
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

TO: Mayor & City Council

DATE: April 6, 2011

FROM: John McDonough, City Manager

AGENDA ITEM: Discussion Item - Main Street Alliance Report

MEETING DATE: For Submission onto the April 19, 2011, City Council Work Session Meeting Agenda

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: (Attach additional pages if necessary)

See attached:

Memorandum
Main Street Alliance Report

APPROVAL BY CITY MANAGER:  APPROVED

_____ NOT APPROVED

PLACED ON AGENDA FOR: 4/19/11

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL REQUIRED: () YES () NO

CITY ATTORNEY APPROVAL: 

REMARKS:



To: John McDonough, City Manager

From: Blake Dettwiler, AICP, Director, Department of Community Development BD

Date: April 5, 2011 for Submission onto the April 19, 2011 Mayor and City Council Work Session.

Agenda Item: Discussion Item – Main Street Alliance Report

CMO (City Manager's Office) Recommendation:

The City Manager recommends review and discussion of the Main Street Alliance Report.

Background:

The Mayor and Council held a joint work session with the Main Street Alliance on September 7, 2010. As a result of the work session, the Mayor and Council directed staff to work with representatives from the Main Street Alliance to review and make recommendations to improve these existing conditions influencing development in the Main Street Overlay District:

- Aesthetics and Sense of Place
- Economics
- Infrastructure and Traffic
- Regulatory Challenges

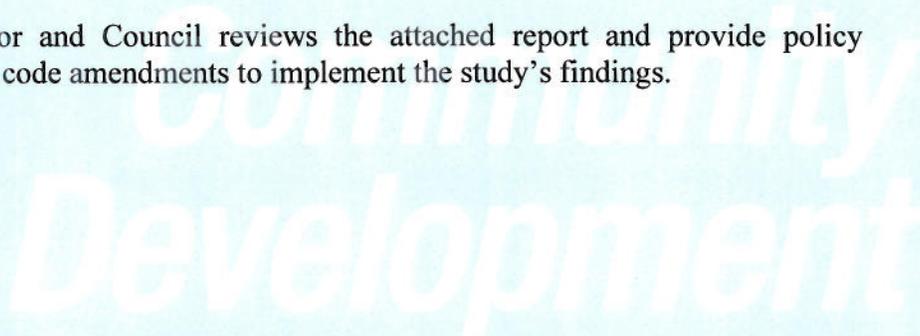
The above-referenced issues were utilized for meeting topics. To maintain the proposed schedule, staff met with representatives from the Main Street Alliance on a monthly basis to address two topics during each meeting.

Discussion:

The final report (see attached) was developed based on input from members of the Main Street Alliance, the Design Review Board and staff. The executive summary outlines the key findings from each of the three meetings held between October and December (a complete list is provided in Section II). Each of the findings and potential next steps listed were selected to address one or more of the four existing conditions influencing development. Where appropriate, real-world market information has been included as well.

Staff Recommendations:

Staff recommends the Mayor and Council reviews the attached report and provide policy guidance relative to potential code amendments to implement the study's findings.





Alternatives:

The Mayor and Council could decide not to provide additional guidance on these issues.

Financial Impact:

None

Concurrent Review:

None

*Community
Development*



City of Sandy Springs

Main Street Alliance Report

April 19, 2011



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff from Community Development has assisted the Main Street Alliance with several initiatives during the past year. The Main Street Alliance's mission is to work with the City and community to create a Downtown District that is a sustainable, vibrant destination for residents and business owners, emphasizing improved traffic flow, increased walkability, green space and improved aesthetics. According to the Main Street Alliance, a new Downtown District will improve the quality of life for the community as a whole because residents will stay in our community for activities such as shopping, dining, arts, entertainment and recreation. Examples of initiatives where the City assisted the Main Street Alliance including identification of a Community Improvement District (CID) boundary and the creation of a public information brochure. Staff has also attended Main Street Alliance meetings to provide updates to the group on the Overlay District standards and the City's capital improvement plans for the downtown area.

The Mayor and Council held a joint work session with the Main Street Alliance on September 7, 2010. As a result of the work session, the Mayor and Council directed staff to work with representatives from the Main Street Alliance during the next 90 days to review and make recommendations to improve these existing conditions influencing development in the Main Street Overlay District:

- Aesthetics and Sense of Place
- Infrastructure and Traffic
- Economics
- Regulatory Challenges

The above-referenced issues were utilized for meeting topics. To maintain the proposed 90 schedule, staff met with representatives from the Main Street Alliance on a monthly basis to address two topics during each meeting. To ensure a consistent approach, the following representatives from the City and Main Street Alliance met on a monthly basis:

City of Sandy Springs

John McDonough

Blake Dettwiler

Tom Black

Jon Drysdale

Mark Moore

Garrin Coleman

Chris Miller

Patrice Ruffin

Linda Abaray

Main Street Alliance

Lonnie Mimms

Jan Saperstein

Kirk Demetrops

Patti Pearlberg

Cheri Morris

Wanda Morganstern

At the close of each meeting, areas of agreement and areas for further discussion were identified. City staff also attended the Main Street Alliance's monthly meetings to provide updates to the larger group. The following is a list of the Main Street Alliance's key issues to be addressed in the downtown area together with recommendations to address each issue:

Aesthetics and Sense of Place

Although Sandy Springs is the 9th wealthiest city in America and is characterized by beautiful residential neighborhoods, its downtown has been left behind. It is unattractive, visually cluttered, is lacking a major draw and has no sense of place. The environment in the downtown is in conflict with the needs of the high quality retailers and restaurants that could serve the Sandy Springs demographic. Upscale businesses that come into downtown too often suffer and eventually close their doors, while research has shown that Sandy Springs residents leave the city for the majority of their shopping and dining.

- a) The visual clutter of the downtown area can be improved by moving the overhead power lines (excluding transmission lines) to the rear of the commercial properties.
- b) The proposed municipal development on the former Target site has the potential to transform the Main Street area. To be transformative, the municipal development will need to incorporate different uses to create an activity center.
- c) The City Hall complex should be the cornerstone of a major Town Center that includes the existing and new civic, cultural and recreational uses along Sandy Springs Circle within a significant green space. This should be tied into the City's comprehensive and growing network of sidewalks and parks, creating linkages to neighborhoods and throughout downtown.
- d) The majority of improvement in aesthetics and sense of place will come from creating an environment in downtown Sandy Springs that promotes the redevelopment of the existing properties.

Infrastructure and Traffic

Downtown Sandy Springs is underserved by an aging, local road network that was not designed to accommodate commuter traffic and cannot function adequately for Sandy Springs residents to patronize downtown's shops and services. A lack of inter-parcel access between downtown properties creates the need for too many curb cuts and places an additional burden on the already overloaded Roswell Road. Furthermore, Roswell Road provides an unpleasant and inconsistent pedestrian environment that does not promote walkability. Until wholesale improvements are achieved, incremental improvements to private properties do not have predictable success.

- a) A master traffic plan should identify roads to carry commuter traffic and other roads to be protected for local use.
- b) MSA applauds the City's focus on causing Roswell Road vehicular traffic to flow efficiently by:

- i) widening the I-285 bridge
 - ii) improving the intersection of Roswell Road, Johnson Ferry Rd and Mt Vernon Hwy;
 - iii) improving the intersections of Roswell with Hammond and Allen Roads, and
 - iv) aligning Carpenter and Cliftwood Drives.
- c) The Main Street Alliance supports the widening of Hammond Dr. east of Roswell Rd. However, care should be taken not to allow commuters to use Hammond, Mt Vernon and Heard's Ferry to move from 400 to I-75 as an alternative to I-285.
 - d) Innovative approaches such as on-street parking and traffic calming measures should be deployed on selected roads to discourage commuter use. An example is Sandy Springs Circle, which could be reduced to two lanes from Cliftwood to Johnson Ferry by adding angled parking on both sides to serve the existing and future civic, cultural recreational and commercial uses.
 - e) The City should monitor and manage Revive 285 so that it does not encourage commuter traffic on Sandy Springs' local road network.
 - f) The Roswell Road streetscape should be refined to place pedestrians further from the street edge and buffered by a landscape strip.
 - g) Shared or subsidized parking is needed to support redevelopment of commercial properties. Shared parking can include both strategically-located public parking structures and private parking lots.
 - h) Interparcel access and cross-access parking should be considered for the Main Street area to remove some burden from Roswell Road. Additionally, more pedestrian activity could be provided between private parcels – this can occur outside the right-of-way and be accomplished with private agreements.

