CITY OF SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM
COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT
TECHNICAL APPENDIX

JANUARY 2, 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report and the attached "Technical Appendix" are known as the "Community Assessment" portion of the Sandy Springs Comprehensive Plan. The intent of this document is to provide information for stakeholders and the general public to consider during visioning workshops and implementation of other public participation strategies according to the community participation program (which has been prepared as a separate document).

Relationship to Policy Making and Adopted Plans

This document is not a statement of policy. It is not intended to be adopted by the Mayor and City Council of Sandy Springs. The information contained in this report and the technical appendix cannot be cited as policy, precedent, or any other definitive statement, other than as basic facts and conclusions reached by the city's planning consultants. Any statements that might imply policy are, at this time, preliminary and unofficial, and are intended to be vetted in upcoming public participation processes.

Approval by the Mayor and City Council of Sandy Springs to authorize the transmittal of this Community Assessment for regional and state review (anticipated on January 16, 2007) does not imply any acceptance or adoption of policies or final conclusions about the subject matters contained in this report. As this document enters the regional and state review process as required by the state's local planning requirements, Sandy Springs will continue to be guided by the Interim Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Mayor and City Council on June 20, 2006.

Process of Developing and Revising this Document

An initial draft of this document was completed in November 2006 and submitted for review by the appointed Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC met November 27, 2006, and provided comments on the initial draft. Furthermore, two community meetings on the draft were held November 29th and 30th, with members of the CAC taking lead roles in presenting and explaining the documents.

Several revisions were made to this document based on reviews by the CAC and comments from the public during community meetings. In fact, this report was reorganized extensively, issues and opportunities were added, and factual information was expanded and corrected in response to those comments. The CAC reconvened December 18, 2006, to consider this second draft.

The Community Assessment and Community Participation Program were considered by the Sandy Springs Planning Commission, which held a public hearing on these matters on December 21, 2006. Additionally, Planning Commissioners attended the November 29th and 30th community meetings and provided comments that have been incorporated in this revised draft. This second draft version of the Community Assessment is, nonetheless, still subject to more revision based on additional input by the CAC and Planning Commission.

The three most important outcomes of this Community Assessment Report are (1) the citywide vision; (2) the preliminary character areas map (labeled "Visionary Character Areas") and accompanying text descriptions; and (3) the list of issues and opportunities. These are introduced in the paragraphs that follow.

Citywide Vision

Under the state's local planning requirements, a "citywide" vision is optional. The state's planning rules contemplate that a citywide vision, if desired by a local government, be developed during implementation of the formal Community Participation Program (which includes three visioning forums to be scheduled). In the case of the Sandy Springs CAC, it was determined early in its deliberations (July-August 2006) that early articulation of a citywide vision was essential to the planning process. Hence, although not contemplated in state rules to be included as part of the Community Assessment, this document contains a statement of citywide vision which has been refined and approved by the CAC. Although considerable input has already been received from CAC members on the vision, it is preliminary only, and subject to revision and refinement during implementation of the Community Participation Program.

Visionary Character Area Map and Text Descriptions

This document contains a map titled "visionary character areas," and a significant portion of this report is devoted to describing the character areas shown on that map. At this stage in the planning process, the visionary character area map is intended to be merely a preliminary version, suitable for soliciting more detailed and structured feedback in visioning forums (see the Community Participation Program). Similarly, the descriptions of the character areas, provided in this report, are preliminary and intended to be refined during visioning forums.

The Community Agenda, to be completed in 2007, will contain a character area map in order to comply with minimum state requirements. The primary purpose of the character area map is to identify general areas that have some common threads (e.g., design features, commonalities of the built environment, shared natural resources, etc.). It implies that an implementation framework will be developed as part of the Community Agenda that differs from how plans have been prepared in the past. Specifically, the intent of the State in developing the local planning requirements was to steer communities away from thinking about single-function future land use districts and relying exclusively on conventional zoning schemes to implement land use policy.

Under the state's local planning standards, a "future land use plan" is considered optional. In making the future land use plan map an option rather than a requirement, the state hopes that the character area map (to be adopted as part of the Community Agenda) will form the basis for reconsidering land use policy and implementation measures.

Although optional under state rules, a future land use plan map is considered essential in the case of Sandy Springs. The appointed CAC members have expressed eagerness to begin refining and improving the future land use plan map that was adopted as part of the Interim Comprehensive Plan. The future land use plan map, upon completion and adoption as part of the Community Agenda, will remain the most useful map in terms of making zoning decisions since, unlike the visionary character area map, it will provide specific recommendations and policies for land uses on a parcel basis. So that there is no misunderstanding of the visionary character area map and text descriptions, readers should consider the following, in summary:

- They are intended to be revised in February 2007 after structured input in visioning forums.
- They will not be adopted until refined, as a part of the Community Agenda (phase two which begins in 2007), which requires approval of the Mayor and City Council of Sandy Springs (projected to be September 2007).

- They may form the basis for revising land use policies, but the future land use plan map is considered more relevant to Sandy Springs in terms of shaping development patterns and establishing short-term implementation measures, since the city's zoning ordinance and development regulations will continue to be the primary means of implementation in foreseeable future.

Issues and Opportunities

The issues and opportunities are intended to capture all of the various subject matters that need to be addressed in the "Community Agenda" portion of the comprehensive plan. It is important to note that, at this stage of the planning process, the intent is to "identify" the issue or opportunity, but not determine how best to "respond" to a given opportunity or "solve" an issue that needs to be confronted. The identification of issues and opportunities began with an initial listing, developed by Sandy Springs planning staff and its planning consultants, then reviewed, modified, and accepted by the CAC. That initial list of issues and opportunities was prepared prior to completion of the Community Assessment, and the Technical Appendix (attached to this report) reveals several other issues and opportunities to be considered in the Community Agenda portion of the comprehensive plan. Other issues and opportunities were added based on CAC and community input during November 2006. It is important to underscore how the issues and opportunities listings will be used. Georgia's local planning requirements call for the initial list to be confirmed, modified, or otherwise revised during implementation of the Community Participation Program. Hence, the listing of issues and opportunities is preliminary, and through structured participation exercises beginning in February 2007, the list of issues and opportunities will be further modified and refined. Upon completion of the public participation process, the city will begin preparing the plan portion of the comprehensive plan (i.e., the "Community Agenda"), which will provide policies and programs that respond to a final approved list of issues and opportunities.

Organization

This Community Assessment Report contains information that is required by the state's local planning requirements. The vision is presented following this executive summary and the glossary of planning terms. Under the revised state rules for local planning, there is no "land use" element per se. Rather, the rules require that conventional land use planning considerations, such as an inventory and analysis of development patterns, be included in this Community Assessment Report. Hence, the inventory and assessment of land use follows the vision, in order to establish baseline conditions and provide an understanding of how land use patterns might need to be changed in order to attain the citywide vision. Quality Community Objectives, which are provided by the State in its local planning requirements, are evaluated and assessed for their relevance to Sandy Springs in light of the citywide vision. The Quality Community Objectives are intended to inform the development of character areas by the city; hence, they are presented prior to the descriptions of character areas. The descriptions of character areas then follow, with attention to how they can implement the citywide vision.

The Technical Appendix (attached to the Community Assessment Report) is summarized, including sections on population, housing, economic development, natural resources, historic resources, community facilities and services, parks and recreation, intergovernmental coordination, and transportation. Issues and opportunities, organized according to functional planning elements (e.g., population, housing, economic development, etc.) are listed in consolidated format at the end of this document, with a brief description of each.

OVERVIEW

Sandy Springs incorporated as a city on December 1, 2005. It is located in North Fulton County, north of the City of Atlanta and south of the City of Roswell (see figure). Its western boundary is the Chattahoochee River (Cobb County lies on the other side of the river), and to the city's east are DeKalb County and a small portion of Gwinnett County.

