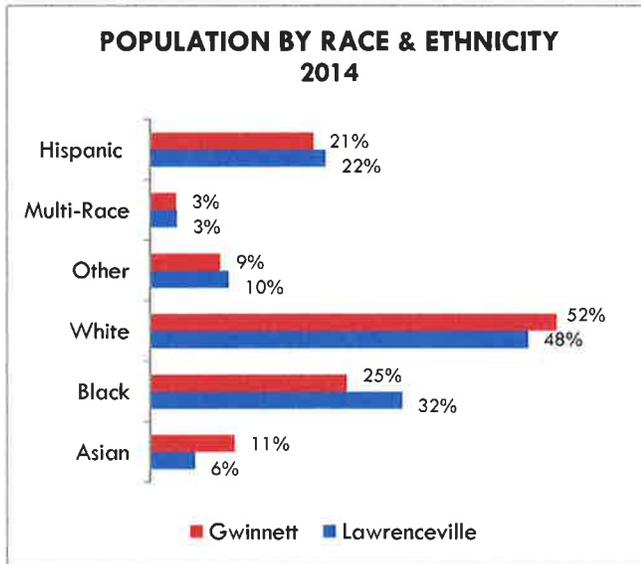
These changes in the local population's diversity could represent potential demand for new businesses to serve the needs of these growing ethnic groups and the opportunity to train entrepreneurs to target these needs. It may also offer the potential to broaden its appeal by creating more ethnic and cultural offerings within Lawrenceville.

Table 3-3
Race and Hispanic Composition
2000 to 2014

Race/ Ethnicity	Lawrenceville		Gwinnett County	
	2000	2014	2000	2014
Asian	3%	6%	7%	11%
Black	14%	32%	13%	25%
White	76%	48%	73%	52%
Other	5%	10%	4%	9%
Multi-Race	2%	3%	2%	3%
Hispanic	12%	22%	11%	21%

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015

Figure 3-4



Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc., 2015

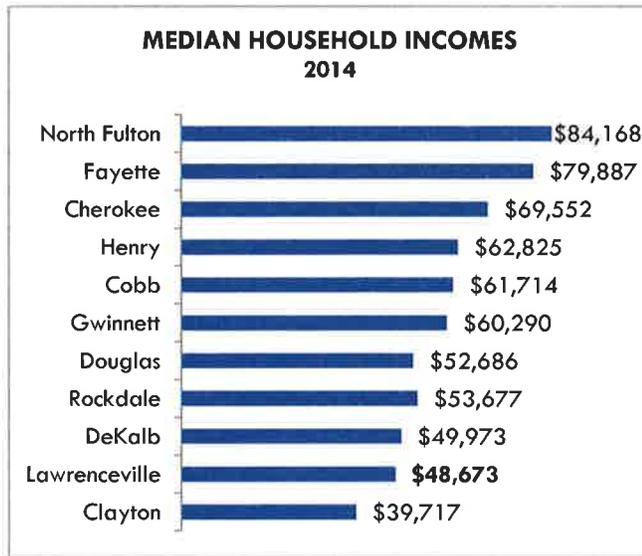


5. Household Income

Lawrenceville’s median family income is relatively low as compared to surrounding jurisdictions in the region. The City’s \$48,673 median household income (Figure 3-5) is approximately 80% of the Gwinnett County median and only 58% of the median for North Fulton County (comprising of Mountain Park, Johns Creek, Milton, Roswell, Alpharetta, and Sandy Springs).

One reason that Lawrenceville’s median household income is relatively low is the concentration of modest, aging multifamily developments. Being the County Seat and a well-established industrial center, Lawrenceville and a larger proportion of housing built prior to the County’s population explosion in the 1980s and 1990s. As this housing stock has aged and more modern and sizeable unites have been built elsewhere in the County, Lawrenceville became a value alternative for households working in Gwinnett County.

Figure 3-5



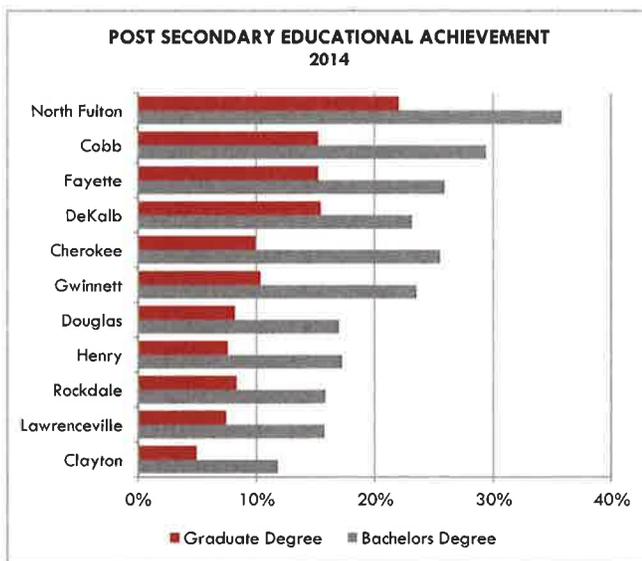
Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc., 2015

6. Education Attainment

The education attainment of Lawrenceville’s labor force is a significant factor in supporting efforts to expand economic development and attract new employers. Figure 3-6 illustrates the educational attainment levels of the population 25 years and older for the City and surrounding region. Less than 25% of Lawrenceville’s adult population has less than a Bachelor’s degree. In contrast, approximately 35% of Gwinnett County’s adult population has a four-year college degree.

This finding is consistent with the household income trends, as there is a high correlation between education attainment and income. The data indicate the need for greater workforce training programs within Lawrenceville to provide local residents access to the high tech jobs being attracted to the County.

Figure 3-6



Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, 2015



C. ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

The economic base analysis examines changes in the labor force and business characteristics of Lawrenceville and also provides comparisons to the region in an effort to understand and frame the economic opportunities for the City. This analysis includes data on employment, major employers, labor force and unemployment trends, occupational skills and commuting patterns, which will help to establish a context for evaluating the local and regional development potential.

1. Employment Trends

The City of Lawrenceville historically has been an employment center for Gwinnett County. In addition to being the County Seat (with the County government and courts system located in Lawrenceville), the City also is home to the Gwinnett Medical Center. The growth of Lawrenceville as an economic hub is not surprising, as it is in the geographic center of the County. That said, other employment centers have grown and exceeded the economic scale of Lawrenceville. The I-85 corridor from I-285 to the I-985 split has grown into the economic center of the County. Peachtree Corners also has a comparable employment concentration as Lawrenceville.

Table 3-4
At-Place Employment by Industry 2002-2011 Trends
City of Lawrenceville

NAICS*	DESCRIPTION	2002	2011	Δ 2002 to 2011	PERCENT CHANGE
	TOTAL ALL JOBS	25,931	27,969	2,038	8%
62	Health care & social assistance	3,351	6,576	3,225	96%
61	Educational services	2,260	4,159	1,899	84%
90	Government	3,801	4,845	1,044	27%
54	Professional, scientific & technical services	861	1,123	262	30%
72	Hotels and restaurants	960	1,158	198	21%
52	Finance & insurance	602	606	4	1%
11	Agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting	1	0	-1	--
21	Mining, oil and gas extraction	5	0	-5	--
44-45	Retail trade	2,374	2,362	-12	-1%
48-49	Transportation and warehousing	223	213	-10	-4%
71	Arts, entertainment & recreation	166	144	-22	-13%
81	Other services	645	595	-50	-8%
22	Utilities	51	0	-51	--
53	Real estate & rental & leasing	318	255	-63	-20%
51	Information	606	470	-136	-22%
56	Admin. & support, waste management	1,633	1,426	-207	-13%
23	Construction	1,253	847	-406	-32%
42	Wholesale trade	1,549	1,059	-490	-32%
31-32	Manufacturing	2,721	1,567	-1,154	-42%
55	Management of companies & enterprises	2,551	564	-1,987	-78%

* North American Industry Classification System Code

Source: U.S. Census; RKG Associates 2015



The growth of these transportation corridor areas (Peachtree Corners is located along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard near I-285 and Fulton County) has attracted many of the businesses not dependent on the healthcare and government economies. While Lawrenceville experienced an 8% net increase in employment between 2002 and 2011 (Table 3-4), the City's economic base remains heavily dependent upon the *Health Care and Social Services* (6,576 employees) and *Government Services* (4,845 employees) sectors. These two sectors account for more than 40% of the City's employment base. *Educational Services* was the next largest total with 4,159 employees.

Employment growth data indicate that the City's primary growth sectors are *Health Care and Social Services*, *Government Services* and *Educational Services*. These three sectors accounted for almost all of the job growth in the City, and experienced a greater net gain than all of the other industries, which experienced a net loss of 4,130 jobs. To put this in context, these three employment sectors went from accounting for 36% of the City's employment in 2002 to more than 55% in 2011. In contrast, the City lost more than 1,150 manufacturing jobs during the same time period. Anecdotal data indicate that much of the City's industrial base has transitioned from production based industrial users to warehouse and distribution, which requires substantially fewer workers for similar size space.

The data indicate two opportunities. First, the City should focus on sustaining and enhancing its healthcare industry base. Preserving the hospital and surrounding medical uses is critical for the City to maintain its economic and fiscal health. Second, the City should invest resources to diversify the local economic base. Becoming so dependent on government activity is not ideal for a community.

2. Major Employers

Table 3-5 lists Lawrenceville's largest private sector employers and identifies their product or service provided. The list was acquired from larger list of the 29 top employers in Gwinnett County. Lawrenceville is home to Gwinnett County's two largest employers, Gwinnett Medical Center and Cisco Systems. However, health care and manufacturing are the only sectors represented for Lawrenceville.



Table 3-5
Major Non-Retail Private Sector Employers 2011
Gwinnett County

Rank	Company Name	Industry	Specialty	Location	Employment
1	Gwinnett Medical Center	Health care	Acute care hospital	Lawrenceville	4,100
2	Cisco Systems, Inc.	Manufacturing	Radio and TV communications equipment	Lawrenceville	1,900
3	Fisery, Inc.	Information	Data processing services	Norcross	1,600
4	Primerica Financial Services	Finance	Financial services	Duluth	1,600
5	NCR Corp	Manufacturing	Computer and electronic products	Duluth	1,400
6	Nextel South Corp	Information	Telecommunications and wireless	Norcross	1,400
7	Publix Supermarket	Retail trade	Supermarket	Countywide	1,300
8	Assurant Specialty Property	Insurance	Property and casualty	Duluth	1,200
9	Atlanta Journal Constitution	Information	Newspaper publishing	Countywide	850
10	Eastside Medical Center	Health care	Acute care hospital	Snellville	800
11	Office Depot Distribution	Trans. & Whsg.	Distribution	Buford	650
12	Sage Peachtree	Information	Software publishers	Duluth	650
13	Merial LLC	Manufacturing	Veterinary medicines	Duluth	600
14	IKON Office Solutions	Rental	Office Machinery	Norcross	550
15	WIKI Instrument Corp	Manufacturing	Measuring and controlling devices	Lawrenceville	540
16	RockTenn Co.	Manufacturing	Paperboard containers	Norcross	530
17	Shumate Mechanical	Retail trade	Household appliances	Duluth	515
18	AGCO Corp	Manufacturing	Agricultural implements	Duluth	500
19	HCA-Atlanta	Health care	Acute care hospital	Lawrenceville	500
20	ViaSat Inc.	Professional, Scientific	Antenna Systems	Duluth	500
21	Uhs-Pruitt Corp	Health care	Assisted living	Norcross	450
22	Immucor, Inc.	Manufacturing	Pharmaceutical and medicine	Norcross	400
23	Unisource Worldwide, Inc	Manufacturing	Packaging	Norcross	400
24	Optimus Solutions LLC	Professional, scientific	Computer systems design	Norcross	385
25	Network Communications, Inc	Information	Internet & web search portals	Countywide	380

Source: Gwinnett Chamber Economic Development



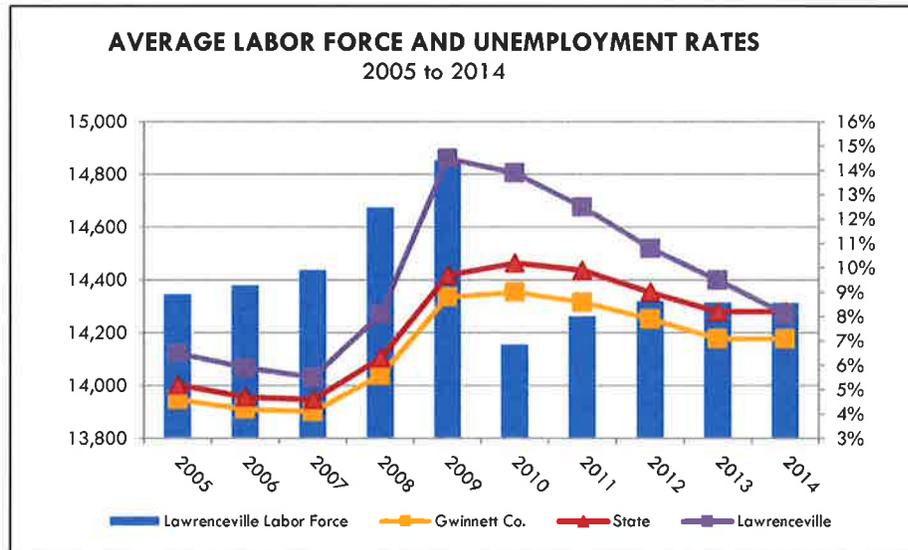
3. Labor Force and Unemployment Trends

The labor force and unemployment rate are measures of the size of a region’s active, resident worker base, as well as their current employment status. The labor force includes workers who are currently employed, unemployed, or actively looking for work. Lawrenceville’s labor force rose from 14,347 in 2005 to a ten-year peak of 14,854 in 2009. In 2010, the labor force reacted to the recession by contracting to 14,155, and has stabilized over the past three years at 14,314 to 14,319. By comparison, Gwinnett County’s labor force increased in size considerably over the past decade, from just over 380,000 in 2004 to just over 440,000 in 2013, in spite of the recessionary downturn from 2009 to 2011.

The effects of the great recession had a greater impact on Lawrenceville than Gwinnett County, or the state, for that matter. The unemployment rate in the City rose from 5.5% in 2007 to 8.1% in 2008, then dramatically increased to 14.5% in 2009, the same year the workforce peaked. Since 2009, the unemployment rate has declined steadily to 8.1% in 2014. Gwinnett County and the State fared better from the recession, with unemployment rates peaking in 2010 at 9.0% and 10.2%, respectively. The State’s 2014 unemployment rate was 8.1%, similar to Lawrenceville’s, compared to 7.1% in Gwinnett County the same year (Figure 3-7).

The construction, manufacturing and wholesale trade sectors were particularly hard hit by the recession. Between 2008 and 2010, Lawrenceville lost 471 construction jobs, 394 manufacturing jobs, and 1,244 wholesale trade jobs.

Figure 3-7



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics; RKG Associates, 2015

4. Occupational Skill Levels

Detailed occupational data for the Atlanta MSA (from which Lawrenceville draws its workforce) for 2013 was obtained from the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics and categorized by job type and skill level (Figure 3-8). These groupings were derived from the consultant’s knowledge regarding the skill and

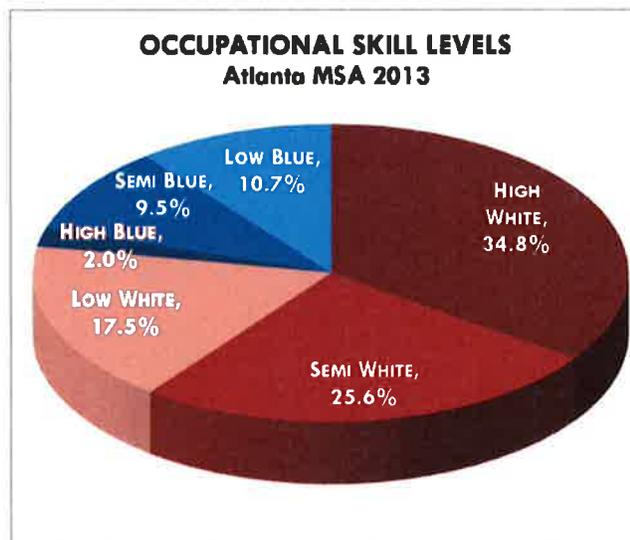


educational requirements of general occupational categories. Although it is difficult to group occupational categories in this manner with great precision, the results provide some indication of the distribution and diversity of skills available within the labor force. The occupational categories and their descriptions are as follows:

- **Highly-Skilled White Collar (HSWC)** – a professional position requiring a college degree, with supervisory/ management responsibility or specialized training while working within a white-collar work environment.
- **Highly-Skilled Blue Collar (HSBC)** – a trade or non-professional position requiring less than an advanced degree, but some post-secondary education, a certificate, or specialized training or skill while working within a blue collar work environment.
- **Semi-Skilled White Collar (SSWC)** – a professional position requiring less than an advanced degree, but some post-secondary education, a certificate, or specialized training or skill while working within a white collar work environment.
- **Semi-Skilled Blue Collar (SSBC)** – a trade position requiring less than an advanced or trade school degree but requiring some specialized training or skill, while working within a blue collar environment.
- **Low-Skilled White Collar (LSWC)** – a position within a white collar work environment requiring no degree or formal schooling beyond high school, but requiring some on-the-job training.
- **Low-Skilled Blue Collar (LSBC)** – a position within a trade profession requiring no advanced degree or formal schooling, but requiring some on-the-job training.

Despite the overarching success of the Sunbelt States to attract manufacturing and other production-based industries, the Metro Atlanta area economy has been driven more by the growth of knowledge and information-based service businesses. In fact, the greater U.S. economy continues to move away from production-based employment for more service-based industries. To this point, it is not surprising that the Atlanta MSA has a concentration of white-collar laborers. The data indicates that nearly 72% of local workers in the MSA are classified as high-skilled or semi-skilled workers (Figure 3-8). The relatively low concentration (11.5%) of labor classified as high- and semi-skilled blue collar workers may seem to present a challenge in terms of growing and supporting production-based industries.

Figure 3-8



Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics; RKG Associates, 2015



Concentration of white-collar workers reflective of the County's transition from production base to information based economy. This large collection of service-based employees is an asset to City in trying to recruit new office-based businesses. Focusing on small business and entrepreneurial development is appropriate for the size and scale of commercial properties and development scale in Lawrenceville. That said, preserving industrial base should be a priority, making it important for the City to work with education partners to develop programs that meet the needs of existing production businesses while creating a labor force for PGs recruitment effort.

5. Commuting Patterns

Understanding commuting patterns can provide useful insight into evaluating potential actions in developing an economic development strategy. Commuting patterns highlight the flow of workers into, and out of, a given labor market area and as such, can help to indicate where there may be potential to capture additional jobs that are "leaking" from the local economic base.

As noted earlier in this chapter, Lawrenceville is an employment center within Gwinnett County. 2011 Census data indicate that almost 26,900 people commute into Lawrenceville to work. In contrast, approximately 11,100 Lawrenceville residents work outside the City (Figure 3-9). From an economic climate perspective, having a large employment base is positive for a community. The net importing of labor and the outflow of residents to outside workplaces confirm Lawrenceville's current position as a key employment node. In 2012, the City had nearly the same number of jobs as residents.

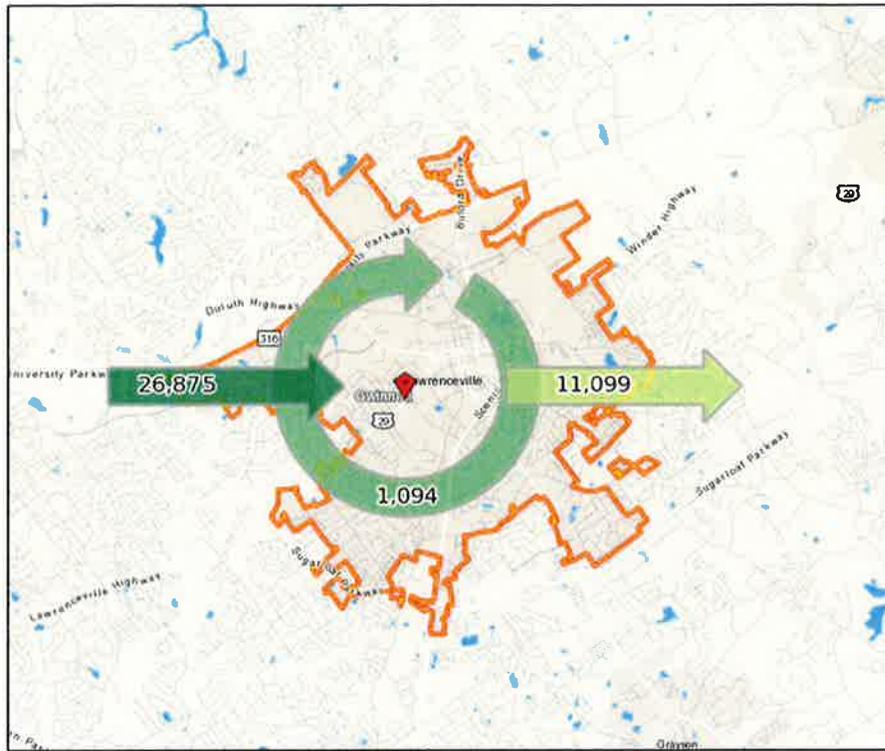
However, the data indicate a greater issue for Lawrenceville's community and economic development efforts. Less than 1,100 of the nearly 28,000 persons employed in Lawrenceville—approximately 4% of the total—both live and work in the City. This finding is consistent with anecdotal data provided by local real estate professionals that limited housing variety and price points limit the attractiveness of Lawrenceville as a place to live. The income and population data indicate a large number of households moving into Lawrenceville have modest incomes, and are seeking the benefits of lower cost housing in a convenient location.

The out-commuting data corroborates this perspective, as only 7.9% of the City's 11,100 residents who leave Lawrenceville to work commute to the City of Atlanta. More than 31% commute to other locations within Gwinnett County, predominantly unincorporated area of the County. Sandy Springs and Alpharetta—two communities with little modest-cost housing, rank 3rd and 4th in terms of out-commuter city/CDP destinations for Lawrenceville residents.

To these points, the City's community and economic development needs to incorporate the expansion of housing types and price points within the City. It will be challenging to encourage small businesses to locate within Lawrenceville if the business owner will end up living in Snellville or Duluth.



Figure 3-9





4 REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines recent real estate trends within the City and surrounding area, with a focus on non-residential and residential market forces that are shaping the City's development environment. The analysis includes factors such as existing inventory of buildings and units, development trends within selected time frames, vacancy and absorption rates, and sales values/lease rates. In addition, RKG Associates conducted a number of interviews with local development and real estate professionals in order to understand the nuances of the market and to gain an "in-the-field" perspective on the potential demand and speculative investment climate.

Data was gathered from a number of sources, both public and private, which include: Gwinnett County, Site to Do Business (ESRI Business Solutions), CoStar, LoopNet and Demographics Now.

B. NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING INVENTORY AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

Based on a review of Gwinnett County's assessment records, a summary inventory has been compiled that illustrates the total building square footage for non-residential buildings in the City of Lawrenceville. The building uses presented in Table 4-1 correspond to the actual use types listed in the database.

As shown, there is approximately 15.3 million square feet (SF) of non-residential building space in the City. Warehouse uses represent the largest portion of the inventory at 6.4 million SF, or approximately 42% of the City's total. Manufacturing space comprises 2.2 million square feet. Although shopping centers comprise 1.4 million square feet, combined retail, including grocery, personal services and dining facilities (restaurants) totals nearly 3 million square feet. Medical office space is just over 1 million square feet, compared to approximately 750,000 square feet of general office space. This is due to the strong influence of Gwinnett Medical Center and its attraction to physicians and other medical practitioners.

In the ten-year period from 2005 through 2014, warehousing dominated development with almost a half million square feet of new space. With the exception of a 93,000-square-foot mini-storage facility, the remaining fifteen warehouse construction projects comprised buildings ranging in size from 4,100 square feet to 49,000 square feet. These new buildings were dispersed throughout the city, mainly located along commercial corridors.

New medical office space totaled approximately 419,000 square feet during this period, comprising twelve buildings, two of which exceeded 120,000 square feet. Medical office buildings also had the highest rate of growth among non-residential uses at just over 42%. Medical office buildings typically tend to cluster on hospital property or within a mile of a hospital. Smaller clinics and specialty practitioners such as dentists and ophthalmologists are flexible with regard to building type and location. General office space added during this period consisted of sixteen buildings totaling



approximately 163,000 square feet. Nine of the sixteen buildings were less than 5,000 square feet in size.

Retail additions to inventory included eleven, fairly small, neighborhood-type shopping centers totaling approximately 298,000 square feet. Stand-alone retail developed during this period totaled 243,000 square feet, which includes a 180,000-square-foot Walmart Super Center.

**Table 4-1
 Non-Residential Inventory
 City of Lawrenceville 2015**

Land Use	Total SF	Percent of Total	New Development 2005 - 2014	Percent Growth
Warehousing	6,421,815	42.0%	498,761	7.8%
Manufacturing	2,235,074	14.6%	274,309	12.3%
Shopping Center	1,431,962	9.4%	298,054	20.8%
Medical Office	1,017,262	6.6%	418,854	41.2%
Stand Alone Retail	874,882	5.7%	242,680	27.7%
General Office	749,914	4.9%	163,110	21.8%
Automotive	632,049	4.1%	53,824	8.5%
Hospital	571,556	3.7%	0	0.0%
Grocery	414,192	2.7%	37,601	9.1%
Mixed-Use	210,287	1.4%	0	0.0%
Lodging	200,310	1.3%	0	0.0%
Downtown	157,032	1.0%	0	0.0%
Dining Facilities	144,518	0.9%	13,255	9.2%
Financial	125,294	0.8%	23,729	18.9%
Personal Services	114,822	0.8%	10,673	9.3%
TOTAL	15,300,969	100%	2,034,850	

Source: Gwinnett County Tax Assessor 2015

C. OFFICE MARKET

1. Market Trends

This section details the recent and historical real estate trends in the regional office market containing Lawrenceville. The data provided in this section are obtained from CoStar, a national real estate data tracking and reporting service. Costar typically categorizes office buildings under three classifications:

- **Class A** - These buildings represent the newest and highest quality buildings in their market. They are generally the best looking buildings with the best construction, and possess high-quality building infrastructure. Class A buildings also are well located, have good access, and are professionally managed. As a result of this, they attract the highest quality tenants and also command the highest rents.
- **Class B** - Class B buildings are generally a little older, but still have good quality management and tenants. Oftentimes, value-added investors target these buildings as investments since well-located Class B buildings can be returned to their Class A glory



through renovations such as facade and common area improvements. Class B buildings should generally not be functionally obsolete and should be well maintained.

- **Class C** - The lowest classification of office building and space is Class C. These are older buildings and are located in less desirable areas and are often in need of extensive renovation. Architecturally, these buildings are the least desirable, and building infrastructure and technology is outdated. As a result, Class C buildings have the lowest rental rates, take the longest time to lease, and are often targeted as re-development opportunities.

CoStar divides the greater Atlanta office market into 10 submarket clusters comprising 49 separate office submarkets. The submarket that contains the City of Lawrenceville is referred to as the Lawrenceville/Lilburn submarket, which is part of the Northeast Atlanta submarket cluster (Figure 4-1).

Costar only documents office space that is leased or available for lease. The Lawrenceville/Lilburn submarket is consists of mainly of Class B and Class C office space, with Class A space making up less than 7.5% of the total inventory at just over 7 million square feet (Table 4-2). Average Class A rents in the Lawrenceville/Lilburn submarket are more than \$5.00 higher per square foot than the Northeast Atlanta cluster, which may reflect the type of product available. Similarly, both Class B and C office space supports higher rents than the Northeast Atlanta market, indicating that the Lawrenceville/Lilburn submarket commands a slight price premium and is considered desirable.

Table 4-2
Lawrenceville Office Market Characteristics
Year End 2014

Type	Existing Inventory		Vacancy	Asking Rents
	# Bids	Total RBA*		
NORTHEAST ATLANTA MARKET				
Class A	68	8,789,079	16.2%	\$20.05
Class B	1,383	21,498,348	19.6%	\$15.13
Class C	1,804	8,963,233	11.7%	\$12.83
Total	3,255	39,250,660	17.0%	\$16.14
LAWRENCEVILLE/LILBURN SUBMARKET				
Class A	5	528,354	24.0%	\$25.16
Class B	346	3,597,992	16.4%	\$16.39
Class C	669	2,969,250	10.6%	\$13.33
Total	1,020	7,095,596	14.5%	\$16.57

*rentable building area
 Source: CoStar; RKG Associates 2015

Year end 2014 market data show the Lawrenceville/Lilburn Class B and Class C office market outperforming the Northeast Atlanta cluster in terms of lower vacancies and higher rents. Future office development will depend on the area's ability to continue to attract and retain employers. Within the greater Atlanta office marketplace, vacancy rates in the 10% to 12% range are what are typically required to trigger new investment.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the office market dynamics peculiar to Lawrenceville, RKG Associates examined office property marketing activity in April of 2015. At that time, five Class A properties and twenty-nine Class B properties were listed for lease. No Class C properties were listed at this time, which is most likely attributable to broker marketing practices than lack of available inventory. Class C space is not considered investment grade property is an not marketed in the same way.

For the purposes of this analysis, RKG Associates sought to focus on the downtown market by first identifying office properties advertised for rent in Lawrenceville, then further focusing on properties in or near the downtown. In Spring 2015, there were 34 properties advertised for lease in Lawrenceville, 5 described as Class A and 29 described as Class B. Brokers are typically reluctant to list their office space as Class C, although some clearly are. Although the total square footage for all



properties advertised for lease was just under 150,000, 27 separate listings were for 5,000 square feet of space or less. Rents ranged from \$21.50 per square foot for Class A down to \$8.00 per square foot for Class B, although most Class B listings were in the \$12.00 to \$14.00 range.

The image below at left shows a 2-story, Class B office building located at 175 Langley Street, five blocks out of the downtown, with asking rents of \$10.50 to \$12.00 per square foot in two separate listings (on the left). The comparable Class B building on the right is at 200 E. Crogan Street, which is located in the downtown, with an asking rent of \$19.20 per square foot. As with any county seat or state capital, proximity to the seat of government carries a premium, and Lawrenceville is no exception.



2. Office Absorption

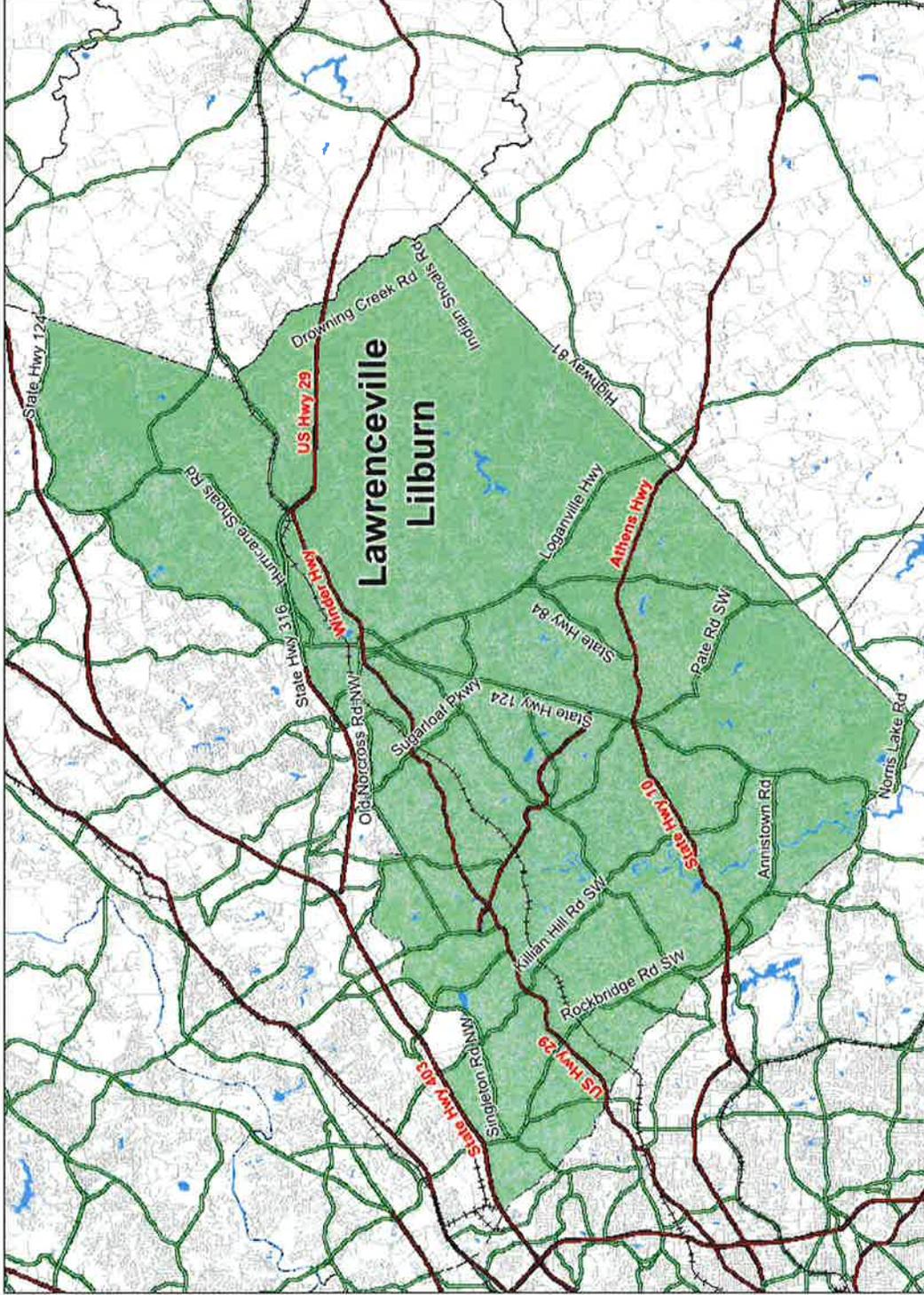
Although analysis of the office data indicates an oversupplied marketplace, local real estate professionals interviewed in the course of the work program suggested that downtown Lawrenceville could support additional office development. According to local realtors, downtown Lawrenceville's current inventory is consistently in demand, and properties for lease do not stay listed for long. To some degree, the desire to be located close to government offices transcends other market considerations. Nonetheless, Lawrenceville's office deliveries have averaged 16,000 square feet per year over the past ten years.