Economics

Redevelopment of downtown commercial properties is not financially feasible because of the gap between current market rents and the actual rent needed to support the costs associated with redeveloping these properties. Ironically, because of the population density and affluence, many existing properties are financially productive despite deteriorating buildings and poor quality tenants. Thus, there is little or no incentive for owners to improve their properties in downtown Sandy Springs. Improving the aesthetics and function of downtown and closing the gap between redevelopment costs and achievable rents will ultimately make redevelopment more financially feasible.

- a) The City should consider implementing proven financial mechanisms to improve the infrastructure and aesthetic environment of its downtown to promote redevelopment and reinvestment in the Main Street Area. This should include investigation of both a Community Improvement District (CID) and a Tax Allocation District (TAD) to fund infrastructure improvements, city amenities, parking decks and streetscapes.
 - i) Sandy Springs may want to consider establishing a working group to analyze the pros and cons associated with creating a quasi-governmental agency for the Main Street Area such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA).

- b) An analysis should be done to determine the magnitude of impact fees required with different types of commercial redevelopment and resultant impact on the viability of redevelopment. This analysis will need to include the “total cost of redevelopment” based upon information provided for a sample retail redevelopment project.

Regulatory Challenges

The City’s development standards and zoning requirements are suburban in nature. While this is appropriate for the overall City, it is a limiting factor for redevelopment in the Main Street area.

- a) The City’s Comprehensive Plan provides adequate density. However, in terms of mixed-use developments, the City should consider including horizontally integrated projects within the definition of mixed-use. The current requirement to mix uses in every building is not a workable product model and cannot be financed.
- b) One possible regulatory approach to provide greater flexibility would be to consider the use of a form-based zoning code for the Main Street area of the City. Future residential uses should also incorporate the tenants of ARC’s “Lifelong Communities” to attract the widest range of residents. At minimum, the existing Main Street Overlay District can be modified to achieve the desired results.
- c) The City may want to consider allowing redevelopment projects to “pool” features like open space and parking. For example, instead of providing all required open space on a parcel by parcel basis, a portion of the required open space could be located in strategic downtown locations to maximize impact. The City should investigate what amendments are needed to its Zoning Ordinance to allow open space land banking.
- d) The City’s existing design standards should be evaluated to ensure they are consistent with the needs of retail.
- e) Signage regulations should be reviewed for the downtown to ensure the City is striking the proper balance between the needs of the business community and the Main Street design standards.
- f) The downtown, like the rest of the City, will be impacted by the new FEMA floodplain maps currently being finalized by the Federal Government. The new floodplain boundaries, when combined with detention requirements, may reduce the amount of land available for redevelopment. The impact of these changes may warrant further evaluation and innovation such as shared detention.

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II. EXISTING CONDITIONS INFLUENCING DEVELOPMENT

The downtown core of the City is characterized by older, suburban-style strip commercial developments. Along both sides of Roswell Road, one-story commercial buildings are set back from the right-of-way with off-street parking between the street and building (see Figure 1). Development types are not integrated into mixed uses or activity centers. According to the Comprehensive Plan, existing intensities are typically less than 15,000 square feet of floor area per acre. Development in the downtown is regulated by the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Ordinance and specific overlay district standards.

Comprehensive Plan

The City's Comprehensive Plan recognizes redevelopment as the highest priority for the City's continued economic development. According to a citizen survey conducted in February 2007, 153 of 156 respondents indicated the City should articulate specific revitalization and redevelopment strategies for the Roswell Road corridor and Town Center area. As part of these strategies, the following concepts were endorsed by the survey respondents:

- The City should establish a sense of place.
- Concentrating development in areas served by transit should be a key part of the economic development strategies.
- The City should use its investment in civic buildings to strategically leverage private reinvestment in redevelopment areas.

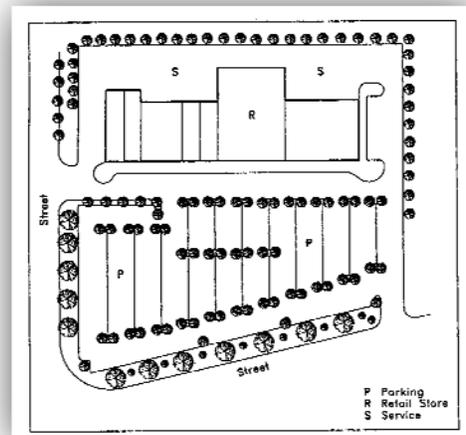


Figure 1 - Traditional Commercial Development

Main Street Overlay District and Town Center

The City has an overlay district that regulates both building design and uses within the City's commercial core. Article XII of the City's Zoning Ordinance provides streetscape requirements for the Suburban and Urban Districts together with the unique design standards associated with the Main Street District. The boundaries of the Main Street District are generally located on the east and west sides of Roswell Road between Abernathy Road and Glenridge Drive.

Main Street Alliance

The Main Street Alliance is a group of commercial property owners within the City's Main Street Overlay District. As Figure 2 illustrates, the member parcels (either owned or controlled) in the Main Street Alliance are located along Roswell Road and generally mirror the boundaries of the Main Street District. Currently, the Main Street Alliance has combined holdings of approximately 1.5 million square feet on 125 acres in the downtown.

Staff from the Community Development Department assisted the Main Street Alliance with several initiatives during the past year. The Main Street Alliance's mission is to work with the City and community to create a Downtown District that is a sustainable, vibrant destination for residents and business owners, emphasizing better vehicular traffic flow, increased walkability, green space and improved aesthetics. According to the Main Street Alliance, the new Downtown District will improve the quality of life for the community as a whole because

residents will no longer need to leave the community for activities such as shopping, dining, arts, entertainment and recreation. Examples of initiatives where the City assisted the Main Street Alliance include the identification of a Community Improvement District (CID) boundary and the creation of a