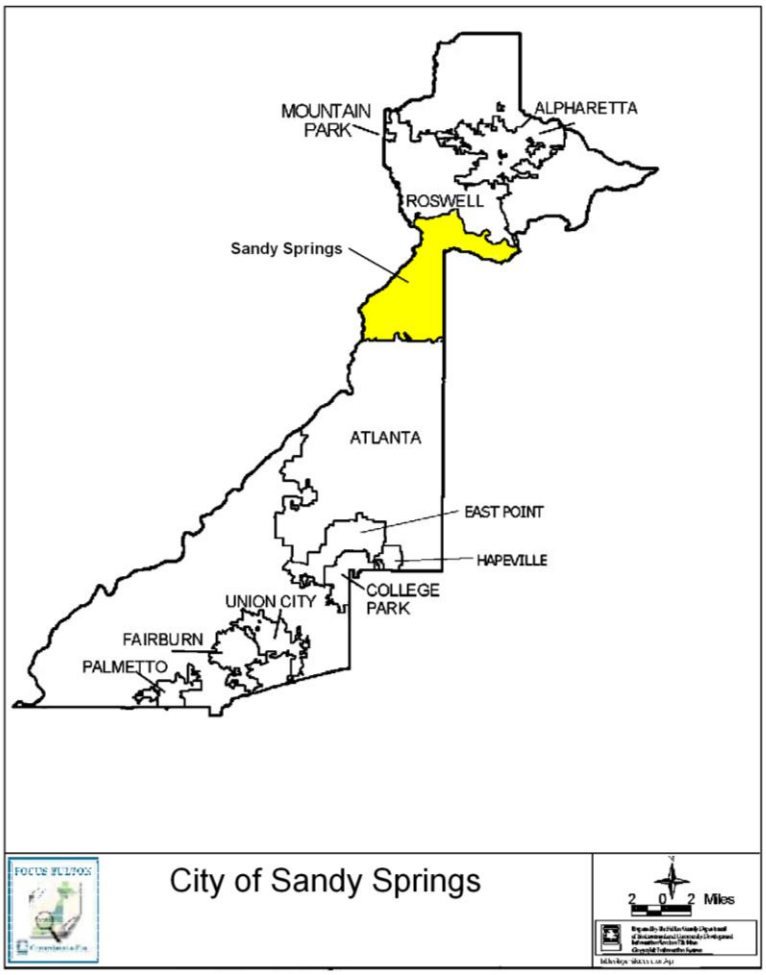


Figure 1. Location

Prior to incorporation on December 1, 2005, Sandy Springs was an unincorporated place included within the Focus Fulton 2025 Comprehensive Plan. Some months after incorporation as a city, Sandy Springs Community Development Department prepared an interim comprehensive plan, which was adopted by the Sandy Springs Mayor and City Council on June 20, 2006. That interim plan was prepared and adopted with the understanding that the city would initiate its own comprehensive planning process.

This document, titled "Community Assessment Report," is one of three major parts of the city's comprehensive plan document. A Community Participation Program is a second major part. The third part, the "Community Agenda," will be prepared following review of the Community Assessment and Community Participation Program.

The Community Assessment includes at minimum (per state administrative rules) the following:

- A list of potential issues and opportunities the community may wish to address;
- Analysis of existing development patterns, including a map of recommended character areas for consideration in developing an overall vision for future development of the community;
- Evaluation of current community policies, activities and development patterns for consistency with the Quality Community Objectives; and
- Analysis of data and information to check the validity of the above evaluations and the potential issues and opportunities.

The product of the Community Assessment (this report) must be concise and informative report (like an executive summary), for it will be used to inform decision-making by stakeholders during development of the Community Agenda portion of the plan. Technical documentation (i.e., extensive tables of data and analysis) must be relegated to a separate appendix to the Community Assessment Report, also referred to in the Local Planning Standards as "Supporting Analysis of Data and Information." A technical appendix accompanies this report.

CITYWIDE VISION

Sandy Springs will continue to be characterized by residential neighborhoods of predominantly single-family, detached homes at low densities. The City will strive to ensure that existing single-family neighborhoods will continue to be characterized by large lots, substantial tree cover, and low vehicular traffic.

Representative of Sandy Springs neighborhoods, this photo shows a detached dwelling at low density with substantial tree cover and low vehicular traffic

Limited infill development will occur within the city's single-family neighborhoods. Redevelopment within single-family neighborhoods may take place through "tear downs" of older, smaller homes and replacement with single-family houses at compatible densities as provided in the revised future land use plan. These neighborhoods will receive a minimal share of the City's projected population and employment increases.

A new home on an older home site along Mt. Vernon Parkway; further right, another infill home under construction

Sandy Springs will prepare and implement a comprehensive approach to reshape and redevelop suburban-style, auto-oriented land use patterns along Roswell Road into more compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places that are well served by bicycle, pedestrian, and public transit facilities, relieved from traffic congestion by a defined grid network of streets, and anchored by civic and institutional land uses, including a new Sandy Springs City Hall.

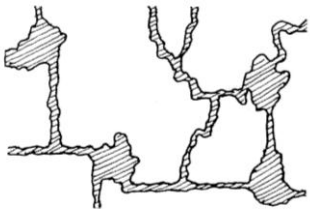
Representative pedestrian-friendly redevelopment in Sandy Springs

The City will use principles of place making to build on its prior efforts, such as the Roswell Road streetscape demonstration project and designation of a Main Street area for a downtown. As appropriate, transitional residential neighborhoods will be integrated into redevelopment projects that front on the road corridor. The Roswell Road corridor will be further delineated into distinct corridor segments, centered on major east-west intersecting roads, guided by redevelopment plans and specially designed implementing regulations. The corridor will receive a substantial share of the City's projected population and employment increases.

Sandy Springs will concentrate a majority or substantial share of the projected population and employment increases within designated live/work centers. The City will promote the increase of its tax base, employment opportunities, and business growth. Development and redevelopment in designated live/work centers will provide more housing in live/work centers and will emphasize connectivity to MARTA stations as central points of activity and mobility.

One of the entrances to Sandy Springs MARTA Station, to which employees of multi-story office buildings have access.

Streams in the City will be protected, and the forested character of the City will be maintained. Sandy Springs will acquire more green and open spaces, connecting parks, work places, destinations, and neighborhoods, and forming a citywide system.



A citywide system of connected parks, greens and open spaces.

Chattahoochee River at Ray's on the River in the Powers Ferry area.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

With a citywide vision statement now prepared and presented in draft form for further refinement in the visioning process, it is important to shift from looking "ahead" to looking at conditions "on the ground" today. This section of the report summarizes historic development patterns, existing land use, and provides information that addresses various other considerations specified in the state's local planning requirements.

Historic Development Patterns

Sandy Springs' growth as a residential community started in the 1950s with the construction of ranch-style subdivisions, followed by strip commercial centers along Roswell Road to serve this new residential community. Single-family residential development has been the largest factor in shaping the development patterns of the City of Sandy Springs. Residential developments have a suburban layout and are characterized by curvilinear streets, streets with cul-de-sacs, and limited entry points into subdivisions.

One of Sandy Springs' older residential neighborhoods, adjacent to Roswell Road

Transportation infrastructure has shaped the development pattern in Sandy Springs. Roswell Road (State Route 9) was the first catalyst for commercial, office and residential developments. The construction of I-285 spurred major office and commercial developments along interchanges, particularly at Powers Ferry, Roswell Road and along the border with DeKalb County. The construction of Georgia 400 and the extension of the MARTA rail line led to the expansion of office, commercial and higher density residential uses in the Perimeter area and around the Georgia 400 interchanges.

At Northside Drive and Interstate 285, office towers rise above the tree canopy.

High density, multi-story residential development at Georgia 400 near Abernathy Road.

Existing Land Use

This section provides an inventory of existing land uses in the City of Sandy Springs. An existing land use inventory was completed in 2005 for Sandy Springs as a part of the Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan. This inventory is presented in both map and text form and includes a description and depiction of the type, acreage, net density of existing land uses. The descriptions of existing land uses are based on the categories established by the Local Planning Requirements. These are:

- **Single-Family Residential:** Single-family dwelling units and manufactured homes on individual lots.
- **Multi-Family Residential:** Residential buildings containing two or more dwelling units, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses and apartments.
- **Commercial:** Land dedicated to non-industrial business uses, including retail sales, office, service and entertainment facilities.
- **Industrial:** Land dedicated to manufacturing facilities, processing plants, factories, warehousing and wholesale trade facilities, mining or mineral extraction activities, and other similar uses.
- **Public/Institutional:** State, federal or local government uses, and institutional land uses. Government uses include city halls, police and fire stations, libraries, prisons, post offices, schools, military installations, etc. Institutional uses include colleges, schools, churches, cemeteries, hospitals, etc.
- **Transportation, Communication and Utilities:** Major transportation routes, public transit stations, power generation plants, railroad facilities, radio towers, telephone switching stations, airports, port facilities or other similar uses.
- **Park/Recreation/Conservation:** Land dedicated to active or passive recreational uses. These lands may be either publicly or privately owned and may include playgrounds, public parks, nature preserves, wildlife management areas, national forests, golf courses, recreation centers, or similar uses.
- **Agriculture and Forestry:** Land dedicated to farming (fields, lots, pastures, farmsteads, specialty farms, livestock production, etc.), agriculture, or commercial timber or pulpwood harvesting.
- **Vacant/Undeveloped:** Lots or tracts of land that are served by typical urban services (water, sewer, etc.) but have not been developed for a specific use or where developed for a specific use that has since then been abandoned.
- **Mixed Use:** (created and applied at the discretion of the community; not used for purposes of classifying existing land use)

The existing land uses were determined by Fulton County planning staff using a variety of sources, including Tax Assessor data, current zoning and use permits, aerial photographs, and other Geographic Information System data layers. The classification scheme used in the existing land use inventory is more detailed than that specified in the Local Planning Requirements, but they can be collapsed into the state-specified standard categories. Table 1 shows the categories used and acreage devoted to each category in 2005. A brief description of these categories follows.