RKG Associates conservatively recommends that any new office space be developed as a component of mixed use development, and in small blocks of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet that can be easily divisible into 3,000- to 5,000-square-foot spaces. If an infill or redevelopment project is built in phases, like that which would be developed on the 17-acre Lawn Block, the market can be tested with an initial 15,000-square-foot Class A office component in the first phase.

Commercial space could be confined to the ground floor in the initial project phase, offering the flexibility to respond to whatever market demand is prevalent, such as retail, personal services, professional services, or other business. If the office market responds positively to new inventory in the downtown, investors can program more office into subsequent phases. Future phases could include purpose built office buildings if the demand warrants.



Figure 4-1



Lawrenceville/Lilburn Office Submarket

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D. INDUSTRIAL MARKET

CoStar classifies industrial space into two categories by use type: **flex** is a type of building designed to be versatile, which may be used in combination with office, research and development, quasi-retail sales, and including, but not limited to production, warehouse, and distribution uses; **warehouse** is primarily used for storing and/or distributing product, and typically includes a small office component.

Many industrial buildings are likely to be purpose-built and owner occupied, particularly if they house some unique manufacturing operation. A prime example of this is the Atlanta Attachment Company, which manufactures sewing automation equipment and components, and is located in the industrial area near Gwinnett County Airport. Many of the industrial buildings available for lease are located in the RACO/Gwinnett 316 Industrial Park near the Gwinnett Medical Center. CoStar tracks 42 industrial submarkets in the greater Atlanta market. The submarket that is relevant to Lawrenceville is the GA 316/Lawrenceville submarket, which is contained within the Northeast Atlanta submarket cluster (Figure 4-2).

Table 4-3
Lawrenceville Industrial Market Characteristics
Year End 2014

Type	Existing Inventory		Vacancy	Asking Rents
	# Blds	Total RBA*		
NORTHEAST ATLANTA MARKET				
Flex	1,124	21,280,945	14.8%	\$7.17
Warehouse	3,121	153,499,928	6.6%	\$4.10
Total	4,245	174,780,873	7.6%	\$4.60
GA 316/LAWRENCEVILLE SUBMARKET				
Flex	162	1,668,346	12.0%	\$8.16
Warehouse	339	17,420,615	7.1%	\$3.75
Total	501	19,088,961	7.5%	\$4.13

*rentable building area

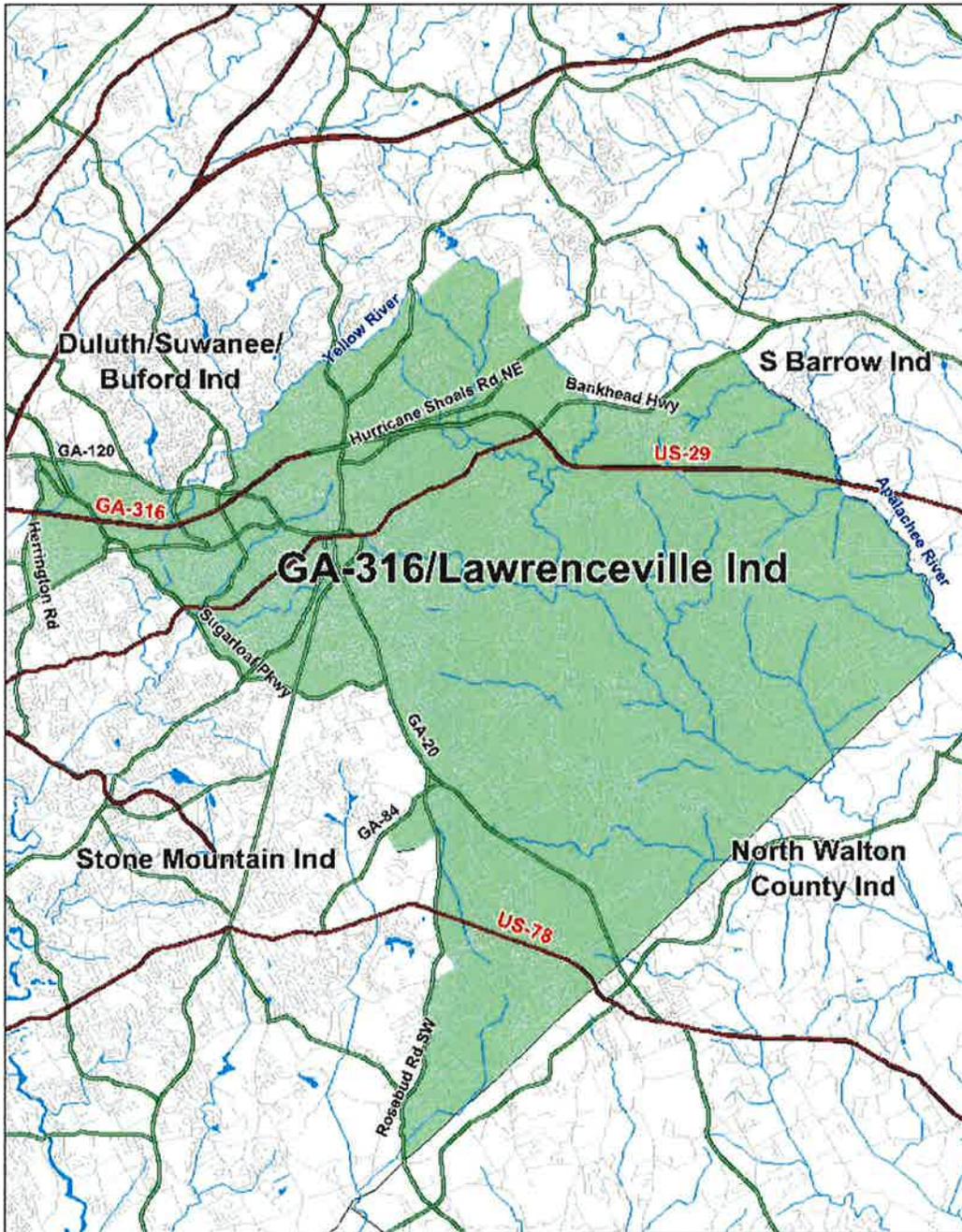
Source: CoStar; RKG Associates 2015

Flex space for lease in the GA 316/Lawrenceville submarket amounts to approximately 1.7 million square feet in 162 buildings, and has a vacancy rate of 12%. Warehouse space available for lease totals 17.4 million square feet with a 7.1% vacancy rate. The greater Northeast Atlanta market contains 21.3 million square feet of flex space with an 14.8% vacancy rate and 153.5 million square feet of warehouse with a 6.6% vacancy rate (Table 4-3).

Similar to office, the GA 316/Lawrenceville submarket performed somewhat better than the Northeast Atlanta submarket cluster. Moving forward into the future however, Lawrenceville's industrial market will be constrained due to the diminishing supply of available industrial land.



Figure 4-2



GA-316/Lawrenceville Industrial Submarket

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E. RETAIL MARKET

1. Retail Inventory and Performance

A key step in the assessment of the retail potential is the examination of market inventory and performance. CoStar generally classifies retail into five major categories by building configuration, including: (1) **general retail**, which is typically single tenant freestanding general purpose commercial buildings with parking, and includes Main Street type retail; (2) **malls**, regional or super regional centers ranging in size from 250,000 square feet to 1.5 million square feet built around two or more full-line department stores; (3) **power centers**, typically consisting of several freestanding anchors and a minimum amount of small specialty tenants; (4) **in-line shopping centers**, neighborhood or community centers ranging in size from 50,000 to 250,000 square feet built around a junior department store, variety store, super drugstore, or discount department store as the major tenant, in addition to a supermarket; and, (5) **specialty centers**, usually located in tourist areas and include outlet centers and theme centers.

Table 4-4
Lawrenceville Retail Market Characteristics
Year End 2014

Type	Existing Inventory		Vacancy	Asking Rents
	# Blds	Total RBA*		
GWINNETT MARKET				
General Retail	2,659	23,676,501	5.1%	\$12.00
Mall	5	4,858,607	4.4%	\$11.48
Power Center	14	5,674,050	4.6%	\$14.52
Shopping Center	675	29,597,173	13.7%	\$12.51
Specialty Center	2	564,757	25.2%	\$8.58
Total Retail	3,943	64,266,614	9.1%	\$12.28
LAWRENCEVILLE/DACULA SUBMARKET				
General Retail	475	3,616,361	2.0%	\$10.81
Mall	—	—	—	—
Power Center	1	345,131	5.1%	—
Shopping Center	92	4,646,316	12.4%	\$10.59
Specialty Center	—	—	—	—
Total Retail	646	8,607,808	7.7%	\$10.62

*rentable building area

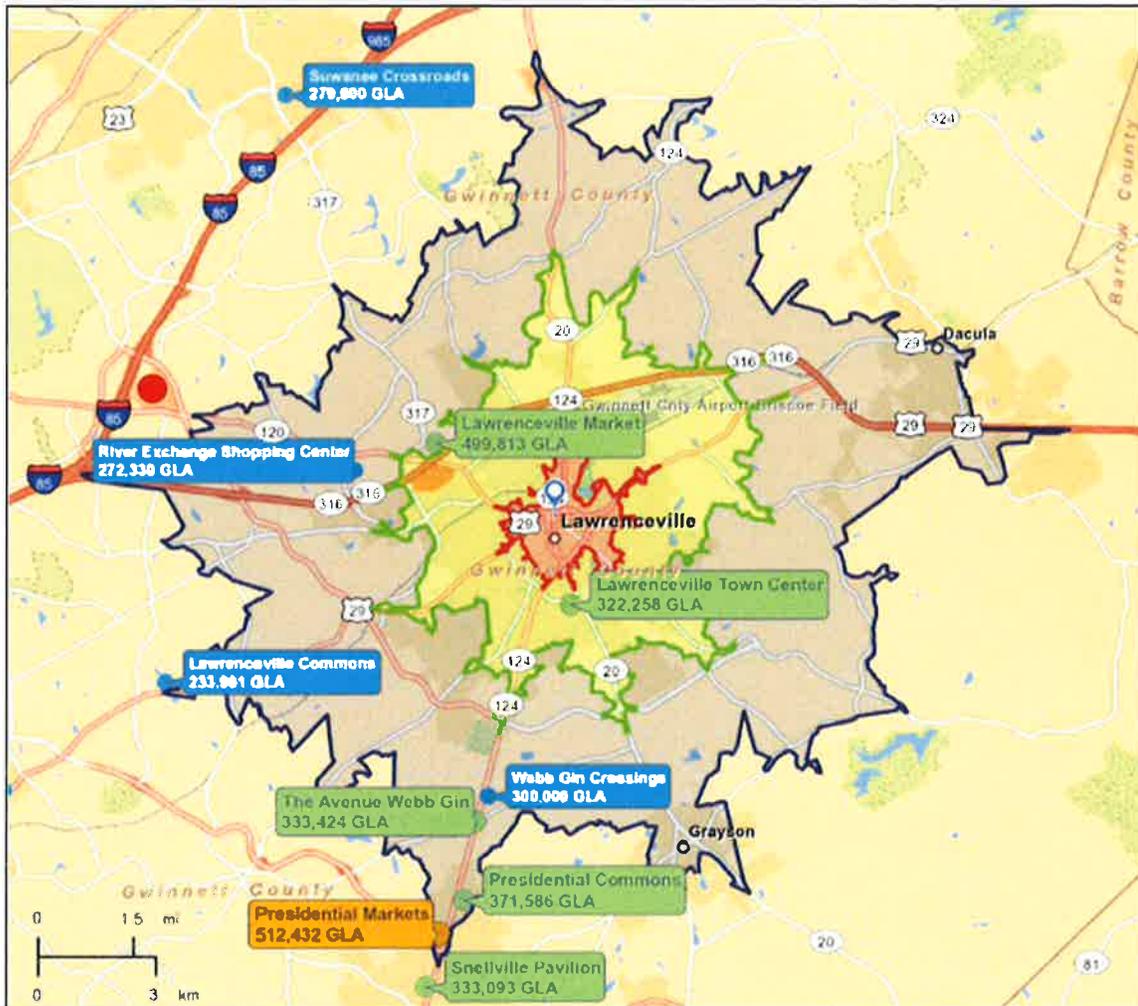
Source: CoStar; RKG Associates 2015

CoStar tracks and reports on 55 retail submarkets in the greater Atlanta retail marketplace. The two most relevant to Lawrenceville are the Gwinnett market and the Lawrenceville/Dacula submarket (Figure 4-4). The greater Gwinnett Market comprises 64.3 million square feet of rentable retail space which includes five regional malls and fourteen power centers with a combined total of over 10 million square feet. Shopping centers make up 46% of the total inventory, followed by general retail with 36%. Lawrenceville has one power center (Lawrenceville Market at Rt. 316 and Duluth Hwy.), 4.6 million square feet of shopping center space (54%) and 3.6 million square feet of general retail. General retail is the strongest category in both the Gwinnett Market cluster and the Lawrenceville/Dacula submarket, with low vacancy rates of 5.1% and 2.0%, respectively, which bodes well for additions to inventory (Table 4-4).

Figure 4-3 shows the distribution of major shopping centers in the Lawrenceville trade area. The red, green and grey shaded areas show drive times from downtown Lawrenceville of ten, twenty and thirty minutes. The map shows ten shopping centers of over 200,000 square feet, and illustrates how some of the competitive supply is dispersed in the trade area.



Figure 4-3



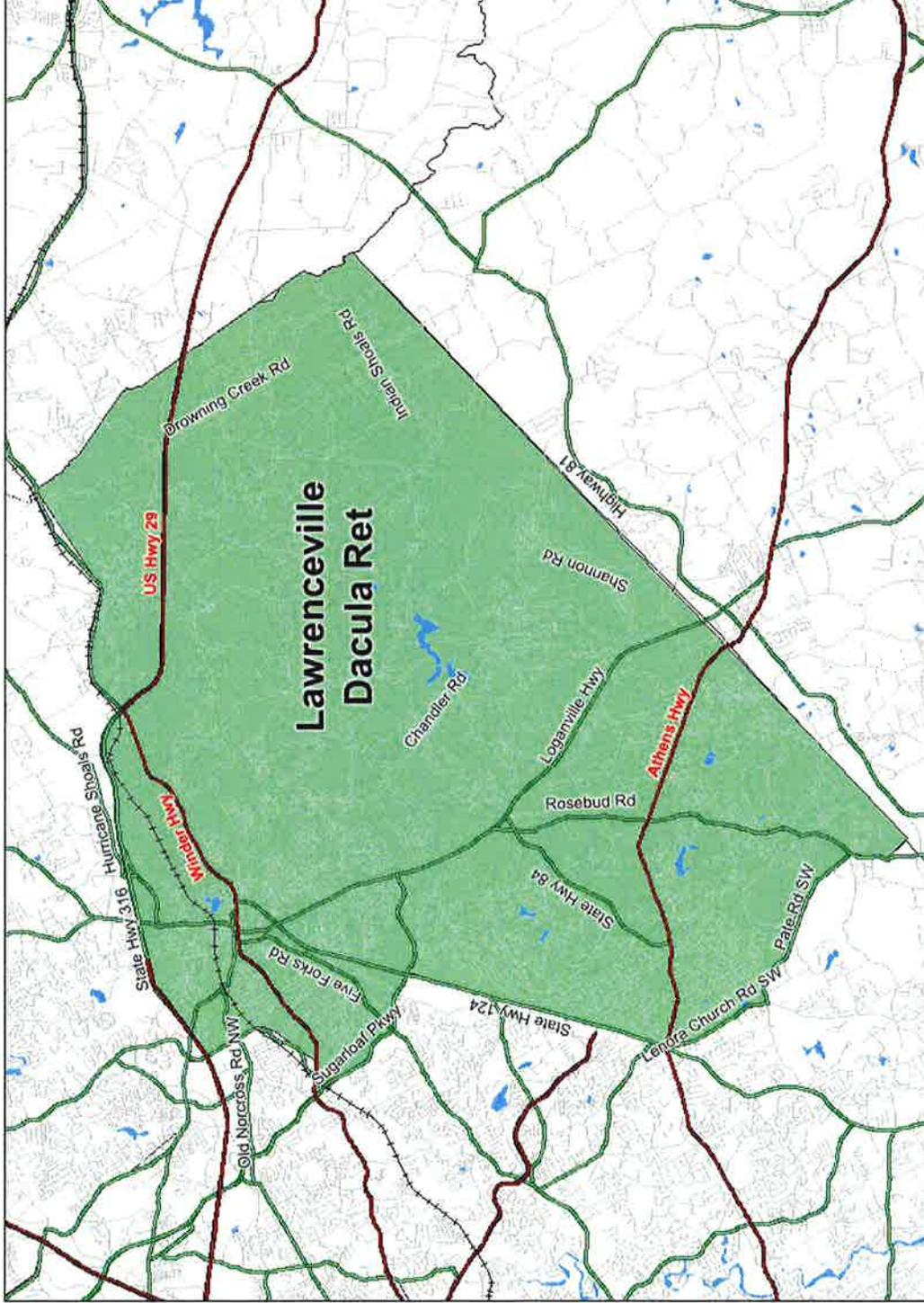
Source: Site to Do Business 2015

2. Retail Supply & Demand Analysis

The term “retail” generally refers to operations involved in the sale of goods, merchandise, or services from a fixed location, such as a shopping center or freestanding store. A widely accepted measure of retail characteristics is the *Retail Market Potential*, a comparison of supply and demand to determine retail growth at a merchandise level for any standard or user defined geographic level. A **retail gap**, otherwise referred to as “sales leakage,” appears when household expenditure levels for a specific geographic area are greater than the reported sales volumes captured by local retailers serving those households. This difference signifies that local households have a greater demand than can be provided by local retail establishments, thus requiring local households to shop outside their immediate trade area. The opposite is true in the event of a **retail surplus**. That is, when the levels of household expenditures are lower than the retail sales estimates. In this case, local retailers are attracting residents of other areas into their stores.



Figure 4-4



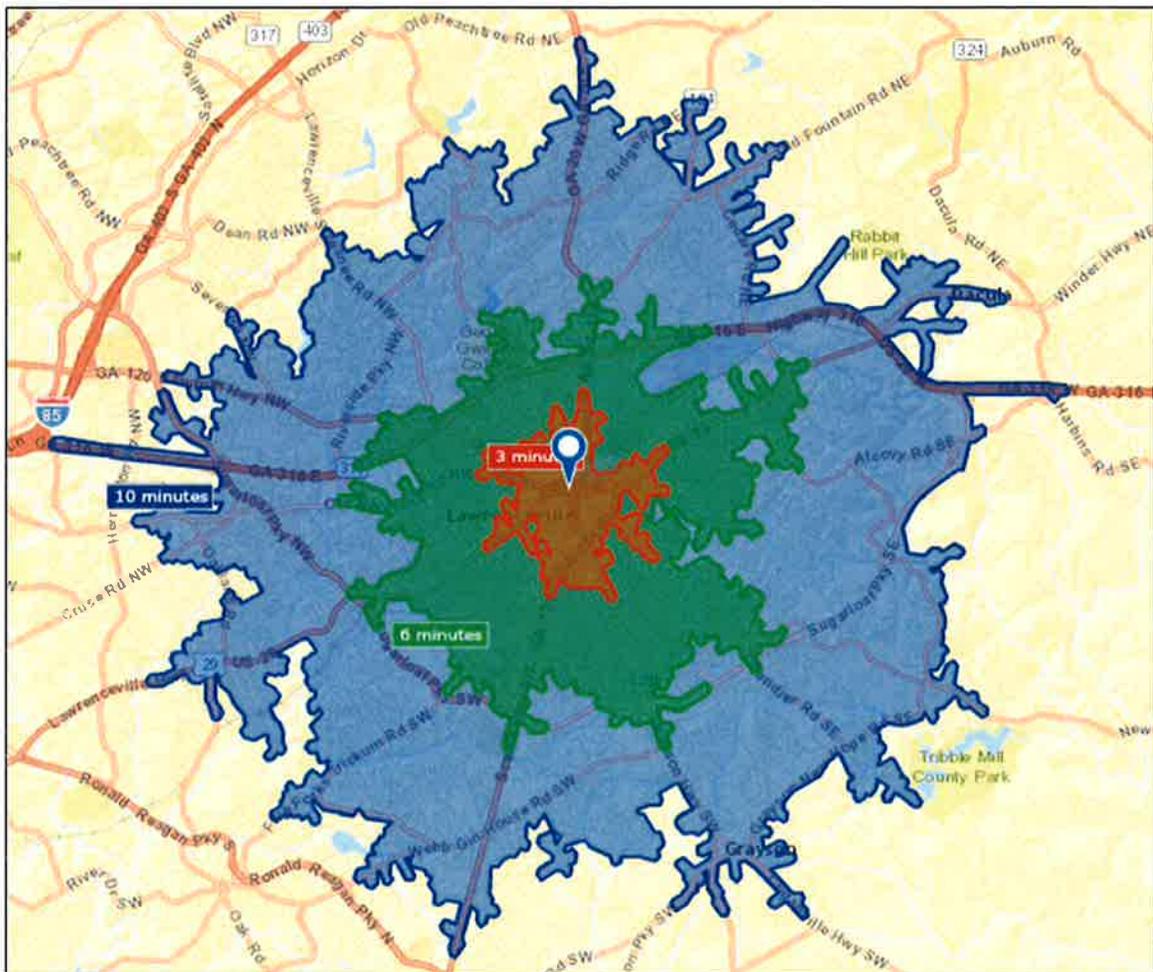
Lawrenceville/Dacula Retail Submarket

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The Lawrenceville trade area is home to various destination retailers, regional malls, community and neighborhood shopping centers, free standing stores, and a “Main Street” shopping district within the City of Lawrenceville. As the preceding Figure 4-4 illustrates, the City is also located in a very competitive retail environment with nearby destination centers competing for consumers and shopping dollars. Nonetheless, convenience and access are strong determinants for where people shop, so the local market must be examined in greater detail. The data in Table 4-6 reflect the capacity of Lawrenceville’s retail enterprises to serve the residents within three drives times emanating from the Lawrenceville Square of 3, 6 and 10 minutes (Figure 4-5).

Figure 4-5: Retail Trade Area Drive Times, 3, 6, 10 Minutes



Source: Site to Do Business 2015

A net inflow of dollars is indicated by numbers in black type, a net outflow, or gap, is shown in red (Table 4-5). Although the area within a three minute drive time has a low number of households with a relatively low median disposable income, it nonetheless shows net retail dollar inflows in all categories. This is due in large measure to the fact that downtown Lawrenceville serves approximately 6,260 daytime workers, and offers destination attractions such as the Aurora Theater and the restaurant and retail offerings on the Square which induce visitors’ spending.



Table 4-5
Retail Market Potential by Drive Times
Lawrenceville 2014

Category	3 Minutes	6 Minutes	10 Minutes
DEMOGRAPHICS			
2013 Population	2,226	44,370	136,095
2013 Households	765	13,901	44,233
2013 Median Disposable Income	\$27,094	\$39,907	\$48,251
2013 Per Capita Income	\$14,952	\$20,191	\$23,961
DAILY NEEDS			
Grocery Store	\$7,233,485	\$48,498,261	\$174,987,984
Specialty food stores	\$106,783	\$158,542	\$42,364,594
Pharmacies & drug stores	\$14,118,124	\$13,418,098	\$53,931,313
GENERAL MERCHANDISE, APPAREL, FURNITURE, OFFICE (GAFO)			
General Merchandise	\$700,824	\$15,371,000	\$37,501,595
Clothing and clothing accessories	\$1,131,165	\$10,479,380	\$5,615,635
Furniture and home furnishing stores	\$5,513,226	\$9,990,958	\$7,985,013
Electronic and appliance stores	\$14,372	\$1,611,170	\$2,812,824
Sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores	\$1,168,257	\$1,986,595	\$4,611,213
Office supplies, stationary, gift stores	\$71,673	\$8,263,829	\$10,262,208
Bldg materials, garden equip & supply stores	\$5,480,202	\$10,080,661	\$22,539,234
FOOD SERVICE			
Full-service restaurants	\$1,355,762	\$3,340,047	\$34,940,272
Limited service eating places	\$52,641	\$6,875,990	\$19,494,378

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions; RKG Associates 2015

Lawrenceville’s downtown contains an eclectic mix of retail and food & beverage opportunities for residents, workers and visitors, in a traditional downtown “main street” environment. Retail offerings include apparel, jewelry, home furnishings, lawn and garden, gifts, antiques, florist and fine arts, interspersed with services such as a beauty salon and shoe repair, as well as a few professional businesses. Food & beverage offerings include popular full-service restaurants, delicatessens, baked goods, ice cream, candy and adult beverages. There are a half dozen vacant ground floor spaces in the downtown, two of which are subject to occupation in the near future.

Although downtown retail supply and demand characteristics are unique to its immediate environment, it nonetheless exists and competes in a larger trade area which must be examined. For example, just within a six-minute drive of the Town Square are two major shopping centers, the Lawrenceville Market (500,000 square feet) and the Lawrenceville Town Center (322,000 square feet), which contain major anchors such as department stores (e.g., Target), home and garden stores (e.g., Home Depot), general merchandise (e.g., Walmart), etc. Just within a three-minute drive-time of the Town Square, the retail supply is more than adequate to meet the needs of its residents. Indeed, the ten-minute drive shed from the Courthouse Square contains a retail surplus in all categories, where the levels of household expenditures are lower than the retail sales estimates, and local retailers are attracting residents of other areas into their stores. Generally speaking, Lawrenceville is a retail destination for much of the surrounding area.

The retail dynamics of a downtown area that hosts a significant daytime worker population and retail opportunities are different than the rooftop/shopping center dynamic in suburban areas. The



downtown pedestrian environment not only facilitates and encourages daytime workers to take meals in local establishments, but also provides a level of convenience for other purchases such as gifts, jewelry and apparel, particularly for special occasions and a holiday shopping. Based on over 30 years of experience with retail surveys and analysis of spending patterns, RKG Associates conservatively estimates that the daytime worker population, concentrated in a downtown environment with pedestrian access to a variety of retail opportunities, will spend, on average, \$2,748 annually on local purchases.

In order to assess the impact of daytime worker spending, the consultant first collected data for the retail/household dynamic within a three-minute drive time of the downtown. Then, an area was selected for analysis that included downtown Lawrenceville and the surrounding major employers within walking distance, such as the County offices. The area selected for analysis is shown within the red boundary in Figure 4-6. Analysis of the selected area, using U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD), showed 6,257 daytime workers within a reasonable and convenient walking distance of the Town Square.

Figure 4-6
Lawrenceville Downtown Employment Area



Source: RKG Associates 2015

Average spending by retail category was then multiplied by the number of daytime workers (6,257) to estimate annual spending in the downtown, which is estimated to total just over \$17 million, approximately \$6.3 million of which is spent on food and beverages (Table 4-6).



Table 4-6
Daytime Population Impacts (6,257 Workers)
Downtown Lawrenceville, 2015

	Avg. Ann. \$/Worker	Total Annual Spending
TOTAL SALES	\$2,748	\$17,191,108
Convenience Stores	\$98	\$613,186
Specialty Food Stores	\$72	\$450,504
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$146	\$913,522
Clothing Stores	\$218	\$1,364,026
Shoe Stores	\$125	\$782,125
Jewelry, Luggage and Leather Goods Stores	\$118	\$738,326
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$95	\$594,415
Florists	\$32	\$200,224
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$158	\$988,606
Full Service Restaurants	\$530	\$3,317,774
Limited Service Restaurants	\$494	\$3,092,522
Drinking Places/Alcoholic Beverages	\$72	\$450,504

Source: Site to do Business, RKG Associates 2015

2. Potential Supportable Retail

Downtown Lawrenceville’s daytime population is a key market segment supporting downtown retail, and probably accounts for much of the retail surplus within the three-minute drive time around the downtown. The downtown continues to increase in popularity as a destination however, with attractions such as the Aurora Theater, events on the Lawn, and other activity generators that enhance visitors’ spending in the downtown in the evenings and on the weekends. Downtown Lawrenceville is most likely at a retail supply/demand equilibrium at present, and support for new space will be subject to many variables, including downtown Lawrenceville’s ability to enhance its popularity as a destination attraction and the absorption of existing vacant storefronts in the downtown.

If and when the Lawn Block is developed, it is highly likely to include commercial space on the ground floors that face the Lawn. This space would be suitable for retail, but could also accommodate professional services and offices that are locally serving. The ground floor spaces around the Town Square will remain the prime retail locations as long as the downtown continues to add critical mass to its activity generating inventory. As the ongoing revitalization of Lawrenceville’s downtown continues apace, new mixed use development can provide the overflow space to meet increased demand.

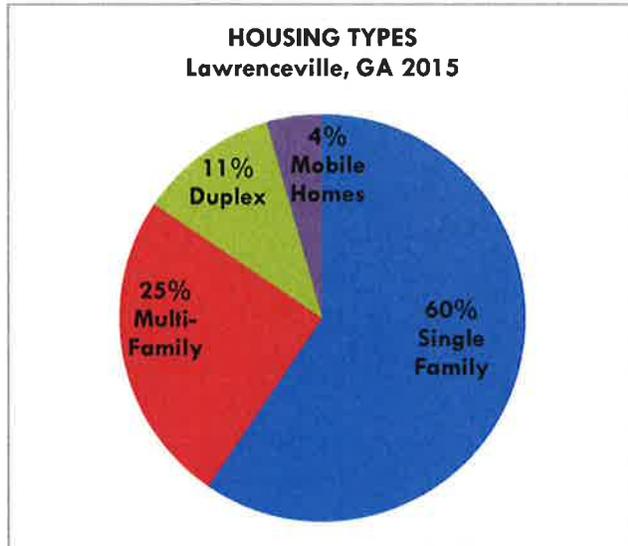


F. RESIDENTIAL MARKET

1. Housing Inventory

Lawrenceville’s current housing stock consists of just over 9,000 residential dwelling units, comprising approximately 60% single family detached, 25% apartments, 11% duplexes, 4% mobile homes, and a handful of townhouses and condos which are located within the Cornerstone development in the downtown (Figure 4-7). From 2005 through 2009, Lawrenceville added a total of 694 new residential units to its housing inventory, including 363 single family homes, 22 townhouses, 21 condos, and 288 apartments. Since 2010, only 50 new single family homes have been added to Lawrenceville’s housing inventory.

Figure 4-7

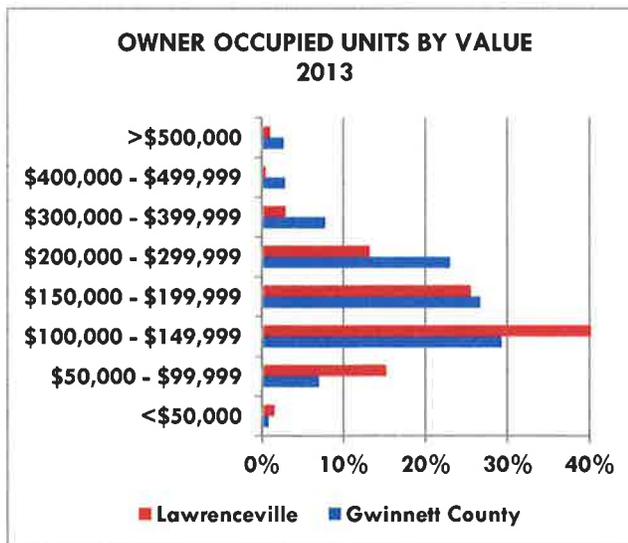


Source: Gwinnett County; RKG Associates 2015

The impacts of the great recession have been reflected in the pace of residential development, both nationally and locally. In the five year period from 2005 through 2009, just over 26,000 residential building permits were issued in Gwinnett County. In the five years from 2010 through 2014, the number of permits declined by more than half, to just over 11,000. Although certainly well below the pace of development from 2005 through 2009, the County’s recovery has been much more robust than Lawrenceville’s. Whether this is due to the lack of developable residential sites or the diversion of developer interest to other local submarkets, it may nonetheless signal pent-up demand and new opportunities for residential development in Lawrenceville.

Lawrenceville has been variously described as the value alternative location for housing in Gwinnett County, which is largely supported by the data collected for this analysis. A comparison of Lawrenceville’s housing values and rents would confirm that the City is indeed a cheaper alternative than the County as a whole. A consensus among Lawrenceville stakeholders is to encourage and support higher end housing in the downtown as the last few remaining opportunity sites are packaged for development.