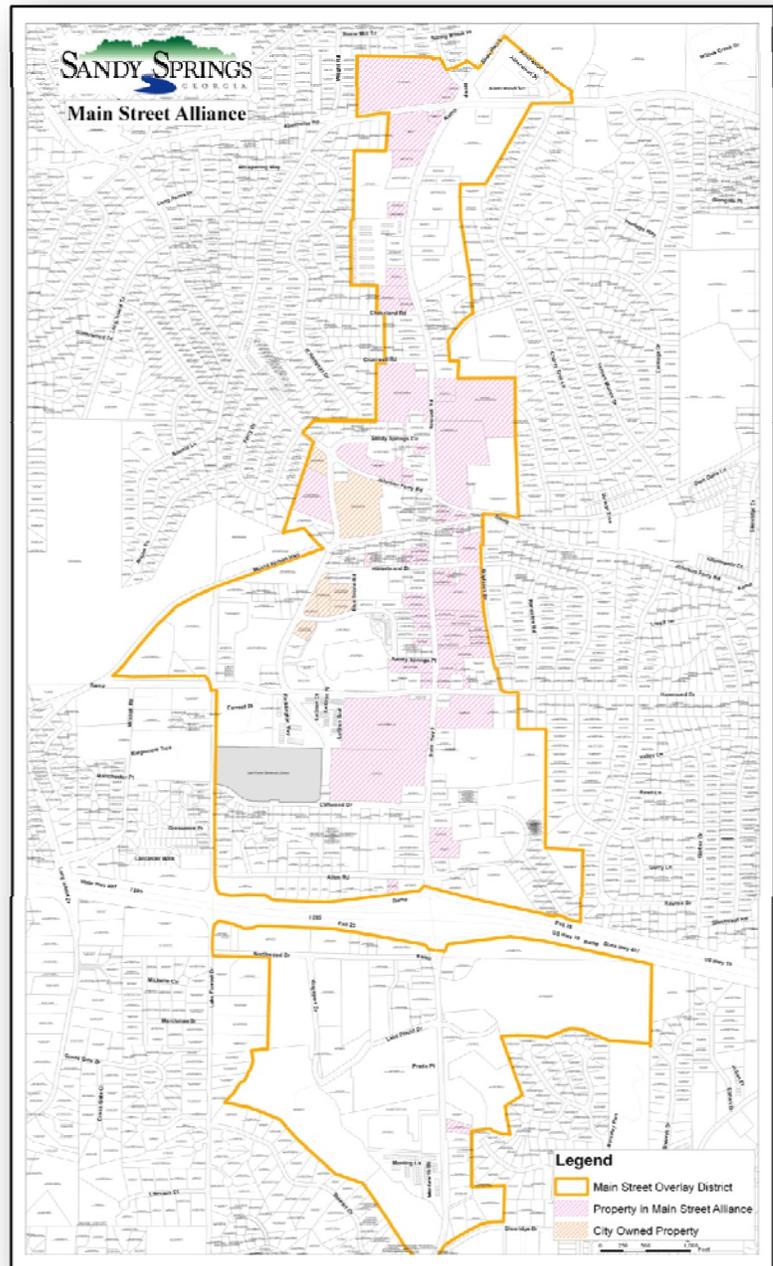


Figure 2 - Main Street Alliance

public information brochure. Staff also attended Main Street Alliance meetings to provide updates to the group on the Overlay District standards and the City's capital improvement plans for the downtown area.

Main Street Alliance Mayor and City Council Work Session

The Mayor and City Council held a joint work session with the Main Street Alliance on September 7, 2010. During the meeting, members of the Main Street Alliance discussed existing conditions affecting the Sandy Springs retail market and outlined a vision for the Main Street portion of the City. As a result of the Work Session, the Mayor and Council directed staff to work with representatives from the Main Street Alliance to address the following existing conditions influencing development in the Main Street Overlay District:

- Aesthetics and Sense of Place
- Economics
- Infrastructure and Traffic
- Regulatory Challenges

The remainder of this section of the report provides a summary of the discussions between staff and members of the Main Street Alliance for each of the above-referenced topics. For each topic, areas of agreement and areas for future study (indicated with an arrow symbol) are identified. Both the areas of agreement and future study have been used to form the basis of the report's recommendations found in Section III.

1.0 Aesthetics and Sense of Place

The City's downtown core lacks a cohesive feel and a sense of place. Both the Main Street Alliance and staff indicated this as a key weakness making Sandy Springs less competitive in comparison to other shopping districts in metro-Atlanta. The key points of agreement regarding this topic are:

1.1 Proposed municipal complex as a catalyst development

The proposed municipal development on the former Target-site has the potential to transform the Main Street area. Members of the Main Street Alliance stressed the value of the municipal complex to draw people to the downtown. Examples of recent municipal



Figure 3 - Duluth, GA Master Plan

complexes which include open or green space can be found in the cities of Duluth and Suwannee.

- Determine what municipal uses would be most complimentary to commercial uses downtown?

1.2 *Public parking as an incentive*

Shared public parking is needed to support higher-end commercial uses in the downtown. Existing parcels are not large enough to provide the number of on-site parking spaces needed to accommodate higher-end retail and restaurant uses. A system of shared parking lots and public structures, if strategically-located, could provide an incentive to encourage redevelopment. For example, a site could accommodate larger more modern buildings if parking was available off-site. This would enable the commercial parcels along Roswell Road, which lack the depth found in newer areas, such as Perimeter Mall, to be redeveloped more easily.

- If a parking deck is included with the municipal development should additional spaces be included above what is needed for the municipal uses. These spaces could be used by shoppers and other visitors to the downtown. Alternatively, could spaces intended for the governmental uses be shared during the day and after 5:00 pm? Where are the ideal locations for shared parking in the downtown? Metered parking spaces or pay-to-park structures may need to be considered to finance shared parking lots.

1.3 *Outside funding sources to be identified*

Two Livable Centers Initiatives (LCI) studies were conducted for the area included within the Main Street District. In 2011 the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) will be accepting applications to implement recommendations contained in previous LCI studies. Both staff and members of the Main Street Alliance recommend the City pursue LCI funding to plan for transportation and pedestrian improvements. Innovative transportation enhancements discussed by the group include the creation of a grid street pattern for downtown, use of traffic calming on side streets and access-management control (limiting driveway connections at block and mid-block opening). Pedestrian improvements including streetscape provisions for inter-parcel access to encourage cross-access for pedestrians.

- Determine how flexible will GDOT be to the use of innovative approaches such as on-street parking and traffic calming measures?

1.4 *Visual clutter needs to be reduced*

The downtown has too much visual clutter. The aesthetics of the downtown could be improved by moving the overhead power lines (excluding transmission lines) to the rear of the commercial properties.

1.5 *Design and landscape standards should be evaluated*

The City's existing design standards should be evaluated to ensure they are consistent with the needs of retail. For example, the current standards require specific tree species as parking lot shade trees. However, some of specified species may be blocking the sign bands in the shopping centers or the trees may be inappropriate for the urban environment. Different species could be selected to provide abundant shade without these limitations. This is supported by Economic Development Policy 13 in the City's Comprehensive Plan which calls for a balance between regulation and the needs of the businesses to remain competitive.



Figure 4 - Roswell Road Looking South

- As part of the City's ongoing efforts to incorporate best management practices, the Tree Ordinance is being reviewed by staff to ensure the right tree species are being required in the proper locations on commercial properties. Additionally, the City could also develop a manual for the proper care and maintenance of trees in parking lots and around commercial buildings.
- The Main Street Overlay District regulations are intended to encourage an urban downtown, but the streetscape standards are more suburban in nature. The streetscape standards need to be reviewed by staff and the Main Street Alliance to ensure they support to intent of the Main Street District regulations.
- According to the Main Street Alliance, a gateway treatment in the downtown would help to identify the Main Street area as unique destination and be used as a marketing tool.

1.6 *Streetscape Program should be continued*

The City has an ongoing program to complete the Main Street streetscape in the downtown district. Although funding is provided by the City for the physical improvements, the budgeted funds are not sufficient to purchase right-of-way along Roswell Road from property owners who choose not participate in the program. Where possible, design standards have been modified for sections where not enough right-of-way is available to provide a typical section. Members of the Main Street Alliance stated that continued public funding for the streetscape program was an important incentive to support redevelopment.

- Staff from Community Development and Public Works should work with GDOT to determine if any other modifications to the streetscape standards would make the downtown more pedestrian-friendly. Specifically, the sidewalk could be separated from the street edge with a landscape strip to create a sense of safety and a more pleasant pedestrian experience.

1.7 *Innovative provisions for open space to be considered*

Representatives from the City and the Main Street Alliance agreed open space, if used properly, can help create a sense of place for the downtown. The location of any large open space area in the downtown could connect with existing features such as the Hitson Activities Center, Heritage Green and the City Hall complex to create a major town center area.