Table 1
Existing Land Uses, City of Sandy Springs, 2005

Land Use	Acres	Percent
Low Density Residential (<2 units/acre)	7,048	28.4%
Medium Density Residential (2-5 units/acre)	4,201	16.9%
High Density Residential (5+ units/acre)	999	4.0%
Office	1,173	4.7%
Retail	715	2.9%
Industrial	17	0.1%
Government	57	0.2%
Other Institutional	292	1.2%
School	263	1.1%
Transportation/Communication/Utilities	3,797	15.3%
Private Recreation	401	1.6%
Public Recreation	678	2.7%
Forest	2,519	10.1%
Agricultural – Vacant	585	2.4%
Floodplain	1,336	5.4%
Lake, Pond, Swamp	735	3.0%
No Data	5	0.0%
Total	24,821	100.0%

Source: Fulton County, in Interim Comprehensive Plan for City of Sandy Springs.

Residential. Approximately 49.3 percent of the land in Sandy Springs is used for residential purposes. A total of 28.4 percent of all land is used for low-density residential uses in the range of two units per acre or less. Medium-density residential, ranging from two to five units per acre, accounts for 16.9 percent of land uses while high density residential uses, over five units per acre, comprise 4% of land uses. High-density residential land uses extend along the Roswell Road corridor, Roberts Drive, Glenridge Drive south of I-285, and in the Perimeter area along Peachtree-Dunwoody Road, between Georgia 400 and the DeKalb County line.

Detached, single-family subdivision.

Commercial. Retail and office uses comprise 1,888 acres or 7.6 percent of the total land area. Most of the retail and office uses are in three main business areas. Roswell Road, from the northern limits of the City of Atlanta to the Chattahoochee River, is a corridor characterized by strip retail-commercial and office uses, built beginning in the 1950s. The largest business area begins west of Georgia 400 and includes the corridor between Georgia 400 and the DeKalb County line from the Glenridge Connector north almost to Spalding Drive. Higher intensity office and retail uses are concentrated there. The third business area, comprised mainly of office uses, is located at the intersection of I-285 and Powers Ferry/Northside Drive.

Industrial. Industrial uses comprise 17 acres or less than one percent of total land uses. The Coca Cola Bottling Plant located on Dunwoody Place is the only manufacturing plant in Sandy Springs. There are some other businesses with industrial land uses.

Coca Cola plant on Dunwoody Place, one of the few industrially designated properties in Sandy Springs.

Public/Institutional. Public and institutional uses comprise 612 acres, or 2.4 percent of total land area. These uses include public and private schools, churches and cemeteries, and public facilities, such as fire stations, police and government facilities, libraries, public health and mental health facilities, and hospitals. Schools, both public and private, comprise 263 acres, while 292 acres are devoted to places of worship and other institutional uses. Government uses comprise 57 acres, or less than one percent of the total land area. Fulton County community facilities in Sandy Springs include the North Fulton Service Center, fire stations, the Abernathy Arts Center, the Sandy Springs Regional Library, the Dorothy Benson Senior Center, the Sandy Springs Health Center and a developmental disability training facility.

Transportation, Communications and Utilities. Transportation, communications and utilities comprise 3,796 acres, or 15.3 percent of the total land area in the city limits. These land uses include major utility stations transportation facilities and three MARTA Rail Stations. There are approximately 124 acres of land dedicated to utilities (electrical power generation, telephone switching station, electrical substations). The vast majority of the acreage is in road right-of-ways.

Park/Recreation/Conservation. Private recreation uses, mainly private golf courses, consist of 401 acres or 1.6 percent of the land uses. Public recreation uses cover 678 acres and approximately 2.7 percent of the total land uses. The largest areas for public recreation are three sections of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. There are eight parks in Sandy Springs, including Abernathy Park, Allen Road Park, Big Trees Forest Preserve, Hammond Park, Morgan Falls, North Fulton Tennis Center, The Sandy Springs Historic Site and Ridgeview Park.

Entrance to Island Ford unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area off Roberts Drive in northern Sandy Springs.

Agriculture and Forestry. There are no agricultural uses in Sandy Springs. Forestry accounts for 2,519 acres or 10.1 percent of the total land area in Sandy Springs. However, the areas shown as forest are mostly wooded areas on large, private residential lots.

Vacant/Undeveloped. The 2005 existing land use inventory found there are only 585 acres that are vacant or undeveloped, constituting only 2.4 percent of the total land area in the city limits.

Undeveloped land, such as this large tract off Ison Road, is becoming increasingly scarce. Sandy Springs is approaching buildout of its vacant land supply.

Areas of Significant Natural and Cultural Resources

Ecologically sensitive areas are not concentrated in any particular area, but are found especially along the Chattahoochee River Corridor, streams, floodplains, and ridgelines.

Through Fulton County's land use regulations, and subsequently through city codes, appropriate means of protecting natural resources have been put into place, though others will be considered as may be needed. As noted in the Technical Appendix Chapter on Historic Resources, the city has not put into place a historic preservation ordinance.

The Chattahoochee River forms the northern and western boundaries of Sandy Springs.

Areas Where Rapid Development or Change of Use is Likely to Occur

Rapid development of additional, vacant land is not an issue for Sandy Springs, since it has few undeveloped or vacant tracts remaining in the city. Nonetheless, redevelopment has been occurring in the city and will continue.

In Sandy Springs, there are many possible changes of use that can occur. For instance, a preliminary list of possible transitional development trends that might be anticipated in the future in Sandy Springs is provided below:

1. Conversion of single-family residence(s) to office uses.
2. Tear-down of single-family residential dwellings and replacement with higher density residential uses or larger single-family dwellings.
3. Tear-down of multi-family complexes and redevelopment as condominiums.
4. Rehabilitation and conversion of older apartment complexes for condominiums.
5. Assembly of lots with single-family residential dwellings and redevelopment as neighborhood-scale, mixed-use developments.
6. Assembly of lots into redevelopment projects of several acres.
7. Conversion or redevelopment of single-function, obsolete commercial use(s) to other viable use(s).

There are residential neighborhoods (or parts thereof) in Sandy Springs that may be susceptible to a variety of land use changes in the near future and longer term. Some neighborhoods appear to have begun to transition from detached, single-family residences to higher-density, multi-family residential uses, low-intensity office uses, and in some cases, neighborhood commercial uses (see representative photos below).

Areas representative of land use "transition."

Neighborhoods that might be considered transitional in nature are located within the Roswell Road corridor, most with frontage on Roswell Road. In other cases, neighborhoods that might be considered transitional in nature are located between high-density residential areas and nonresidential zones. Such areas are close enough to activity centers and the Roswell Road corridor to be connected to them with bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities.

Within neighborhoods and areas that might be considered transitional in nature, specific land use composition or mixes in the future could vary depending on current conditions, and there are many possible development types that can balance the objectives of neighborhood protection and economic development. A map of areas that may be susceptible to change was prepared and included in the initial draft of this Community Assessment Report, with the intention not of suggesting they will be redeveloped, but rather, to provide a framework for more careful study of them in the process of designating their future land use(s) on the future land use plan map. However, the initial map of transitional neighborhoods generated considerable public concern. So as not to imply any sort of change, the map of transitional neighborhoods was deleted from this report.

Areas Outpacing Availability of Facilities and Services

The availability, capacity and lack of infrastructure are key factors in determining the shape, intensity and location of development. Due to its already developed nature, Sandy Springs is not at risk of being rapidly developed in a way that will outpace infrastructure (with the exception of the overburdened road network). Fulton County maintains the water treatment facilities serving the City of Sandy Springs, and thereby regulates the capacity for such treatment. The degree of capacity in water and wastewater infrastructure is largely monitored by the permitted capacity (legal limit) levels of the plants. The Fulton County Board of Commissioners may enforce moratoria when the rate of development threatens to exceed the permitted level of capacity.

Areas in Need of Redevelopment or Aesthetic Improvement

Residential, commercial, and office development started to increase in the City of Sandy Springs in the 1960s. Commercial buildings along Roswell Road may lack the needs required by today's tenants, and they are now considered (for the most part) unattractive by today's standards.