Figure 4-8



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015

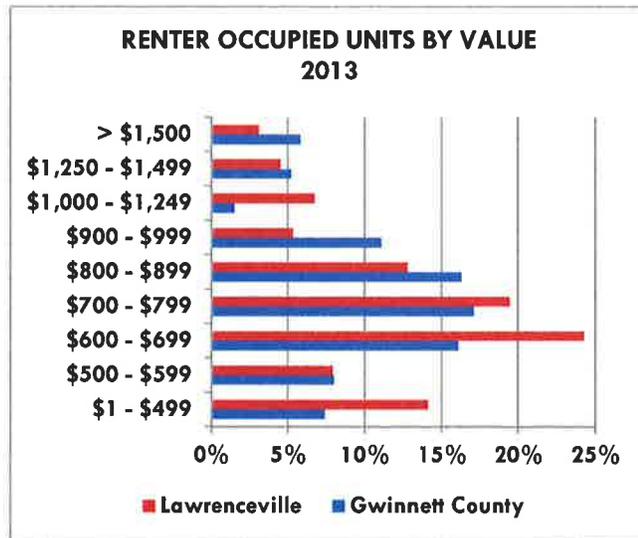


range, compared to 29% in the County. As the range of values increase, Lawrenceville's share of housing in that range decreases relative to the County, and as the range of values decrease, Lawrenceville's share relative to the County increases.

Housing cost trends are generally consistent for renter occupied housing as well, as Lawrenceville has higher concentrations of units in the lower rent ranges, and lower concentrations of units in the higher ranges, compared to the County as a whole (Figure 4-9).

Three-year activity data from the Georgia Multiple Listing Service for Gwinnett County show the average residential property listing price rising from \$219,252 in May of 2012 to \$323,571 in April of 2015, a 48% increase. Average days on the market in May of 2012 were 45, a number which peaked at 89 in January of 2013, and currently stands at 75 for April 2015. In May of 2012 there were 3,130 properties for sale, nearly doubling to 6,109 in April 2015. New construction activity has picked up as well, with residential units permitted numbering 2,469 in 2012, 3,101 in 2014, and 3,347 in 2013.

Figure 4-9



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2015

2. For-Sale Residential Product

The relatively small size of Lawrenceville's opportunity sites suggest that projects would require relative dense, urban development to be viable. Lawrenceville's model for this is, of course, Cornerstone, which features a combination of 43 flats and townhouses on a city block, with non-residential uses on the ground floor fronting West Crogan Street. Units range in size from 1,509 up to 2,612 square feet. Downtown Lawrenceville's individual opportunity sites range in size from the small (McRay/Bulls Eye Parking Lot, 1.09 acres, and Aurora, 1.57 acres), to the medium (Oak Street Property, 7.15 acres), to the relatively large (Lawrenceville Lawn Block, 16-18 acres).

Duluth and Suwanee have also seen the development of urban density housing near their newly created town centers. In Duluth, a 3-bed, 2.5 bath townhouse such as the one shown in the image to the right is listed for sale at \$230,000. This



Cornerstone, Lawrenceville, GA



Duluth, GA townhouse for sale



particular property is within walking distance of Duluth’s still emerging town center.

In Suwanee, a large town center concept has been developed that features mixed uses facing a park with an amphitheater, and transitioning to townhouses and detached dwellings in the interior and back edge of the development, respectively. Only two properties are listed for sale in this development, both similar in configuration and location to the units in the background of the image shown at right.



Suwanee, GA townhouses facing the park

The first property is a 3-bed, 3.5 bath townhouse listed for \$485,000. The second property is a 4-bedroom, 4.5 bath townhouse listed for \$479,000. By contrast, a 3-bed, 2.5 townhouse a half-mile from the town center is listed for \$244,000.

Based on the information at hand, It is RKG Associates’ professional opinion that any of the downtown opportunity sites listed above could support for-sale housing units at price points of \$230,000 and higher for condos, townhouses and detached, with a premium for housing near the Lawn.

3. Apartments

Analysis of the local apartment market shows the supply and demand factors that will impact future development of apartments in Lawrenceville. For the purposes of this study, RKG Associates utilized data from Reis, a private source for commercial real estate data. Reis divides the Atlanta market into several submarkets, including South Gwinnett County (which includes Lawrenceville, Lilburn, Snellville and Dacula) and North Gwinnett County (which includes Norcross, Duluth, and Suwanee).

In 2014, the North and South Gwinnett County submarkets contained a combined 50,706 apartments, 27,399 of which were in South Gwinnett and 23,307 in North Gwinnett. From 2009 through 2014, South Gwinnett added 350 new units, representing a relatively small increase of 1.3% to the inventory. North Gwinnett added 964 units, a 4.3% increase in the inventory. Even with the addition of new units to the inventory, the dynamics in the both submarkets indicate a robust and increasing demand for apartments.

Table 4-7
Apartment Market Characteristics

Year	Inventory Units	Built	Vacancy Rate	Asking Rent
SOUTH GWINNETT				
2009	27,049	0	10.4%	\$795
2010	27,151	102	7.0%	\$782
2011	27,151	0	6.5%	\$789
2012	27,151	0	6.2%	\$798
2013	27,399	248	4.9%	\$819
2014	27,399	0	4.1%	\$844
NORTH GWINNETT				
2009	22,343	0	11.0%	\$838
2010	22,753	410	8.4%	\$848
2011	23,049	296	7.1%	\$854
2012	23,049	0	5.5%	\$872
2013	23,307	258	5.1%	\$899
2014	23,307	0	4.6%	\$923

Source: Reis Reports, 2015



Vacancy rates have decreased considerably in both submarkets since 2009. South Gwinnett's vacancy rate dropped from 10.4% in 2009 to 4.1% in 2014, its lowest rate in the six-year period. During the same period, average asking rents rose from \$785 to \$844. Trends were similar in North Gwinnett, with vacancy rates dropping from 11.0% to 4.6%, and rents increasing from \$838 to \$923. Rents in North Gwinnett have consistently stayed higher than South Gwinnett rents over the six-year period (Table 4-7).

A survey of 30 apartment properties in Gwinnett County shows a broad range of product types and price points, and confirms the findings in the preceding Figure 4-9 that indicate Lawrenceville has served as a value alternative to other areas of the County, perhaps with the exception of Norcross. Nonetheless, there are no compelling reasons to conclude that Lawrenceville cannot support a higher end apartment product than what is currently offered, particularly in sought after locations such as the downtown.

The low range of the local apartment inventory is generally older, with smaller floor areas, less amenities, and rents ranging from the \$600s for a one-bedroom unit to less than \$1,000 for a three bedroom unit. The image at right shows an apartment building at Meadowood, in Norcross. Asking rents are \$625 for a one-bedroom unit and \$780 for a two-bedroom unit. Built in 1982, the apartment complex comprises 113 units in single-story buildings.



Meadowood Apartments in Norcross

Just outside of Lawrenceville are the Villas at Sugarloaf apartments. The Villas at Sugarloaf offer one-bedroom, one bath apartments of 890 square feet ranging from \$899 to \$1,408 (with garage), two-bedroom, two bath apartments ranging in size from 1,186 to 1,491 square feet and in price from \$1,047 to \$1,787 (with garage), and three-bedroom, two-bath apartments of 1,540 square feet range in price from \$1,422 to \$1,894 (with garage). Villas at Sugarloaf could be considered in the upper mid-range of the market, based on the available inventory. Built in 2007, the apartment complex includes 270 units in 3-story buildings. Amenities include a fitness center, game room, playground and pool.



Villas at Sugarloaf near Lawrenceville

Of the apartment complexes surveyed, the Point at Suwanee Station falls into the high end. This complex offers one-bedroom, one bath apartments of ranging from 803 to 921 square feet with rents ranging from \$965 to \$1,615 (with garage), and two-bedroom, two bath apartments ranging in size from 1,149 to 1,278 square feet and in price from \$1,180 to \$1,985 (with garage). Three-bedroom, two-bath apartments of 1,445 square feet are under



Point at Suwanee Station



construction and planned for rents of around \$2,165 (with garage). Built in 2006, the apartment complex includes 336 units in 3-story buildings. Amenities include a pool, fitness center, club house, tennis court picnic area, and walking/biking trails. The kitchens are equipped with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances.

If apartments are proposed as one of the land use elements for Lawrenceville's downtown opportunity sites, the product should be comparable to the Villas of Sugarloaf or better, if the City's objective is to attract young professionals and empty nesters. Based on standard mortgage underwriting thresholds indicating that housing costs should not exceed 30% of gross income, a qualifying minimum annual salary for a \$900 per month one-bedroom apartment is \$36,000, and the qualifying minimum annual household income for a \$1,900 per month three-bedroom apartment is \$76,000.

3. Residential Absorption

During the five-year period from 2005 through 2009, there was an annual average of 5,203 residential permits issued annually in all of Gwinnett County. In Lawrenceville, the annual average residential permits were 139, equating to approximately 2.7% of the total. After 2008-2010, the period of greatest impact of the economic downturn, the number of residential permits in Gwinnett County started to steadily and consistently rise. In 2011, 873 residential units were permitted. Residential permits increased to 2,469 in 2012, to 3,101 in 2014, and to 3,347 units in 2013, yielding a three-year annual average of 2,972 permitted units.

Given the opportunity to develop new residential units in Lawrenceville, and assuming that units could be absorbed at the pre-2010 rate of approximately 2.7% of the County total, Lawrenceville could conceivably absorb 80 new residential units per year. Of course, housing that is located in an attractive and desirable location could potentially be absorbed at a higher rate, barring another downturn in the national economy.



5 COMPETITIVENESS ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

In order to assess Lawrenceville’s competitive position for business development, RKG Associates first identified the strengths and weaknesses of the region, the business climate, and quality of life factors. This regional focus is very important, particularly for an economy the size of Lawrenceville, where growth trends and amenities in surrounding area can have as much, and potentially a greater, impact as trends and amenities within the City.

This chapter includes: (1) a review of Lawrenceville and the broader region’s business climate and site location strengths and weaknesses; (2) an assessment Lawrenceville’s position in the context of top site selection factors; and (3) the State of Georgia’s rating by the Corporation for Enterprise Development based on their specific criteria. For the purposes of this analysis, RKG Associates utilized several data sources that provide information about the business climate in and around Lawrenceville which compile the information at different geographic scales. Each section details the respective geography being examined.

B. BUSINESS CLIMATE FACTORS

The consultant obtained the results of the 5th annual Top State for Doing Business survey of site selection decision makers published by *Area Development Magazine*, a site and facilities planning publication. *Area Development Magazine* employs site consultants to rank states on factors in the following categories: “Business Environment” (overall cost of doing business, incentive programs, corporate tax environment, cooperative state government, access to capital and project funding, speed of permitting, most favorable regulatory environment); “Labor Climate” (availability of skilled labor, competitive labor costs, labor climate for right-to-work states, labor climate for non-right-to-work states, leading workforce-development programs); and “Infrastructure and Global Access” (distribution and supply-chain hubs, rail and highway access, certified sites/shovel-ready programs, competitive utility rates, energy reliability and smart-grid deployment, water outlook, including availability and cost). Overall Rank and major categories are ranked from 1 to 10, lesser categories are ranked 1 to 5, with a dash indicating no ranking.

Georgia ranked first in the United States in 2014 in terms of being supportive of business, which is advantageous to any jurisdiction in the state seeking to attract business. Georgia’s Business Environment rank is second among all states. Particular strengths under this category are the cost of doing business, cooperative state government, access to capital and project funding, and speed of permitting. Its Labor Climate is ranked first with leading work force development programs as a particular strength. Energy reliability and smart grid development stands out as a particular strength under Overall Infrastructure and Global Access. Two lesser categories subject to improvement are the corporate tax environment and availability of skilled labor (Table 5-1).



In addition to ranking Top States for Doing Business, *Area Development Magazine* has also analyzed economic and work force data for 400 MSAs both for 2012-2013 (recent performance) and 2007-2012 to rank Leading Locations for 2014. The goal of this effort was to identify which cities in the U.S. are emerging from the recession as front-runners, and why. The MSA with the best performance in a certain indicator earned a ranking score of “1” and the MSA with the worst performance earned a ranking score of “400.”

The Atlanta MSA scored an overall rank of 65 out of 400 in Leading Locations, within the top 20 percent of MSAs analyzed. Particular strengths in the ranking categories were “Economic Strength Indicators” and “Year-Over-Year Growth Cities Indicators.” Strong individual indicators include “Workforce 18-44 Years with Bachelor’s Degree or Higher,” “Total Inward Migration Bachelor’s Degree or Higher, % of Total Workforce,” “Employment Growth as % of Population,” and “Goods Producing Employment Growth as % of Population.” The weak individual indicator was “Local Area Unemployment Rates” (Table 5-2).

C. TOP SITE SELECTION FACTORS

The information in Table 5-3 shows a score-based ranking of the top site selection factors for the years 2009 through 2013 as identified by a sampling of America’s corporate executives. The factors are ranked by their five-year average scores, with the previous year’s (2012) also presented in parentheses. Although not specific to any one area, the results of this effort indicate those factors that are most important when a company is considering relocation/expansion. This analysis helps to identify those attributes of Lawrenceville to highlight in terms of marketing efforts, as well as identification of attributes that may need to be improved.

**Table 5-1
Top States for Doing Business 2014
Georgia**

OVERALL RANK	1
BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	2
Cost of Doing Business	2
Incentive Programs	3
Corporate Tax Environment	—
Cooperative State Government	1
Access to Capital & Project Funding	2
Speed of Permitting	2
Most Favorable Regulatory Environment	5
LABOR CLIMATE	1
Availability of Skilled Labor	—
Competitive Labor Costs	5
Leading Work Force Development Programs	1
Right-to-Work Environment	3
OVERALL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GLOBAL ACCESS	2
Rail and Highway Access	3
Certified Sites/Shovel Ready Program	3
Competitive Utility Rates	3
Energy Reliability/Smart Grid Deployment	2
Distribution and Logistics Access	3

Source: Area Development Magazine; RKG Associates 2015

**Table 5-2
Leading Locations: Ranking for Economic & Job Growth
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta MSA 2014**

RANKINGS BY CATEGORY	
Overall Rank	65
Prime Workforce Indicators	149
Economic Strength Indicators	55
Recession-Busting Cities Indicators	153
Year-Over-Year Growth Cities Indicators	26
INDIVIDUAL INDICATORS	
Workforce 18-44 Years with Bachelors Degree or Higher	33
Total Inward Migration Bachelors Degree or Higher	48
Local Area Unemployment Rates	240
Wage and Salary Growth	150
Per Capita Real Gross Metropolitan Product	103
Employment Growth as % of Population	62
Goods Producing Employment Growth as % of Populatio	98

Source: Area Development Magazine; RKG Associates 2015



An examination of averages over the last five surveys indicate that highway accessibility and labor costs continually rank at the top of the list. Both of these factors are related to long-term operations costs. The availability of skilled labor is the top selection criterion for the first time in five years, rising over eight points since 2009, reinforcing that the importance of education and training cannot be overstated. The high importance of occupancy and construction costs and the availability of buildings suggest that businesses may be anxious to move once the decision to expand or relocate has been made. Factors which may be more closely tied to start-up and operating costs include corporate tax rate (7th), state and local incentives (8th), low union profile (9th), and tax exemptions (11th).

Of the top 26 criteria identified in the table, Lawrenceville's positioning is considered to be positive within many of the categories from a marketability standpoint. Brief synopses of selected criteria are noted below.

- Availability of Skilled Labor – There is an abundant supply of highly skilled, white collar workers in the North Atlanta region that includes Lawrenceville. However, high skilled, blue collar workers are scarce and only comprise 2% of the Atlanta MSA labor pool. The pool of semi-skilled labor, both blue and white collar, offers potential for recruiting and training to fill production-based jobs, since the skill sets within the high and semi-high white collar industries should be transferred to blue collar industries as demand warrants. Area Development Magazine ranked the Atlanta MSA 33rd out of 400 MSAs in *Workforce 18-44 Years with a Bachelor's Degree or Higher* in its Leading Locations for 2014 survey.
- Highway Accessibility – Lawrenceville has direct access to State Road 316 and indirect, relatively close access to I-85.
- Labor Costs – Average wages in the Atlanta MSA are higher than both the state and the nation. The 2013 annual mean hourly wage in the MSA was \$23.11, compared to \$21.17 in the state and \$22.01 in the nation. By comparison, 2013 average mean hourly wage in the Charlotte, NC MSA was \$22.51 and the Raleigh, NC MSA was \$22.65.
- Occupancy or Construction Costs – Construction costs in the Atlanta MSA generally run between 94% and 97% of the national average, according to the January 2012 Marshall Valuation Service, a nationally recognized building cost indexing service.
- Availability of Buildings – A review of current listings (Spring 2015) of office space in Lawrenceville showed approximately 47,000 square feet of Class A space and just over 100,000 square feet of Class B space available for rent. The largest block of Class A space is 27,550 square feet, followed by a 10,620-square-foot space. The three remaining Class A properties are less than 5,000 square feet each. The largest advertised Class B space is 18,000 square feet, followed by one at 8,400 square feet and one of 7,300 square feet. All others are 5,000 square feet or less. A total of 200,000 square feet of flex space is available for lease in the GA 316/Lawrenceville submarket. Available warehouse space in the submarket totals 1.2 million square feet.
- Corporate Tax Rate – The State of Georgia's average corporate income tax rate is 6%. This rate is the approximate mid-range among the proximal states of Alabama (6.5%), Tennessee (6.5%), South Carolina (5%), and Florida (5.5%).
- State and Local Incentives – The State of Georgia offers a number of small business incentive programs such as small business tax relief and angel investor tax credits. Gwinnett County's



business incentives range from permits and zoning assistance to reduction in development fees, reduction in property tax, and Industrial Revenue Bond financing.

- Low Union Profile – According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor statistics, Georgia ranked 12th in union membership rate among states at 5.3%, in 2013.

Table 5-3
Top Site Selection and Quality of Life Criteria
Area Development Magazine

Rank	Criterion	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
SITE SELECTION FACTORS						
1	Availability of Skilled Labor	95.1	89.4 (3)*	88.4	85.9	86.9
2	Highway Accessibility	93.5	90.1 (2)	93.8	97.3	92.9
3	Labor Costs	90.8	90.8 (1)	88.4	91.0	96.7
4	Occupancy or Construction Costs	87.4	82.8 (5)	85.9	89.8	86.7
5	Availability of Advanced ICT Services	84.6	85.1 (4)	76.6	72.9	83.2
6	Availability of Buildings	83.3	78.4 (8)	76.3	81.0	75.7
7	Corporate Tax Rate	82.4	79.3 (7)	86.0	86.3	87.0
8	State and Local Incentives	81.9	71.1 (13)	85.9	89.3	84.9
9	Low Union Profile	81.4	73.5 (10)	81.0	75.4	75.8
10	Energy Availability and Costs	80.8	81.3 (6)	84.8	82.1	88.0
11	Tax Exemptions	80.6	75.4 (9)	83.6	90.9	88.4
12	Right-To-Work-State	80.6	72.6 (11)	77.5	67.9	74.0
13	Availability of Land	80.3	59.0 (18)	73.9	73.4	75.7
14	Expedited or "Fast-Track" Permitting	76.3	67.2 (15)	72.4	68.2	72.2
15	Proximity to Major Markets	75.6	72.2 (12)	83.0	66.4	73.3
16	Availability of Long-Term Financing	74.8	63.1 (17)	70.0	58.5	65.4
17	Environmental Regulations	71.7	71.1 (14)	76.4	74.8	71.2
18	Inbound/Outbound Shipping Costs	70.9	63.7 (16)	81.6	84.0	81.7
19	Proximity to Suppliers	67.7	54.9 (19)	67.8	63.6	63.9
20	Raw Material Availability	60.5	49.7 (23)	52.8	61.5	57.0
21	Accessibility of Major Airport	59.4	52.9 (21)	55.7	50.0	49.0
22	Proximity of Technical University	54.1	50.3 (22)	40.2	36.1	36.7
23	Training Programs	51.5	54.7 (20)	50.6	56.7	61.7
24	Availability of Unskilled Labor	48.9	42.9 (25)	58.9	45.4	55.5
25	Railroad Service	29.4	43.6 (24)	33.6	36.0	27.4
26	Waterways or Oceanport Accessibility	20.0	19.9 (26)	24.5	21.9	17.7
QUALITY-OF-LIFE-FACTORS						
1	Low Crime Rate	80.9	79.3 (1)	82.0	86.4	79.0
2	Healthcare Facilities	79.7	69.8 (2)	71.0	72.2	68.4
2T	Housing Availability	75.3	69.8 (4)	64.1	66.4	62.4
3	Housing Costs	73.0	66.9 (5)	69.0	68.4	61.5
4	Ratings of Public Schools	71.5	63.3 (3)	68.8	61.2	61.4
5	Colleges and Universities in Area	66.4	61.6 (8)	56.6	53.2	50.7
6	Climate	59.5	55.0 (6)	52.2	56.3	55.0
7	Recreational Opportunities	59.5	52.9 (7)	52.2	48.2	52.7
8	Cultural Opportunities	54.8	48.9 (9)	42.8	48.7	46.0

*All figures are percentages and are the total of "very important" and "important" ratings of the Area Development Corporate Survey

** (2012 ranking)

Source: Area Development Magazine, 2009-2014; RKG Associates, 2015



D. ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES SCORECARD

To assess the business climate factors that impact Lawrenceville and Georgia as a whole, the consultant collected State rankings from the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) in Washington, D.C. CFED is a non-profit organization that promotes economic vitality through increased economic competitiveness. It also gathers economic, financial and other relevant data on all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The CFED issues an annual *Development Report Card for the States*, which ranks each state in 92 categories, of which 57 categories are included here. These categories fall under the sub-headings of: (1) Financial Assets and Income, (2) Business and Jobs, (3) Housing and Homeownership, (4) Healthcare, (5) Education, and (6) Other.

While rankings are, by nature, subjective and do not provide the complete picture of the business climate in Georgia and the local region, they are useful in measuring the State's performance relative to other states. This comparison provides a practical and adequate method for comparing the relative performance of Georgia in a number of important areas.

The CFED data shown in Table 5-4 was sorted by the State's ranking among all fifty states and District of Columbia (second column). The ranking system goes from 1 (the best in a particular category) to 51 (the worst in a particular category). In order to provide a regional competitive context, RKG Associates also included comparative data for Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina. These states have been included in this analysis to provide a sense of how Georgia compares to states that can be considered competitors, in terms of economic development recruitment due to geographic and amenity similarities. In addition "grades" are given on a curve: ten states get A's, ten states get B's, sixteen get C's, ten get D's and five get F's."¹ The following narrative summarizes the findings in the 2014 CFED scorecard for Georgia.

1. Financial and Assets Income

Georgia received an F in this category in 2014. Although a number of the criteria are not reported in this section due to limited data availability, the remainder illustrated several notable observations. The State has an average household net worth of \$46,349 compared to \$70,359 for the nation. The asset poverty rate and income poverty rates are notably higher than the nation, which may be related to its higher unemployment rate (8.5% compared to 7.6% national). A larger percentage of unbanked households may point to a lack of local financial institutions as well as households living paycheck-to-paycheck with little or no reserves for savings. The state's high bankruptcy rate indicates that more households were extended beyond their means. Credit card debt is slightly higher than the nation as a whole, but the proportion of overdue payments is higher. Along with improving overall income levels, these issues could also potentially be addressed through education about better methods for managing personal financial dealings.

2. Business and Jobs

Rankings in the business and jobs category were relatively poor for all states in the region. Georgia's overall F grade was matched by Alabama. One of the few bright spots indicated by these criteria is a relatively high degree of private loans to small businesses suggesting that capital is available from local lenders to support local business operations and expansions, a fact which is borne out by the also relatively high proportion of microenterprise ownership in the state. These indicators suggest there is a good climate for small businesses. The state ranks below the nation in underemployment, unemployment, low wage jobs, and average annual pay, which suggests that there needs to be a

¹ 2012 Asset and Opportunity Scorecard, Corporation for Enterprise Development



stronger effort to create, attract and retain higher skilled and higher paying jobs. Efforts to increase the number of small business start-ups appears to be one approach that could yield positive results for Lawrenceville's on-going economic development strategy.

3. Housing and Homeownership

Georgia ranks in the bottom within the housing and homeownership metrics garnering an overall D rating along with Tennessee. The state had a homeownership rate (63.7%) on par with the nation (63.9%), with a bias towards middle and upper incomes as indicated by a rank of 35th in the Homeownership by income category. Housing costs burdens for homeowners and renters were slightly lower than national trends. The foreclosure rate of 2.2% in Georgia is much lower than the national rate of 3.3%, but they are nonetheless ranked 44th in the Nation. The state ranks 17th in home affordability, which ranks third in Quality of Life Factors as shown in the preceding Table 5-3.

4. Healthcare

Health insurance can impact economic development as an overall cost of doing business, as well as through lost productivity of uninsured workers receiving insufficient medical care. In addition, the uninsured may incur high medical costs that inhibit their ability to cover other necessary household expenses. Georgia received an F rating overall for healthcare with approximately 21% of employees uninsured, ranking it 44th nationally. The 54.1% of employees covered by their employees' insurance programs is lower than the nation, and ranks the state 38th, in the middle of its peer states. Improving these scores could help both to improve worker productivity and act as incentive for attracting new employees to the state.

5. Education

Georgia ranks in the middle quintile in a number of the education-related criteria with an overall C rating. The state ranks 23rd with regard to the percentage of residents with four-year degrees and 33rd in the percentage of residents with two-year degrees. The state's ranking in the percentage with high school degrees is a low 40th, and math and reading proficiencies at the grade school level rank 40th and 36th, respectively. College debt levels are low, indicating more affordability in the state's higher learning institutions. Nonetheless, these findings suggest the state has work to do from an educational standpoint in order to make it more of a supportive component of economic development efforts.

6. State Minimum Wage

RKG Associates has included an additional data criterion to those collected by CFED, the state minimum wage. Georgia, as well as Tennessee, has a mandatory stateside minimum wage rate. Tennessee and South Carolina have minimum wage rates linked to the Federal rate of \$7.25 per hour. Georgia's minimum wage is set lower at \$5.15 per hour. Georgia's minimum wage rate helps mitigate increased costs of living for a portion of its residents.

7. Implications

The 2014 *Assets & Opportunity Scorecard* provides a picture, from a household financial security perspective, of both how families in each state fare and the policies in place to improve outcomes. These indicators may not be reflective of conditions in Lawrenceville. However, they provide a broad-brush perspective used by some potential employers and employees to evaluate economic development interest. Overall, Georgia scored relatively low on the *Scorecard* as did the entire Southeastern United States, where all states were ranked in the lowest quintile overall.



Table 5-4
2014 Assets and Opportunities Scorecard
Corporation for Enterprise Development

Category	United States Data	Georgia Data	Georgia	Florida	Alabama	Tennessee	South Carolina
FINANCIAL ASSETS AND INCOME			F	D	F	D	D
Net Worth	\$70,359	\$46,349	--	--	--	--	--
Asset Poverty Rate	25.4%	32.3%	--	--	--	--	--
Asset Poverty by Race [1]	2.2	2.2	--	--	--	--	--
Asset Poverty by Gender [1]	1.2	1.0	--	--	--	--	--
Income Poverty Rate	14.7%	17.4%	44	34	47	42	43
Unbanked Households	8.2%	11.5%	45	28	41	42	35
Bankruptcy Rate (per 1,000 people)	3.7	6.3	50	34	48	50	5
Average Credit Card Debt	\$10,221	\$9,604	26	38	19	22	23
Borrowers 90+ Days Overdue	3.6%	4.5%	46	50	39	33	48
BUSINESSES AND JOBS			D	C	F	D	F
Small Business Ownership Rate	1.4%	1.2%	49	47	36	46	38
Private Loans to Small Business	\$1,155	\$1,172	22	49	9	24	26
Microenterprise Ownership Rate	16.5%	18.2%	6	1	19	14	29
Business Ownership by Gender [1]	1.3	1.3	28	26	37	39	48
Business Ownership by Race [1]	2.6	1.6	28	2	36	39	45
Business Value by Gender [1]	2.6	3.0	40	10	46	19	33
Business Value by Race [1]	2.6	4.3	48	31	50	36	45
Business Creation Rate (per 1,000 workers)	9.3	11.1	17	4	49	50	39
Underemployment Rate	14.1%	15.3%	43	37	21	36	39
Unemployment Rate	7.6%	8.5%	42	29	23	35	39
Low-Wage Jobs	21.0%	26.5%	39	38	49	37	44
Average Annual Pay	\$49,289	\$49,064	15	39	26	20	44
Retirement Plan Participation	44.2%	45.1%	32	49	26	41	32
Employers Offering Health Insurance	50.1%	47.7%	31	44	17	25	35
HOUSING AND HOMEOWNERSHIP			D	D	B	C	B
Homeownership Rate	63.9%	63.7%	39	34	13	24	16
Homeownership by Race [1]	1.6	1.6	29	17	14	33	19
Homeownership by Income [1]	2.2	2.3	35	2	12	17	6
Foreclosure Rate	3.3%	2.2%	22	50	17	16	37
High-Cost Mortgage Loans	3.6%	3.3%	28	23	38	41	16
Delinquent Mortgage Loans	2.6%	3.3%	44	39	43	40	21
Affordability of Homes (value/income) [1]	3.3	3	17	27	15	24	21
Housing Cost Burden: Homeowners	33.9%	32.8%	32	48	15	23	19
Housing Cost Burden: Renters	52.0%	53.1%	43	51	24	35	41



Table 5-4 (continued)

Category	United States Data	Georgia Data	Georgia	Florida	Alabama	Tennessee	South Carolina
HEALTHCARE							
			F	F	D	C	C
Uninsured Rate	16.9%	20.7%	44	49	25	30	40
Uninsured by Race [1]	2.0	1.7	19	18	21	15	9
Uninsured by Income [1]	4.4	5.6	47	8	49	32	17
Uninsured by Gender [1]	1.2	1.1	14	23	15	35	18
Uninsured Low-Income Children	10.0%	12.3%	43	46	13	22	36
Uninsured Low-Income Parents	35.0%	43.2%	49	47	36	20	24
Employer-Provided Insurance	57.4%	54.1%	38	49	34	35	40
Employee Share of Premium	27.4%	30.5%	44	50	49	34	38
Out-of-Pocket Medical Expenses	14.2%	17.8%	--	--	--	--	--
EDUCATION							
			C	C	F	C	D
Early Childhood Education Enrollment	27.6%	38.6%	7	4	35	27	13
Math Proficiency: 8th Grade	35.5%	29.4%	40	36	50	44	35
Reading Proficiency: 8th Grade	36.1%	31.5%	36	32	47	33	41
High School Degree	86.4%	85.0%	40	34	46	39	42
Two-Year College Degree	37.1%	35.3%	33	30	45	44	38
Four-Year College Degree	29.1%	28.2%	23	31	45	42	40
Four-Year Degree by Race [1]	1.6	1.5	21	14	22	15	40
Four-Year Degree by Income [1]	5.0	5.7	41	13	48	44	45
Four-Year Degree by Gender [1]	1.0	1.0	--	--	--	--	--
Average College Graduate Debt	\$29,400	\$23,089	22	11	26	7	31
College Graduates with Debt	71.0%	59.0%	36	6	9	20	13
OTHER							
State Minimum Wage as of January 2013	--	\$5.15	\$5.15	\$8.05	\$0.00	\$7.25	\$7.25

Source: Corporation for Enterprise Development; RKG Associates 2015

[1] The ratios in the Georgia Data column measure the difference in outcomes between two populations by: race (white and minority), income (high- and low-income groups), or gender (male and female). A ratio of 1 indicates perfect equality; the higher the ratio, the greater the inequality.

[2] Some measures were not ranked due to insufficient data at the state level.



6 PRIORITY OPPORTUNITY SITES

A. INTRODUCTION

During the course of the analysis, the City staff, the Strategy Committee and RKG Associates collectively recognized that the economic development plan needed to provide an analysis and prioritization of real estate assets that can accommodate the development envisioned for the City's future. It was noted that the City's existing real estate investment and implementation efforts have been more reactive to market opportunities rather than proactive towards reaching a specific economic development goal. While this approach has produced many positive results, not all efforts have been as effective and efficient as possible. Simply put, this Chapter is intended to provide the City a more strategic approach to siting various economic development efforts.

B. IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

The opportunity sites were identified through a comprehensive effort that included feedback from City Staff, the Strategy Committee, and the Consultant Team. The following tasks explain the approach to determining both opportunity areas and opportunity sites.

- Ensure consistency in community vision and preference – It is important to note that the recommendations presented in this Chapter fully considered existing strategic documents including (but not limited to) the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Downtown Master Plan, and the Jackson Street Park Master Plan. This initial assessment of previous strategies was critical to ensure that recommendations were consistent with prescribed community vision and preferences.
- Understand the City's current land use patterns – The opportunity sites analysis began with an assessment of the City's existing development patterns. The Strategy Committee recognized that the City's economic development efforts should be focused in areas where (re)development activity maximized the benefit to City residents while preserving existing residential communities. To this point, the identification of the City's opportunity sites focused on existing and emerging economic centers.
- Define opportunity areas and their specific focus – The initial activity centers identified in the previous steps were then further refined to define specific opportunity areas within Lawrenceville. This step incorporated a number of physical and market-based factors with the City's existing development patterns. Issues such as transportation access and real estate market conditions were combined with existing land use patterns and development trends to identify those areas of the City where economic development efforts should be focused. The Strategy Committee agreed upon the areas show in Map 6-1.

Once the opportunity areas were defined, the Strategy Committee worked with City staff and the RKG Team to identify specific economic development priorities. The economic



development focus was created to ensure activity was [1] consistent with existing development patterns; [2] maximizes the area's development potential, and [3] sustains and enhances existing assets within that area. The specific boundaries for adjacent opportunity areas reflect the consensus of the Committee on where the economic focus transitions. That said, the Strategy Committee recognizes that the opportunity area boundaries are guidelines, and not borders to prevent or discourage economic investment. To this point, the actual boundaries should be considered on a case-by-case basis and adjusted when a particular investment meets the overall economic development vision and does not undermine the overall strategy for that particular area of the City.