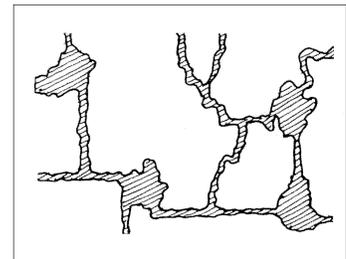


Figure 5 - Representation of Connected Open Space

- One concept which has not been investigated fully is the use of an open space “land bank” to combine the open space requirements of smaller parcels into one large open space in the downtown, which might help to anchor redevelopment in the downtown. The City should investigate what amendments are needed to the Zoning Ordinance to allow open space land banking.

2.0 Infrastructure and Traffic

The Main Street area of Sandy Springs is very auto-dependant with limited, or poor, pedestrian connections. Downtown Sandy Springs is underserved by an aging, local road network that was not designed to accommodate commuter traffic and cannot function adequately for Sandy Springs residents to patronize downtown’s shops and services. A lack of inter-parcel access between downtown properties creates the need for too many curb cuts and places an additional burden on the already overloaded

Roswell Road. Furthermore, Roswell Road provides an unpleasant and inconsistent pedestrian environment that does not promote walkability. Additionally, the commercial parcels do not provide adequate interparcel access placing a significant burden upon Roswell Road. The City has continued to invest in streetscape and efficiency improvements in the Main Street area. The adopted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) has nine projects targeted to improve both traffic flow and pedestrian connections in the Main Street area. These CIP projects are designed to either improve the east-west flow of traffic during the morning and evening peak hours or improve connections between the Perimeter CID and Main Street Areas. As the following table shows, the City has a significant level of investments planned (approximately \$79m) in the near and long-term for the Main Street area.

Table 1 – CIP-T Projects in Main Street Area

Project	Description	Cost Estimate	Start Date
T-0006	SS Cir @ Hammond Dr Ped. Enhance.	\$2,003,532	Jan – 2011
T-0008	Roswell Rd Streetscape	\$1,393,867	2013
T-0009	Johnson Ferry Rd Streetscape	\$820,473	Underway
T-0010	Johnson Ferry Rd @ SS Cir Inter. Imp.	\$1,000,000	2012
T-0011	Johnson Ferry Rd CD and PE	\$21,947,000	2014
T-0013	Roswell Rd ATMS	\$3,981,000	Spring – 2011
T-0014/15	SS Cir Pedestrian Enhancement.	\$2,620,369	2012
T-0024	Hammond Dr Widening	\$40,000,000	Unknown
T-0031	Roswell Rd Bridge Widening	\$5,000,000	Apr - 2011

The projects listed in the table above are also provided in the figure on the following page. The remainder of this section of the report provides the details associated with each of the projects listed in Table 1.

T-0006 - Sandy Springs Circle And Hammond Dr Pedestrian Enhancements (Phase I)

T-0006 is a sidewalk / streetscape project conforming to the Main Street design standard on both sides of Sandy Springs Circle between Cliftwood Drive and Sandy Springs Place. Construction will start in January of 2011 and is expected to be complete in 6 to 9 months depending upon the weather.

T-0008 – Roswell Road Streetscape

T-0008 is a streetscape project on the west side of Roswell Road between Cliftwood Drive and Hammond Drive and also on both sides of Hammond Drive between Roswell Road and Sandy Springs Circle. All sections the sidewalk will be consistent with the City's Main Street design standards. Currently, the City is acquiring the necessary right-of-way to begin this project. This project is scheduled to be completed by 2013.

T-0009 – Johnson Ferry Road Streetscape

T-0009 is a streetscape project on Johnson Ferry Road between Abernathy Road and Sandy Springs Circle. The pedestrian enhancements associated with this project include new sidewalk sections and pedestrian lighting. This project is under construction and should be completed by early spring 2011.

T-0010 – Johnson Ferry Rd @ Sandy Springs Circle Intersection Improvement

T-0010 is an intersection improvement project which will provide an additional right turn lane and the lengthening of the existing left turn lane. The project is currently in the design phase with a targeted construction date of 2012.

T-0011 – Johnson Ferry Road Multi-Modal Project

T-0011 will provide new sidewalks, pedestrian enhancements, bicycle lanes and a new grid block system between Sandy Springs Circle and Hammond Drive. The project is currently in the design phase and planned for construction in 2014.

T-0013 – Roswell Road Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS)

T-0013 is an extension of the existing ATMS improvements already provided for Roswell Road. T-013 is planned for the northern section of Roswell Road from Abernathy Road to the City limits and will include installation of fiber optic interconnects and upgrades to the current traffic signal system. This project is scheduled to bid in early 2011.

T-0014 and T-0015 – Sandy Springs Circle Pedestrian Enhancement

T-0014 and T-0015 is a sidewalk / streetscape project conforming to the Main Street design standard on both sides of Sandy Springs Circle between Johnson Ferry Road and Sandy Springs Place. These two projects are in concept design.

T-0024 – Hammond Drive Widening

T-0024 is a proposed project to widen Hammond Drive between Roswell and Barfield Roads. Although still in the concept design stage, the current plans do provide for median wide enough to accommodate a trolley type or some other version of mass transit

to connect the Main Street area with the Perimeter Center Improvement District. The project schedule will be determined once the preferred concept is selected.

T-0031 – Roswell Rd Bridge Widening

T-0031 is in the preliminary planning stages and will include operational, capacity and safety modifications to Roswell Road bridge which spans I-285. The project is planned for bid in April 2011.

2.1 *Improve Interparcel Connections*

Access on Roswell Road is currently provided on a parcel-by-parcel basis. Specifically, each parcel has its own driveway connection which in some cases results in multiple driveways separated by 50 feet, or less.

- A cross-access/parking concept could be considered for the Main Street area. Under this alternative, access on Roswell Road would be limited to block and mid-block openings. Connections to the openings would be provided via easements between private properties. This approach has been utilized successfully in other urban areas to improve traffic flow and encourage more cross-shopping.

2.2 *Make Area More Pedestrian-Friendly*

Roswell Road is a four-lane state route with an average right-of-way width of approximately 110 feet. Although the area does have nine-foot wide sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians, interparcel pedestrian connections are still limited. Also, the sidewalk is not buffered from the road reducing the feeling of safety for pedestrians. Finally, because of the width of Roswell Road, it is difficult for pedestrians to cross and negotiate traffic.

- The streetscape standards should be evaluated to ensure pedestrians are protected to provide a pleasant walking experience.
- Members of the Main Street Alliance acknowledged a need to provide more convenient connections between parcels. While sidewalks may be located at the right-of-way, more pedestrian activity could be provided between parcels – this may need to occur outside the right-of-way and be accomplished with private agreements.

- The proposed City development on the former Target site has the potential to consolidate the center of activity to the west side of Roswell Road. Alternatives should be considered by the City to improve pedestrian connections between the Target site and the remainder of the Main Street area. Options to consider could include mid-block pedestrian-actuated crossings or even a pedestrian bridge spanning Roswell Road. Similar pedestrian bridges have been used in cities like Arlington, Virginia to encourage greater pedestrian activity and prevent commercial areas to become isolated.

2.3 Create Smaller Blocks

The Main Street area has multiple east-west connecting streets along Roswell Road, but fewer local streets paralleling Roswell Road. The resulting roadway network is a partial grid, with few alternatives beyond Roswell Road to travel north and south.

- Both private redevelopment plans and the City's planning efforts could emphasize a new grid pattern for the Main Street area. A series of local connecting streets would allow traffic to move more freely on Roswell Road while creating a sense of place in the downtown.
- On-street parking could be provided in the downtown in conjunction with these smaller blocks as a way to calm traffic while creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment (the vehicles can serve as a buffer between pedestrians and fast-moving traffic).

3.0 Economics

Residents leave Sandy Springs for specialty retailers, professional services, dining and entertainment in areas such as Buckhead and the Perimeter Mall area. According to members of the Main Street Alliance, due to the existing mixture of uses, the Main Street area does not attract quality retailers, restaurants or professional office uses.