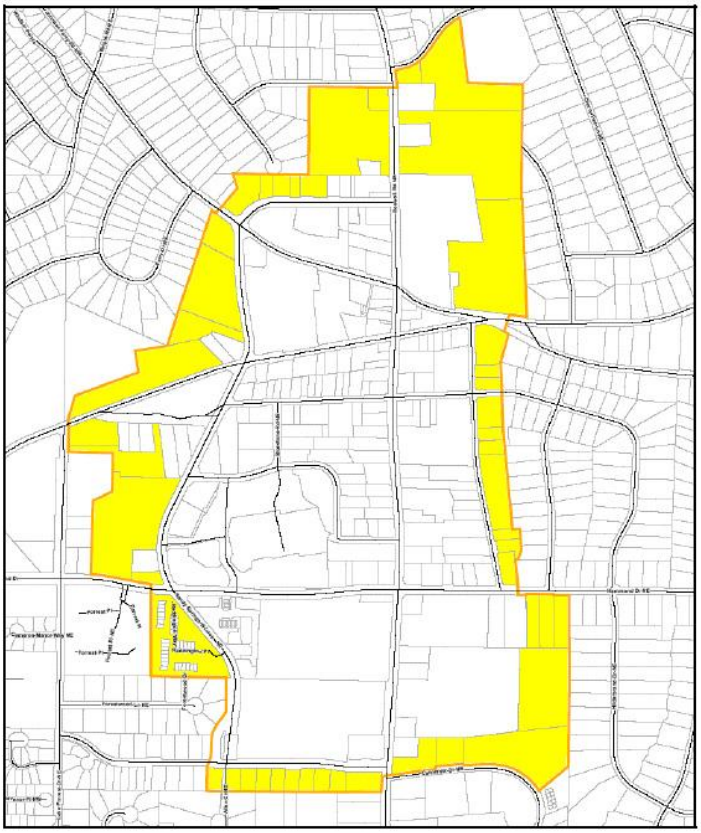
The older, suburban-style "strip" commercial development along Roswell Road in Sandy Springs (see representative photos below) is usually characterized by one-story buildings set back 30 or more feet from the highway right-of-way with off-street parking in the front. Development typically is isolated, i.e., not planned in relation to abutting commercial uses nor connected with nearby developments. Intensities are typically less than 15,000 square feet of building space per acre (or a floor-area ratio of less than 0.34). The character of these districts is automobile-dominant, though provisions for accommodating pedestrians are provided in some cases. These areas are served by bus transit (MARTA) but were not developed in a way that caters to transit users, such as internal sidewalks connected to the public street sidewalk system. Many of such developments are proposed by the citywide vision to be redeveloped, or at minimum, retrofitted to correct for functional and aesthetic issues, such as lack of landscaping, wide or poorly aligned curb cuts, and lack of pedestrian and transit-oriented amenities.

Representative older, suburban-style "strip" commercial development along Roswell Road.

In response to the decline of commercial, office and residential properties along Roswell Road, Fulton County approved the Sandy Springs Revitalization Plan in 1992. Sandy Springs Revitalization Inc. was formed to promote redevelopment along Roswell Road, to encourage pedestrian oriented development, to build a streetscape along Roswell Road, and to develop a street grid network for the downtown. A demonstration streetscape project was installed along a section of Roswell Road to improve the pedestrian environment. The Sandy Springs Overlay District was adopted and the Design Review Board created to ensure that new development and redevelopment along Roswell Road meets specified design standards.

Streetscape Improvements

Moreover, a Livable Centers Initiative study, conducted in 2001, focused on creating a Sandy Springs main street and town center between Abernathy Road to the north, Glenridge Drive to the south and east and Sandy Springs Circle to the west (see accompanying map). There has been some redevelopment of properties within this area, but there are still many opportunities for older commercial and office sites to be redeveloped. With regard to residential uses, some of the older apartments have been converted to condominiums while others have been rehabilitated.



Redevelopment area boundary in brown and transitional areas in yellow. Source: Sandy Springs Central Business District Economic Analysis and Redevelopment Strategy, December 9, 2005, by Jordan, Jones and Goulding and Bleakly Advisory Group for Sandy Springs Revitalization, Inc.

The Zoning Ordinance adopted by Sandy Springs establishes two overlay districts, Sandy Springs Overlay and the Perimeter Community Improvement District. Both of these overlay districts are intended in part to "protect and enhance local aesthetic and functional qualities and to stimulate businesses." Applications in the Sandy Springs Overlay District are reviewed by the Sandy Springs Design Review Board, which provides comments to the Department of Community Development prior to the issuance of a land disturbance, building or sign permit.

Abandoned Structures or Sites

Some of the older, strip commercial centers in Sandy Springs, primarily along Roswell Road, have declined but none appear to be completely abandoned. There is no discernable pattern of abandonment in Sandy Springs – there are some properties scattered along Roswell Road, such as gas/service stations, with buildings that have been closed and boarded up. Other than those scattered service stations, there is not a significant problem in Sandy Springs with the abandonment of structures or sties.

These commercial properties on the northwest corner of Dalrymple Road and Roswell Road are vacant but not abandoned. Such vacant properties are not extensive in Sandy Springs, and prospects for reuse or redevelopment appear promising.

Areas with Significant Infill Development Opportunities

This large, detached, single-family residence on Riverside Drive, west of River Valley Road, is representative of larger homes that have been built or are being infilled in established single-family areas in many parts of Sandy Springs, including Northside Drive and Heards Ferry Road.

Infill development of detached, single-family dwellings on the north side of Roberts Drive, west of SR 400. Such infill can be appropriate in urban residential character areas, but such density and scale would be highly inappropriate in protected neighborhoods.

Infill development (defined in the glossary) occurs in older urbanized and suburban areas that are mostly developed and where services and infrastructure exist. Infill developments are often small in scale and are usually located either on previously undeveloped parcels that may have development challenges or on under-utilized parcels that often have older homes or businesses. Infill development often occurs at a higher density and intensity than the buildings that were replaced and the surrounding development. Infill development allows more people to live, work and conduct business in an area, leads to possible mixes of uses, and results in a more compact development pattern. Infill development often results in the construction of residential

units in proximity of employment and commercial centers and in the construction of a diversity of housing types. Infill development can allow for the efficient use of existing infrastructure, a reduction of commute distances, and encourage use of alternative modes of transportation. On the other hand, infill development often leads to loss of vegetation. If not properly controlled, new housing can be grossly out of scale in size and style with surrounding homes. And infrastructure is not always adequate in infill areas – the intensity of infill development can place additional demands on existing infrastructure.

As a part of the assessment process, a map of potential infill development opportunities was prepared and included in the first draft of this document. That map raised questions and concerns relative to its ultimate meaning, and therefore, it was deleted from further consideration.

Areas of Significant Disinvestment

There does not appear to be any discernable pattern of disinvestment in Sandy Springs.[1] There are several instances where individual property owners may choose not to reinvest in their property and improvements. For instance, smaller homes built in the 1960s, due to their age and size, are not very marketable except for lease to renter households. Where whole neighborhoods of such older homes exist, the filtering cycle of housing begins (i.e., conversion to rental status, with accompanying lack of investment. While such concentrations of homes could eventually constitute a neighborhood with significant disinvestment, such disinvestment has generally not occurred with any degree of concentration or concern. One possible reason why concentrated disinvestment has not occurred in Sandy Springs is because of the highly desired location of the city and the maintenance of high property values. When land uses become obsolete, due to high returns on other development types, these properties are often put to another profitable use, as opposed to being left in a state of disinvestment.

Sandy Springs also has a number of older multi-family complexes. As noted elsewhere in this report, some of these are being redeveloped and others have converted to condominiums. Again, there is no discernable pattern with regard to disinvestment, however.

A complex representative of the older multi-family housing stock in Sandy Springs.

Finally, many communities that have concentrations of significant disinvestment have witnessed that trend because they have obsolete industrial and manufacturing properties – those that are difficult to use again because the building was constructed for one industrial or manufacturing use which is no longer viable in today's information-based economy. Since Sandy Springs has virtually no industrial and manufacturing uses, it has not experienced that type of disinvestment.

[1] During the review of this Community Assessment Report, disagreement with this conclusion was expressed. An alternative view is that, when taken as a whole, existing conditions in the Roswell Road corridor in Sandy Springs represent significant commercial disinvestment.

ANALYSIS OF CONSISTENCY WITH QUALITY COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

Quality Community Objectives (QCOs) are the state's elaboration on statewide goals, adopted by the Department of Community Affairs and articulated in the local planning standards effective May 1, 2005. They are intended to provide guidance and possible "targets" for local government to achieve in developing and implementing their comprehensive plans. This means that they are not mandatory requirements.