- Identify sites with the greatest potential to accommodate economic development efforts – The next step in this effort was to identify specific locations within the opportunity areas that have the greatest potential to accommodate (re)development. This analysis was done on a parcel level to identify those assets that are vacant, blighted, or underutilized (based on existing zoning). Opportunity sites—which include single parcels as well as potential assemblages—were identified through this process. The Consultant Team presented development potential opportunities for the Strategy Committee to consider. The final recommendations resulted from a series of discussions that balanced the economic development goals with the opportunity area vision and the local market potential. For sites where a consensus could not be reached, alternatives are presented for future consideration.
- Prioritize and phase implementation efforts – The final step of the effort was to prioritize and phase the City's economic development efforts of these sites and areas. Simply put, the most effective economic development efforts are those that focus in on the community's highest priorities. While the City's economic development staffing plan provides the necessary resources to carry out the implementation strategy, it is the Consultant Team's experience that those communities that take a more focused, strategic approach have greater success than those that attempt to spread their efforts and try to be all-encompassing.

C. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

While the identification process was a comprehensive collaboration between key public, civic, and governmental representatives to identify a *preferred* approach to the City's real estate-based efforts, the Strategy Committee was unanimous in its position on the City maintaining a level of flexibility when implementing this strategy. Economic development—particularly the real estate investment component—is a fluid endeavor that requires compromise and adaptability to reach its full potential. Simply put, the concepts and strategies presented in this Chapter are intended to be guides for future efforts, and not mandates. It is the Strategy Committee's intent that the City consider the principles detailed in this section when making decisions regarding economic development efforts and investments.

Most notably, the Strategy Committee recognizes that a number of the opportunity sites are privately owned. The scope of this effort did not allow for the City's staff or the RKG Team to reach out to each property owner to determine their long-term investment interest and/or willingness to engage in the preferred development concepts. To this point, it will be critical for the City to engage these entities as *partners* in the implementation effort. The City's economic development staff should establish a relationship with owners that have conflicting investment plans and/or are hesitant to engage in this effort. The cultivation of trust and buy-in may take time. As noted, the preferred strategy should be used as a guide. In cases where there is initial resistance, the prioritization presented herein may need to be adjusted. Furthermore, the City's initial investigation may reveal opportunities not envisioned



during this process. To these points, the Strategy Committee recommends the City staff consider the following principles during implementation.

- *Focus your efforts in priority areas* – The Strategy Committee is unified in its position that the City’s initial economic development focus be on stabilizing and developing the Downtown opportunity area (discussed in greater detail in the Implementation Strategy chapter). The Committee also recognizes the importance of supporting the City’s large institutions such as Gwinnett Medical Center and Georgia Gwinnett College.
- *Scale effort to staffing* – The Strategy Committee recommends that the City be more strategic and deliberate in initiating projects. All implementation should be done in context staff availability and capacity. Overcommitting resources will lead to an inefficient and ineffective implementation effort.
- *Encourage a mixture of residential types* – The City has concentrations of single-family detached housing and market affordable rental housing. There is very little variety within the City to appeal to a broader consumer base. The Strategy Committee recommends the economic development effort encourage and incorporate greater housing types as part of mixed-use developments.

D. OPPORTUNITY AREAS

The following section provides an overview of each opportunity area and the specific opportunity sites within those areas. The opportunity areas are presented in order of priority, with opportunity sites distributed into short-term, mid-term, and long-term groups. Short-term projects are those the Strategy Committee would encourage be initiated within the next two years. Mid-term projects likely have a five-year timeline. Long-term projects are ones that should be cultivated as market conditions allow. This segmentation reflects the Strategy Committee’s preference for the focus of the City’s economic development efforts. The group recognizes that substantial efforts already have been implemented—and are ongoing—in the Downtown area. Their preference for continued focus on the Downtown reaffirms past actions and encourages continued focus on Downtown as a priority.

1. Downtown

The Downtown opportunity area generally is the portion of the City immediately surrounding the original 9-block area commonly referred to as the Square and City Hall. The Lawrenceville Lawn is a primary feature within the Downtown opportunity area. The boundaries loosely follow the railroad tracks to the north, Route 20 (Buford Drive and Jackson Street) to the east, Scenic Highway to the south, and Culver Street/Lawrenceville Highway to the west.

a.) Existing Conditions

The Downtown opportunity area has a diverse collection of residential, civic, commercial and industrial uses, consistent with a well-established county seat community. The City’s historic downtown development is a centerpiece of the area, with large civic uses making up much of the area south of Luckie Street. Many of the residential buildings in the Downtown opportunity area have been converted to commercial use, particularly those closest to the County courthouse and government center (Map 6-2). Despite the Downtown’s proximity to the City’s larger employers, access to four major transportation arterials, and aesthetic charm, there are few residences and very little residential development activity.



Property conditions generally are good, with scattered parcels that have moderate to severe deferred maintenance. Privately-owned properties on the edges of the area boundary tend to have the greatest investment needs. However, there does not appear to be any apparent blight and renovation activity is apparent in a number of buildings/properties.

Buildings generally are well occupied in the area. Only a few privately-owned buildings are substantially vacant. The most notable vacancy is the former City Hall building located on South Clayton Street. Based on conversations with local real estate professionals, turnover can be high in some buildings in the Downtown area, but do not remain vacant very long. The demand to be downtown appears to be strong enough to overcome some of the challenges posed by the smaller, older stock (particularly along the Square).

b.) Economic Development Focus

As noted in the economic development goals section of the Implementation Strategy chapter, the primary economic development focus for Downtown is to expand it as a live-work-play destination within Lawrenceville. There is substantial interest in increasing residential use within the Downtown, particularly for increasing the variety of housing choice and encouraging mixed-use development. The Strategy Committee envisions an effort to strengthen the retail presence at the Square, while accommodating greater office/service activity in other strategic locations in the opportunity area. Given the City already owns a number of land assets in Downtown—particularly the current Public Works site just south of the Lawrenceville Lawn (Map 6-3), the Strategy Committee expressed a desire to reactivate these parcels into private development in a manner that is consistent with the economic development goals and the Downtown Master Plan. The Strategy Committee encourages the City to consider public-private partnerships (PPPs) to attract private sector investment including the use of Request for Proposals (RFP) processes. It is important to note that the Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority (LDDA) currently is in the process of negotiating a number of City-owned land assets. The Committee recognizes these initiatives were underway prior to the completion of this strategy, and should continue while incorporating the principles of this effort where possible.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

- *1. Medium Density Residential* – The former Oak Street school site is approximately 7.5 acres (Map 6-4). It is an ideal site for a multifamily or multifamily/townhouse community that provides an opportunity for people looking for downtown living. The elevation of the site makes for very good views. The target market likely will be empty nesters and young professionals with no children. The site has the capacity to accommodate approximately 285 multifamily rental units or 80 townhouses, based on existing land regulations. The market indicates a multifamily rental focus will yield the greatest return and economic benefit to the City due to current financing conditions. However, the development could be built to accommodate a smaller-scale for-sale project as well. The City owns the site, making it an ideal early project.
- *2. Mixed Use Infill (Pike Street)* – The Strategy Committee encourages purposing the existing surface parking lot that fronts Pike Street to accommodate new multifamily development that wraps around a City parking garage. The inclusion of a parking garage is highly encouraged, as existing concerns about parking in Downtown would make it challenging to lose the parking spaces (especially during events). The site can accommodate a reasonable-sized mixed-use development that wraps the parking structure along Culver and Pike Streets. Being the site is owned by the County and leased by the City, the control makes it a viable early project. However, this effort will require a public-private



partnership as the development will not generate enough revenue for a private developer to absorb the cost of the parking structure.

- 3. Mixed Use Infill (Square) – The City's existing Downtown Master Plan calls for a Georgia Gwinnett College/Aurora Theater/private investment program for this site. The development of a new theater to augment the existing Aurora integrated into a mixed-use development with commercial frontage along the Square and upper-story living opportunities is the most appropriate use of this land. While the City owns some of the parcels at this site, some remain in private ownership. The City will have to work with the property owner to determine their willingness to partner and/or sell the property. If a reasonable agreement can be negotiated, this site can be a short-term opportunity. Similar to the Mixed Use Infill project at Pike Street, this effort will require a public-private partnership to meet the vision. Most notably, the civic (theater and parking) and educational uses will need a funding source beyond the private development entity.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

- 4. Signature Project (Phases 1-2) – The Jackson Street Park Master Plan identified the potential for a signature project, providing a development program that creates the live, work, play dynamic being sought for Downtown Lawrenceville. The Lawrenceville Lawn initiative was the first phase of the greater development project. The size of this site and the fact that the Public Works operations are being relocated makes this site a catalytic endeavor. The Strategy Committee envisions this project being done in phases due to the site's overall size and current ownership patterns. The Committee recommends that the portions of the site between the Lawn and Branson Street (extended to Jackson Street) be considered as the first development area. The City owns all of this land (except for the auto parts store along Clayton), making it a good candidate for redevelopment once the Public Works operations are relocated (approximately 2-years out). The portions of the site south of Branson Street including the former school would be a later phase (long-term) that extends the overall development program to encompass City Hall and the new law enforcement center.

The vision (as detailed in the aforementioned plan) is to develop a signature live-work-play project that enhances the retail offerings on the Square, maximizes the public benefit of the Lawrenceville Lawn, increases living options in downtown and relocates incompatible uses from the Downtown. The City should pursue a public private partnership with a master developer to detail a development program that accomplishes the defined vision for this site.

- 5. Residential Infill – There is a reasonably sized site on Pike Street that can accommodate a small multifamily development. Similar to the Oak Street site, multifamily rental has the greatest potential in the short term. Something to the scale and quality of Cornerstone would be the most appropriate and desirable product. The site is a single parcel where the City could encourage the owner to invest/partner with an investor.
- 6. Office Flex – These parcels are located on the east end of Downtown along Route 20 (Buford Drive) and currently are vacant. Property rezoning to accommodate additional office or light office/flex space could provide options for service/office businesses currently consuming downtown retail space. Given the vision to expand retail offerings along the Square, providing a convenient site close to the Square with exposure on Buford Highway is a logical option. The City will need to work with current property owners to understand the short-term ownership and investment strategy.



e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- 7. Signature Project (Phase 3) – Phase 3 reflects the challenge of consolidating some of the privately-owned land and the need to pace development to meet the City’s current absorption potential. Phase 3 would extend the Signature Project concept (site #4), increasing Downtown activity without detracting from the Square. Despite the longer delivery expectations, planning for Phase 3 should be done concurrently with Phases 1 & 2. Engaging a single development partner for the entire Signature Project effort should be considered.
- 8. Gateway Office/Residential Project – This property currently has a single house, making it substantially underutilized given its location in Downtown. The parcel is sizeable enough to develop a gateway mixed-use development to augment the Downtown experience while creating a strong entry presence from the west side of Downtown. With some office/service uses surrounding the site, it will be important to utilize a development scale consistent with the rest of Downtown. Coordination with the existing property owner will determine the ultimate timing and potential for this opportunity.
- 9. Residential Infill – These lots are located across Luckie Street from the Lawrenceville Lawn and behind the Lawrenceville First Baptist Church. There has been some demolition on the site, with the remaining buildings being in marginal condition. The location away from the Square make this a challenging site for commercial development. However, the site does provide an opportunity to increase Downtown residences on a site with good views/access to the Lawn. Creating a mixed income or age restricted project, potentially in partnership with the church, is possible.

2. Hospital Corridor

The Hospital Corridor opportunity area includes the non-residential properties that are within close proximity of Duluth Highway (Route 120) from the City line at Highway 316 to the Downtown opportunity area boundary where Highway 29 intersects with Route 120. The area includes the Gwinnett Medical Center and a number of the medical offices along Professional Drive. A small enclave of industrial uses along Maltbie Street fall within the boundaries as well. The Hospital Corridor area is bounded by the Industrial West and College Corridor opportunity areas on either side.

a.) Existing Conditions

There are four distinct areas of the Hospital Corridor area. The hospital and surrounding medical office uses encompass much of the northern portion of the area on either side of Duluth Highway (Map 6-5). However, these uses comprise very little of the Highway frontage. Almost all of the highway frontage is traditional suburban strip commercial development. There are a number of small and mid-sized shopping centers as well as stand-alone foodservice, automotive, and retail establishments. There are concentrations of industrial uses along the rail line that bisects the opportunity area, particularly along Maltbie Road. Finally, there are a few residential infill developments including an apartment complex on the edge of the Downtown area at the end of Oak Street. The single anomaly in the area is a high school located on Duluth Highway.

The medical and commercial development tends to be in good condition. Some of the older, smaller commercial parcels near downtown are in marginal condition, with a greater incidence of deferred maintenance. These parcels tend to have the greatest vacancy levels. In contrast those parcels at the southern end that have recently been developed are in very good to excellent condition and are well occupied. There is some vacancy in the medical offices buildings near the hospital, but at



rates consistent with market averages. The industrial development tends to be the least attractive, but is well occupied.

The retail spaces tend to have the greatest vacancy (Map 6-6), highlighted by a vacant car dealer parcel on the west side of Buford Highway. The lack of market strength for large retail spaces is most evident in the former shopping center located between Buford Highway and Phillip Drive. The hospital group acquired the center and is reported to be converting it to medical office and back office space. There is a single office building that is substantially vacant in the former GMBA Center on Crown Pointe Way.

b.) Economic Development Focus

The Hospital Corridor plays an important role for the City of Lawrenceville, serving as the primary gateway into the City's hospital and Downtown from Highway 316. To this point, the Strategy Committee encourages the City to focus on enhancing opportunities for the Hospital to thrive while improving the economic vibrancy and aesthetic quality of the corridor between Highway 316 and Downtown. There are a few strategic parcels along the corridor that require the City to engage property owners in order to reactivate and repurpose those sites. The Committee also encourages the City to build upon existing efforts to frame and enhance the Downtown entrance through strategic development projects.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

No short-term opportunities were identified for the Hospital Corridor.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

- *1. Mixed Use Infill* - This site includes a vacant car dealership that fronts Pike Street and two vacant parcels that front Hurricane Shoals Road (Map 6-7). Combined, these parcels could accommodate a mixed use support service infill development. Given the proximity to the Gwinnett Medical Center, the concept for this site combines new housing opportunities and support services targeted to the medical community. The housing and retail/services provided could offer a unique live-work opportunity in Lawrenceville, enabling medical workers to walk to the hospital without having to cross Pike Street/Duluth Highway. The site partially sits within the City's tax allocation district (TAD), offering a potential incentive to encourage redevelopment.
- *2. Medical Office Mixed Use* - As mentioned, this former shopping center (mostly vacant) is owned by the Hospital Authority, and is being proposed as additional medical office and back office operations for the hospital. However, the site has the potential to incorporate medical services with residential/continuing care facilities in a horizontal mixed use configuration (a mix of uses on the site, but not in the buildings per se). The site is large enough for a continuing care retirement community (CCRC) with embedded medical services and/or an assisted care concept with a medical office component to be located along Phillip Boulevard while accommodating additional medical services further into the site. The development patterns surrounding this site are conducive to accommodate a residential component. However, this effort will require coordination with the Hospital Authority. Depending on where they are in the reuse of the facility, this opportunity may not be viable.



e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- 3. Redevelopment Site - This site includes a vacant office building and a large vacant parcel. The former GMBA Center development now only has a short-term stay hotel and suites. The property has a number of challenges for development including poor visibility from Duluth Highway and proximity to industrial/flex development. The Strategy Committee did not identify a single preferred use, but discussed a number of opportunities including the potential to allow more small and mid-sized industrial /flex development or an age-restricted housing development. The group consensus was to not encourage traditional family housing development. The ultimate opportunity will be determined by the owner's investment strategy and market climate at the time of investment. That stated, the Committee encourages the City to develop a relationship with the owner to identify opportunities in a collaborative manner.
- 4. Industrial/Flex Infill - This site has some automotive/flex space development, with 14 acres currently being marketed. The portion of the site along the rail line is vacant, but challenging to access due to environmental concerns. Similar to the former GMBA site, the Strategy Committee recommends the remaining developable piece should be marketed in coordination with Partnership Gwinnett for additional industrial/flex development. There also is the potential to expand the existing automotive use on the site to provide a relocation option for auto businesses occupying prime frontage space along the City's main transportation corridors.
- 5. Gateway Mixed Use - This collection of properties have a variety of owners and uses, but primarily are in modest to marginal condition. The site lends itself to assemblage and redevelopment as a gateway feature to Downtown (similar to a Cornerstone concept). The apartment complex behind the parcels should be contacted for potential partnership/site expansion. This effort will require substantial outreach and coordination, making it a longer-term process.

3. College Corridor

The College Corridor opportunity area extends along Collins Hill Road/Northdale Road from Highway 316 and Georgia Gwinnett College (GGC) to the Downtown opportunity area and the railroad tracks. The most notable use is the Wal-Mart/Kohl's shopping center near the Highway 316 interchange. Development along the corridor transitions from commercial to residential just south of Hurricane Shoals Road, limiting the boundary to parcels adjacent to Northdale Road.

a.) Existing Conditions

The College Corridor area has a diverse mix of uses. At the northern end, the area has the large retail center on the west side of Collins Hill Road and a small industrial enclave to the east side (Map 6-8). There are a number of large, vacant parcels in this section. The Collins Hill/Northdale/Hurricane Shoals intersection has a collection of commercial uses including two small shopping centers. There is a small industrial development along Northdale Road near Hurricane Shoals Road, but the remainder of the corridor has apartment, townhouse and single-family residential down to the Clayton Street intersection. Commercial and industrial uses from Clayton Street down to the railroad tracks.

Commercial property conditions generally are good, as much of this development is relatively new and well occupied. The industrial development is typical for the use, with marginal aesthetics. The townhouse and single family housing range in condition, but are fairly well maintained. The



multifamily development is in moderate shape, but show the impact of being older properties. Despite the sizable vacant parcels near Highway 316, there is very little building vacancy in the opportunity area (Map 6-9).

The City is implementing a road realignment strategy to divert downtown traffic from Northdale Road onto a parallel road to be built that splits at Hurricane Shoals and cuts through three apartment complexes. The road realignment will eliminate the connection of Northdale Road from North Clayton Street, providing a new connection further up Clayton. If completed, this realignment will change the development potential of the southern portion of the opportunity area. Simply put, any development along Northdale Road will likely be residential in nature, given its loss of connectivity to Downtown. The development potential along the new road will also be limited, as the portions of the existing parcels available for development will have limited property depth from the road. These factors were considered when identifying opportunity sites in the area.

b.) Economic Development Focus

There is a substantial interest within Lawrenceville to better connect Georgia Gwinnett College and Downtown Lawrenceville. The College Corridor is envisioned to be a physical and psychological connection between the two areas. To this point, the primary focus for this area is to encourage and support the long-term sustainability of Georgia Gwinnett College. Any development in the area is intended to support the College's growth and evolution. Initiatives such as the walk/bike path connecting the two destinations are consistent with this focus.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

- *1. Mixed Use College Oriented* – This site is located on the east side of Collins Hill Road north of Hurricane Shoals Road (Map 6-10). This single parcel is sizeable enough to accommodate a live/recreate development that can serve the GGC community. There are a number of similar development products in Athens, Atlanta, and other college communities in Georgia that combines student-focused housing with retail and services attractive to college consumers in an urban, mixed-use form. The Strategy Committee recognizes that there are limited housing opportunities on campus, and creating student-focused development close to GGC is a logical effort. Furthermore, bringing the college community “across 316” can help minimize the physical and psychological barrier that the road creates between the school and Downtown. The opportunity area's large frontage on Collins Hill Road creates a strong visual connection for the college. The site already is being marketed for development, making the City's economic development involvement more of a support/development process assistance effort.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

- *2. Highway Development, College Focused* – This land is immediately south of Highway 316. Georgia Gwinnet College is on the north side of the highway. The property is bordered by the Walmart/Kohl's center to the south. The opportunity area is ideal for encouraging a college-focused development that incorporates both commercial (retail and service businesses) and residential components to serve the GGC student body. As noted for Site #1, creating a live/recreate center on this side of 316 encourages better connectivity between the college and Downtown. A proposed trail system connecting this parcel with Downtown will augment that opportunity as well. This effort will be more involved, as greater coordination with the property owner will be required to identify their investment strategy and approach.



- **3. Residential Infill** – This site includes two houses that occupy nearly 10 acres of land. The location has potential to accommodate a small-scale residential infill development of small-lot detached or townhouse-style units. The opportunity can expand housing choice in the City. Given the potential impact of the road realignment project and the need to coordinate with existing property owners, this site likely is a mid-term or long-term opportunity.

e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- **4. Industrial/Flex** – These parcels are located north of the railroad tracks in an industrial area off of Clayton Street. They have potential to accommodate additional industrial/flex/automotive use, but are not well positioned compared to other assets in the City. The City will need to coordinate with the existing property owners to determine opportunities and work with Partnership Gwinnett to market the site. Given the site disadvantages and the strength of other available industrial sites in the City, this site most likely is a longer-term opportunity.

4. Route 20 North

The Route 20 North opportunity area is bisected by Highway 316. The area north of 316 includes the most of the commercial frontage up to the Route 20/Braselton Highway split as well as two industrial corridors, Cripple Creek Drive and Swanson Drive. The portion of the opportunity area south of Highway 316 is bounded by the Industrial East opportunity area to the east, the College Corridor opportunity area to the west and the railroad tracks to the south. The Route 20/Highway 316 intersection has a number of parcels that would be in the opportunity area boundary, but are not part of the City's incorporated area. This is particularly true for the immediate parcels north of Highway 316.

a.) Existing Conditions

The portion of the opportunity area north of Highway 316 is exclusively non-residential. The properties immediately adjacent to Route 20 are traditional suburban commercial in nature, with a mixture of retail and service businesses. Cripple Creek Drive and Swanson Drive (to the west of Route 20) corridors are industrial flex space with small to medium-sized facilities (Map 6-11). There are a few undeveloped parcels, but very few building vacancies. The industrial space appears to be fully occupied. Properties in this area generally are in good condition, with the industrial areas being in comparatively good appearance compared to similar product elsewhere in Lawrenceville.

The portion of the Route 20 North opportunity area south of Highway 316 is a diverse mix of uses with little to no buffering between use types. The area closest to Highway 316 (down to Hurricane Shoals Road) is a mixture of highway commercial, shopping center, and industrial. The portion of the study area south of Hurricane Shoals Road is predominantly industrial (adjacent to the Industrial East opportunity area) with a two small enclaves of single-family detached housing. Route 20 frontage has a concentration of independent automotive repair and sales businesses. There are two relatively small multifamily developments near the railroad tracks west of Route 20.

Residential property conditions are fair to good. The commercial and industrial uses are fair to marginal. The Route 20 corridor has little or no streetscaping, making the eclectic mix of uses appear even more disordered. There is little vacancy in the opportunity area except for the large shopping center on the southeast quadrant of the Highway 316/Route 20 interchange (Map 6-12). This property appears to have a converted one space into a house of worship, but is mostly vacant.



The parking lot of the shopping center appears to be temporary storage for the ongoing improvements to Highway 316.

b.) Economic Development Focus

The primary economic development focus for the Strategy Committee is to strengthen the Highway 316/Route 20 interchange. This will require a coordinated effort between the City and the County, given some properties are located outside the City limits. The Highway 316 interchange is the primary commercial gateway into Lawrenceville from the east, and is only one exit from Georgia Gwinnett College and the Gwinnett County Airport. To this point, the frontage parcels could accommodate either enhanced industrial development or college-focused development.

A secondary focus of the Strategy Committee is to enhance the corridor aesthetics from the City limits to the railroad tracks and into Downtown. As noted, there is little streetscaping in the area, and the comparatively dense development and variety of land uses adversely impact the visual appeal of the corridor.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

- *1. Gateway Mixed Use or Signature Industrial Development* – The parcels that make up this opportunity site currently house a largely vacant and underutilized shopping center on the Southeast corner of the Highway 316/Route 20 intersection (Map 6-13). This site has excellent visibility from Highway 316, making it a good location for a gateway, mixed use development that could be marketed to the GGC community. The proximity to 316, good access to Gwinnett County Airport and parcel size also makes it an ideal candidate for a signature industrial development that could be marketed through Partnership Gwinnett. Whether there is a college connection or landmark industrial building, the opportunity site could be more than a typical strip shopping center. Given the current retail market conditions, reactivating the center will be challenging. The Strategy Committee recommends that the City collaborate with Partnership Gwinnett to work with the property owner to identify their investment strategy and develop an implementation plan for the site.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

- *2. Medium Density Residential With Commercial Frontage* – This site is a large industrial storage yard between Hurricane Shoals Road and Highway 316, with some small commercial frontage lots along Hurricane Shoals. Given the site's location along Highway 316 in proximity to GGC, it could be an alternate site for medium density multifamily housing targeted to the GGC community, reusing the frontage lots for more college-oriented commercial use. This site is a long term opportunity given it currently is occupied and there are better located options for this type of development (see College Corridor discussion). That said, the evolution of GGC from a commuter college to a live-away college will create substantial demand for off-campus housing. The City can collaborate with Partnership Gwinnett to work with the existing owner/tenant to identify the potential for relocation elsewhere in Lawrenceville/Gwinnett County.

e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- *3. Highway Commercial* – This large piece of land on the east side of Route 20 north of the Highway 316 interchange has excellent frontage and visibility. The property lends itself to expanding the highway commercial frontage along Route 20. The property currently is not openly being marketed. The Strategy Committee recommends the City staff reach out to the property owner to discuss short and long-term investment strategies for the parcel.



- 4. Mixed Use Infill – This small assemblage of parcels is located at the intersection of North Clayton Street and Route 20. The site is wedge-shaped and includes a small automotive repair facility and a number of vacant lots. The Strategy Committee recognizes the importance of this intersection, as both streets lead into Downtown Lawrenceville. To this point, the Committee recommends the City explore the potential to relocate the automotive business and development corner as a mixed-use infill project. Given the size of the site, the development likely will be a combination of retail and service businesses. However, upper story residential should not be excluded from consideration. Given the need to assemble the property, the need to relocate an existing business, and the small scale of the project, this is a long-term opportunity.

5. Route 20 South

The Route 20 South opportunity area includes the frontage properties along Route 20 between Scenic Highway and the City boundary near Sugarloaf Parkway. Unlike the other opportunity corridors, the Route 20 South area is fairly narrow due to the prevalence of residential neighborhoods that abut the frontage properties. Furthermore, there is a sizable portion of the frontage lots on the west side of Route 20 south of Davis Road that are unincorporated Gwinnett County outside the City limits.

a.) Existing Conditions

The development along the Route 20 South corridor closely reflect traditional suburban strip commercial development. There are two large church properties (Saint Lawrence Catholic Church and the Lawrenceville Church of God) at the north end of the opportunity area that break up the commercial frontage (Map 6-14). The commercial development fabric starts to break down at Davis Road, where there is a small automotive/industrial enclave at Farmer Court. South of that intersection, there are a number of residential subdivision development fronting Route 20, large vacant parcels, and substantially underdeveloped properties. Activity increases at the far southern end of the City limits at the Ingles shopping center due close proximity to the Route 20/Sugarloaf Parkway intersection.

Property conditions generally are good, with a few properties in modest to poor condition. There are a few retail properties that have had long-term vacancies and have become disinvested. The automotive industrial area is typical of the intensity of development and land use type, but generally is not visible from Route 20.

The Route 20 South corridor has the greatest incidence of retail vacancy of all the opportunity areas (Map 6-15). It is conservatively estimated that there is more than 150,000 SF of retail vacancy in the area. This total would be substantially higher if not for the County government (Voter Registration and Health Department) consuming the 100,000 SF+ primary anchor tenant space at the Lawrenceville Town Center development. This high vacancy likely explains the number of undeveloped larger (5+ acres) parcels in the opportunity area.

b.) Economic Development Focus

The Route 20 South opportunity area's "heyday" of retailing existed before the larger commercial centers were developed south and west of Lawrenceville. The substantial power center development along Scenic Highway in and near Snellville (i.e. The Shoppes at Webb Gin, Presidential Commons, Presidential Market Center...) has drawn much of the Route 20 South market, leaving a substantial inventory with little market demand. To this point, the Strategy Committee recommends the City focus on "rightsizing" the retail base within the area, considering redevelopment/adaptive reuse strategies to attract new residents to the City. The growth of



additional consumer demand will help mitigate some of the existing vacancies. The Strategy Committee envisions the potential to increase housing choice within the City, creating a buffer between the commercial frontage of Route 20 and the single-family detached housing subdivisions behind these properties.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

No short-term opportunities were identified for the Route 20 South opportunity area.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

- 1. Adaptive Reuse - This parcel currently has a vacant, blighted building. It is located between an existing residential neighborhood and a small automotive-focused industrial park (Map 6-16). Given its relative isolation and disparate adjoining uses, the reactivation of this site lends itself to being a transitional use. Given the current lack of market for retail space along Route 20 south of Downtown Lawrenceville, the most logical use is as a mixed-income property and/or an age restricted site. Regardless of market target, it can provide greater housing diversity in the City. The City can work with the owner to invest/find the right investor for this project.
- 2. Townhouse Development - This site currently is undeveloped, located along a stretch of Route 20 between the commercial activity near Downtown and the commercial activity closer to Sugarloaf Parkway. The parcel is well suited to accommodate a townhouse/attached housing development, potentially a mixed multifamily/townhouse development. The City staff will need to work with the property's owner to determine the potential to implement this strategy.

e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- 3. Residential or Office - These parcels currently are undeveloped, located along Applewood Drive on the east side of Route 20. The more immediate market opportunity would be as multifamily housing development. However, they may have more long-term benefit to the City being focused to accommodate office/service development as a longer-term strategy. They are adjacent to the "4. Medium Density Residential with Highway Commercial" opportunity site, lending to a potential larger redevelopment opportunity for the City if done together. The combined strategy likely will be a long term venture, given there are existing, active buildings and multiple owners.
- 4. Medium Density Residential With Highway Commercial - This opportunity site is a collection of vacant parcels, unoccupied commercial buildings, and functioning properties (including a Veterans of Foreign Wars facility). The proposed strategy would be for the City to work with the property owners to identify a potential mixed use redevelopment program with a larger focus on the residential component. The site lends to refocusing due to its lack of highway frontage and the relatively weak retail market. That said, this effort will be complex due to the need to relocate some users.
- 5. Gateway Mixed Use - This opportunity site is similar to the previous site, being a collection of vacant parcels, vacant buildings, and functioning buildings. However, the development is extremely low density, lending to the potential for greater intensity of use. The concept for this opportunity site is to develop a gateway/entrance development that enhances the image and marketability of the Route 20 corridor into Lawrenceville. Creating mixed use development along Route 20 from Sugarloaf Parkway into



Lawrenceville will “right size” the commercial offerings within the opportunity area while strengthen the retail/service market for the remaining properties, particularly the Ingle’s shopping center, which appeared approximately 40% vacant at the writing of this report.

6. Industrial West

The Industrial West opportunity area encompasses the western-most portion of Lawrenceville between Old Norcross Road and Highway 316. The area also includes the industrial properties south of Old Norcross Road on either side of Lawrenceville Suwanee Road. The area has access to Highway 316 along Riverside Parkway.

a.) Existing Conditions

The Industrial West opportunity area is the City’s primary employment and business cluster. The area is immediately adjacent to the Gwinnett Medical Center and is concentrated around the Gwinnett 316/Rayco industrial park (Map 6-17). The privately held property is almost exclusively industrial or medical office. Two County schools (Discovery High School and Benefield Elementary School) make up a large portion of the opportunity area west of Riverside Parkway. A final industrial cluster (Tipton Industrial) is the extreme west side of the area. Property conditions are generally good for industrial development. The Gwinnett 316 Park is well maintained, with buildings in very good condition. There are a few building vacancies, but nothing disproportionate to regional market conditions. There are a number of large, undeveloped parcels in the opportunity area available to expand the City’s primary employment base (Map 6-18).

b.) Economic Development Focus

The Industrial West opportunity area is ideally positioned to sustain and expand the City’s industrial base. The properties are well buffered from incompatible uses, they are well served by transportation access, and remain a valuable fiscal asset to the City. The remaining undeveloped parcels are well positioned to expand the City’s production base and medical services industry.

c.) Opportunities

- Industrial Sites – This area is a natural industrial cluster that creates tax base and jobs for Lawrenceville. Continuing this pattern is logical for both economic growth and to avoid incompatible development. The short term sites (sites #1 and #2) already are being marketed by the property owner (Map 6-19). The City’s involvement would be to make sure private, City, and Partnership Gwinnett efforts are coordinated. The mid-term sites (sites # 3 and #4) may have some physical/access limitations that could require greater investment of time to identify opportunities and marketing efforts. The City is envisioned to support Partnership Gwinnett rather than lead these efforts.
- Medical Sites – These sites are well situated to enable continued growth of the City’s medical cluster. While the market need for new development may be longer-term, preserving these sites for medical-focused development is consistent with the City’s greater economic development sustainability. The City’s role would be a marketing/planning one rather than owning/developing.

7. Industrial East

The Industrial East opportunity area comprises the eastern-most portion of the City, located between Highway 316 and East Crogan Street. The area is bisected by Hosea Road, and is bounded by the City limits to the north, east, and south and Fredrix Alley/Rhodes Jordan Park to the west.



a.) Existing Conditions

Similar to the Industrial West opportunity area, the Industrial East opportunity area is almost exclusively comprised of production-based land uses. This area has a higher concentration of heavy industrial activity and automotive sales/repair (Map 6-20). The area's most substantial asset is the Gwinnett County Airport, which provides a 6,200 foot runway and has a number of aviation-related businesses/functions. The Airport is an employment center on its own, with more than a dozen public and private operations housed within the airport grounds. Other substantial uses include BlueLinx, the Gwinnett Transfer Station, and U.S. Auto Sales.