The demographic data in the appendix indicates the City has very high income levels compared to other areas of Metro-Atlanta. However, even with a strong demographic profile, there appears to be a gap between the type of retailers and office uses which could be supported by the City and those actually located in the Main Street area. According to members of the Main Street Alliance, this is due to the aforementioned traffic congestion, unsightly utility transmission lines and lack of attractive open or green space. Downtown Sandy Springs is not an easy place to shop and cannot attract the high quality tenants to serve the area's consumers and pay the increased rent needed to support redevelopment. Also,

many of the smaller commercial parcels do not have adequate on-site parking. To illustrate this point, Rumi's Kitchen at the northwest corner of Roswell Road and Hilderbrand Drive was listed as a restaurant which needs to rely on off-site parking for its patrons. Likewise, there is a large gap between the potential rents which could be sought for a redeveloped property versus the level of investment needed to attract these higher rents. The Main Street Alliance presented three redevelopment alternatives to illustrate this point:

Economics Affecting Downtown Sandy Springs Commercial Property

Option 1: Complete Redevelopment (all existing buildings removed and new buildings constructed)

- Density of existing commercial/retail approximately 10,000 – 15,000 SF/Acre. The density is consistent with typical one and two story, surface parking developments.

Reasonable estimate of average rental rate is \$15.00/SF. Rental rates are higher for many properties.

Net Operating Income (“NOI”) per SF, per acre, averages \$150,000 - \$225,000 per year

Depending on quality of the tenants, “cap rates” on the above NOI would range from 7% to 9%

Therefore, range in value on a per acre basis is from \$1,666,667 (\$150,000/.09) to \$3,215,000 (\$225,000/.07) per acre.

By comparison, the land (and former Bellsouth office buildings) that was used for the Perimeter Place mixed-use development across from Perimeter Mall was purchased for \$1,112,000/acre. The 42 acres now include approximately 500,000 SF of retail (one and two story), 330 units of apartments (six stories) and 220 condominiums (27 stories). If you assume 1,200 SF for the 550 residential units, the development included approximately 1,160,000 SF of development or 27,619/SF per acre.

Predicament:	
Lowest Price per acre:	\$1,666,667
Maximum New 1 st Floor Retail:	15,000 SF
Retail Value:	\$50.00/SF or \$750,000
Value needed from Upper floors:	\$916,667
Upper Floors (residential, office) value:	\$20.00/SF or 45,833 SF needed
Total SF per acre	60,833 SF

At this density, new development would need to be 5-7 stories with structured parking. However, retail and office would not receive high enough rents to cover cost of covered parking. Additionally, 5-7 stories is a height exceeding lower cost “stick” construction for residential.

Conclusion: Without available off-site parking or some type of subsidy for new structured parking, complete redevelopment of sites in Sandy Springs is financially challenging if not prohibitive. A complete redevelopment would envision all existing buildings and improvements being leveled.

Option 2: Partial Redevelopment (minor to major renovation of existing properties)

Partial redevelopment is a more likely scenario for properties in Downtown Sandy Springs, but only if the area becomes more attractive (traffic, sense of place, etc.) to tenants who can pay higher rents based on generating enough revenue (sales) at their stores. Examples of a partial redevelopment would include the interior and exterior modifications at Sandy Springs Plaza to accommodate Trader Joe's.

From the example above, if a current owner is receiving \$225,000 (\$15.00/SF rental rate on 15,000 SF) in NOI, what will motivate the owner to reinvest (or sell) in their property? If downtown Sandy Springs attracts, for example, high quality restaurants that can pay \$30.00/SF for the right property, the owner could double his rent. To secure a lease with a restaurant, the owner would need to invest around \$100/SF (allowance for building renovation and interior construction for restaurant excluding any cost for new development standards and/or additional parking). With the rent doubling, the \$100/SF investment would be financially profitable to the property owner. Now, if the property owner did not want to invest the money, with the tenant available, another developer could offer the property owner a purchase price attractive for the current owner to be financially motivated to sell.

Option 3: Catalyst User in Downtown Sandy Springs

What if Sandy Springs could attract some kind of user (corporation, institutional, school, etc.) to locate in Sandy Springs to attract shoppers to the downtown district? What would be the benefits? What type of facility would be needed?

Let's assume the user needs approximately 250,000 SF.

At that size, the building (s) needed could range from:

1. One (1) 10 story building with 25,000 SF per floor
2. Two (2) side by side five (5) story building with 25,000 SF per floor
3. A super floor structure could be considered at approximately 62,500 SF per floor and therefore require a four (4) story building
4. All options would need a parking garage with approximately 1,000 parking spaces.

Most of the options above could be accommodated as part of mixed use development (ground floor retail, etc.) on 7 – 10 acre site.

The benefits:

1. Parking garage could be a shared garage and provide some offsite parking to other properties in Sandy Springs.
2. The employees and visitors to the user would shop and possibly live in Sandy Springs.
3. More jobs in Sandy Springs.

The three examples above all indicate a need for additional incentives to help reduce the costs associated with redevelopment. While not necessarily financial in nature, incentives such as off-site

municipal parking lots would enable a greater utilization of commercial land in the Main Street area while helping to off-set some development costs listed on the preceding page.

3.1 *Redevelopment Incentives*

The City's Future Land Use Map includes living-working designations to allow an appropriate and balanced mix of uses to create a live-work environment at a scale and character that is compatible with its surrounding community. Living Working areas will be activity centers where the community can live, work, shop, meet, and play. These areas should be compact, pedestrian-oriented, with a mix of uses (residential, civic, institutional, office, and retail/service, or some combination thereof, along with open space), both horizontally and vertically (i.e., more than one use in the same building). These classifications are intended to protect environmental resources, provide accessible open space, balance all modes of transportation, increase housing choices and improve prospects for civic interaction.

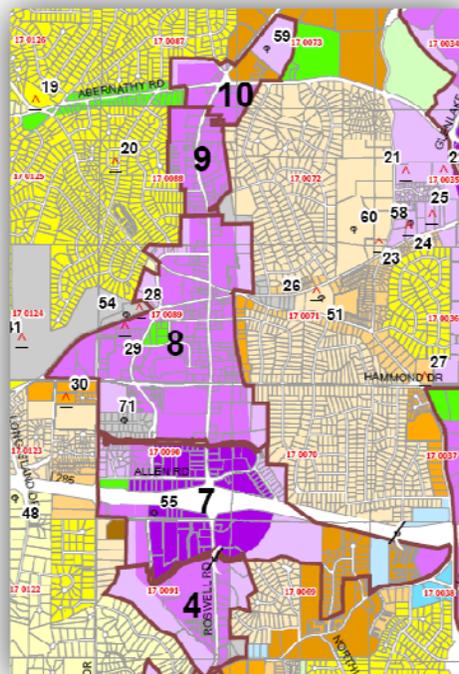


Figure 7 - Future Land Use Plan

The uses within the living-working areas should be in close proximity to one another in order to encourage walking, and to increase mobility to those who do not drive. Within these areas, there must be an appropriate transition of land uses, height and density/intensity at the edges abutting protected neighborhoods. Such areas should be planned with connections to adjacent properties where compatible, and to serve surrounding neighborhoods. The future land use plan map identifies three types of Living Working Areas each is described below:

1. **Living Working Neighborhood:** This is the lowest intensity option of the three living-working designations. These areas are intended to serve a single neighborhood or small group of adjacent neighborhoods, and to be compatible neighbors to lower density residential neighborhoods. This area is designated as light purple in Figure 7.
2. **Living Working Community:** This is a medium intensity/density category that is intended to serve a group of adjacent neighborhoods and to be compatible with low and medium density residential neighborhoods. This area is designated as purple in Figure 7.
3. **Living Working Regional:** This is a high intensity/density category that applies adjacent to major transportation interchanges and/or rail transit stations (with the

exception of the Live-work area at Dunwoody Place and Roswell Road). These areas have significant concentrations of employment. This area is designated as dark purple in Figure 7.