Policies and development patterns must be analyzed for consistency with the "Quality Community Objectives" (QCOs). Local planning requirements require this to be done as part of the professionally prepared Community Assessment (this document); hence the paragraphs that follow provide a professional and objective evaluation, informed by a general understanding of stated city policies and desires. This section addresses current policies of Sandy Springs and the characteristics of its existing development patterns that support, or do not support, the various QCOs.

Conceptually, the QCOs can be divided into regulatory and non-regulatory, or into three categories:

(A) Economic development (non-regulatory)
(B) Intergovernmental (mostly non-regulatory)
(C) Physical development and conservation (regulatory)

Economic Development-Related QCOs

Economic development-related QCOs include the following:

1. Appropriate Businesses Objective
2. Educational Opportunities Objective
3. Employment Options Objective
4. Growth Preparedness Objective

1. "Appropriate Businesses Objective: The businesses and industries encouraged to develop or expand in a community should be suitable for the community in terms of job skills required, linkages to other economic activities in the region, impact on the resources of the area, and future prospects for expansion and creation of higher-skill job opportunities."

Fulton County's adopted Focus Fulton 2025 comprehensive plan includes a detailed economic development element. Fulton County's economy as a whole is heavily reliant on employment in the services, finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE), Transportation, Communications and Utilities (TCU), and wholesale trade industry sectors. Fulton County is underrepresented in terms of manufacturing jobs when compared with the state as a whole (see Table 2-3 of Focus Fulton plan). The Fulton County Economic Development Department encourages economic development on a countywide basis. The Focus Fulton plan indicates that the TCU sector should be encouraged in Fulton County, and it also encourages the expansion of bio-sciences and bio-technology, computer software/services, and telecommunications. In North Fulton County, key strategies are to retain existing corporate headquarters and attract telecommunications firms and technology-oriented companies.

Sandy Springs is no different from Fulton County or the Atlanta (ARC) region as a whole in the expectation that future economic activities will be centered on the forecasted increases in jobs in the services industry sector. Although the Sandy Springs Interim Comprehensive Plan provides only limited information about economic development in the City, additional data analysis conducted as a part of this Community Assessment (see Technical Appendix, Chapter 4) reveals that Sandy Springs' economy is particularly strong in the Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (FIRE) sector.

2. "Educational Opportunities Objective: Educational and training opportunities should be readily available in each community – to permit community residents to improve their job skills, adapt to technological advances, or to pursue entrepreneurial ambitions."

Fulton County is well served by institutions of higher learning, including Georgia Institute of Technology and Georgia State University. Sandy Springs, due to its location in the north central part of the Atlanta region, is accessible to almost countless opportunities for education and workforce training. As noted in Chapter 4 of the technical appendix, the resident labor force in Sandy Springs is majority professional and managerial. The residents in Sandy Springs are highly educated in comparison with other populations. Unemployment has remained very low in Sandy Springs. Sandy Springs is served by Fulton County's Department of Economic Development with regard to economic development activities, including promotion of small businesses and entrepreneurial activities.

3. "Employment Options Objective: A range of job types should be provided in each community to meet the diverse needs of the local workforce."

Limited data are available on employment in Sandy Springs. As noted in Chapter 4 of the Technical Appendix, the resident labor force in Sandy Springs in 2000 was disproportionately focused in managerial and professional occupations (a majority) and sales and office occupations. The types of jobs that fit Sandy Springs' resident labor force are those most often found in office parks as opposed to blue-collar type jobs found in industrial parks. The jobs available in Sandy Springs are considered highly consistent with the largest needs of the local workforce. Smaller portions of the labor force in Sandy Springs in 2000 are employed in blue-collar occupations such as construction and production. Sandy Springs has few if any opportunities to expand the range of job types to accommodate new businesses involved in production, since it has very little industrially zoned land and not much vacant land available and suitable for such development. As a result, Sandy Springs cannot put in place any policies that would significantly change the current or forecasted employment mix within the City.

4. "Growth Preparedness Objective: Each community should identify and put in place the prerequisites for the type of growth it seeks to achieve. These may include housing and infrastructure (roads, water, sewer and telecommunications) to support new growth, appropriate training of the workforce, ordinances to direct growth as desired, or leadership capable of responding to growth opportunities."

Without much effort, Sandy Springs has received substantial population and employment growth. Its location in the north-central part of the region has bestowed on the city important location advantages that have helped it capture a substantial share of the region's employment growth without concerted policies regarding economic development. A large share of the city's forecasted increases in employment will be filled in vacant office space.

Sandy Springs is adequately served with water and sanitary sewer facilities by Fulton County and the City of Atlanta. Those facilities will enable the city to continue and sustain its economic growth. Telecommunications infrastructure is particularly important in Sandy Springs, since a larger share of its employment base is in the area of information (see Table 4.7 of the Technical Appendix) when compared with occupational mixes in the state and nation. City leaders should continue to explore ways to ensure employers in the city have the best available communications technology.

As is made evident in the analysis of road capacities in Sandy Springs, traffic congestion places some limitations on future growth potential. Many roads in Sandy Springs exceed their capacity (i.e., levels of service are inadequate), and a transportation master plan is being prepared as a part of this comprehensive plan in order to address transportation needs.

The types of growth Sandy Springs desires to achieve are expressed in its citywide vision statement (draft, subject to more public review). The city desires to focus and concentrate new employment opportunities in areas served by MARTA rail transit and bus routes (i.e., in the transit-oriented regional activity center and along Roswell Road). The city has succeeded in channeling growth into these areas through rezoning decisions that prevent the spread of employment uses into stable residential neighborhoods.

The city also desires to obtain high quality development. In establishing a Design Review Board (continued by the city after establishment by Fulton County), efforts are made to improve the quality and function of development in growth areas. Although past design review decisions by the county and city have improved the quality and appearance of development, there is recognition on the part of citizens, business persons, and community leaders that more and better guidance would further improve the quality and appearance of development. There is also some recognition that “form-based zoning” may have benefits for the city.

The city desires to engage in “place making” and create a destination-oriented, mixed use downtown. Strategies will be put in place in the Community Agenda that focus on making redevelopment happen in the designated downtown redevelopment area (see draft visionary character areas map in this report). It is acknowledged here that Sandy Springs (less than one year old as a city) has not yet put into place the institutional machinery needed to make redevelopment happen in the downtown redevelopment area. A tax allocation district was created prior to Sandy Springs becoming a city, but initiating a tax increment financing strategy for downtown redevelopment is considered questionable or dubious at this time in the City.

Regional QCOs

5. Regional Identity Objective
6. Regional Cooperation Objective
7. Regional Solutions Objective

5. “Regional Identity Objective: Regions should promote and preserve an “identity,” defined in terms of traditional regional architecture, common economic linkages that bind the region together, or other shared characteristics.”

The metropolitan Atlanta region has no particular style or identity in terms of architecture. The identity of Sandy Springs is one of an affluent suburb within a diverse, fast growing region. The office towers at I-285 and SR 400, known as the “king” and queen,” symbolize Sandy Springs and its place within the region’s economy. If they exist at all, there are limited opportunities for

Sandy Springs as a local government to promote a regional identity that either does not exist or has not been fully articulated regionally.

6. "Regional Cooperation Objective: Regional cooperation should be encouraged in setting priorities, identifying shared needs, and finding collaborative solutions, particularly where it is critical to success of a venture, such as protection of shared natural resources."

As a city in its infancy (less than one year old), Sandy Springs has had to rely on assistance of other local governments in initiating its various public facilities and services. For instance, Fulton County has provided fire protection in the interim while Sandy Springs gets its own fire department up and running. 911 communications is another service that has been provided so far through intergovernmental cooperation. The intergovernmental coordination element (see Chapter 8 of the Technical Appendix) discusses how Sandy Springs relates with various other local governments, regional entities, and various state and federal agencies.

One area where regional cooperation is evident is with regard to the Chattahoochee River as a natural resource. Sandy Springs will continue to participate in Metropolitan River Protection Act reviews of any development proposals in the river corridor for compliance with the river protection plan adopted by the Atlanta Regional Commission. Due to the existence of national recreation areas alongside the Chattahoochee River, Sandy Springs may need to play a prominent role in any efforts to look at the Chattahoochee River as a whole.

Forested buffer alongside the Chattahoochee River along Old Riverside Drive. The Metropolitan River Protection Act has helped protect the integrity of the river corridor.

For instance, there is some desire that there be a regional/statewide greenway along the Chattahoochee River from its headwaters in Helen, Georgia, through the metro Atlanta region.