Property conditions are consistent with automotive and heavy industrial users. That said, there is no obvious disinvestment in the area. To this point, there is little building vacancy in the opportunity area. There are a number of large, underdeveloped parcels in the area, but most currently are being used as auto sales and storage yards. There is only one parcel currently available for development (Map 6-21).

b.) Economic Development Focus

The Industrial East opportunity area is ideally positioned to sustain its share of the City's industrial base. The properties are well buffered from incompatible uses, they are well served by transportation access, and remain a valuable fiscal asset to the City. The remaining undeveloped parcel is well positioned to expand the City's production base. The lone exception to this is the portion of the opportunity area along Crogan Street. The portion south of Crogan Street is the site of the new Central Cluster Middle School. Any development in this area should be respectful of the education cluster.

c.) Short-Term Opportunities

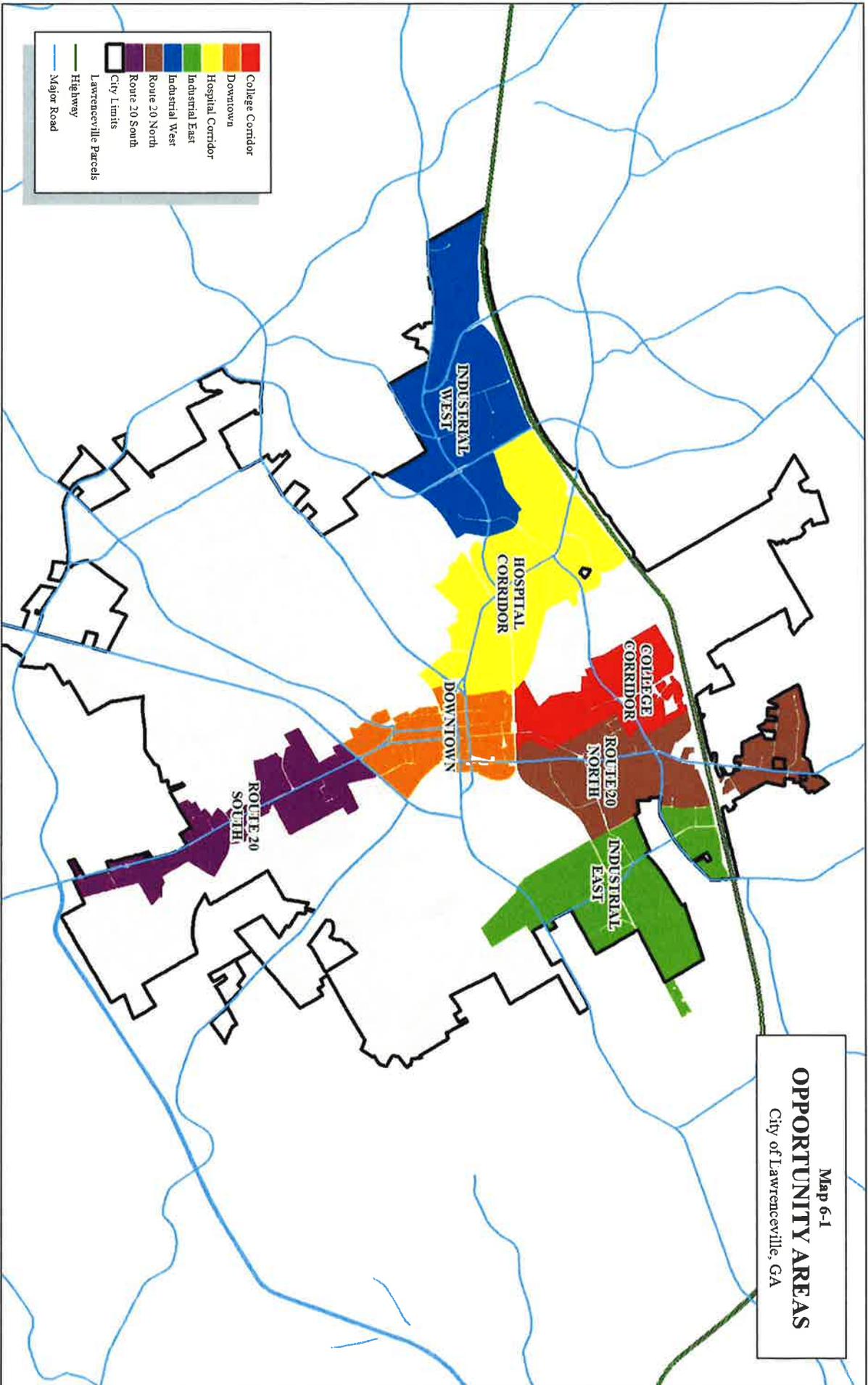
- 1. Industrial - This vacant parcel is already being marketed by the existing property owner (Map 6-22). The City's economic development efforts for this site should be to ensure coordination is occurring between the property owner and Partnership Gwinnett.

d.) Mid-Term Opportunities

No mid-term opportunities were identified for the Industrial East opportunity area

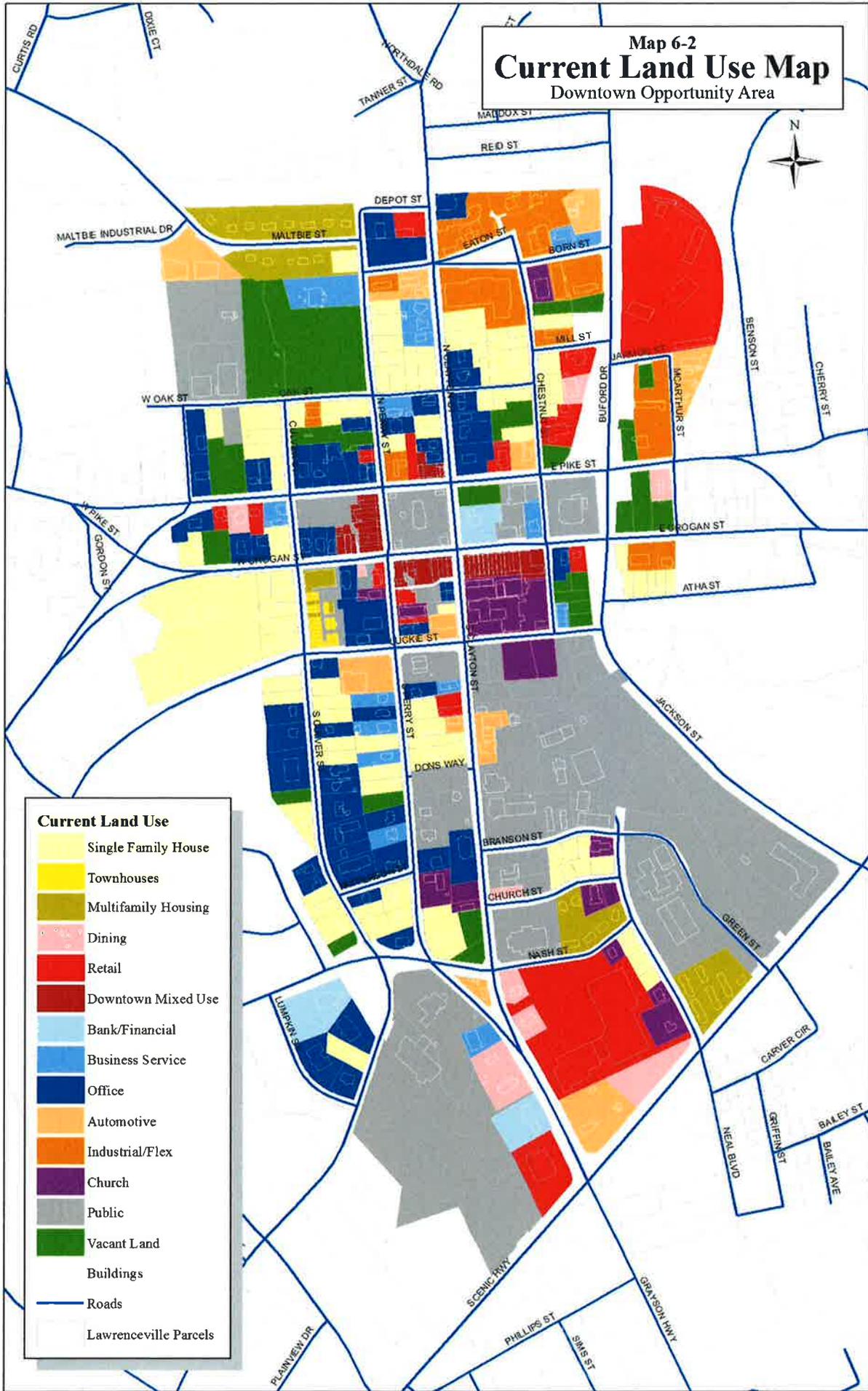
e.) Long-Term Opportunities

- 2. Gateway Mixed Use With Education Focus - This temporary trailer storage yard is across Crogan Street from the new Middle School being built adjacent to Jenkins Elementary School. The site is large (approximately 24 acres) and immediately east of Downtown Lawrenceville. The property is better suited as a mixed use/gateway project that may accommodate some school uses to buffer the City's industrial base near the airport and the school/housing developments on the south side of Crogan Street. This would require coordination with the property owner, likely including an alternative location or land swap.



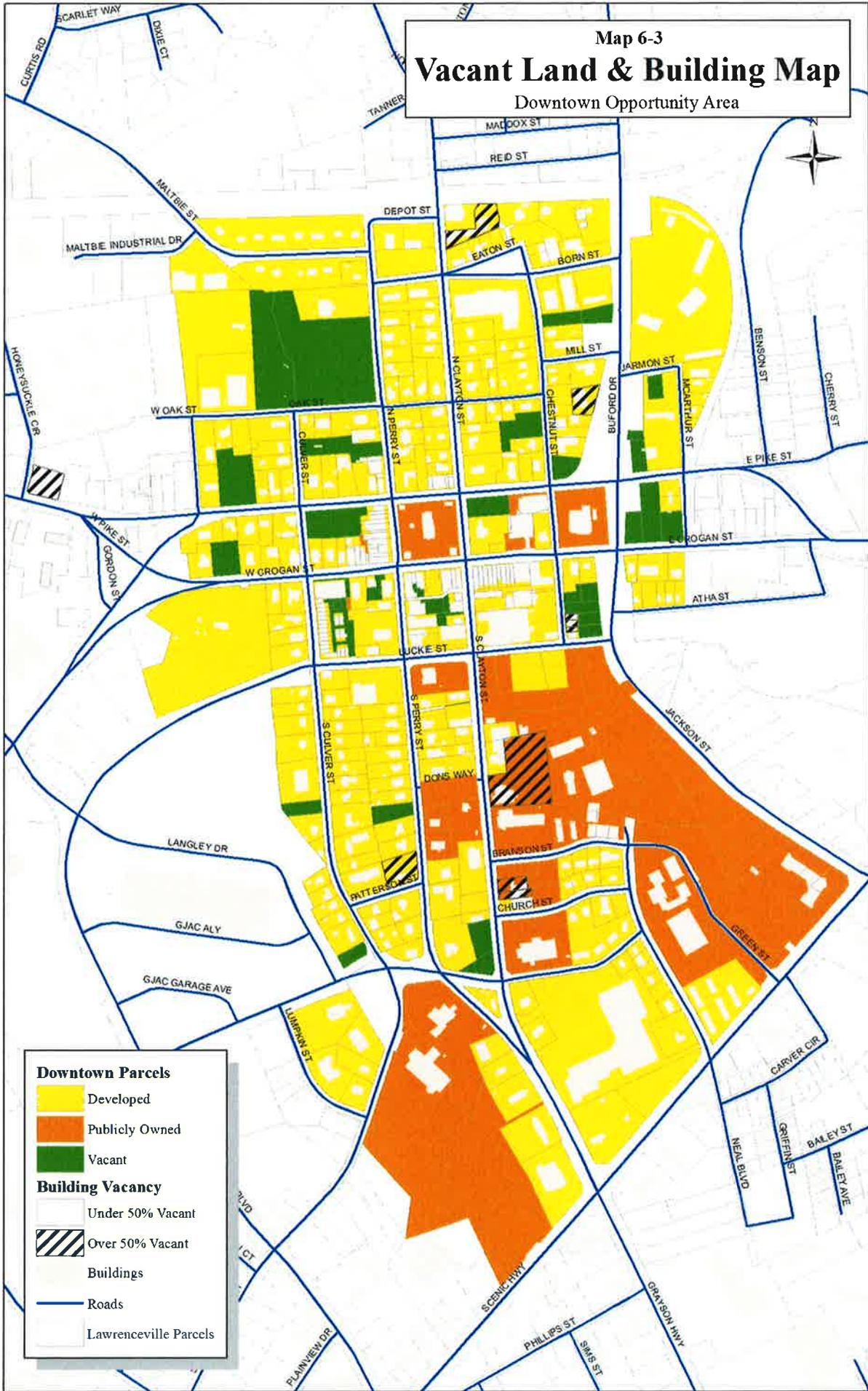
Map 6-1
OPPORTUNITY AREAS
 City of Lawrenceville, GA

Map 6-2
Current Land Use Map
 Downtown Opportunity Area



- Current Land Use**
- Single Family House
 - Townhouses
 - Multifamily Housing
 - Dining
 - Retail
 - Downtown Mixed Use
 - Bank/Financial
 - Business Service
 - Office
 - Automotive
 - Industrial/Flex
 - Church
 - Public
 - Vacant Land
 - Buildings
 - Roads
 - Lawrenceville Parcels

Map 6-3
Vacant Land & Building Map
 Downtown Opportunity Area



Downtown Parcels

- Developed
- Publicly Owned
- Vacant

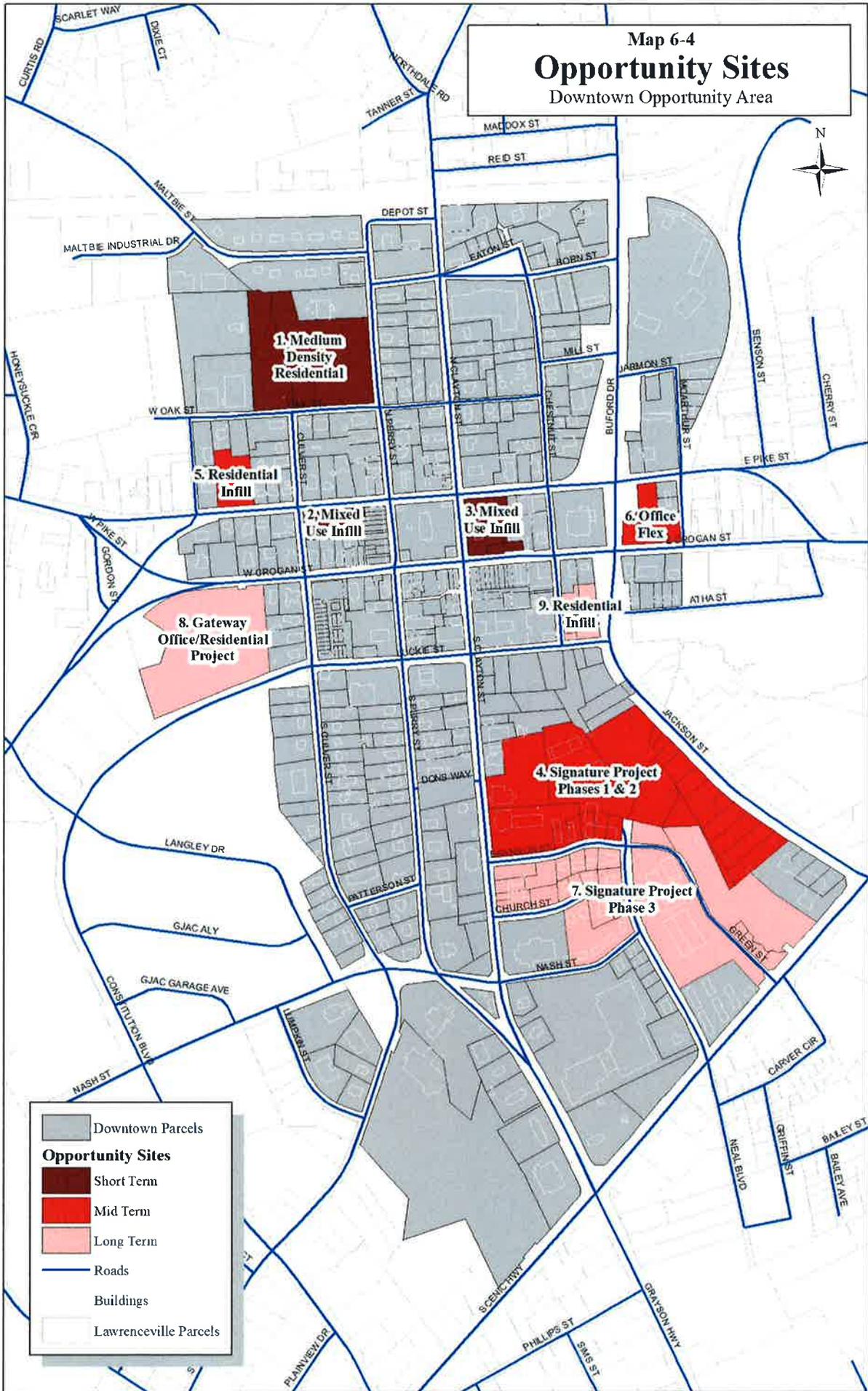
Building Vacancy

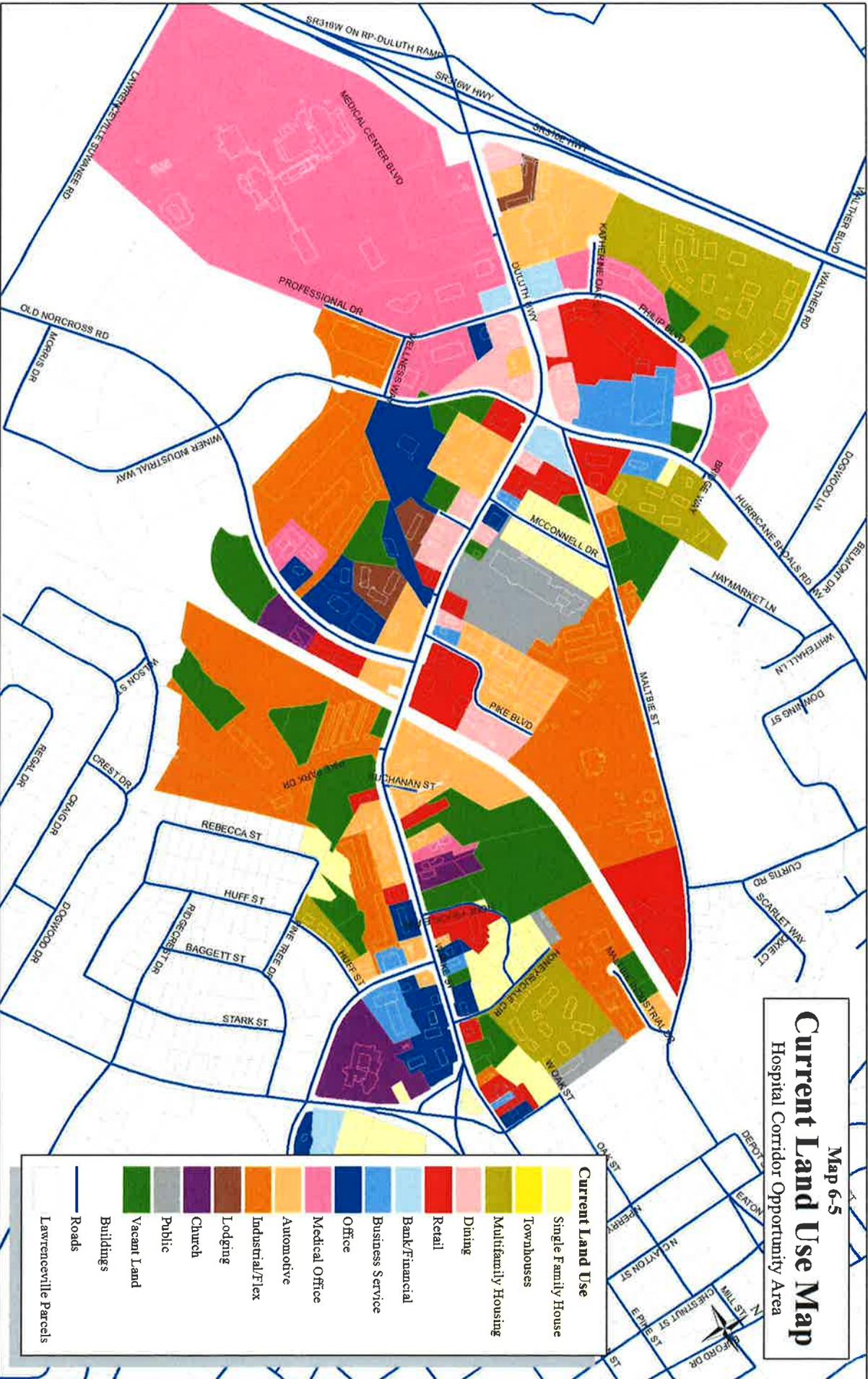
- Under 50% Vacant
- Over 50% Vacant

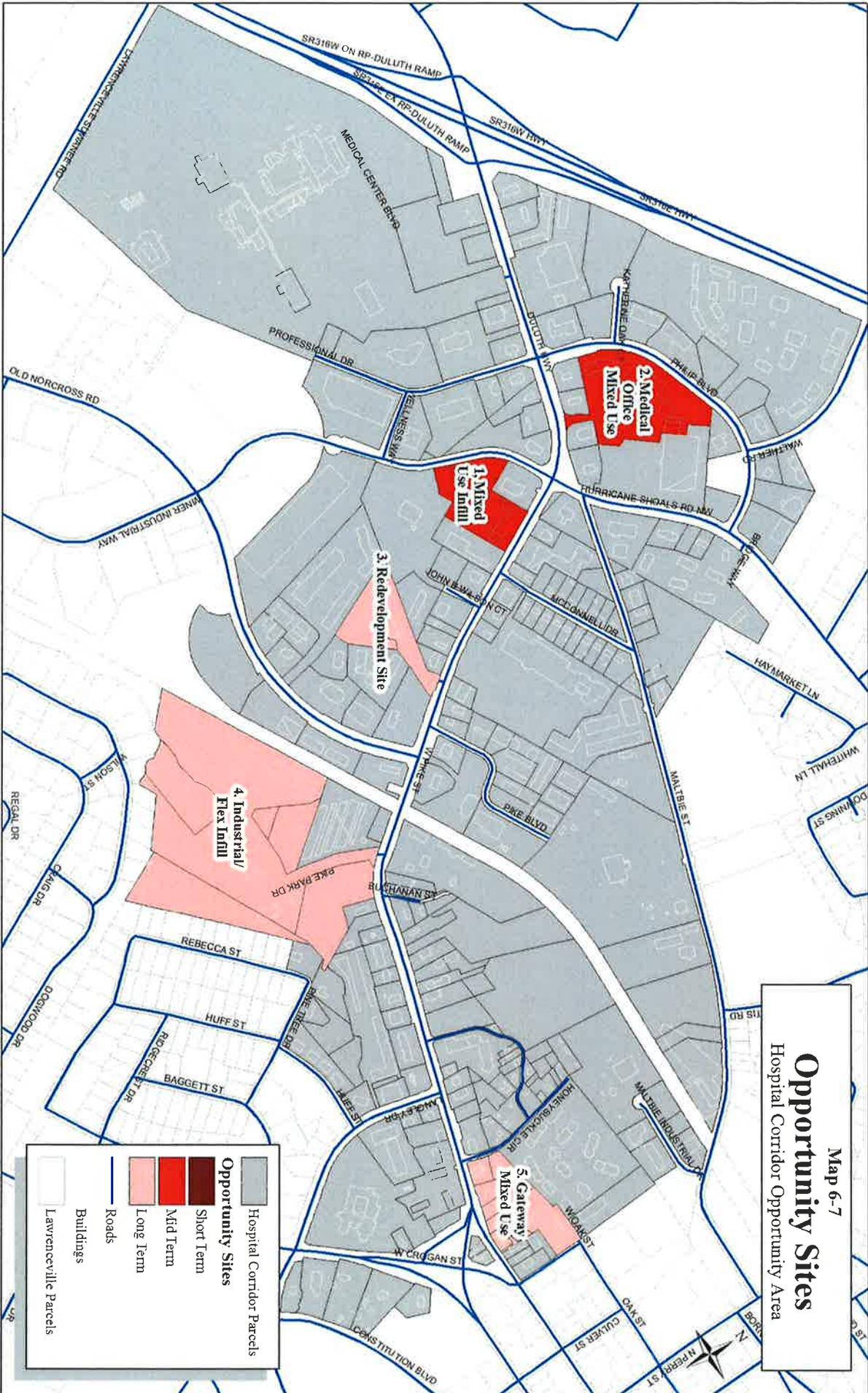
Other Symbols

- Buildings
- Roads
- Lawrenceville Parcels

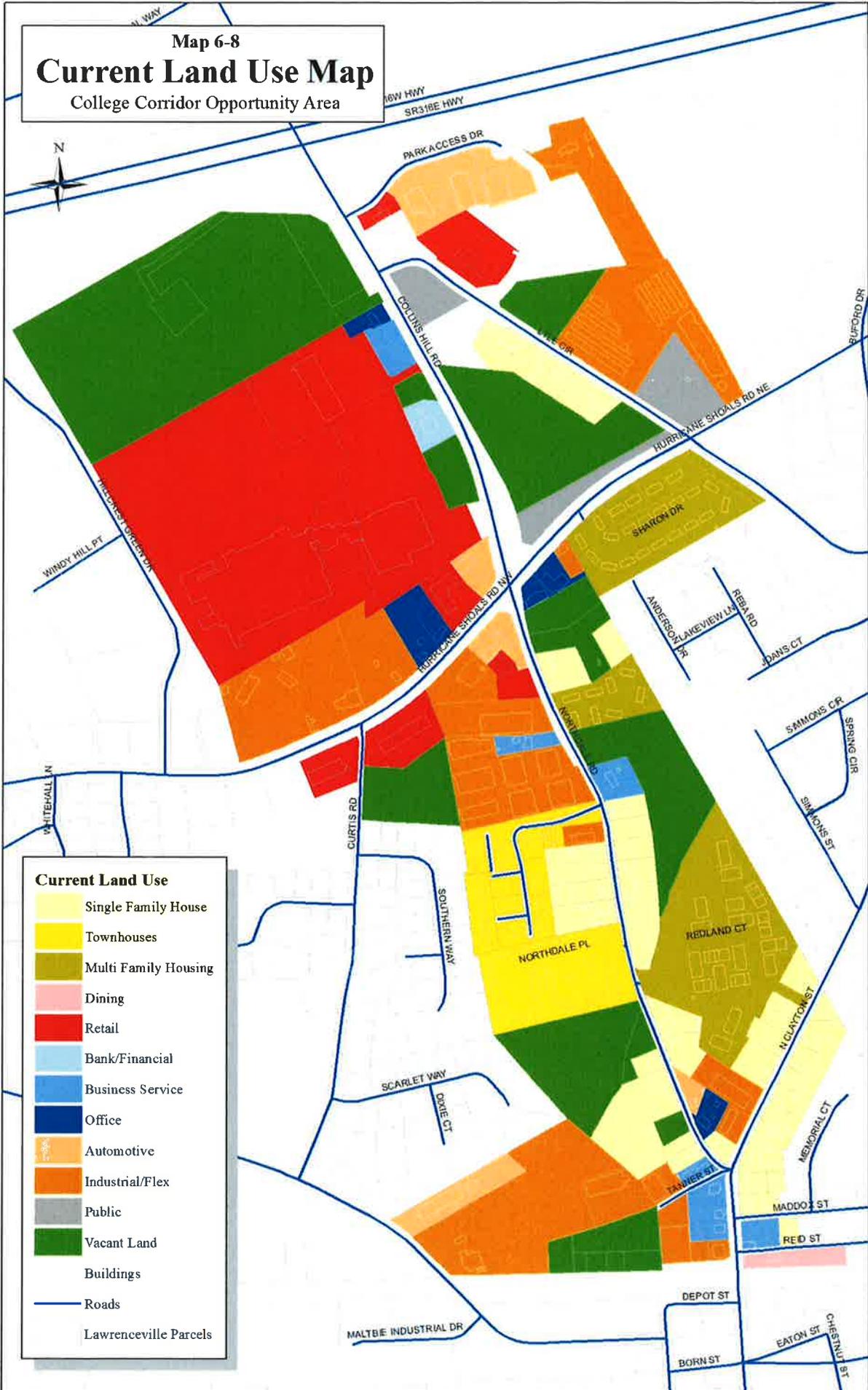
Map 6-4 Opportunity Sites Downtown Opportunity Area





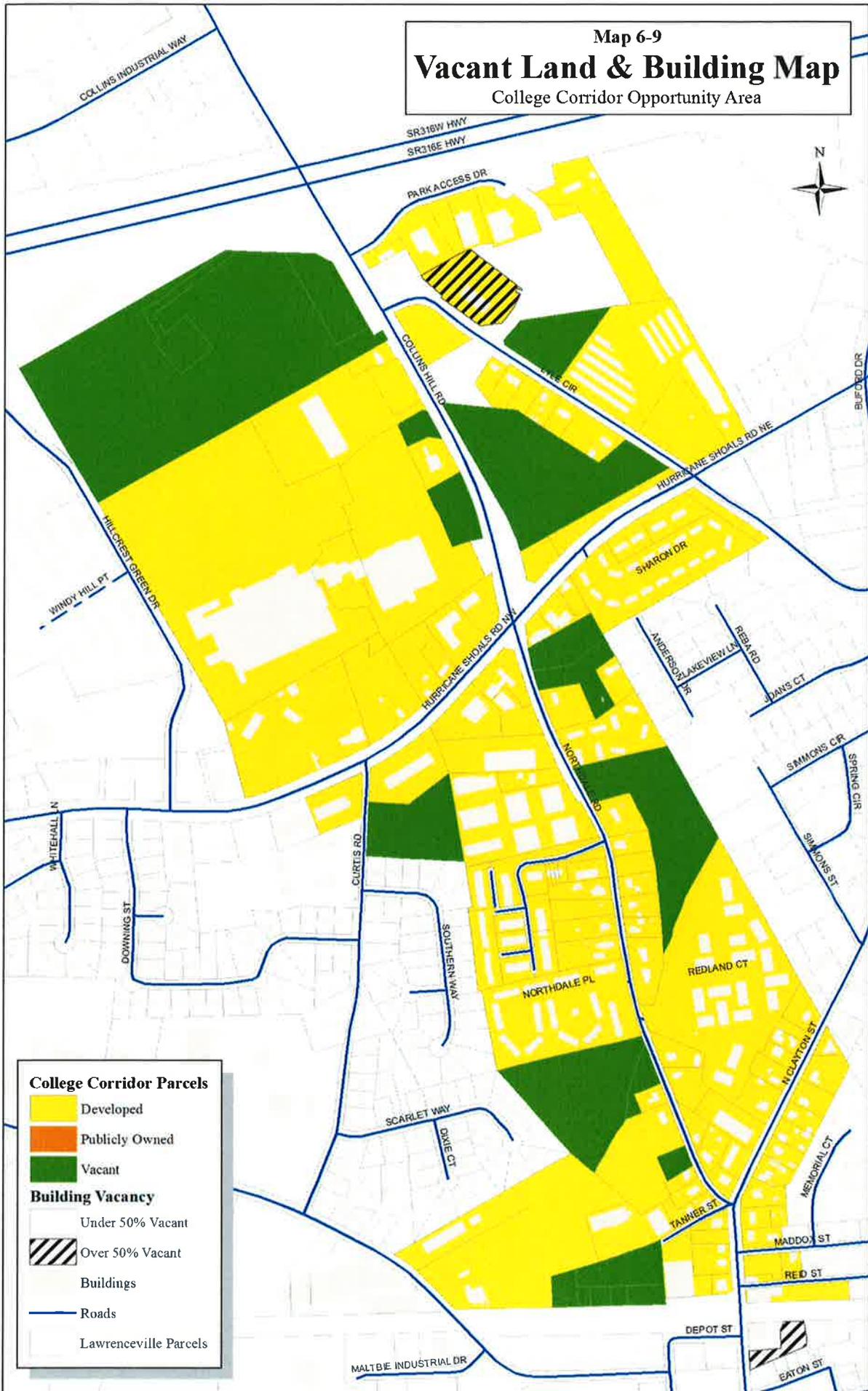


Map 6-8
Current Land Use Map
 College Corridor Opportunity Area



Current Land Use	
	Single Family House
	Townhouses
	Multi Family Housing
	Dining
	Retail
	Bank/Financial
	Business Service
	Office
	Automotive
	Industrial/Flex
	Public
	Vacant Land
	Buildings
	Roads
	Lawrenceville Parcels