The City's Land Use Plan utilizes density as an incentive to encourage quality development and redevelopment. The majority of the Main Street Area has either a LW Community or LW Regional designation. As Table 2 illustrates, the permitted densities in the LW Community category is up to 20 units per acre while the Regional category has unlimited densities.

Table 2 - Living Working Development Standards

Designation	LW Neighborhood	LW Community	LW Regional
Residential	Up to 5 units/acre	Up to 20 units/acre*	Over 20 units/acre
Commercial/Office Density	10,000 sf /acre	25,000 sf /acre	Over 25,000 sf/acre
Total Square feet/tenant	30,000 sf limit	100,000 sf limit	Case-by-case
Height Limit	2 story	4 story**	8 story***
Minimum Open and Green Space Components	10% -- 5% must be green space, the remaining 5% may be open space or green space	15% -- 10% must be green space, the remaining 5% may be open space or green space	20%**** -- 15% must be green space, the remaining 5% may be open space or green space

* Except at Powers Ferry Node where a maximum 10 units per acre is recommended.

** Except in Town Center where heights are allowed to be six stories maximum. See Town Center assemblage policy for height incentives and bonuses.

*** Except at I-285/Roswell Road node where heights are not proposed to be limited. Other permitted height variations apply to the PCID and can be found under the Land Use Policies in Chapter 5; on the east side of Roswell Road, north of Dunwoody Place, heights at this node are proposed to be limited to a maximum of 15 stories.

**** Except at Dunwoody Place Node where minimum open and green space components are required to be a minimum of 30% with 25% required to be green space and the remaining 5% may be open space or green space.

Members of the Main Street Alliance discussed the economic realities of density and redevelopment at length during their December 10, 2010 Board Meeting. Based on the experience of the developers in the group, parcel-based density allowances in the Main Street area may need to be adjusted to serve as a true redevelopment incentive. As stated earlier, according to the Main Street Alliance, current market forces and community values in Sandy Springs support structures between 2 and 6 stories. More dense stand-alone developments are neither financially feasible nor compatible with the community's vision as

expressed in the Comprehensive Plan. The following analysis was provided by members of the Alliance to underscore these assertions.

The LW Community Designation is the designation most likely to govern zoning requests in the Main Street District. In the Town Center area, it allows heights up to six stories. However, relative to density, the LW Community Designation allows cumulatively up to 20 units per acre of residential and up to 25,000 square feet of commercial. This total density is the minimum necessary to encourage redevelopment, but this mix on one parcel is unlikely. Main Street Alliance envisions downtown Sandy Springs as having a mixture of uses in the area but not each development having all of the uses. Each parcel having all of the uses is not economically feasible under the current combination allowable in LW Community. Additionally, the financing of these types of integrated mixed-use properties is not available.

If you assume 1,200 SF as an average residential unit size, the LW Designation currently would allow 24,000 SF of residential (1,200 SF * 20) and 25,000 SF of commercial per acre or a total of 49,000 SF per acre. Assuming a mixture of 50% 1 bedroom and 50% 2 bedroom for the residential, the parking need (at one space per bedroom) for the residential would be 40 parking spaces (the Main Street District only requires 1 space per unit, but the market will likely demand more). If you assume the maximum parking standard of 4.5 spaces per 1,000 in the Main Street District for the commercial (the market may actually require something higher like 5.0 : 1,000), the parking space needed for the commercial would be 113. Total parking needed is 153 parking spaces per acre (40 residential and 113 commercial). As stated earlier, much of this parking would need to be structured parking and retail and office in downtown Sandy Springs has not been able to support cost of covered parking compared to achievable rents.

The Alliance has asserted the LW Community Designation should be changed to allow for a higher total density (at least 75,000 SF per acre) with no restriction on the mix of uses. For example, a building could be 100% residential (ground floor should be retail if the building is on a retail street). At 1,200 SF per unit, property could be 62 units per acre. Residential traffic is completely dispersed throughout the day and brings shoppers to the restaurants and retail in Downtown Sandy Springs. This same reasoning would be true for hotels and the increased density would favor the likelihood of a few high quality office buildings.

Density alone may not be enough of an incentive to encourage redevelopment. As the section entitled, "Economics Affecting Downtown Sandy Springs Commercial Property" illustrated, other incentives may be needed:

- The City's development standards and zoning requirements are suburban in nature. While this is appropriate for the overall City, it may be a limiting factor for redevelopment in the Main Street area. Specifically, while the existing prescriptive zoning code provides a unified set of standards, it fails to accommodate the type of creative commercial design encouraged in the Comprehensive Plan. One possible regulatory approach to provide greater flexibility would be to consider the use of a form-based zoning code for the Main Street area of the City. This would provide greater flexibility relative to setbacks, while maintaining the City's density limitations and strengthening the design standards.
- The form of redevelopment should be considered as well. For example, due to demographic changes associated with the Baby-Boom Generation, incentives for

new residential developments that incorporate the tenants of “Lifelong Communities” that enable residents to age in place. This may help to make the downtown area be more attractive for residential redevelopment.

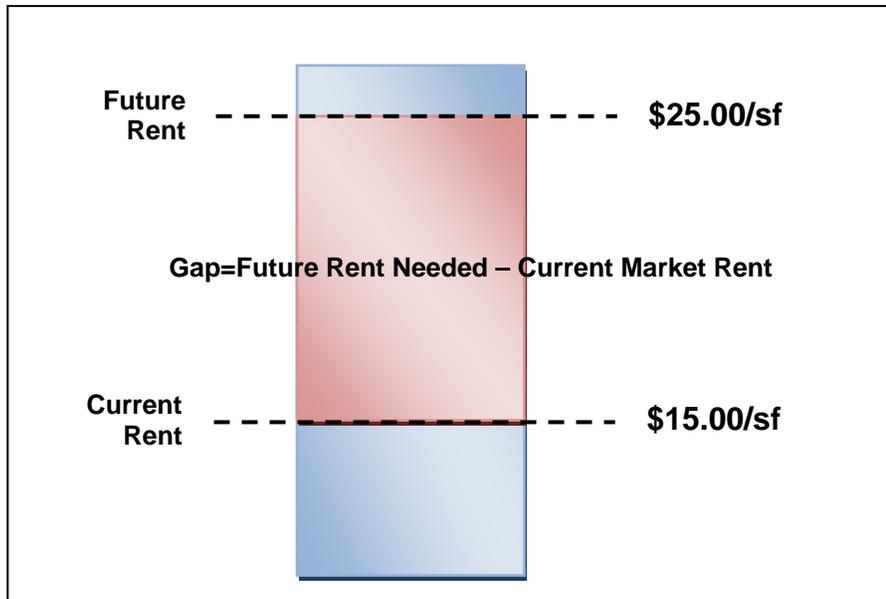
- The City may also want to consider allowing redevelopment projects to “pool” features like open space and parking. For example, instead of providing all required open space on a parcel-by-parcel basis, a portion of the required open space could be located in strategic downtown locations to maximize their impact. Existing parcels could be redeveloped as pocket parks to provide the same total amount of open space in defined locations. A similar approach could be taken with parking, whereby shared parking lots could be developed for the use of all shoppers in the downtown.

The majority of commercial space in the Main Street area is comprised of buildings which were originally constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. Because of this, they are not spatially designed to accommodate the current demands of national tenants which would normally locate in Sandy Springs based on the area’s demographics. According to the members of the Main Street Alliance, due to the age of these buildings, it may be cost-prohibitive to make the renovations necessary to accommodate these tenants as most of the buildings are income-producing assets for their owners.