As noted in the Community Facilities Element (see Chapter 7 of the Technical Appendix), Sandy Springs is reliant upon Fulton County for sewer services, and some of the sewage is treated in abutting counties (DeKalb and Cobb). This suggests that Sandy Springs will need to continue participating in regional approaches to sewage treatment. An agreement also exists between Sandy Springs and Fulton County relative to use of county fire stations.

7. "Regional Solutions Objective: Regional solutions to needs shared by more than one local jurisdiction are preferable to separate local approaches, particularly where this will result in greater efficiency and less cost to the taxpayer."

As a city in its infancy, Sandy Springs has been an innovator. A "privatization" model has been utilized by the city – it has a private company, CH2M Hill OMI, providing many services in the city. In this sense, Sandy Springs has been a trend setter, and other evolving cities (Milton and

Johns Creek) have followed this model of service delivery based on high satisfaction levels and positive initial reports of efficiency and comparative lower costs to taxpayers.

The creation of the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District in 2001 and the adoption of regional plans for watershed management, water supply, and wastewater treatment are good examples of how the environment of service delivery is changing in favor of regional solutions. Sandy Springs' leaders are aware of these regional planning efforts and will continue to participate in them. Community facilities plans for water and sewer, which are now provided by Fulton County Government, will need to take the recommendations of regional plans into account and eventually conform to them.

As already noted, Sandy Springs continues to explore avenues for the joint delivery of certain services, such as 911 communications, with other local governments, and it continues to maintain city-county service arrangements. The Community Agenda will consider other possible additional opportunities for the shared delivery of public facilities and services.

Physical Development and Conservation QCOs

The following eight QCOs have substantial or significant opportunities to be implemented through regulations:

8. Heritage Preservation Objective
9. Open Space Preservation Objective
10. Environmental Protection Objective
11. Transportation Alternatives Objective
12. Housing Opportunities Objective
13. Traditional Neighborhood Objective
14. Infill Development Objective
15. Sense of Place Objective

8. "Heritage Preservation Objective: The traditional character of the community should be maintained through preserving and revitalizing historic areas of the community, encouraging new development that is compatible with the traditional features of the community, and protecting other scenic or natural features that are important to defining the community's character."

The center of the historical agricultural community of Sandy Springs was the area bounded by Roswell Road on the east, Abernathy Road on the north, and Mt. Vernon on the south. However, today no significant concentration of historic resources survives in this area. Sandy Springs does have some significant historic resources that are worthy of recognition and preservation, but no local historic preservation ordinance has been adopted in Sandy Springs. Preservation ordinances provide some means of protecting historic resources by establishing a Historic Preservation Commission and/or local historic district.

While they are not "historic" in the pure sense of that term, Sandy Springs has undertaken efforts to revitalize the older, commercial center of the city. A redevelopment plan that established a tax allocation district has been completed. In addition, Sandy Springs ensures that new development and redevelopment projects within the Roswell Road corridor are compatible with good design features through a Design Review Board and the application of design guidelines.

There are no scenic views or sites designated in the City of Sandy Springs, according to the adopted interim comprehensive plan for Sandy Springs. However, the Chattahoochee River and forested areas within the city are considered to be important scenic or natural features that help define the character of Sandy Springs. The Chattahoochee River forms the city's western and northern borders. Through community visioning for the Focus Fulton Plan, the Chattahoochee River was considered to be one of the County's, and thereby the City's, assets.

The adopted interim plan also notes that ravines and steep hillsides often provide impressive scenic views.

The sloping, forest land (left) at the corner of Riverside Drive and Johnson Ferry Road and ravine along Riverside Drive are indicative of the steep drainages near the Chattahoochee River that help give Sandy Springs its open space character.

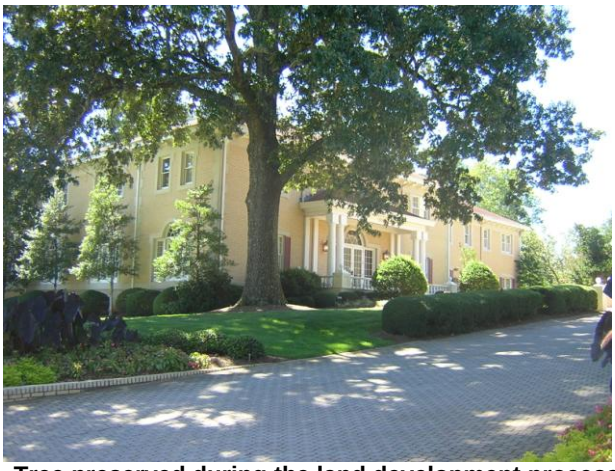
There are approximately 687 acres of forested and river frontage land in Sandy Springs under public ownership, some of which are a part of the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area. In addition to land acquisition, the Chattahoochee River has been the subject of various planning and regulatory efforts over time. In 1973, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the Metropolitan River Protection Act (Georgia Code 12-5-440) to address development pressure near and pollution of the Chattahoochee River. Under this legislation, the Act established a 2,000-foot river corridor on both banks of the River and its impoundments, including stream beds and islands, within which development proposals are reviewed for conformance with a plan to protect the river as adopted by the Atlanta Regional Commission. Fulton County adopted regulations for wider stream buffers in compliance with the North Georgia Water Planning District mandate on May 4, 2005. The City of Sandy Springs adopted these regulations upon incorporation. The regulations require undisturbed buffers and impervious surface setbacks adjacent to streams. Streams in all watersheds within the City of Sandy Springs are to be protected with a minimum 50-foot undisturbed buffer on each side of the stream, and there is an additional 25-foot setback required to be maintained adjacent to the undisturbed buffer, within which all impervious surfaces are prohibited.

Most of the forest land in the City is located on private land. There is one forest preserve. The John Ripley Forbes Big Trees Forest Preserve is a 30-acre tree, plant and wildlife sanctuary in the Morgan Falls area of Sandy Springs (east of Roswell Road). This previously threatened urban forest, one of the last in Sandy Springs, was assembled in three purchases beginning in 1990. The purchase was spearheaded by Southeast Land Preservation Trust in partnership with Fulton County and the State of Georgia.

Big Trees Forest Preserve

Big Trees is an urban forest including some large 100- and 200-year old white oak trees. The forest is preserved and protected in a cooperative partnership with Big Trees Forest Preserve, Inc., Fulton County Parks and Recreation Department and the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources.

With regard to the protection of trees and steep slopes, Sandy Springs has adopted a tree ordinance which provides standards for tree preservation during land development, building construction and timber harvesting. As part of the land disturbance permit (LDP) application process, tree protection and landscape plans must be submitted to the City Arborist for review and approval. Each site is walked by the Arborist and visited periodically during land disturbance activities. The interim comprehensive plan found there is a need for the City to apply forest management principles in the tree preservation ordinance, and the tree ordinance was undergoing a revision process at the time this Community Assessment was being drafted.



Tree preserved during the land development process.

The City of Sandy Springs has no ordinance to protect steep slopes, but it enforces its own Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance which addresses slope stability during land development activities. Since the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance does not provide technical guidelines for preserving and protecting steep slopes, the interim comprehensive plan called for a policy and ordinance containing technical guidelines for preserving and protecting steep slopes to be adopted.

9. "Open Space Preservation Objective: New development should be designed to minimize the amount of land consumed, and open space should be set aside from development for use as public parks or as greenbelts/wildlife corridors."

Because Sandy Springs is in a part of metropolitan Atlanta that began to suburbanize in the 1950s, and is largely built out today, new land consumption within the city limits is negligible. Because of the substantially developed nature of Sandy Springs, there are few opportunities to acquire public parks and greenbelts/wildlife corridors. Opportunities for preserving open space are being investigated as a part of the recreation and park master planning process being undertaken at the time this Community Assessment was being drafted. In addition, the adopted interim comprehensive plan notes that "requiring interconnected forest corridors between large subdivisions would limit the amount of fragmented tree coverage typically associated with large residential developments." In an effort to preserve trees and promote conservation, the adopted plan suggests that incentives should be provided to developers who incorporate tree preservation sites, conservation easements, forest preserves and/or low-impact development practices within their developments.

10. "Environmental Protection Objective: Air quality and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected from negative impacts of development. Environmentally sensitive areas deserve special protection, particularly when they are important for maintaining traditional character or quality of life of the community or region. Whenever possible, the natural terrain, drainage, and vegetation of an area should be preserved."