Map 6-9
Vacant Land & Building Map
 College Corridor Opportunity Area



College Corridor Parcels

- Developed
- Publicly Owned
- Vacant

Building Vacancy

- Under 50% Vacant
- Over 50% Vacant

Legend

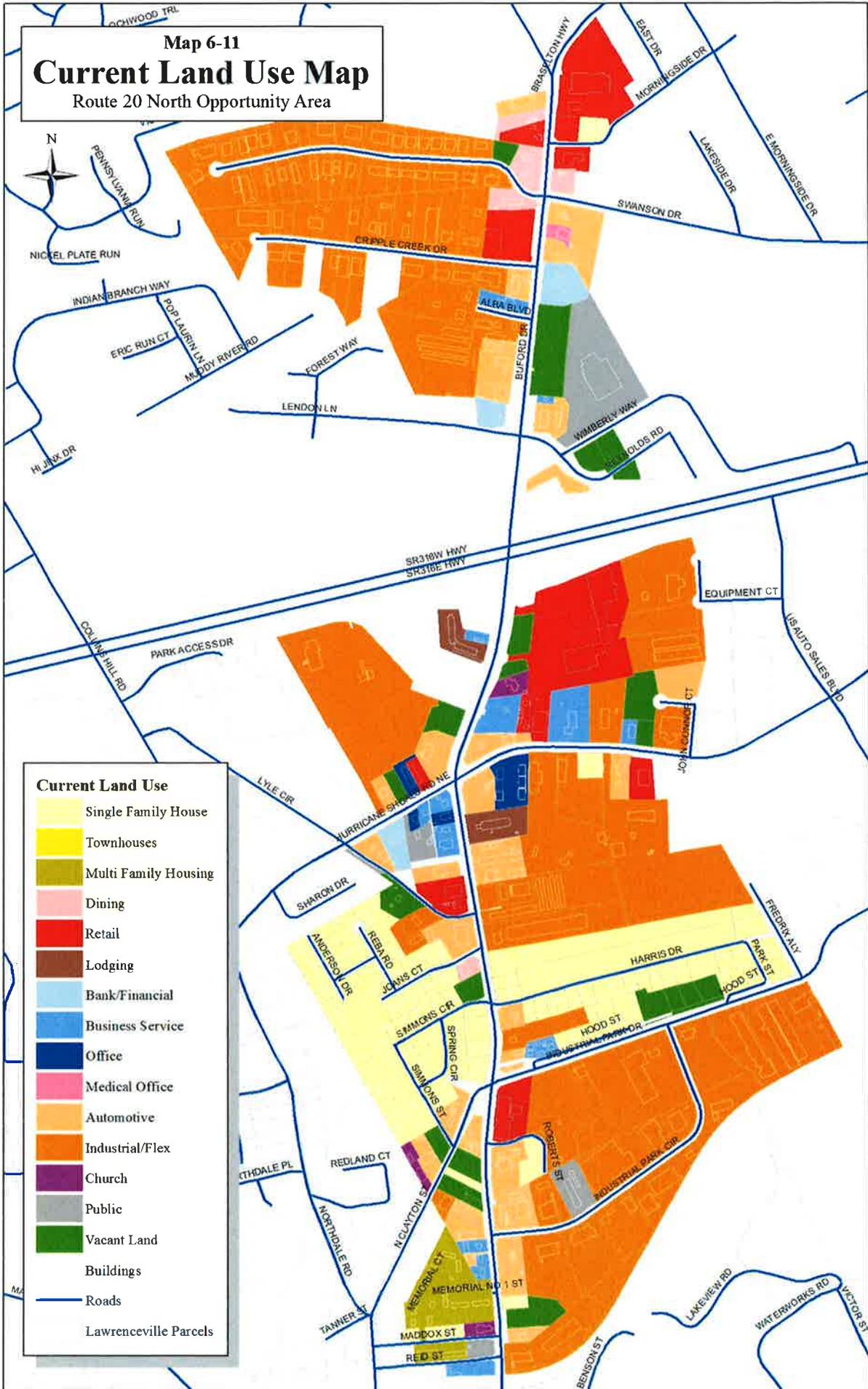
- Buildings
- Roads
- Lawrenceville Parcels

Map 6-10
Opportunity Sites
 College Corridor Opportunity Area



	College Corridor Parcels
Opportunity Sites	
	Short Term
	Mid Term
	Long Term
	Roads
	Buildings
	Lawrenceville Parcels

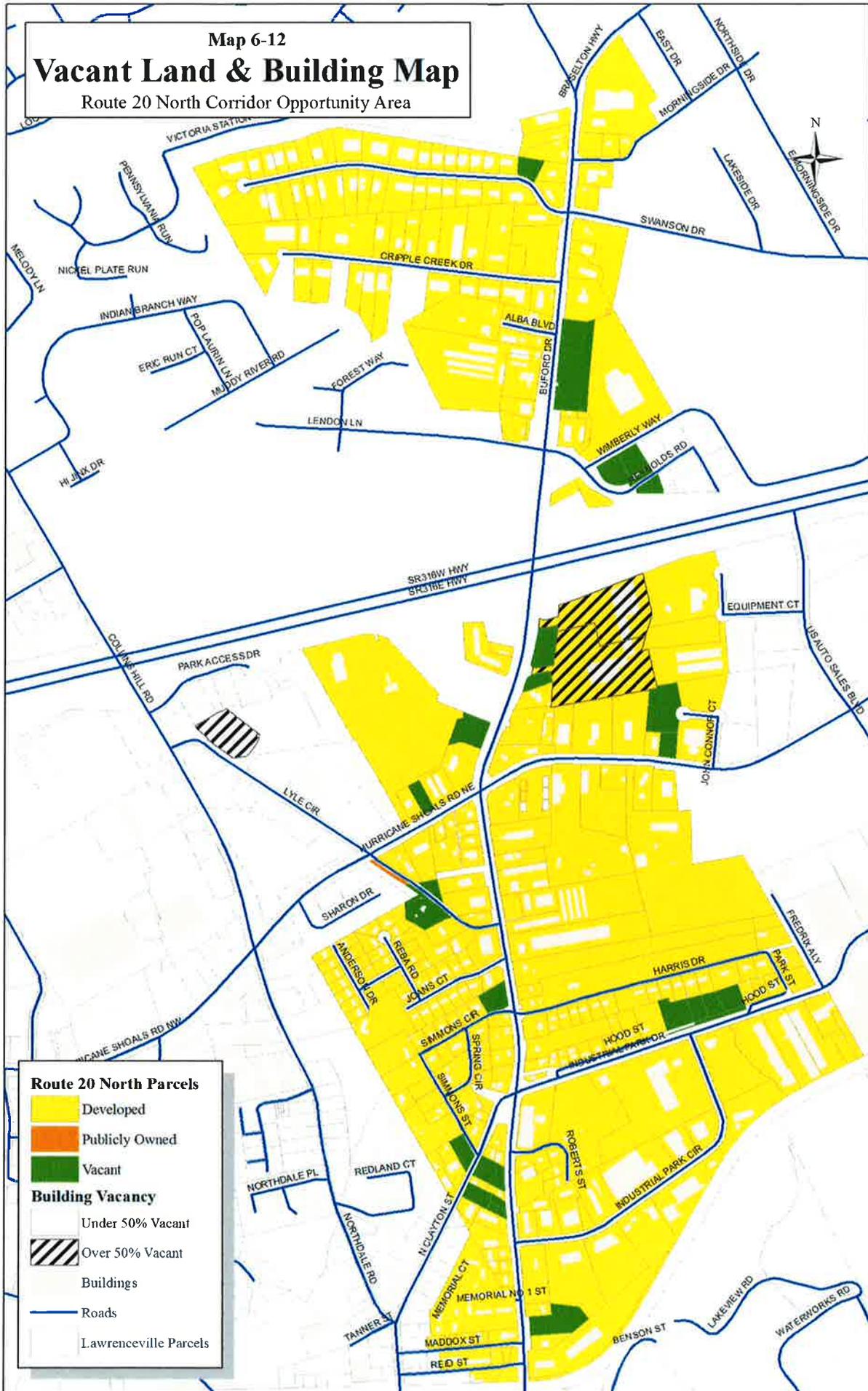
Map 6-11
Current Land Use Map
 Route 20 North Opportunity Area



Current Land Use

- Single Family House
- Townhouses
- Multi Family Housing
- Dining
- Retail
- Lodging
- Bank/Financial
- Business Service
- Office
- Medical Office
- Automotive
- Industrial/Flex
- Church
- Public
- Vacant Land
- Buildings
- Roads
- Lawrenceville Parcels

Map 6-12
Vacant Land & Building Map
 Route 20 North Corridor Opportunity Area



Route 20 North Parcels

- Developed
- Publicly Owned
- Vacant

Building Vacancy

- Under 50% Vacant
- Over 50% Vacant

Buildings

-

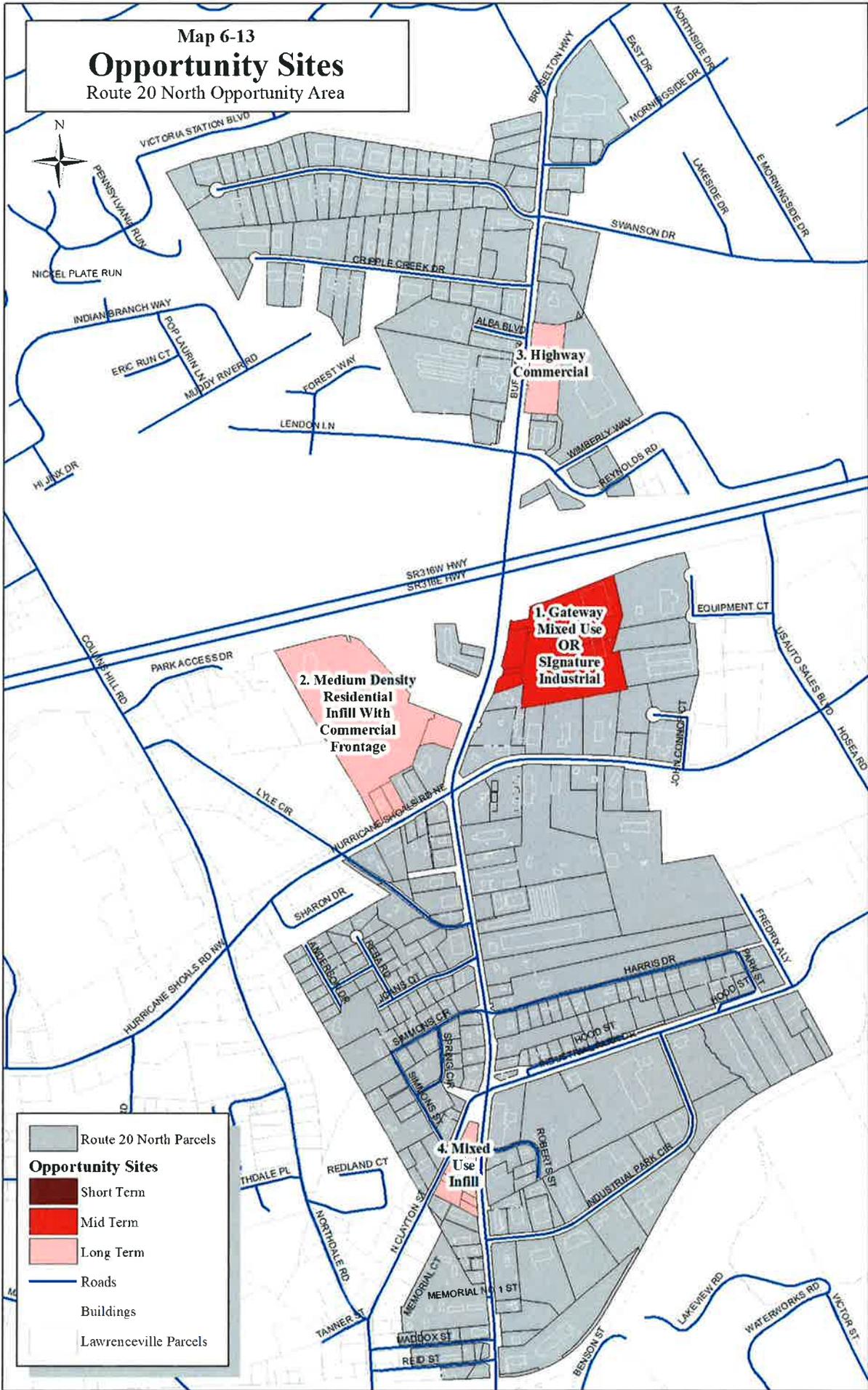
Roads

-

Lawrenceville Parcels

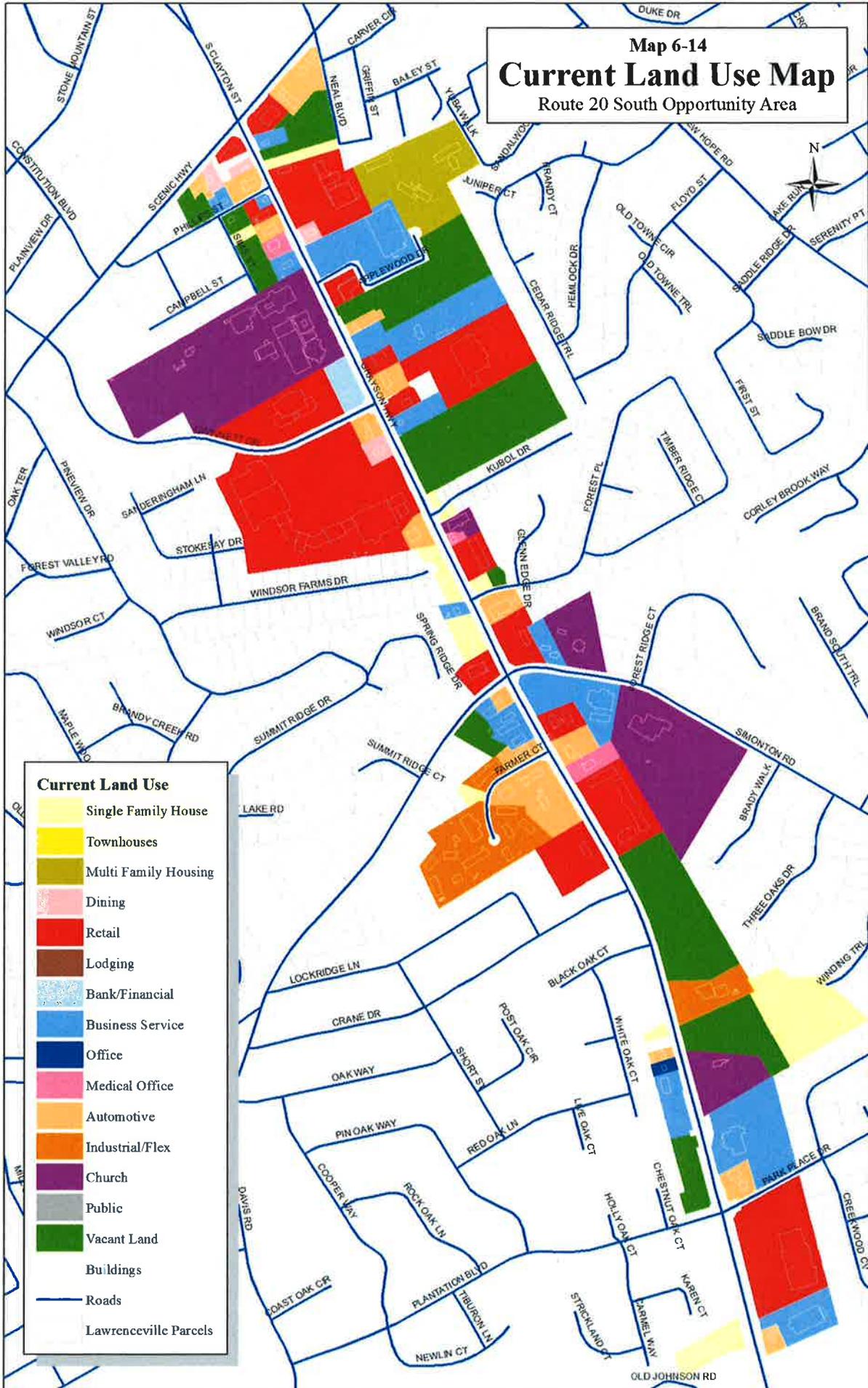
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Map 6-13
Opportunity Sites
 Route 20 North Opportunity Area

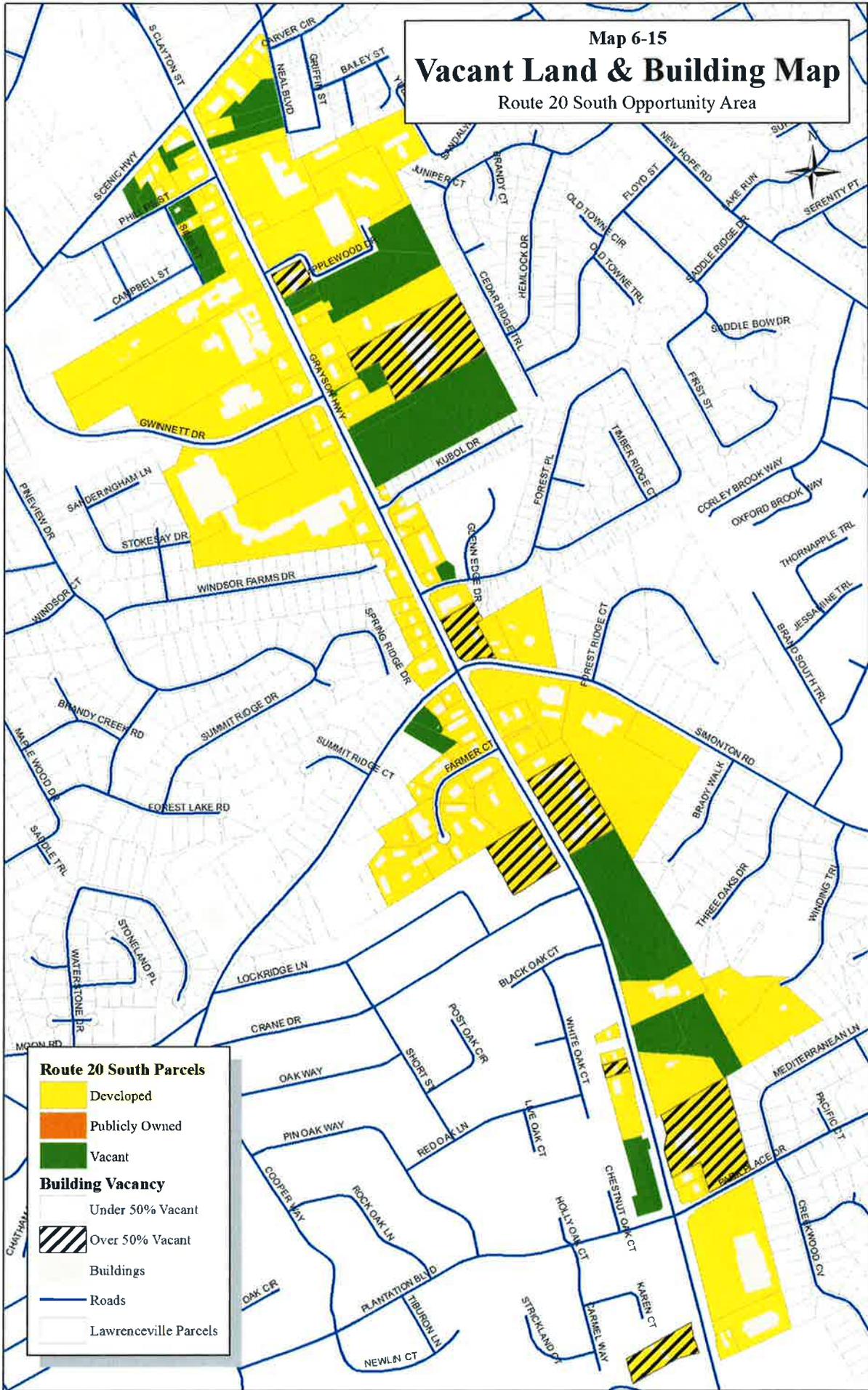


	Route 20 North Parcels
Opportunity Sites	
	Short Term
	Mid Term
	Long Term
	Roads
	Buildings
	Lawrenceville Parcels

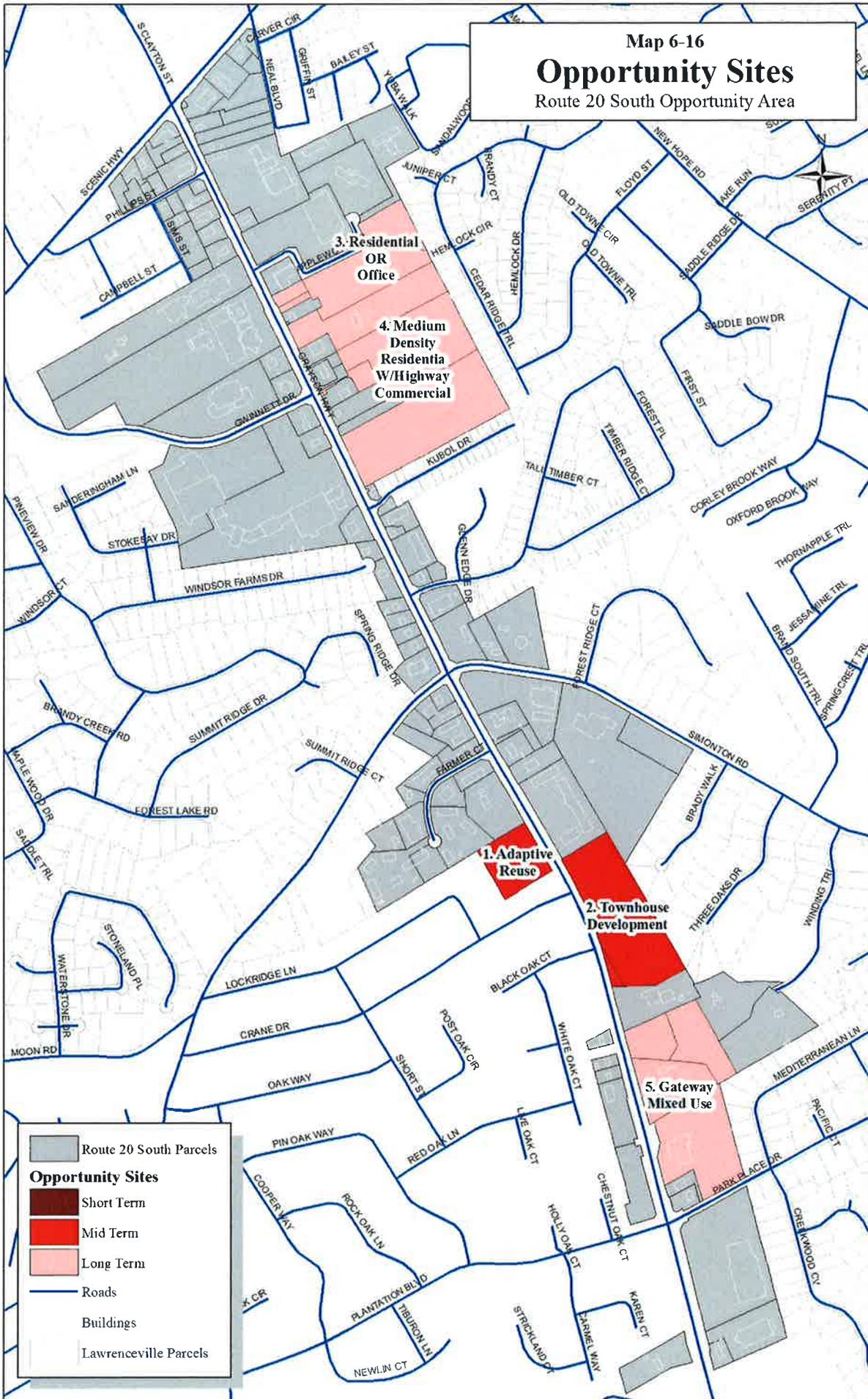
Map 6-14
Current Land Use Map
 Route 20 South Opportunity Area



Map 6-15
Vacant Land & Building Map
 Route 20 South Opportunity Area



Map 6-16
Opportunity Sites
 Route 20 South Opportunity Area



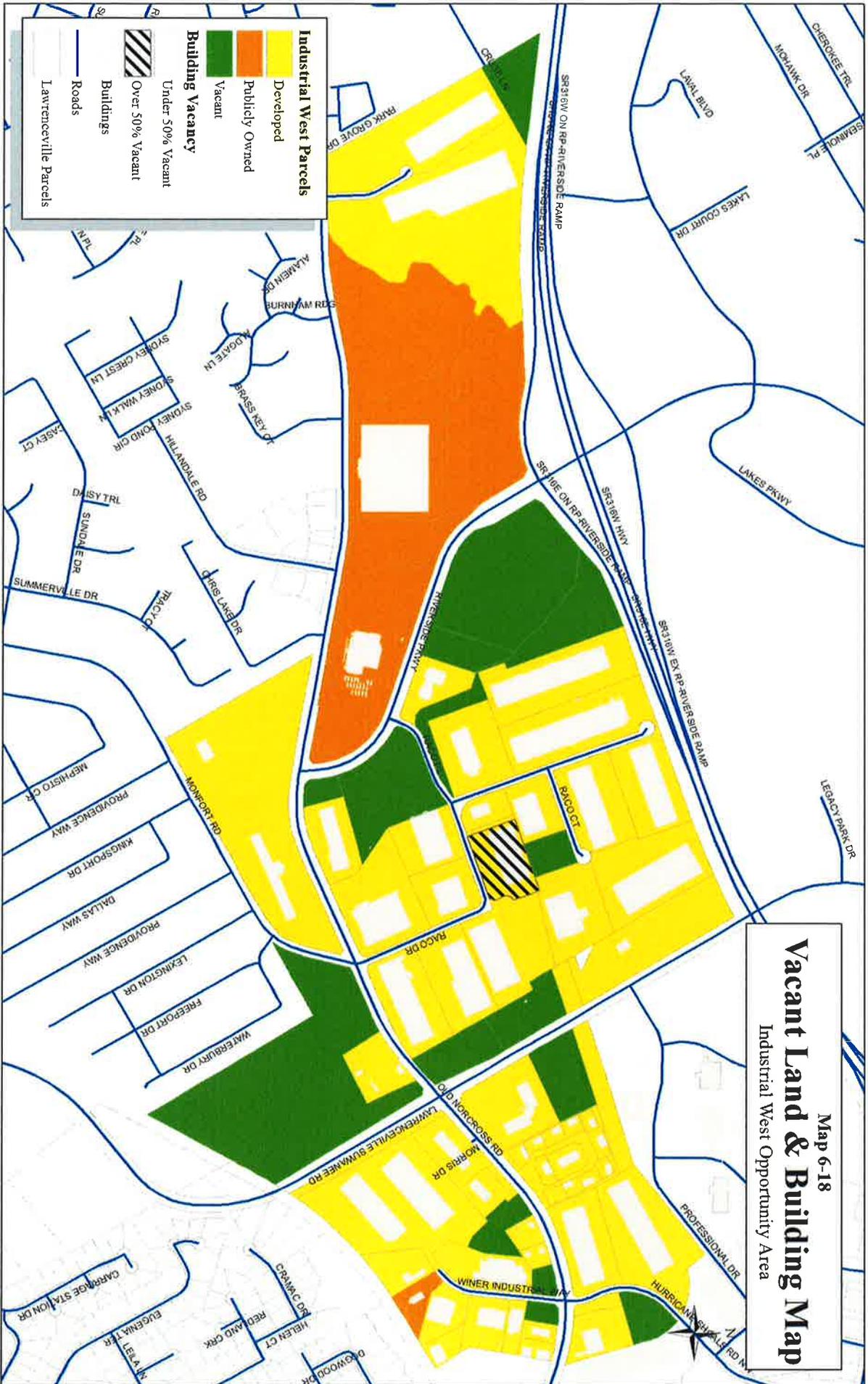
	Route 20 South Parcels
Opportunity Sites	
	Short Term
	Mid Term
	Long Term
	Roads
	Buildings
	Lawrenceville Parcels

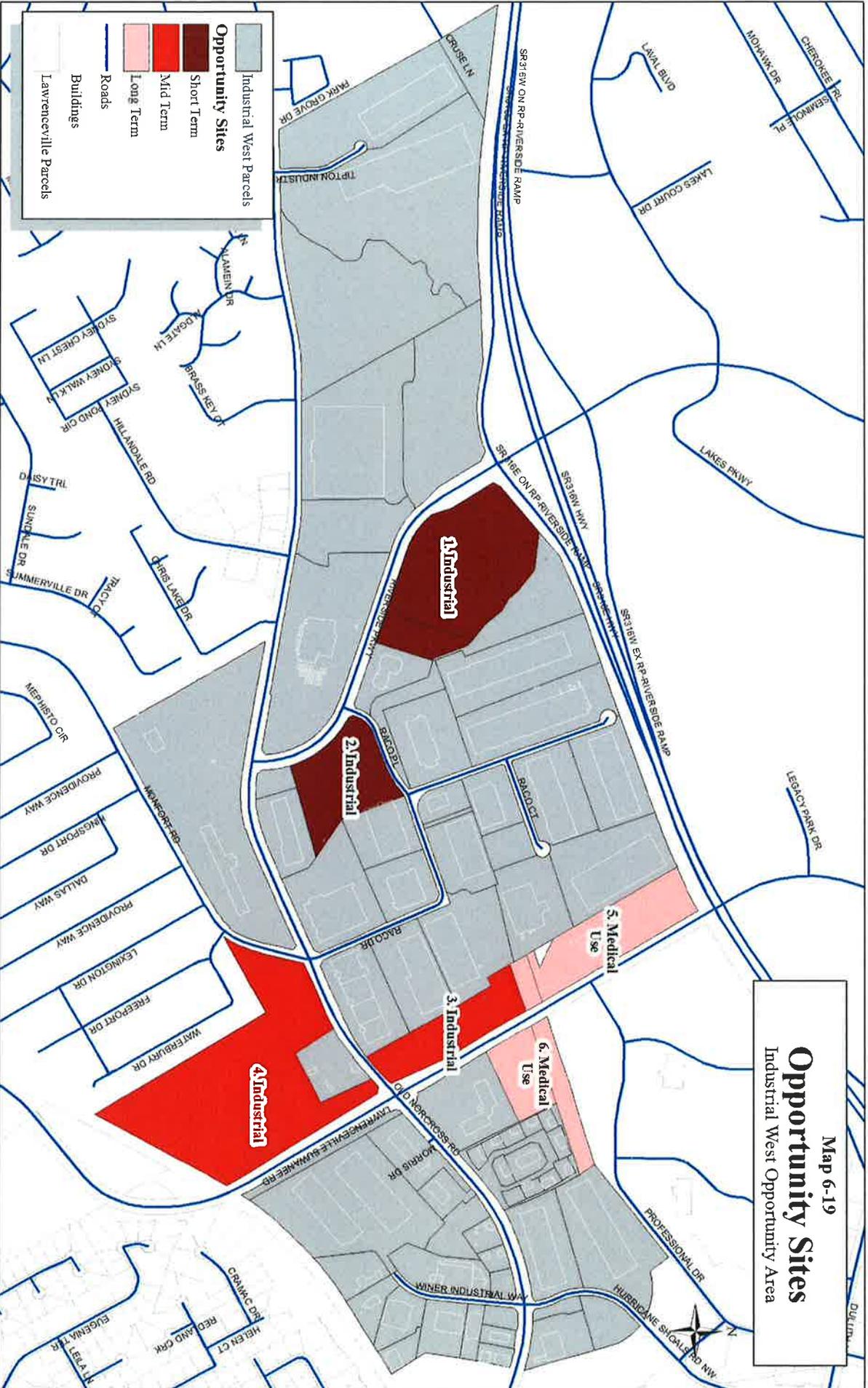


Current Land Use

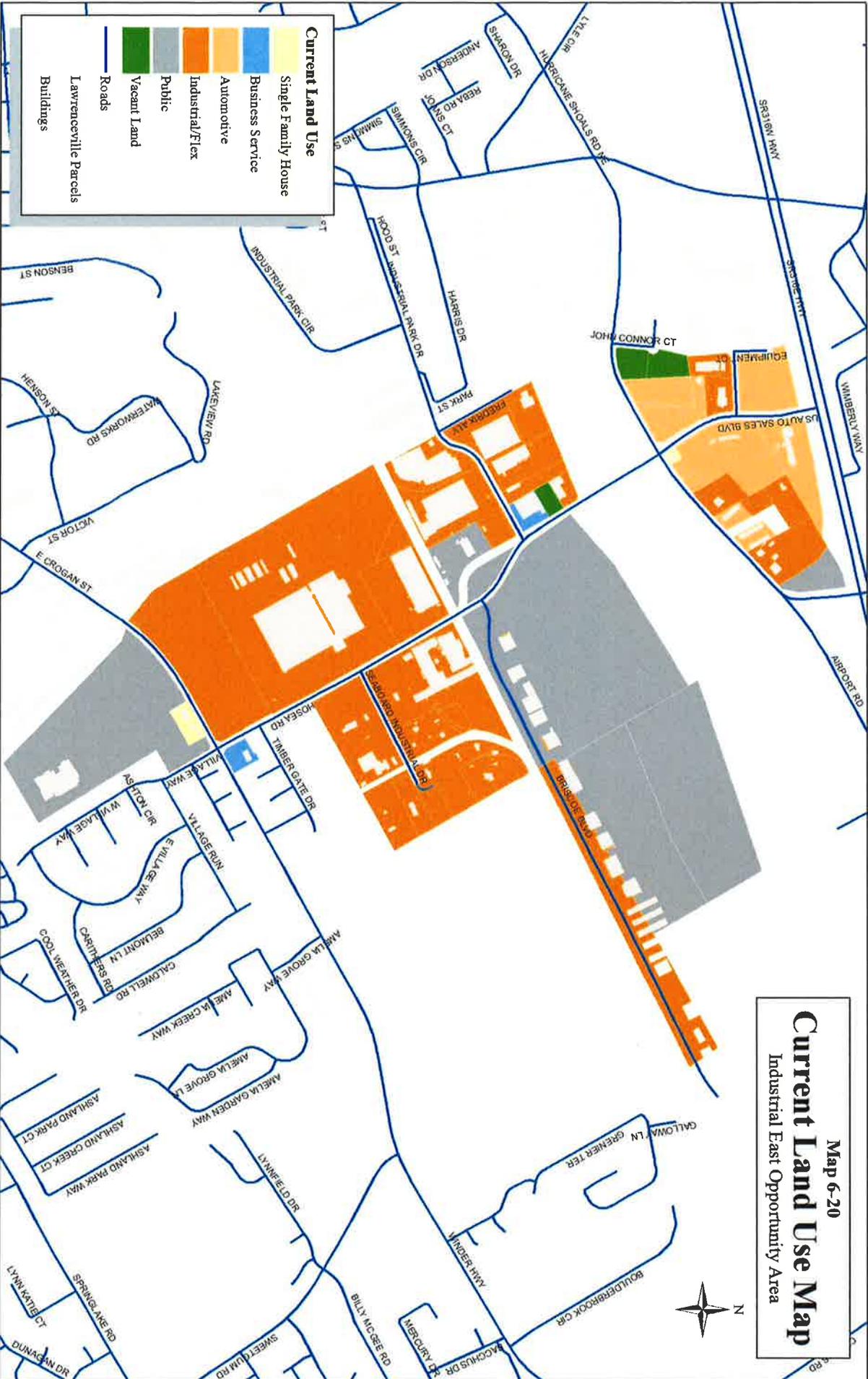
- Single Family House
- Medical Office
- Automotive
- Industrial/Flex
- Public
- Vacant Land
- Buildings
- Roads
- Lawrenceville Parcels