3.2 *Investigate Economic Incentives*

Section 4.0 included a discussion of the gap between the *allowable* densities in the Main Street District and the *achievable* densities based upon the current commercial and residential markets in Sandy Springs. Currently, average rental rates in Sandy Springs on commercial space are approximately \$15.00/SF (per year) and residential rents in the Sandy Springs market range between \$1.15 and \$1.20 per square foot (per month). These rents correlate to a low to mid-rise development pattern of two to six stories consistent with the City’s Future Land Use Plan designations for the downtown. Due to its strategic location in the metro region, land values in Sandy Springs are higher than those associated with other suburban areas, although rents are still comparable to suburban markets. Because of this, redevelopment is driven by the cost of land. To be financially feasible, redevelopment projects require much higher rents (\$25.00/SF average for commercial and around \$1.65/SF for residential). Retailers can only afford on average \$25.00/SF rents in trade areas with higher sales volumes than exist in Sandy Springs today and \$1.65/SF residential rents are substantially higher than what can be supported in the Sandy Springs market. This gap (40% higher for commercial and 43% higher for residential) must be addressed to make redevelopment feasible in Sandy Springs. The following graphic

illustrates the connection and shows the gap between what the market will support in rent structure versus what would be needed for a residential redevelopment to be financially feasible:



The final meeting between staff and the Main Street Alliance centered on different alternatives the City could consider to reduce development costs in the downtown. These city-funded improvements, which have all been discussed in previous sections, would help make redevelopment more financially feasible. For example, the development patterns associated with the \$1.65 per square foot residential rents would necessitate a parking structure(s) to accommodate the development. If the structure was funded through a public-private partnership between the City and developers, the development costs could be reduced thereby bringing the future rent in-line with the maximum rents in the area. As an example, the City could fund additional infrastructure improvements which would normally be borne by the developer. This was done successfully in Smyrna to make the Market Village financially feasible in a suburban market which had yet to experience commercial redevelopment. Another incentive could include open space and detention facilities.

- The City should fully investigate different tools to reduce development costs in the Main Street Area. As development costs are reduced, the future rent needed to support redevelopment will reduce as well. Ultimately, this will help to make redevelopment more financially feasible.
- Sandy Springs should consider all available financial mechanisms to promote redevelopment and investment in existing commercial properties. These include:

- Tax Allocation District (TAD) – A TAD can be used to fund infrastructure improvements, city amenities such as parking decks, and are financial incentives to redevelop existing properties. These programs are prevalent in other metro areas and have shown tremendous success throughout the United States. The Main Street Alliance indicated it will be important to educate the community regarding the actual costs and benefits of these programs and would be willing to coordinate educational meetings.
- Community Improvement District (CID) – A CID is a specialized taxing district where property owners agree to assess themselves and use the additional property tax revenue to fund district-specific improvements. Its mission is to work continuously to improve the economic viability of the district.

3.3 *Impact Fees to be analyzed*

The City currently charges impact fees based on the net impact of redevelopment. A credit is provided in the calculations for existing developments. Due to the slow-down in development, the City does not have enough representative projects to determine if the current impact fee program acts as disincentive for redevelopment. Conceptually, members of the Main Street Alliance indicated reduced/waived impact fees should be considered by the City to make redevelopment financially feasible.

- An analysis should be prepared to determine the magnitude of impact fees required with different types of commercial redevelopment and how this impacts the viability of redevelopment. This analysis will need to include the “total cost of redevelopment” based upon information provided for a sample retail redevelopment project.

3.4 *Master stormwater program*

The majority of the commercial developments in the downtown were constructed before current stormwater detention requirements were enacted. The downtown, like the rest of the City, will be impacted by the new FEMA floodplain maps currently being finalized by the Federal government. The new floodplain boundaries, when combined with detention requirements, may reduce the amount of land available for redevelopment.

- As an alternative, the members of the Main Street Alliance asked staff to determine if master stormwater facilities could be constructed in and around

downtown to accommodate the individual stormwater requirements associated with redevelopment.

- Members of the Main Street Alliance also requested staff analyze the impact of current detention requirements on retail redevelopment. It will be critical to understand the implications of new regulations in conjunction with the new floodplain maps and MNGWPD standards. Specifically, an analysis is needed to demonstrate the magnitude of the impact of these requirements.

4.0 Regulatory Challenges

Representatives from the Main Street Alliance met with the Design Review Board (DRB) on December 14, 2010. The meeting was an opportunity for staff and the Main Street Alliance to brief the DRB regarding the on-going meetings and to discuss existing conditions influencing development in the Main Street Overlay District. Because the DRB has design oversight within the Main Street District, the meeting focused on both design standards and the urban form of the downtown. Members of the DRB and the Main Street Alliance agreed the downtown is lacking a sense of place, but a sense of place could be achieved through the redevelopment of the Target Site, if done properly and connected to surrounding green space tied to existing civic, cultural and recreational facilities. As mentioned earlier in the report, the Main Street Alliance indicated the mixture of uses for the potential municipal complex was key. Members of the DRB and the Main Street Alliance agreed the development would have the greatest impact if it included ancillary uses to a new city hall such as a town green for festivals to draw residents and visitors downtown. Other complimentary uses not necessarily on the Target Site mentioned by both groups were residential apartments and condominiums. These units could be constructed to accommodate both young professionals and empty-nesters, which according to data from the Atlanta Regional Commission Lifelong Community studies comprise the largest demographic groups going forward.

Key Items Discussed:

- Downtown is lacking a sense of place, but a sense of place could be achieved through the redevelopment of the Target Site.
- Signage regulations should be reviewed for the downtown to ensure the City is striking the proper balance between the needs of the business community with the Main Street design standards.
- Quality redevelopment will need to be incentivized through many different means including regulatory.
- Improved pedestrian connections, inter-parcel access, common open space, area detention facilities and shared parking are important features which may help to encourage redevelopment.
- A form-based zoning code may help to encourage the higher-end mixed-use redevelopment projects envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Main Street Alliance discussed the need to provide incentives to encourage quality redevelopment. Incentives need not be strictly financial in nature. For example, if open space, green space or detention

could be provided on an area-wide versus parcel-basis, commercial parcels could be utilized more effectively. Similarly, pedestrian connections, inter-parcel access and shared parking were also mentioned by both groups as important features to encourage redevelopment. According to the assembled group, when combined, these features could help to reduce traffic congestion while encouraging more retail activity that creates a sense of vibrancy in the downtown. Removing the state highway designation from Roswell Road was also discussed as concept a worth considering as it may give the City greater control and flexibility for future traffic planning and traffic calming.

Design for the downtown was discussed in great detail. The City's current zoning code relies on development regulations with minimum standards. The use of traditional zoning is enhanced by the Main Street Overlay District which includes design standards and encourages developments to be located close to the street with pedestrian activity areas. To build on the existing overlay district, the members of the Main Street Alliance and the DRB agreed a form-based zoning code should be considered for the downtown. A form-based code regulates development using a specific urban form and relies upon clear regulations and streamlined approval processes. If managed properly, a form-based code can eliminate the ambiguity often found in traditional design district requirements while providing for enough flexibility to accommodate the unique characteristics of the surrounding area. A form-based code approach to zoning in the downtown would be compatible with the City's Future Land Use which provides density incentives for mixed uses. At its core, form-based codes encourage compact developments and regulate to create places rather than regulate to create buildings. Unfortunately, the types of urban mixed use projects described in the Comprehensive Plan are not easy to achieve with the City's current zoning standards which are still suburban in nature.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Representatives from the City and the Main Street Alliance met jointly during three monthly work sessions to discuss alternative strategies to improve the following conditions influencing development in the Main Street Overlay District:

- Aesthetics and Sense of Place
- Economics
- Infrastructure and Traffic
- Regulatory Challenges

Monthly progress reports were provided to the Main Street Alliance focusing on two of the six items listed above. Follow-up presentations were then made by City staff to Main Street Alliance at their monthly meetings to ensure the items contained in each progress report adequately reflected key findings, areas of agreement and concepts for future investigation. Based upon these meetings, the following is a list of the key findings from each of the meetings:

Aesthetics and Sense of Place

- a) The visual clutter of the downtown area can be improved by moving the overhead power lines (excluding transmission lines) to the rear of the commercial properties.
- b) The proposed municipal development on the former Target site has the potential to transform the Main Street area. To be transformative, the municipal development will need to incorporate different uses to create an activity center.
- c) The City Hall complex should be the cornerstone of a major Town Center that includes the existing and new civic, cultural and recreational uses along Sandy Springs Circle within a significant green space. This should be tied into the City's comprehensive and growing network of sidewalks and parks, creating linkages to neighborhoods and throughout downtown.
- d) The majority of improvement in aesthetics and sense of place will come from creating an environment in downtown Sandy Springs that promotes the redevelopment of the existing properties.