Chapter 5 of the Technical Appendix summarizes the environmentally sensitive areas that deserve protection in Sandy Springs. As noted in that chapter, the Chattahoochee River (a premier natural resource) is protected in various ways by state, regional and local plans and regulations. Protecting the ecological integrity of the Chattahoochee River and its water quality are important to the city, county, region, and state. Forested character is also a characteristic of Sandy Springs that is recognized in its citywide vision statement (draft, subject to refinement). The natural resources element indicates that the city's tree protection ordinance has recently been reviewed by a committee and that changes are being considered to adjust regulations to better meet the desires of the city. Furthermore, the technical appendix notes that steep slopes are natural resources that deserve further consideration in the planning process in terms of possible additional regulations.

In the past, air quality in the metropolitan Atlanta area has not met certain federal standards. While compliance with air quality mandates is often considered too large an issue for any one local government to address on its own, the City of Sandy Springs can do its part to contribute to the betterment of air quality in the region, through planning for multi-modal transportation systems, encouraging bus and heavy rail transit use, concentrating future development in activity centers and transit corridors, and promoting other strategies that have beneficial impacts on air quality.

11. "Transportation Alternatives Objective: Alternatives to transportation by automobile, including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities, should be made available. Greater use of alternative transportation should be encouraged."

In preparing a multi-modal transportation master plan, as part of its comprehensive planning process, Sandy Springs is committing to provide the best possible alternatives to automobile reliance. Sandy Springs has three heavy rail MARTA stations and numerous bus stops. Sandy Springs was developed as an automobile-dominated suburb, but its leaders recognize the need and desire to enhance pedestrian, public transit, and bicycle transportation options in the city.

Bus Shelter along Roswell Road with shade trees.

12. "Housing Opportunities Objective: Quality housing and a range of housing size, cost, and density should be provided in each community."

Sandy Springs has some of the finest residential neighborhoods in metro Atlanta. Median values of homes in Sandy Springs are much higher than the county as a whole and the state, suggesting that opportunities for a range of housing costs are extremely limited.

While it is probably best known for the affluence of its single-family neighborhoods, Sandy Springs is also the location of many multi-family residential complexes and developments. As noted in the Technical Appendix (Chapter 3), a majority of households in 2000 were renter occupied, and a slight majority of the housing stock in 2000 was multi-family. Densities of residential neighborhoods and residential developments in Sandy Springs range from less than 0.5 housing unit per acre to more than 20 units per acre. Preserving the integrity of Sandy Springs' residential neighborhoods is the first priority of the City, and new, more diverse housing will not be accommodated in existing low density residential neighborhoods – the citywide vision statement alludes to the possible threat of "densification," and rejects that possibility.

There is considerable sentiment in the City that it has its fair share of apartments. Furthermore, like with other communities, the aging suburban apartment stock gives rise to concerns about physical decline and the need for upkeep and maintenance. Some of these older complexes will need renovation, and some will convert to condominiums.

Despite these concerns about a predominantly multi-family (and aging) housing stock, Sandy Springs is committed to implementing its own Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. It is currently preparing a Consolidated Plan to qualify the city to administer its own CDBG entitlement funds. Furthermore, it is recognized that much of the new, additional housing units to be constructed in the city are likely to be at higher densities, concentrated within the regional activity center, the downtown, and in parts of the Roswell Road corridor. This means that the ratio of single-family to multi-family housing units is likely to remain majority multi-family. One of the ways Sandy Springs can still promote more diverse housing opportunities is by adopting a policy that supports mixed-income housing as a part of redevelopment proposals. The Community Agenda will consider and address what the city can do to provide diverse housing meeting the needs identified in the Consolidated Plan and housing element.

13. "Traditional Neighborhood Objective: Traditional neighborhood development patterns should be encouraged, including use of more human scale development, mixing of uses within easy walking distance of one another, and facilitating pedestrian activity."

The foundation of Sandy Springs is its suburban, low-density residential neighborhoods. It is not realistic or desirable to attempt to transform suburban neighborhoods into traditional neighborhoods. Residents want to protect their neighborhoods as they are, and do not welcome the introduction of more dense, grid-oriented residential development patterns in established "protected" neighborhoods (see the visionary character area map which is a part of this Community Assessment Report). Similarly, the mixing of land uses within protected neighborhoods will not be pursued.

While recognizing the prominence of the goal of protecting its existing neighborhoods, Sandy Springs is also very open to pursuing more human-scale development, facilitating pedestrian activity, and mixing uses, but only in certain places – the Roswell Road corridor, the city's designated downtown redevelopment area, and within the transit-oriented regional activity center (served by MARTA rail stations). Within those designated areas, traditional neighborhood development can be appropriate and will be pursued as a desirable development pattern that reduces automobility, increases pedestrian mobility, and creates a human scale. Where possible and appropriate, Sandy Springs will increase pedestrian accessibility between protected neighborhoods and commercial places, parks, and other destinations.

14. "Infill Development Objective: Communities should maximize the use of existing infrastructure and minimize the conversion of undeveloped land at the urban periphery by encouraging development or redevelopment of sites closer to the downtown or traditional urban core of the community."

This quality community objective is most applicable to communities on the suburban fringe. As an older, established community approaching its "buildout," Sandy Springs has little if any "urbanizable" land at the periphery. Infill development is acknowledged in the citywide vision statement (draft, subject to refinement), but it must take place at compatible densities as guided by a revised future land use plan (to be prepared as part of the Community Agenda). A map showing sites of potential infill development has been prepared and is a part of this Community Assessment Report.

Sandy Springs has a keen interest in encouraging redevelopment of sites in the Roswell Road corridor and within the character area designated as "downtown redevelopment" on the visionary character area map. That downtown redevelopment area is the traditional urban core of Sandy Springs.

15. "Sense of Place Objective: Traditional downtown areas should be maintained as the focal point of the community or, for newer areas where this is not possible, the development of activity centers that serve as community focal points should be encouraged. These community focal points should be attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places where people choose to gather for shopping, dining, socializing, and entertainment."

Sandy Springs does not have an identifiable "town center" in the traditional sense of the term, such as Decatur. The draft citywide vision statement embraces this Quality Community Objective in the sense that the city desires to engage in place making to transform its suburban-oriented business areas into attractive, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly places. In addition, the

regional transit-oriented activity center has a developing “sense of place” with the assistance of the Perimeter Community Improvement District (CID), which as helped promote a recognizable identity of that area through signage and public improvements. As noted above, the “king and queen” office towers at I-285 and SR 400 (see document cover) give that part of Sandy Springs some unique identity in the region.

CHARACTER AREAS

The local planning standards require that the community assessment contain a map and description of "preliminary character areas." Based on early input from the Community Facilities and Land Use Subcommittee of the Sandy Springs Comprehensive Plan Citizen Advisory Committee, as well as information provided in the Interim Comprehensive Plan 2025 adopted by Mayor and City Council, and the consultant's own observations, the following descriptions of character areas are provided. An initial map showing these character areas was presented to the subcommittee on September 11th. A character area map was revised and presented at the September 25th break out session of the subcommittee. The subcommittee met on October 9th, and a third set of revisions was made to the preliminary character area map. The character area descriptions and the map of preliminary character areas will be considered further during the public participation (visioning) processes.

Character-Defining Features

The following list provides several but not all of the major design features and land use characteristics that help planners and citizens delineate areas with unique character. That character may be based on existing development, and/or it may result more from the vision of what the city wants these areas to become in the future.

- Suburban versus more urban intensities
- Single-function land use versus mixed or multiple land uses
- Surface versus deck parking
- Building orientation removed from or close to the roadway
- Orientation to patrons in automobiles or pedestrians via rail and/or bus transit
- Grid pattern versus curvilinearity of public and private streets
- Disconnectedness versus connectivity and relation to surroundings
- Lack of identity and uniqueness versus special design features and amenities (e.g., streetscapes) that add to sense of place
- Redevelopment prospects (unlikely, anticipated, encouraged)
- Jobs-housing relationship (balanced, unbalanced)
- Implementation of State Quality Community Objectives (QCOs)
- Special implementation measures now used or to be implemented.

List of Character Areas

Conservation
Master Planned Community
Protected Neighborhood
Urban Residential
Mixed Use – Neighborhood Scale
Mixed Use – Community Scale
Downtown Redevelopment
Employment
Regional Transit-Oriented Activity Center

Comparison of Character-Defining Features

Table 2 provides a comparison of character defining features for the proposed conservation and predominantly residential character areas. Table 3 provides similar information for nonresidential/ mixed use character areas.