Map 6-17
Current Land Use Map
 Industrial West Opportunity Area





Map 6-19
Opportunity Sites
 Industrial West Opportunity Area

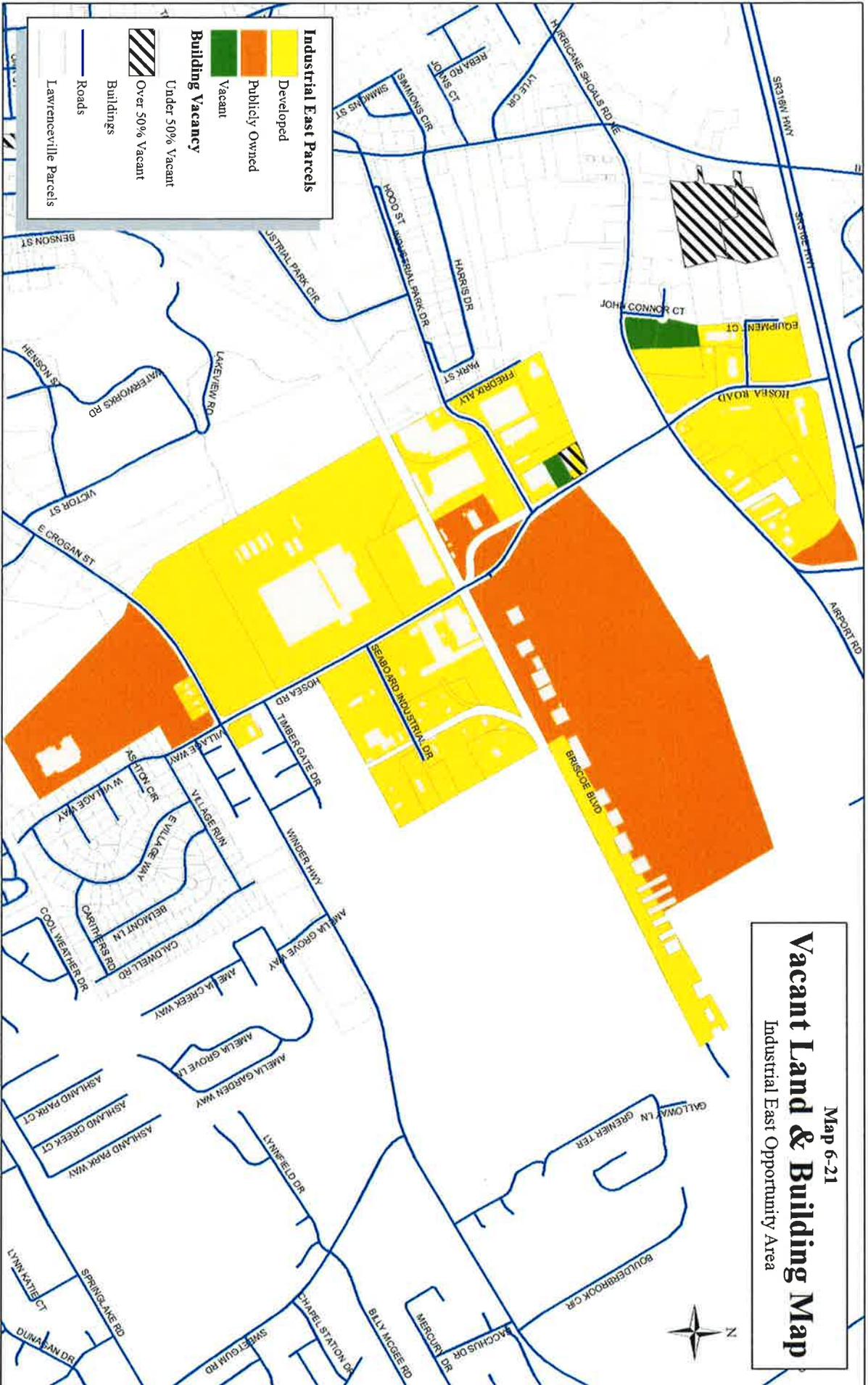


Current Land Use

- Single Family House
- Business Service
- Automotive
- Industrial/Flex
- Public
- Vacant Land
- Roads
- Lawrenceville Parcels
- Buildings

Map 6-20
Current Land Use Map
 Industrial East Opportunity Area





Map 6-21
Vacant Land & Building Map
 Industrial East Opportunity Area



7 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Lawrenceville has experienced some success in community and economic development over the past fifteen years using an ad hoc approach to implementation. Despite the numerous studies completed for the City over the years, implementation of economic and community development has been done in a more reactive approach than a proactive one. While these previous studies have offered a consistent vision for Lawrenceville, the lack of centralized focus has led to a series of “fits and starts” rather than a continuous process. This success is a testament to both the resolve of the Lawrenceville community and the market potential of the area.

That said, the Strategy Committee’s intent for this implementation strategy is to build upon the vision established for the City and the successes already achieved by providing a more holistic plan that can guide future City endeavors. This implementation strategy provides the City of Lawrenceville with a “road map” to economic development implementation that prioritizes City efforts based on the goals established through a series of community and stakeholder input sessions. The Strategy Committee encourages the City’s leadership to support a more deliberate implementation approach that considers the costs and benefits of distributing staff and financial resources too thin. As stated during this effort, the Strategy Committee prefers a “rifle approach” to economic development rather than a “shotgun approach.” The implementation recommendations include a phasing recommendation intended to maintain deliberate focus, particularly in the short-term.

During the course of this effort, the focus for this effort transitioned from a traditional economic development strategy to a more community driven, real estate focused economic growth and sustainability strategy. The need to shift the analysis focus became evident as the City staff, the Strategy Committee and the Consulting Team processed the City’s assets, challenges, and opportunities. At a base level, the more substantial industry retention and recruitment effort is well underway through Partnership Gwinnett. Dedicating substantial City staff time to this effort would be duplicative. The analysis indicated the City resources would be better used to support and expand community-based businesses and start-up opportunities. Furthermore, the analysis indicated there is greater interest and opportunity for the Lawrenceville administration to focus on project-based economic development that supports and enhances the larger business recruitment and retention effort. The implementation strategy presented herein reflects this modified focus.

B. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Strategy Committee provided preliminary goals to be considered during the course of this analysis. These goals were revisited and refined throughout this effort as new market data, stakeholder input, and group discussion was presented. The final set of goals are intended to guide implementation decisions by the City staff and elected leadership within context of policies, regulations and investments that will impact the City’s economic development efforts. While the Strategy Committee recognizes that individual decisions will have a number of implications across many City efforts and services, the



state economic development goals should act as a checklist for decision makers when weighing the pros and cons of said action. The following goals are not listed in any particular order.

- *Fill the Downtown with viable businesses* – The Strategy Committee is unified that the City’s initial economic development focus be in strengthening and growing Downtown Lawrenceville. As noted in the Downtown Master Plan, the community’s vision to encourage a greater retail, dining, and entertainment destination remains a top priority. The Strategy Committee support the establishment of policies and programs to encourage a diverse, stable mix of tenants in the Downtown.
- *Make sure the City’s forward progress follows a plan* – As noted in the introduction, the Strategy Committee recommends the City leadership use this plan as a road map to prioritize and phase economic development efforts within the City. Economic development is a process and not a destination. “Staying the course” is important for internal stability and well as building trust with private sector entities necessary for the City to achieve success (i.e. business owners, property owners, investors and developers).
- *Create a “live, work & play” environment in Downtown* – The Strategy Committee envisions Downtown Lawrenceville to have a greater mix of commercial and residential development that will improve the market potential in Lawrenceville while further activating the Downtown. The support and development of “play” components within the City should be equally regarded by the City. Preserving and building upon the dynamic community development programs is an essential part of improving the quality of life for all Lawrenceville residents.
- *Develop underutilized properties to a highest and best use* – Lawrenceville is not a typical metro Atlanta suburban bedroom community. The City historically has been a hub within Gwinnett County due to its geographic location in the Center of Gwinnett County and its position as the County seat. That said, development patterns outside the Downtown more closely reflect a suburban community than an economic activity center. To this point, Lawrenceville is experiencing many of the same urban/suburban challenges as other cities in Cobb, North Fulton and Gwinnett. The Strategy Committee encourages the City leadership to take advantage of these opportunities, where appropriate, and enable strategic properties to reach their market potential.
- *Create more diverse housing opportunities* – As noted in this analysis, the City of Lawrenceville does not have a diverse housing supply. Most of Lawrenceville’s housing is either single-family detached homes or market affordable multifamily developments. The Strategy Committee has established a goal of expanding the City’s consumer market to include empty nesters and young professionals, which generally seek different housing options than what Lawrenceville offers. As noted in the Opportunity Sites Analysis chapter, there are a number of areas within Lawrenceville that can accommodate a diverse mix of upscale and market-appropriate housing that will attract new households.
- *Develop, attract and retain diverse array of professional businesses* – One of the stated interests of the Strategy Committee is to build a more dynamic and diverse employment base in the City. While the City’s institutional employers (i.e. Gwinnett County, Gwinnett Medical Center, Georgia Gwinnett College...) create substantial economic activity, the Strategy Committee has established a goal of attracting professional businesses that are not dependent upon these assets. The Strategy Committee envisions this effort encompassing variety of initiatives ranging from a more proactive retention strategy to building a locally-based small business and entrepreneurial development program.



- Develop, maximize and retain talented local workforce – The Strategy Committee envisions Lawrenceville’s economic development implementation efforts will increase household incomes in the City. Developing a greater mix of housing options in the City is one way of accomplishing this, providing households seeking more urban-style housing a choice within Lawrenceville. The other portion of increasing household incomes is supporting and developing the City’s existing workforce. The Committee envisions the City being more proactive in working with partners such as Partnership Gwinnett, Gwinnett Tech, Georgia Gwinnett College and the Gwinnett County school system to enhance and expand opportunities for Lawrenceville residents—particularly secondary students—to develop skills relevant to the Gwinnett economic base.

C. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Consulting Team and the Strategy Committee identified some guiding principles for the City leadership to consider when implementing this economic development strategy. These concepts are not tied to a specific action item, but are critical strategic components when deciding which action items to pursue and how the City should pursue those efforts. Incorporating these principles into the City’s implementation efforts will help ensure that this strategy remains a relevant, functional document into the future.

Stay the Course – As noted, economic development is a process and not an event. This strategic plan provides a number of short, mid and long-term initiatives that help the City achieve its economic development goals. However, the recommended actions are not the only ways to meet those needs. The programs, policies and investments recommended in this chapter provide a preferred approach to the City. Actual implementation may require modifications and/or reordering of actions, particularly for mid and long-term actions where previous efforts and market conditions may require a reassessment of the economic development business plan. This is a natural part of economic development implementation. That said, the Strategy Committee encourages the City to adopt the goals and principles and ensure that implementation efforts respect the intent of the recommendation if it cannot follow the specific approach.

Be Visionary, but Realistic – The Strategy Committee has established an optimistic vision of economic development for the City. Implementing the entirety of this plan at once would be very costly, and is beyond the capacity of the City’s existing economic development budget and staffing. That said, the Strategy Committee recognizes that maintaining a “high bar” for economic development will help push implementation efforts beyond status quo. The challenge will be maintaining that visionary approach while enacting strategies that are market, fiscally and financially viable.

Be Proactive – One of the initial challenges that needs to be met is transitioning the City’s economic development efforts from a more reactive approach to a more proactive strategy. While the City has achieved some level of success in allowing opportunities to develop through the market, there are a number of initiatives that can be undertaken to accelerate that process. Most notably, the City needs to build a more active marketing and outreach effort to identify needs, build awareness, and cultivate opportunities.

Be Collaborative – The City of Lawrenceville has a number of strategic partners and resources available to help achieve its economic development goals. At a base level, Partnership Gwinnett is an internationally renowned economic development organization with a number of resources available to help the City. Other organizations, such as the Gwinnett County government, Gwinnett Medical



Center, Gwinnett Tech, Georgia Gwinnett College, and the Gwinnett County Airport are resident resources to the City. That said, the Strategy Committee encourages the City to continue to build these relationships into strategic partnerships for implementation. Leveraging local resources is a logical way to expand the City's effort without expanding costs.

Leverage Private Sector Partners – The City has used property acquisition as its primary tool to encourage and guide real estate development. While an effective tool, it can be costly and time consuming as well. Building greater relationships with real estate professionals and Lawrenceville property owners will enable the City to encourage more investment activity without the substantial capital outlay. Focusing the City's participation on public good, regulatory, and infrastructure investment can spur reinvestment in a number of locations while mitigating risk for the City.

D. PRIORITY ACTIONS

The implementation matrix presented at the end of this chapter provides an easy-to-follow guide of the recommendations identified to guide Lawrenceville's community and economic development strategic plan. The recommendations are parsed into three topic areas: [1] Asset Development; [2] Organization and Regulatory; and [3] Marketing and Outreach. The specific recommendations in this strategy were shaped through combining the vision of the Strategy Committee, input from community stakeholder, business leaders and elected officials, current and projected market conditions, and identified opportunities.

The following action items are considered to be "priorities" for the Strategy Committee in context of the City's short-term implementation of an economic development business plan. They are considered critical, and in some cases catalytic, in their importance to reach the stated goals and encouraging the development of the opportunity sites detailed in chapter 6. The narrative provides context for these recommendations to help position (or reposition) the City's efforts in a manner that will maximize the effectiveness of City resources in expanding the City's economic sustainability, support new and existing businesses, expand the diversity of local housing choices, and attract investment to Lawrenceville. While the other actions identified and detailed in the implementation matrix are necessary to meet the full vision for Lawrenceville's economic development efforts, their implementation are considered to be supportive and/or ancillary to these efforts.

1. Asset Development Priorities

Objective #1: Expand the City's proactive business retention visit efforts – The City currently does not have a formal business retention visit strategy. Reaching out to existing businesses within the community is an essential tool for sustainable economic development growth. It is RKG Associates' experience that communities achieve a greater ratio of economic development spending to job retained/created through working with existing businesses over attracting new ones to the community. To this point, the City has approved the expansion of the community and economic development staff. One of the responsibilities of the new staff should be to manage the business retention efforts.

- Perform an annual business needs survey – The first step towards this effort should be the creation and implementation of a business needs survey. The survey is an efficient way for the City to gather information on market challenges, opportunities and needs of Lawrenceville businesses quickly. Questions should cover topics such as workforce needs/challenges, market growth opportunities, competition challenges, location/physical needs, etc. The City can use the responses in four primary ways. First, programs and policies can be created to address challenges/opportunities identified by a number of businesses. Second, trends/issues in a given



industry or area can be identified and mitigated through collaboration with key stakeholders. Third, individual responses can be used to ensure site visits are targeted to those businesses that have the greater opportunities to grow/are at risk of downsizing/closing. Finally, survey findings can be tracked over time to identify market trends and fine tune programs based on the current and projected economic climate.

As awareness of the survey grows, it can be expanded to serve as a comprehensive approach to identify workforce, market, regulatory, and growth needs of the City's business base. At that time, the results collected from this effort can guide any changes to existing business outreach approach and help define economic development policy focus for Lawrenceville.

- ***Business retention and outreach visits*** – The City should establish a target of 30-50 business retention visits a year, tracking which businesses are visited and the results of the visits. Coordination with regional (i.e. Partnership Gwinnett) and state economic development partners is essential as well. The intent should be to avoid repetitive or duplicative visits to businesses.

Objective 2: Develop city-focused entrepreneurial initiatives – Partnership Gwinnett, the Gwinnett Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC) and the UGA Small Business Development Center (SBDC) provide a number of services and opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs to flourish in Gwinnett County. The Strategy Committee recognizes the value of these services for Lawrenceville and all of Gwinnett County. However, many of these programs are either well publicized within Lawrenceville, are not easily accessible to City residents, or are may not be relevant to the type of business local residents seek to create. To these points, the Strategy committee recommends that some effort be put into developing relationships with these entities to bring a Lawrenceville-focused presence into Downtown.

One initial opportunity is to identify and train Lawrenceville business leaders to be mentors for City-based start-ups and small businesses. Working with local business leaders to help mentor local residents will ensure greater commitment to the program by all parties. An initial effort to identify 3-4 mentors and train them through a program such as the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) mentor-protégé program. One initial thought is to create a Downtown Lawrenceville retail business mentorship/incubator effort. It was well noted throughout this process that turnover in Downtown can be high due to individuals leasing space to run their “dream business” without any real strategic plan in place. Establishing a program that brings together proven “veterans” of downtown with these individuals could create a more stable business base in and around the Square.

While the incubator idea would require substantial planning and market testing before the City should invest in that endeavor, there are a number of other small business/entrepreneur efforts that could be offered in partnership with the SBDC. Classes/lectures offered in Lawrenceville on writing a business plan, how to secure financing, and how to identify, hire, and manage staff would be useful to building a local business base.

Additional strategies include assessing the potential to identify and activate an angel investor network for Lawrenceville and implementing a “Shark Tank” like event to bring budding entrepreneurs together with business leaders/investors. Both initiatives would require collaboration with Partnership Gwinnett and local financial entities to be successful.

Objective 3: Market and Recruit additional health care businesses to Lawrenceville – Health care is the largest and most successful private industry in Lawrenceville. As noted earlier in the report, health care constitutes the largest private employment sector and experienced substantial employment gains



since 2002. The presence of Gwinnett Medical Center and the medical activity surrounding that facility is a substantial part of the City's economic base. To this point, the Strategy committee encourages the City to invest in retaining, expanding, and recruiting additional health care and social services operations to the City. This effort will require coordination with industry professionals to develop a strategy for attracting and recruitment, as the City should avoid creating unnecessary complications for the existing businesses. That said, some of the concept put forward during this planning process include expanding specialties within the community, pursuing a research and development strategy within existing specialties, and expanding support industry presence in the City (i.e. diagnostic labs). A more specific strategy should be developed through a health care roundtable of local medical leaders, the City's economic development staff and Partnership Gwinnett.

Objective 4: Develop a locally-maintained inventory of land and buildings available for sale/lease –

The Strategy Committee recognizes that to preserve, expand, and grow the business base within Lawrenceville, there needs to be sufficient and price appropriate real estate assets to house those businesses. The initial assessments of the City's real estate market and potential opportunity sites was completed as part of this analysis (chapters 4 and 6). However, more specific data collection and dissemination will be required to maximize the City's potential in attracting new investment into the building supply.

At a base level, the Strategy Committee recommends that a database be created of all properties currently listed for sale or lease. The economic development staff can create an on-line data entry portal as part of the new economic development website (discussed later in this section) for property owners and brokers to list assets. Understanding the existing assets within the City will aid business retention and recruitment efforts.

More strategically, the City can create a property assemblage book. As noted in the previous chapter, many of the City's best economic development opportunities will require some level of property assemblage. The next step is for the City's economic development department to reach out to each property owner to determine their ability/willingness to be considered as part of an assemblage/reinvestment effort. Those areas where enough properties are willing to consider being included are then ranked based on a number of factors, which may include catalytic potential, location, and cost. The property assemblage book can then be marketed to investors seeking opportunities. The book should provide information on all the properties as well as the community's development vision for that area. The assemblage book can serve as a "playbook" for the City's land bank strategy, with the City acquiring key pieces as they become available on the market.

The initial outreach is only the first step in the process to develop trust and buy-in from property owners. Consistent outreach will be necessary for both those property owners who are engaged in reinvestment efforts (to provide updates and retain their interest) as well as those initially uninterested (to establish trust and track any changes in investment strategy).

Objective 5: Establish formulaic measures to guide real estate investment/partnership development

– Most real estate developers and investors seek opportunities that generate a specific return given an acceptable level of risk. The "go/no go" decision often is based on this risk-reward balance as compared to other investment opportunities. Communities seeking real estate and economic development oftentimes seek to mitigate risk factors and/or enhance the reward (return) to the developer to make local projects more attractive. One approach to develop a formulaic approach to providing regulatory and financial incentives. This approach removes some of the uncertainty and inconsistency for the developer, reducing risk. The Strategy Committee recommends that the City embrace this approach and create a codified mechanism that details the requirements needed to obtain the benefit (*if you do this, then you get that...*).



Many economic development tools use economic metrics to determine applicability. For example, communities mandate a certain number of jobs have to be created before certain incentives are available. Other approaches include requiring a minimum investment threshold or preference for a specific type of business. The Strategy Committee consider these economic metrics in instances where these metrics are most valued. However, the thresholds and programs available once those thresholds are reached should be made clear and non-negotiable.

The other formulaic approach being recommended is for the City Council to define its return of investment/return on investment requirements to engage in property acquisition/investment through a public private partnership. Not all projects will—and should—be measured by economic benefit. On one hand, establishing financial requirements for real estate transactions provides a clear message to existing property owners about the City’s spending tolerance. On the other hand, creating these criteria helps staff and implementation partners understand what is feasible and how assets will be deployed. Once these thresholds are established (which generally are determined through a number of work sessions with the elected body), economic development staff can use financial pro forma modeling to determine if a project meets the proposed threshold.

It is important to note that the Strategy Committee understands these thresholds may require adjustments if a project offers a unique benefit to the community. That said, having a minimum standard enables the City economic development staff and intergovernmental partners better direction when pursuing an opportunity.

Objective 6: Develop a Lawrenceville land bank – Property acquisition can be slow and challenging for a public entity to accomplish. At a basic level, decisions have to be made through voting, which occurs at established meetings and in a public setting. This puts a community at a disadvantage from a negotiation perspective. Utilizing a quasi-governmental entity can help alleviate that process. Sellers also tend to be more opportunistic when dealing with a large government entity, feeling there is a substantial amount of money available for the purchase. The Strategy Committee recommends the City consider a land bank outside the City government structure to proactively encourage reinvestment in the City in an effective and efficient manner.

There are a number of ways that the land bank could be established. The most common ways are to either include it as part of the non-profit entity or to create a separate non-profit entity where the City Council is the Board of directors. Having a single entity addressing land acquisition and disposition enables a more centralized and focused real estate strategy. Another benefit in having the land bank is that it enables private matching funds to be collected and used to purchase this land (although that often comes with some form of guaranteed return for the private dollars invested). However, private sector investors typically seeks some form of representation on the decision-making body. Many communities partner with local utility companies that engage in economic development to further leverage the public and private investments in land banks.

Given the ultimate strategy of creating a public private partnership to implement the City’s economic development efforts, incorporating the land bank function into this entity is logical.

Objective 7: Partner with education leaders to expand school-to-work opportunities – Engaging school-aged children before graduating high school—and even before reaching the age where they can legally drop out—about the benefits of completing their education based on the opportunities available can help at-risk students remain in school. The greatest challenge, from an economic development perspective, is help those students see the direct correlation between the academic programs available and the employment potential they create.



Gwinnett County has a national renowned primary and secondary education system. However, much of the school program focus is on developing career-based opportunities. While this is very important in the information and technology based global economy, not all students have the interest or capacity to pursue that education track. Within Gwinnett County, there are a number of opportunities for an individual to have a rewarding, lucrative job that does not require a four-year college degree, or even a substantial amount of post-secondary education. Creating greater awareness and a stronger connection between these job opportunities and the City's existing and developing workforce will provide better opportunities for Lawrenceville's existing households to increase their income levels.

To this point, the Strategy Committee recommends that the City engage a formal education and workforce roundtable with strategic employment (i.e. the Gwinnett Medical Center, Cisco...) and education/workforce training providers (including Gwinnett Tech, Georgia Gwinnett College, and the Gwinnett County Board of Education) and Partnership Gwinnett to discuss and address challenges and opportunities to expand primary and secondary programs in Lawrenceville schools. This group can use the workforce needs business survey results as a starting point for seeking ways to give Lawrenceville students more direct employment paths. Potential efforts to be considered include apprenticeship programs, work-for-credit opportunities and integration of SBDC/ATDC programs into the secondary education system.

Objective 8: Work with local partner to develop an employment exposition for school-aged children and their families – Another education/employment opportunity to be considered is creating a County-wide employment exposition that showcases the variety job and career choices within Gwinnett County. All students (and career transitioning adults) should be engaged early and often about the importance of education to their future earning potential. The Strategy Committee encourages the City and the workforce and education roundtable to partner with neighboring economic development entities and regional employers to provide separate, specialized sessions for middle school children, high school children, and transitioning adults to engage these businesses about educational needs, potential career paths and typical incomes.

An initial exposition could be a two or three-day event that brings together regional employers to showcase the type of jobs available, the education and training requirements, and the salary ranges of these jobs. As popularity grows, the length of the event may need to be expanded based on interest from other jurisdictions. Students would be bussed to the event during the school day, and led on a guided tour through the exposition based on their stated work interests. It will important to have a diverse representation personal service, professional service and production-based businesses. This effort is intended to be another method to bridge the City's current and future workforce and the companies that require them to be appropriately prepared for jobs. Given the potential for this to showcase opportunities outside of the City for local residents, the event could be hosted on a rotating basis with all participating economic development entities. Sponsorships should be sought from participating business to defray costs of holding the events.

Objective 9: Expand the Downtown's live-work-play opportunities

The Strategy Committee recognizes that the City's economic development efforts should initially focus on sustaining and expanding the Downtown's vitality as a live-work-play destination. There was consensus on the Strategy Committee that establishing a vibrant downtown will make future economic development efforts elsewhere in the City easier. Given the noted importance of Downtown to the community (i.e. the City's Comprehensive Plan) as an employment, civic, and cultural center, focusing the City's energy and investments on Downtown is a logical strategy. To accomplish this, the Strategy Committee recommends a number of efforts.



- Reconstitute the Downtown merchant's group – Engaging the Downtown merchants and businesses will be a critical part of the success in enhancing the Downtown opportunity area. While there is a loosely affiliated group of Downtown merchants currently meeting, building a stronger, more comprehensive group is necessary to make all potential tools viable (i.e. a CID). Economic development staff time should be committed to organizing and activating the Downtown business groups, particularly retail businesses and professional service businesses.
- Form a Lawrenceville arts and culture advisory roundtable – The Aurora Theatre and the Lawrenceville Lawn are strategic assets in the continued revitalization of Downtown. The Strategy Committee recommends that an arts and culture roundtable be established, bringing together private, public and civic interests to enhance the City's cultural and entertainment efforts. More strategic engagement with regional partners, such as the Gwinnett County Convention and Visitor's Bureau also is encouraged.
- Test the financial feasibility of expanding the Aurora Theatre – There is a documented interest in expanding the Aurora Theatre operations by creating a new 500-seat theater. While this concept is incorporated into existing strategies, no work has been done to assess the economic and financial feasibility of this effort, particularly from a funding perspective. The Strategy Committee recommends a more detailed business and financing strategy be pursued to better understand if—and how—this new theatre could be built.
- Establish a Downtown Community Improvement District – Community Improvement Districts have proven very successful throughout northern metropolitan Atlanta. The CID concept allows communities to leverage private investment to accelerate improvement investments within the district's boundaries. Engaging the private sector to participate is valuable, as it ensures buy-in and establishes a sense of ownership of the process.
- Redevelop the City's Public Works site – The Jackson Street Park Master Plan provides a vision for the redevelopment of the land between the Lawrenceville Lawn and City Hall. The Strategy Committee encourages the City to continue with the process of relocating the Public Works operations and engage in a public private partnership effort to transform this location into the community and economic focal point identified. Engaging the private sector through a RFQ/RFP process will ensure the City gets the most creative and competitive project.
- Encourage the reclamation of Downtown houses for residential use – A number of respondents during the process expressed an interest in recapturing the small neighborhoods that surround the Square as residential enclaves. Providing incentives to both the existing business occupants and potential permanent residents will be necessary to accomplish this task. One approach is providing partially or fully forgivable rehabilitation loans to persons who purchase these units as their primary residence. The amount of the loan can be forgiven over time, the longer the individual resides in the property. From the business perspective, developing appropriate space for them to relocate will be critical. The redevelopment of the Public Works site could be the primary alternative site.
- Enhance marketing and outreach coordination for community events – The City already does a good job of marketing events and festivals in the Downtown. However, there are opportunities to create a single marketing and advertising effort for all activity in Downtown. The additional staff approved by the City Council will help this effort, as the Community and Economic Development Department will have the staff resources to devote to this.



Objective 10: Diversify the City's housing supply, both by housing type and price point

As noted in the previous chapters, the City does not have a very diverse housing supply, with concentrations in single-family detached units and modestly priced multifamily rental housing. However, there are limited options for people seeking more urban-form ownership and rental housing. This is evident in Downtown Lawrenceville, where the Cornerstone development is the only offering of this type of housing. To this point, the ability of Lawrenceville to attract a more diverse resident base will require a greater mix of housing types and values.

- ***Housing master plan*** - The first effort to be considered is for the City to engage a citywide housing master plan. A housing master plan provides three primary benefits. First, it will inventory all of the existing supply, including property condition. This will afford the City to create more precise housing rehabilitation and redevelopment efforts. Second, it will identify price point gaps in the market. This data is critical to understanding the greatest unmet demand by income/ability to pay. Finally, it can engage in-commuters to understand reasons why they choose to live elsewhere.
- ***Zoning modifications*** – There are a number of policy-based initiatives that can be enacted to encourage the development of new housing types prior to the study being completed. The opportunity sites chapter identifies a number of parcels that are marketable as urban form, medium density, and mixed use projects. Creating enabling regulations, whether through a rezoning or overlay district, will allow these developments. One of the concepts encouraged by the Strategy Committee is the use of form based code in the Downtown, placing a priority on the scale and aesthetics of the development to ensure it is consistent with the historic character of the area.
- ***Rehabilitation loan/grant program*** - Another initiative recommended is a matching grant/loan program for the rehabilitation of upper-story space along the Square. Similar to the housing reclamation strategy, the upper-level rehabilitation effort is targeted as reactivating currently unused, or underused, space to increase the variety and type of housing in the Downtown. The program concept is to offer a financial incentive (i.e. loan forgiveness, low interest loans, matching grants...) in exchange for reactivating the space. The City recovers some, or all of this money through loan repayment and increased tax revenue based on higher-valued properties.

Objective 11: Formalize and execute the marketing and development of the City's opportunity areas and sites – The Strategy Committee wanted to ensure the implementation plan was connected to the opportunity site analysis detailed in the previous chapter. Simply put, the asset, regulatory, and marketing efforts detailed in this strategic plan all provide the tools necessary to encourage and accelerate the investment—or reinvestment—into the opportunity sites identified in chapter 6. As noted in the implementation matrix, meeting this objective will require components of many of the other actions detailed here.

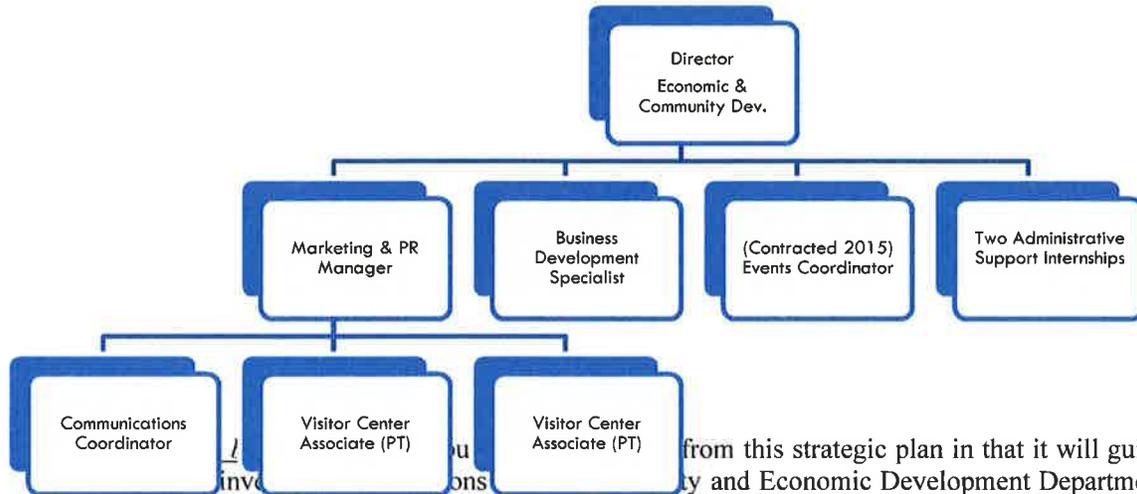
2. Organization and Regulatory Priorities

Objective 1: Empower the City's community and economic development staff for success – The City Council has approved a staffing strategy for the Community and Economic Development Department that should provide the staffing resources necessary to implement this plan. One of the largest challenges the City has faced to this point is worker capacity. Expanding the department to five full-time positions and two part-time positions provides the labor necessary to implement (Figure 7-1). That said, the current missing component is the input and support from the private sector and other key implementation partners. It is the recommendation of RKG Associates that the Strategy Committee be



retained as the Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee to assist and participate in the creation and implementation of the business plan.