Infrastructure and Traffic

- a) A master traffic plan should identify roads to carry commuter traffic and other roads to be protected for local use.
- b) MSA applauds the City's focus on causing Roswell Road vehicular traffic to flow efficiently by:
 - i) widening the I-285 bridge
 - ii) improving the intersection of Roswell Road, Johnson Ferry Rd and Mt Vernon Hwy;
 - iii) improving the intersections of Roswell with Hammond and Allen Roads, and
 - iv) aligning Carpenter and Cliftwood Drives.

- c) The Main Street Alliance supports the widening of Hammond Dr. east of Roswell Rd. However, care should be taken not to allow commuters to use Hammond, Mt Vernon and Heard's Ferry to move from 400 to I-75 as an alternative to I-285.
- d) Innovative approaches such as on-street parking and traffic calming measures should be deployed on selected roads to discourage commuter use. An example is Sandy Springs Circle, which could be reduced to two lanes from Cliftwood to Johnson Ferry by adding angled parking on both sides to serve the existing and future civic, cultural recreational and commercial uses.
- e) The City should monitor and manage Revive 285 so that it does not encourage commuter traffic on Sandy Springs' local road network.
- f) The Roswell Road streetscape should be refined to place pedestrians further from the street edge and buffered by a landscape strip.
- g) Shared or subsidized parking is needed to support redevelopment of commercial properties. Shared parking can include both strategically-located public parking structures and private parking lots.
- h) Interparcel access and cross-access parking should be considered for the Main Street area to remove some burden from Roswell Road. Additionally, more pedestrian activity could be provided between private parcels – this can occur outside the right-of-way and be accomplished with private agreements.

Economics

- a) The City should consider implementing proven financial mechanisms to improve the infrastructure and aesthetic environment of its downtown to promote redevelopment and reinvestment in the Main Street Area. This should include investigation of both a Community Improvement District (CID) and a Tax Allocation District (TAD) to fund infrastructure improvements, city amenities, parking decks and streetscapes.
 - i) Sandy Springs may want to consider establishing a working group to analyze the pros and cons associated with creating a quasi-governmental agency for the Main Street Area such as a Downtown Development Authority (DDA).
- b) An analysis should be done to determine the magnitude of impact fees required with different types of commercial redevelopment and resultant impact on the viability of redevelopment. This analysis will need to include the "total cost of redevelopment" based upon information provided for a sample retail redevelopment project.

Regulatory Challenges

- a) The City's Comprehensive Plan provides adequate density. However, in terms of mixed-use developments, the City should consider including horizontally integrated projects within the definition of mixed-use. The current requirement to mix uses in every building is not a workable product model and cannot be financed.
- b) One possible regulatory approach to provide greater flexibility would be to consider the use of a form-based zoning code for the Main Street area of the City. Future residential uses should also incorporate the tenants of ARC's "Lifelong Communities" to attract the widest range of residents. At minimum, the existing Main Street Overlay District can be modified to achieve the desired results.

- c) The City may want to consider allowing redevelopment projects to “pool” features like open space and parking. For example, instead of providing all required open space on a parcel by parcel basis, a portion of the required open space could be located in strategic downtown locations to maximize impact. The City should investigate what amendments are needed to its Zoning Ordinance to allow open space land banking.
- d) The City’s existing design standards should be evaluated to ensure they are consistent with the needs of retail.
- e) Signage regulations should be reviewed for the downtown to ensure the City is striking the proper balance between the needs of the business community and the Main Street design standards.
- f) The downtown, like the rest of the City, will be impacted by the new FEMA floodplain maps currently being finalized by the Federal Government. The new floodplain boundaries, when combined with detention requirements, may reduce the amount of land available for redevelopment. The impact of these changes may warrant further evaluation and innovation such as shared detention.

Each of the items listed above require policy guidance from the Mayor and Council. A briefing could be provided by staff and members of the Main Street Alliance to the Mayor and Council at an upcoming work session. This briefing would afford the Mayor and Council with an opportunity to discuss each recommendation and identify those that should be investigated future and those that could be put into action as code amendments.



Main Street Alliance Presentation

April 19, 2011

Main Street Economic Development Activities

- Existing conditions inventory
 - Created Economic Baseline Study for Sandy Springs
 - Profiled existing demographics and occupancy rates in Main Street Area
 - Developed financial model to analyze implications of land use decisions upon City's financial health
 - Prepared PowerPoint presentation for potential businesses considering Sandy Sandy Springs
- Ongoing outreach and coordination efforts
 - Develop staff connections for business relocations with:
 - local and regional chambers of commerce
 - Georgia Department of Economic Development
 - Development Authority of Fulton County
 - National Association of Chinese Americans / Chinamex
 - Create "Choose Sandy Springs" brand
 - Local business support



Main Street Alliance

- Work Session held with Main Street Alliance (MSA) members in September, 2010 to establish a shared vision for downtown Sandy Springs
 - Group of commercial property owners with combined holdings of over 50 parcels with approximately 1.5 million square feet on 125 acres in downtown
- Main Street Alliance (MSA) members presented the following issues affecting downtown:
 - Aesthetics and Sense of Place
 - Infrastructure and Traffic
 - Economics
 - Regulatory Challenges



Key Findings

- The proposed municipal development on the former Target site has the potential to transform the Main Street area.
- A master traffic plan should identify roads to carry commuter traffic and other roads to be protected for local use. Innovative approaches such as on-street parking and traffic calming measures should be deployed on selected roads to discourage commuter use.
- Shared or subsidized parking is needed to support redevelopment of commercial properties.
- Interparcel access and cross-access parking should be considered for the Main Street area.



Key Findings – Cont'd

- The City should consider implementing proven financial mechanisms to improve the infrastructure and aesthetic environment of its downtown to promote redevelopment and reinvestment in the Main Street Area.
- The City's Comprehensive Plan provides adequate density. However, in terms of mixed-use developments, the City should consider including horizontally integrated projects within the definition of mixed-use.
- One possible regulatory approach to provide greater flexibility would be to consider the use of a form-based zoning code for the Main Street area of the City. Future residential uses should also incorporate the tenants of ARC's "Lifelong Communities" to attract the widest range of residents.



Key Findings – Cont'd

- The City may want to consider allowing redevelopment projects to “pool” features like open space and parking. For example, instead of providing all required open space on a parcel by parcel basis, a portion of the required open space could be located in strategic downtown locations to maximize impact.
- New floodplain boundaries, when combined with detention requirements, may reduce the amount of land available for redevelopment. The impact of these changes may warrant further evaluation and innovation such as shared detention.
- Redevelopment of downtown commercial properties is not financially feasible because of the gap between current market rents and the actual rent needed to support the costs associated with redeveloping these properties.



Next Steps

- Incorporate MSA Report into Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study
- Continue monthly meetings between staff and members of the MSA
- Identify appropriate locations for interparcel access, shared parking and common open space/detention
- Provide Mayor and Council with comparative study of form-based codes and traditional zoning
- Analyze selected redevelopment options using new fiscal land use model





SANDY SPRINGS
GEORGIA

Questions?