**Figure 7-1
 Economic & Community Development Department**



from this strategic plan in that it will guide the City and Economic Development Department over the next year. This plan should be created within context of this strategy, but prioritized based on existing resources, market opportunities, and community preference. The Strategy Committee recommends that a strategic retreat be held with the Advisory Committee upon completion of this effort to define the specific action plan for the next year. The retreat should be held annually to update and reprioritize the business plan as tasks are completed, market conditions change, and priorities adjust.

- Establishment of a public private partnership to implement the City's economic development effort – A longer term strategy is to create (or reconstitute an existing) a 501(c)(3) entity under which all economic development functions will be administered. Simply put, the proposed goals and objectives identified in this document require a comprehensive effort that will need the input and participation from a number of public and private implementation partners. While the Advisory Committee is a logical intermediate step to engage these partners, creating an entity outside the auspices of government body enables the implementation partners to equally participate in the development of the business plan, make decisions on specific approaches, and help guide go/no go decisions on implementation. The 501(c)(3) approach offers these partners the means to pool their resources and assets into a single “voice” for Lawrenceville.

More importantly, the 501(c)(3) also provides the opportunity for the City's business community to participate in economic development implementation. It is RKG Associates' experience that the most successful economic development entities are ones that activate the local industry leadership as direct partners, both financially and programmatically. Given the level and depth of experience and interest just on the Strategy Committee, the County has substantial resources available outside the government structure. However, this level of effort



from the private sector requires some level of direct influence on decision-making and strategic planning. To this end, the implementation entity is envisioned to have substantial private-sector representation among its Board members.

The entity should be structured so the staff is employed by City (as it currently is structured), with the mission and implementation actions being decided by the Board of Directors. While the final make-up of the Board will be determined through collaboration amongst the stakeholders, the Strategy Committee recommends no more than 15 people be placed on the Board of Directors, preferably fewer. The proposed structure provides the following benefits:

- *Instant credibility* – Removing these efforts from the direct control of a government entity will provide an almost instant message to the business and development community that the City is serious about success. Independent, non-profit economic development entities are able to separate more easily from political and administrative nuance in the development process since direct accountability is to the Board of Directors, and not an elected body. There are several examples of this model for similar sized communities (i.e. Roswell, GA) where a quasi-governmental economic development entity has produced success. It is the Strategic Committee’s position that maintaining this independence is critical for success.
- *Greater flexibility* – Having a singular economic development entity outside administrative controls also allows the Board of directors more flexibility in outreach, community and business interaction, and implementation. Simply put, jurisdictions must follow certain procedures and protocols that independent non-profits do not. For example, procurement procedures typically are much different for an independent entity than they are for a governmental body. In addition, it was made apparent through this effort that having the economic development implementation entity outside of government to garner private support, both financial and strategic resources.
- *Unity* – Under the current configuration within Lawrenceville, there is the potential to have three separate entities performing portions of the functions that a comprehensive economic development entity typically manages (the City staff, the Downtown Development Authority and the Development Authority). Bringing these entities under a single organization with a unified Board of Directors allows for better coordination and efficiencies in costs while reducing the potential for disjointed and counterproductive action.
- *Accountability* – Despite the increased credibility and greater flexibility, a single, outside economic development entity ultimately will be more accountable to both the public sector entities and private sector investors. While initial funding almost exclusively will be generated by the City, the implementation entity will have to provide detailed accounting of its efforts, successes and failures to each investor. Assuming the investors enter into an agreement with the implementation entity that has a performance clause, then the City Council will retain a level of oversight with the implementation entity and can de-fund the entity if it does not meet its stated deliverables.

Objective #2: Expand the City’s relationships with external implementation partners – It was reported that relationships with regional implementation partners and key business and real estate stakeholders have improved since the City hired its current Director. That said, there are a number of additional opportunities to continue to build these relationships. Most notably, the hiring of additional staff should provide the Director with more time to proactively engage with real estate professionals (i.e. brokers,



developers, investors) as well as coordinate with implementation partners. The economic development specialist role is envisions to lead business outreach and retention, creating greater coordination between the City's efforts and the business community's needs. Continuing to expand the City's relationships with its partners is critical to develop partnerships for implementation.

One recommendation is for the staff to host networking events that bring together investors, developers, and property owners around specific economic development themes. Concepts include announcing a specific program or policy, showcasing a successful investment, or providing access to a guest lecturer on larger market-based topics. These efforts could be done in collaboration with Partnership Gwinnett and/or the Atlanta Regional Commission.

Objective #3: Leverage the talents and vision of the Lawrenceville community – AS is the case in many communities, there are a small number of community and business leaders that have taken a very active role in developing this economic development strategic plan. While these individuals have proven invaluable to delivering this strategy and the positive momentum it delivers, they are not capable of addressing all of the implementation assistance that this effort requires. Simply put, there are not enough resources available to address all technical and labor needs. Additional support from civic, community, and business leaders will be necessary for the City to reach its full potential. The following approaches provide some key areas with the greatest need:

- Advocates to assist in community outreach – Prior to this effort, there has been little effort to engage local residents about the opportunities/challenges of implementing an economic development program. Given the challenge of reaching all of the different community groups (and economic development perspectives), additional personal and professional relationships with key civic stakeholders will need to be developed. Ideally, the community advocates would be individuals with strong ties and broad recognition within either a particular area of the City or with a civic group. Individuals selected to be advocates should be familiar with the City's economic development efforts, have the ability to discuss and explain economic development concepts, and be well spoken. Most importantly, the advocates must be available to assist in outreach to various community (i.e. congregations) and civic (i.e. neighborhood groups) entities. The advocate effort is intended to build community-wide awareness of the benefits and challenges of implementing an economic development strategy at the local level without requiring a staff large enough to provide individual attention to every citizen.
- Ambassadors to assist in industry retention and recruitment – The ambassador program is a collection of business and industry leaders within the City that provide support to the economic development entity's staff for industry recruitment and retention. Although these individuals will have no formal authority within the recruitment process, they provide a "real life" vantage point for prospects about doing business in Lawrenceville. Their most important function is to provide a business-perspective for prospects interested in locating/expanding within the City. Utilizing business leaders in the recruitment process legitimizes the recruitment effort through testimonials while leveraging the staff's time and effort. It is important that ambassadors be well informed, well-spoken and respected within their industry. In other words, the most effective ambassadors may not be from the largest businesses. A wide variety of business types should be represented to ensure appropriate coverage regardless of the prospect.
- Mentors to foster entrepreneurial growth – As noted, mentors can be a valuable component of developing new and small businesses in Lawrenceville. Given the changing demographics in the City, the number of persons that could participate in this effort is increasing. The Strategy Committee recommends that the City should seek out participants in coordination with the UGA Small Business Development Center.



Objective #4: Enhance the City’s economic development toolbox to encourage investment and growth – Economic development is a competitive environment. There are many more communities trying to attract businesses than there are businesses seeking to relocate/grow. This imbalance in supply and demand has created competition. More aggressive communities are willing to “share” the benefits they will receive back to the business that is providing the benefits (i.e. tax base, jobs, investment, diversification...). This sharing can be in expedited review processes, relaxed regulations, and financial inducements. Each benefit is focused on providing greater predictability to the company, therefore reducing risk. To maximize success from an economic development perspective, the Strategy Committee recognizes that the City has to be competitive in this environment. Current and potential strategies for supporting economic development include (and some are already being employed in the City):

- Community/business improvement districts,
- Tax allocation districts,
- Tax abatements,
- Form based code,
- Overlay districts,
- Transfer of development rights,
- Streamlined development review process,
- Fee reductions/waivers,
- Infrastructure cost mitigation, and
- Zoning.

The Strategy Committee recognizes that the City has limited resources available for economic development. To this point, the Committee encourages the City Council to be aggressive in pursuing job creation and retention, but in a manner that measures the benefits of a given investment with its potential benefits. The proposed incentive “tool box” should offer a variety of options to accommodate the specific needs of a prospect to be applied to the benefit of both the community and the business. RKG Associates and the Strategy Committee recognize that some prospects may require too many benefits to justify the return to the community. As noted earlier, this is why formulaic measures should be created to determine eligibility to these tools. That said, the following efforts should be pursued to help define new programs, refine existing programs, and maximize the City’s ability to leverage its resources by attracting private investment and matching grants from implementation partners.

- Internal coordination – Establish a regular department head meeting to coordinate on economic development projects and initiatives. The intent of the meeting is to identify potential challenges and work through possible solutions.
- Streamline review and approval processes – Development approvals require community oversight to ensure the community’s safety, welfare, and interests are being preserved. However, there are methods to accomplish these goals without creating undue burden on development. This is particularly true for projects that meet specific community investment/development goals. Considering approaches such as concurrent review, administrative approvals, and expedited timelines are ways to reduce the cost (and risk) of a development project.
- Regulatory changes – Not all economic development incentives that create value for a developer need to be financially-based. Communities can use zoning regulations to create value for a project without spending any money. In addition to reduced approval processes, approaches such as density bonus and variances can increase profitability of a project while



controlling the level of impact the project may have above a by-right development. As noted earlier, form based code is effective at allowing developers to find creative solutions to development challenges without upsetting the character of the area.

3. Marketing and Outreach Priorities

Objective 1: Create a dialogue with community stakeholders – Community awareness and support is a critical component of implementation. Simply put, the amount of financial and political support for economic development is influenced by the willingness of residents to endorse local action. Past actions (that occurred before initiating this effort) indicate there is not widespread understanding of economic development initiatives in Lawrenceville, why it is important for future sustainability, and what needs to be done to achieve the stated vision. Increased awareness and education about economic development can only benefit the City’s implementation in building sustainable and strategic relationships with all local stakeholders.

- **Publish community eNewsletters** –The Strategy Committee recommends the City’s economic development entity create regular eNewsletters that highlight the actions and successes of the City’s economic development effort. This newsletter should vary slightly from one sent to stakeholders, partners, and prospects, presenting the data in less industry-focused language. The Strategy Committee and RKG Associates encourage the City’s implementation entity to include some small educational components/editorials to the newsletter that better explains the more technical content presented. One potential addition could be a “Director’s Notes” that highlights a relevant piece of the newsletter within context of why it is important and the benefits created by that effort/success. Creating a method for residents to sign up for this eNewsletter through a dedicated economic development website is recommended.
- **Host community update meetings** – It was noted through this effort that the City’s economic development department historically has not provided regular updates beyond the City Council. This disconnect enables naysayers to “define the reality” of the City’s economic development efforts. The Strategy Committee recommends the implementation entity used its community advocates to meet with citizen and civic groups to provide annual updates on the actions of the organization and the benefits being generated for the community. This effort can dovetail into a staff-led town hall presentation/discussion enabling community members to hear about the organization and ask questions/give feedback. The town hall event is more formal, focusing on the “state of economic development” within Lawrenceville.
- **Implement an annual consumer survey** – One way to engage the community is to hold an annual survey that allows individuals to provide feedback on their experiences in Lawrenceville as a place to live, work, and recreate. The survey tool should be created to ask specific questions to three groups, [1] residents of the City, [2] in-commuters that work in Lawrenceville, and [3] persons who attend events/activities in the City. The survey results can be compared against the business surveys and input provided through the various stakeholder roundtables to corroborate or identify areas of disconnect. These findings can help create/refine implementation actions by the City and its partners.

Objective #2: Create an economic development website, preferably outside the City’s main page – A new City of Lawrenceville economic development website should be developed to provide information to prospects, partners, stakeholder, and the community with access to implementation efforts, the City’s business plan, information on available properties, and digital copies of all marketing collateral. As separate section for community engagement should be included, where all outreach materials are maintained, the City’s events schedule, and the annual survey is administered. Available sites and



buildings information should be offered via data sources that combine local information (i.e. City data) with other sources (i.e. broker community). A listing of all incentive, program, and policy information that supports economic development should be provided, along with a link to the entities that manage or administer those programs.

Objective #3: Develop professional marketing collateral for the City – Lawrenceville does not have the marketing collateral necessary to effectively “sell” the City and its efforts. Industry trends indicate that developers, investors, site selectors, and businesses are relying more and more on on-line research to identify opportunities. Communities can find themselves at a competitive disadvantage despite their respective market potential without having the appropriate materials and an engaging website.

While having materials is a baseline requirement in the competitive economic development world, maintaining and regularly updating the content is the true benchmark. This is particularly important for Internet-based materials, as having dated information can harm the community’s potential for a prospect before the community ever learns about the opportunity. The Strategy Committee recommends the following materials be created:

- **Quality of Life Sheet** – The quality of life brochure should focus on the intangibles of living and working in Lawrenceville. The content should emphasize factors such as cost of living, recreational amenities (i.e. Rhodes Jordan Park), ease of road access, the existing employment base, access to larger metropolitan Atlanta markets, and quality/variety of the City’s cultural amenities. This material is particularly valuable in the professional services recruitment and entrepreneurial development.
- **Incentive Sheet** – A series of incentive documents should be created that detail all City, County, state and federal incentive programs available for businesses locating in Lawrenceville. Each incentive sheet should focus on those programs relevant to the particular business type or investment being targeted. Prospective businesses can use this document to gauge the financial benefits to doing business, and existing businesses may be alerted to incentive programs they were unaware of, therefore helping to ensure their continued presence.
- **Business Testimonial Book** – RKG Associates’ efforts for this analysis has revealed a number of compelling “success stories” of existing businesses in Lawrenceville that counter some of the negative perceptions of the community. However, these experiences are not chronicled or readily available to use in marketing. The Strategy Committee recommends crafting a business testimonials book with written statements from existing industry and business leaders on topics ranging from quality of life, business climate, market performance, and personal preference to do business in Lawrenceville. Getting input from companies that have chosen and thrive locally is valuable to industry recruitment. Individual testimonies of leaders from business in the target industries should also be included in the target industry brochures.
- **Property Assemblage Book** – As noted, a property assemblage book is a valuable tool for a real estate-based economic and community development plan. The book should provide information on all the properties as well as the community’s development vision for that area. The assemblage book can serve as a guide to potential investors seeking opportunities in the City.

Objective #4: Take advantage of digital marketing and communication techniques – The importance of social media in creating awareness and interest in a “brand” is well documented. For the City of Lawrenceville, the “brand” is its effort to entice new investment, attract new residents, and strengthen its community. Having a presence on social and digital media will only benefit the City. This is



particularly true for the stated interest in attracting more Millennials to Lawrenceville. However, the value of social and digital media is not limited to cultural and social events. Services such as LinkedIn and even Twitter have connected business interests and opportunities. While this approach likely will not be the deciding factor between success and failure for the City, not engaging in social and electronic communication likely will limit the City's potential. It is critical that the City ensure all electronic activity is consistent and frequent, as an idle Twitter page can be more harmful than no Twitter page at all. To this point, staff time should be dedicated to any electronic communication efforts.

E. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following implementation matrix presents the full range of objectives and corresponding action items for consideration when creating the implementation entity's first year business plan. The time lines, estimated costing, and implementation partners for each action item identified in the matrix reflect of the level of effort desired by the Strategy Committee and assessment by the Consultant. The final business plan established by the implementation entity should be heavily influenced by the Strategy Committee's established strategy, but refined based on the available strategic and capital resources available to this effort. The final timing, focus, and potential costs will be better determined by the formal implementation entity representatives and the dedicated participation from various public and private sources.



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CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
ASSET DEVELOPMENT															
Objective #1: Expand the City's proactive business retention visit efforts															
Action 1:	Create a comprehensive business database for all businesses in Lawrenceville; update annually	ED, GC													A
Action 2:	Develop and implement an annual web-based survey for all businesses, focusing on identifying needs, emerging market trends and potential obstacles to success	ED, PG													B
Action 3:	Host an annual forum with local workforce training providers and education leaders to share results of initial survey results	ED, GW, GG, GT													A
Action 4:	Present survey's market findings at industry roundtables relevant to that industry, soliciting response and advice on addressing specific needs/opportunities; use this data to inform an annual economic development planning retreat	ED, LV													A
Action 5:	Coordinate with local and state entities also performing retention activities to eliminate duplicative efforts and avoid inconveniencing local businesses	ED, PG, GE													A
Action 6:	Provide monthly newsletter to the business community, using the database to distribute electronically	ED													B
Action 7:	Develop a business lecture series, hosting 1-2 event per year, establishing topic areas based on the responses to the annual business survey and interacting with the industry roundtables	ED, PG, LV													C
Objective #2: Develop City-focused entrepreneurial initiatives															
Action 1:	Identify 3-4 local business leaders willing to serve as mentors under the SDBC/implementation entity, expand number as needed/talent allows	ED, LV													A
Action 2:	Provide formal training to selected mentors (i.e. the SBA's Mentor-Protegé Program)	ED, US													C
Action 3:	Implement mentorship program in coordination with the Small Business Development Center, bringing entrepreneurs together with implementation entity mentors	ED, SB, PG													B
Action 4:	Monitor success/effectiveness of existing programs and modify as needed based on changes in marketing and recruitment efforts/market conditions	ED, LV, SB, PG													A
Action 5:	Expand/market business development programs including: [1] writing a business plan; [2] how to finance a business; [3] how to identify, hire and manage staff; and [4] how to market to clients	BT, GG, SB													D
Action 6:	Te mentorship program to enrollment in business development programs	ED, SB													A
Action 7:	Establish incentives to accommodate home-based businesses; including business license fee waivers and business financing packages (tied to development program attendance)	LV, GC, PG, ED													D
Action 8:	Implement a program, conclusion and follow up survey of program participants to track effectiveness and success rate	ED, PG													A
Action 9:	Work with existing entities to market and expand co-work and incubator opportunities (i.e. retail incubator) for Downtown	ED, PG, LV													E
Action 10:	Explore the potential to develop an angel investor network; host an annual "Shark Tank" event enabling local entrepreneurs to pitch their business strategy	ED, PG													B
Objective #3: Market and recruit additional health care businesses to Lawrenceville															
Action 1:	Work with the healthcare industry roundtable to define market opportunities and identify potential target markets in context of the target industry clusters	ED, PG													A
Action 2:	Perform a medical services market opportunity analysis, identifying specializations/sectors currently underrepresented in Lawrenceville/Gwinnett County	ED, PG, AR													C





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CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix ASSET DEVELOPMENT	Implementation Lead	Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost				
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		9	10		
Objective #3: Market and recruit additional health care businesses to Lawrenceville Action 3: Inventory businesses operating in these industries, developing relationships to identify opportunities for them to expand (retention) or name potential targets (recruitment) Action 4: Work with the Gwinnett Medical Center to define future of health care opportunities. Develop recruitment/incentive programs to assist in meeting the defined strategy Action 5: Coordinate recruitment marketing efforts with Partnership Gwinnett, identifying opportunities to joint market	ED ED, PG, LV, GC ED, PG	B B C														A A C
Objective #4: Develop a locally-maintained inventory of land and buildings available for sale/lease Action 1: Maintain an Excel database on all available non-residential properties, including asking prices (for rent and for sale) in the City; work with local brokers and property owners to update database regularly Action 2: Develop on-line data entry capability for property owners and real estate brokers to submit property information data for all available assets within the City. Use this information to update the City's database Action 3: Develop a "property assemblage book" that highlights all development/redevelopment properties from the opportunity sites analysis; advertise the book on the economic development website Action 4: Implement a recurring outreach initiative to property owners who currently are marketing their assets OR are identified as opportunity sites; use this data to update the City's database and property assemblage book	ED ED, PG ED	R, O, D C R, O, D O														A C B A
Objective #5: Establish formulaic measures to guide real estate investing/partnership development Action 1: Create a financial pro forma model that can be used to measure the financial feasibility of a property acquisition/redevelopment plan Action 2: Establish minimum return of investment and return on investment guidelines based on the economic development goals to be achieved for all property acquisition Action 3: When appropriate, work with existing property owners to be development partners rather than acquiring the property; use acquisition as a "last resort" rather than the preferred method Action 4: Create a new entity/reconstitute an existing entity to be the City's economic development implementation lead for the entire City; ideally the entity would be a public-private partnership housing the City's community and economic development staff	ED ED, LV, BE, GC ED, LV, GC ED, LV, DD, DA, PG	C C O, D B, R														B A A A
Objective #6: Develop a Lawrenceville Land Bank Action 1: Identify parcels considered to be strategic in the implementation of the opportunity site plans, specifically ones that are part of necessary property assemblage Action 2: Acquire only those properties that meet the defined criteria with the intent to package for resale to an investor seeking to implement the City's economic development strategy Action 3: Utilize the new/reconstituted implementation entity as a land bank, enabling it to implement transactions on behalf of the City Action 4: Establish a real estate investment fund for economic development property acquisition where sale of existing assets replenish the investment fund	ED, LV, PG ED, LV ED, LV ED, LV, GC	A A F A														Included in Above Included in Above
Objective #7: Partner with education leaders to expand school-to-work opportunities Action 1: Establish an education and workforce roundtable that brings the Gwinnett Tech, Georgia Gwinnett College, Gwinnett County Board of Education and private businesses together with City leadership on a quarterly or semi-annual basis Action 2: Actively promote existing workforce/continuing education programs available to Lawrenceville residents Action 3: Identify new education/continuing education programs that can be developed based on the results of the business survey and interactions with the industry roundtables	ED, GC, GT, BE, LV, GC ED, PG, GG, GT, BE ED, PG, GG, GT, BE	B A B														Unk.





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Implementation Matrix		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN													
ASSET DEVELOPMENT													
Objective #10: Diversify the City's housing supply, both by housing type and price point													
Action 1:	Create and Implement a city-wide housing master plan to identify areas for redevelopment, revitalization and infill development	ED, LV, AR											D
Action 2:	Encourage urban-style housing development and mixed use projects in the Downtown opportunity area	LV											A
Action 3:	Encourage repositioning of vacant commercial assets within the Route 20 South opportunity area to be townhouse/mixed-use, town center style developments	LV											A
Action 4:	Encourage development of age-restricted housing within the Hospital Corridor opportunity area	LV											A
Action 5:	Consider the implementation of an upper-story rehabilitation grant program to encourage residential conversions within the Downtown opportunity area	LV, GC, BE, ED											E
Action 6:	Consider programs to encourage empty nester and near-retirement households to locate in Lawrenceville, such as modernization and weatherization matching grants and property tax freezes for age-qualified households	LV, GC, BE											E
Action 7:	Consider a first-time buyer housing rehabilitation grant/loan program to attract young households to targeted neighborhoods	LV, GC, BE											E
Objective #11: Formalize and execute the marketing and development of the City's opportunity sites/opportunity areas													
Action 1:	Finalize the creation of the City's implementation entity, including the capacity to own real estate (preferably through the land bank concept)	LV, ED											A
Action 2:	Transfer ownership of city-owned land asset to be enacted for economic development, as determined through coordination between the City Council and the new implementation entity Board of Directors	LV, ED											A
Action 3:	Develop a business plan for land assets, including a financial analysis of any proposed projects	ED, LV, DD											A
Action 4:	Create a request for qualifications to solicit development interest from private firms/investment partners that details the development program and expected deliverables through the public-private partnership	ED, LV, GC, DD											C
Action 5:	Select potential partners to request a more detailed proposal for the development program, financing/funding strategies, and public-private partnership details	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 5:	Score and select preferred partner for the development project	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 6:	Negotiate development agreement with development partner, detailing phasing and deliverable expectations of the project	ED, DD, LV											Included in Above
Action 7:	Implement development and marketing strategy (if applicable) for the development project(s)	ED											A
Action 8:	Provide regular progress reports to the City Council/community	ED, LV											A
Action 9:	Use and development proceeds (if applicable) to develop future investment/partnership projects between the City, implementation entity, and private sector through the Land Bank/implementation entity	LV, ED											A
ORGANIZATIONAL AND REGULATORY													
Objective #1: Empower the City's community and economic development staff for success													
Action 1:	Constitute an Advisory Board to work with City staff on implementation of the strategic plan, preferably through extending the life of the Strategy Committee	ED, LV											A
Action 2:	Create an economic development business plan based on this strategic plan to transition the City's economic development effort from predominantly reactive to proactive	ED, LV											A



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		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
ORGANIZATIONAL AND REGULATORY													
Objective #1: Empower the City's community and economic development staff for success													
Action 3:	ED, LV	B											B
Action 5:	ED, LV												A
Action 6:	ED, LV	O											C
Action 7:	ED, LV	B											A
Action 8:	ED, LV												A
Action 9:	ED, LV	B											A
Action 10:	ED, LV, DD, DA												A
Action 11:	ED	B, D, O, F											A
Action 12:	LV												A
Objective #2: Expand relationships with external implementation partners													
Action 1:	ED, PG, GE, GC												A
Action 2:	ED, UT												A
Action 3:	ED, GG, GT, BE												A
Action 4:	ED	D, B, O, R											A
Action 5:	ED	B, D, O, R											A
Action 6:	ED	B, D, O, R											B
Action 7:	ED, AR												A
Objective #3: Leverage the talents and vision of the Lawrenceville community													
Action 1:	ED	B, O, D, F											A
Action 2:	ED	B, O, D, F											A
Action 3:	ED												A





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CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN Implementation Matrix		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10				
ORGANIZATIONAL AND REGULATORY		Public/NP	Implementation Lead		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Objective #3: Leverage the talents and vision of the Lawrenceville community			Private	Public											
Action 4:	Develop an ombudsman program, bringing free/reduced cost technical assistance services for entities investing in the City	ED	B, F												B
Action 5:	Identify and train community 4-6 advocates, empowering them to interact with individual citizens, community groups, and local elected bodies; candidates should be individuals well respected in the community	ED	Z												A
Action 6:	Identify and coordinate existing business leaders within various industry sectors (i.e. healthcare, manufacturing, etc.) to become marketing ambassadors, actively participating in business recruitment and retention	ED	B												A
Objective #4: Enhance the City's economic development toolbox to encourage investment and growth															
Action 1:	Consider overlay zones and/or form based codes for each of the opportunity areas to enhance development flexibility in exchange for aesthetic controls	ED, LV, GC													A
Action 2:	Consider guaranteed expedited/concurrent review processes for priority projects	LV													A
Action 3:	Allow administrative approvals for investments/projects of a certain scale/type that meet specified economic development goals/thresholds (i.e. facade improvement)	ED, LV, GC													A
Action 4:	Hold bi-monthly or quarterly department head strategy meetings to discuss proposed, initiated and ongoing economic development efforts and how to best integrate cross-department needs/opportunities	ED, LV, GC													A
Action 5:	Expand/create Tax Allocation Districts to align with the City's opportunity area boundaries (either multiple TADs or one single TAD)	ED, LV, ST	C												C
Action 6:	Create community improvement districts for each opportunity area (or combine opportunity areas into a single CID)	ED, LV, ST	B, O, C												Included in Above
Action 7:	Formalize permitting/development fee reductions that meet defined thresholds for economic development	ED, LV, GC													A
Action 8:	Consider density bonuses in and near downtown in exchange for favorable land use programs (i.e. mixed income developments)	ED, LV													A
Objective #4: Enhance the City's economic development toolbox to encourage investment and growth															
Action 9:	Continue to provide land acquisition cost mitigation or reimbursement (tied to the land bank concept)	LV													F
Action 10:	Work with financial institutions to offer City-backed loan guarantees and/or interest rate write downs for start-up or home based businesses; consider formalizing this program in a City-sponsored loan pool	ED, LV, GC	F												D
Action 11:	Create formulaic incentive structure for all incentive programs, defining the job creation, tax base enhancement, economic development goal thresholds to access those programs	ED, LV, GC, BE													A
Action 12:	Frame incentives based on the intended target/recipient (i.e. loan assistance for start-up businesses vs. tax reimbursement for large job creation vs. forgivable grants for Downtown residential redemption)	ED, LV, GC, BE													A
Action 13:	Review effectiveness of incentive programs and refine as necessary	ED, LV, GC, BE													A
MARKETING AND OUTREACH															
Objective #1: Create a dialogue with community stakeholders															
Action 1:	Provide bi-monthly or quarterly progress updates to the City Council through an in-person presentation, preferably at a scheduled elected body meeting	ED, LV													A
Action 2:	Hold semi-annual town hall events to debrief community members on current economic development efforts, trends and projections in the market, and likely future opportunities/efforts	ED, LV	Z												B





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CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN															
Implementation Matrix	Description	Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost	
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
MARKETING AND OUTREACH															
Action 3:	Develop and distribute community versions of the economic development monthly newsletter that focuses stories and information on economic development education and highlighting the benefits/activities	ED													A
Action 4:	Create an open-source community database for City residents and interested parties to sign up to receive the economic development monthly bulletin	ED	C												A
Action 5:	Host annual surveys for (1) residents; (2) event attendees; and (3) daytime workers to garner information on the perceptions of Lawrenceville as a place to live, shop, dine, and recreate	ED													B
Action 6:	Establish materials and implementation protocol for interacting with community stakeholder groups (i.e., HOAs, civic groups...) using staff or trained advocates	ED													B
Objective #2: Create an economic development website, preferably outside the City's main page															
Action 1:	Create a Lawrenceville economic development website to provide access to all materials, events, incentives and education materials	ED	C												C
Action 2:	Provide web-based, downloadable incentives sheet detailing programs available by industry and location	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 3:	Host business and community surveys on the website	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 4:	Create a comprehensive calendar of events for community and economic development activities and meetings	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 5:	Post electronic marketing materials and newsletters on the site	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 6:	Create a community engagement/outreach section with all educational materials	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 7:	Establish links to regional and state economic development partners	ED	C												Included in Above
Objective #3: Develop professional marketing collateral for the City															
Action 1:	Create a quality of life brochure highlighting Lawrenceville's unique characteristics (i.e. Downtown), amenities (Rhodes Jordan Park, Lawrenceville Lawn), and cultural attractions (i.e. Aurora Theatre, summer concert series)	ED, PG													B
Action 2:	Develop a community "highlights" document including market fundamentals, local and regional business climate, labor force data, etc.	ED, PG													Included in Above
Action 3:	Develop a detailed incentives document that details all local, county, state and federal incentive programs	ED, PG													Included in Above
Action 4:	Craft a business testimonials book with written statements from existing Lawrenceville business leaders on topics ranging from business climate, market performance, and choosing the City to do business	ED	B, D												Included in Above
Action 5:	Develop each of these materials in print, digital and internet format, connecting them to the City's economic development website	ED	C												Included in Above
Action 6:	Create opportunity area concept materials highlighting the vision and opportunities in each area; do not market specific parcels where the property owner has expressed no interest	ED													Included in Above
Action 7:	Develop land and building asset marketing sheets for the property assemblage book, focusing information about size, location, cost, and amenities	ED													Included in Above
Action 8:	Regularly update the materials as market/business climate changes in the City	ED													A





Community and Economic Development Strategic Plan
City of Lawrenceville, Georgia

CITY OF LAWRENCEVILLE, GA COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN																
Implementation Matrix																
MARKETING AND OUTREACH	Objective #4: Take advantage of digital marketing and communication techniques	Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated Cost		
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
	Action 1: Create and regularly maintain a Twitter account	ED														A
	Action 2: Develop and produce a monthly public access news show/webcast highlighting the pertinent pieces from the newsletter	ED	M													B
	Action 3: Develop a comprehensive digital outreach list to publish regular eNewsletters and make necessary eblast messages	ED														A
	Action 4: Build relationships with all local print, digital and social media outlets and create a regular communication strategy	ED	M													A
	Action 5: Get a Quick Response code developed for the economic development website	ED	C													B
	Action 6: Have all materials translated into other languages, starting with Spanish	ED	C													B
	Action 7: Dedicate staff time to consistently and frequently update and maintain these efforts and relationships	ED														A

LEGEND

Implementation Leaders

- Public:**
 BE - Gwinnett County Board of Education
 ED - Lawrenceville Economic Development Staff
 GC - Gwinnett County Government
 GE - Georgia Department of Economic Development
 GG - Georgia Gwinnett College
 GT - Gwinnett Tech
 LV - Lawrenceville City Council
 US - Federal entities (i.e. SBA, EDA...)
 ST - State of Georgia

Partners:

- AU - Aurora Theatre
 DD - Lawrenceville Downtown Development Authority
 DA - Lawrenceville Development Authority
 PG - Partnership Gwinnett
 UT - Utilities
 SB - UGA Small Business Development Center
 AR - Atlanta Regional Commission
 CV - Gwinnett County Convention and Visitor's Bureau

Private

- C - Consultant
 D - Development Community
 F - Financial Institutions
 B - Business Leaders
 M - Local Media
 O - Property Owners
 R - Realtors/Brokers
 S - Site Selection Professionals
 Z - City of Lawrenceville Residents

Cost Estimate Legend:

- A - Under \$1,000
 B - \$1,000 to \$10,000
 C - \$10,000 to \$50,000
 D - \$50,000 to \$100,000
 E - \$100,000 to \$500,000
 F - Over \$500,000
 Unk. - Unknown