Table 2
Comparison of Character Defining Features
Conservation and Predominantly Residential Character Areas

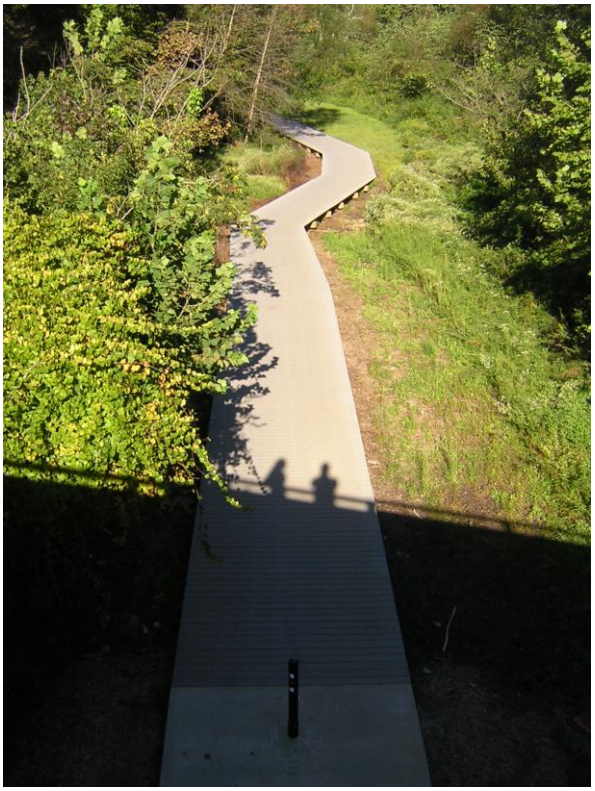
Character-Defining Feature	Conservation	Master Planned Community	Protected Neighborhood	Urban Residential
Suburban versus more urban intensities	N/A	Suburban, low density	Suburban, low density	Urban
Single-function land use versus mixed land uses	N/A	Single-function, with open space; single housing type	Single-function; single housing type	Single-function, mostly single housing type
Surface versus deck parking	Surface, gravel preferred	Surface parking only	Surface parking only	Surface parking only
Building orientation removed from or close to corridor	N/A (sensitive to environment)	Spacious setbacks from subdivision streets	Spacious setbacks from subdivision streets	Setback 30 feet or more from highway right-of-way
Orientation to patrons in automobiles or pedestrians via rail and/or bus transit	N/A	Automobile oriented	Automobile oriented	Automobile oriented with pedestrian amenities
Grid pattern versus curvilinearity of public and private streets	N/A	Curvilinear	Curvilinear with cul-de-sacs	Grid pattern with some curvilinear designs
Disconnectedness versus connectivity and relation to broader whole	Connection to other greenspace	Connected via golf course; streets are disconnected (cul-de-sacs)	Disconnected (cul-de-sacs)	Internal connectivity but external disconnectedness
Lack of identity and uniqueness versus special design features and amenities	N/A; Natural features only	Unique through master planning features	Subdivisions lack individual identities and special design features except at entrances	Developments lack individual identities except at entrances
Redevelopment prospects (unlikely, anticipated, encouraged)	N/A	Not anticipated	Not anticipated	Not anticipated for most complexes; encouraged for more obsolete complexes
Jobs-housing relationship (balanced, unbalanced)	N/A	Unbalanced in favor of housing	Unbalanced in favor of housing	Unbalanced in favor of housing
Overarching Principle	Environmental Protection	Neighborhood Protection	Neighborhood Protection	Maintain Stability

Table 3
Comparison of Character Defining Features
Predominantly Non-Residential Character Areas

Character-Defining Feature	Mixed Use – Neighbor-hood Scale	Mixed Use – Community Scale	Downtown Redevelop-ment	Employment	Transit-Oriented Activity Center
Suburban versus more urban intensities	Suburban	Suburban to urban rede-velopment	Urban	Suburban and Urban	Urban
Single-function land use versus mixed land uses	Pedestrian retail and mixed uses including housing and offices above retail	Commercial and residential areas are mostly single-function but connected	Mixed uses through redevelopment	Offices with limited commercial integrated into office buildings	Predominantly mid- and high-rise offices but with mixed uses strongly encouraged
Surface versus deck parking	Both surface and deck parking	Surface and possibly deck parking	Both surface and deck parking	Usually deck parking	Predominantly deck parking
Building orientation removed from or close corridor	Pedestrian retail and mixed use buildings frame the corridor	Mixed-use buildings close to street in activity centers	No or little setback from corridor and internal streets	Usually set back from roads and centered on site	No or little setbacks; oriented to transit
Orientation to patrons in automobiles or pedestrians via rail and/or bus transit	Pedestrian orientation takes precedence over automobile access	Combination of auto and pedestrian/ transit orientation	Pedestrian orientation to bus transit takes precedence over automobile access	Automobile oriented	Pedestrian orientation to rail and bus transit takes precedence over automobile access
Grid pattern versus curvilinearity of public and private streets	Grid pattern of short streets and blocks are encouraged	Grid pattern with some curvilinear designs	Grid pattern of short streets and blocks are encouraged	N/A – usually oriented to highway interchanges	Grid pattern of short streets and blocks are encouraged
Disconnectedness versus connectivity and relation to broader whole	Connected to adjacent development	Connections between uses and developments	High level of connectivity among uses and development	Usually self-contained without significant connections to adjacent uses	High level of connectivity among uses and development
Lack of identity and uniqueness versus special design features and amenities	Identity and uniqueness is achieved through compactness and special features	Anticipated and encouraged	Identity and uniqueness is achieved through compactness and special features	Multi-story building height is a defining feature	Identity and uniqueness is achieved through compactness and special features
Redevelopment prospects (unlikely, anticipated, encouraged)	Anticipated and encouraged	Anticipated and encouraged	Encouraged through formal public-private means	Unlikely	Some redevelop-ment and retrofit
Jobs-housing relationship (balanced, unbalanced)	Improve imbalance of jobs with new housing	Prospects for balance through redevelopment	Provide balance of jobs and housing	Heavily unbalanced in favor of jobs	Improve imbalance of jobs with new housing
Overarching Principle	Identifiable Mixed Use Node	Mixed use oriented to river	Create a Mixed-use Downtown	Multi-story employment	Regional Mixed Use Destination/ Employment Center

Conservation

This area corresponds with major public park lands and private park lands. Major features include federally owned greenspaces along the Chattahoochee River.



Land Uses: Few if any land uses other than passive recreation and public and private park spaces.

Character: Natural environment with some recreational amenities

QCOs Implemented: Environmental Protection; Open Space Preservation; Regional Identity

Implementation: Floodplain management overlay; Metropolitan River Protection Act and Regional River Plan; Recreation and Park Master Plan; Tributary Buffer Ordinance; Tree Conservation Ordinance

Cochran Shoals, Powers Island unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Protected Neighborhood

This category applies throughout Sandy Springs and encompasses the largest land area of any character area. It corresponds with conventional, suburban subdivisions of exclusively detached, single-family homes. The design of these neighborhoods is mostly conventional suburban, usually with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs. Densities range from less than one unit per acre to approximately three units per acre, though some subdivisions may be slightly higher densities.

Within this character area, no zoning changes will be permitted for higher densities than those designated on the future land use plan (to be revisited and readopted), and no uses other than detached, single-family residences and supporting institutional or recreational facilities serving the immediate neighborhood will be permitted. Protected neighborhoods will receive only a minor share of the citywide population increase projected during the next twenty years; limited amounts vacant land exists within these areas, so infill development is possible in some areas but limited overall. A significant amount of tree cover remains, and through traffic is minimized.

Residents of a protected neighborhood along Roberts Drive express their discontent with a rezoning.

Land Uses:	Exclusively detached, single-family residential
Character:	Suburban, curvilinear with cul-de-sacs
QCOs Implemented:	Housing Opportunities; Sense of Place
Implementation:	Single-family zoning districts of varying densities

Master Planned Community

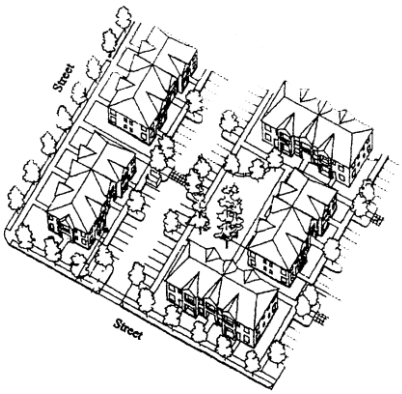
This category only has one application in Sandy Springs – the Huntcliff master planned community. Master-planned communities are planned at a scale of several hundred acres at minimum, and incorporate green space and/or recreation. In the case of Huntcliff, the community is designed around a golf course (shown as conservation on the character area map) and the Chattahoochee River.

Land Uses:	Predominantly detached, single-family residential
Character:	Suburban, master planned
QCOs Implemented:	Open Space Preservation Housing Opportunities
Implementation:	Community Unit Plan zoning district

Urban Residential

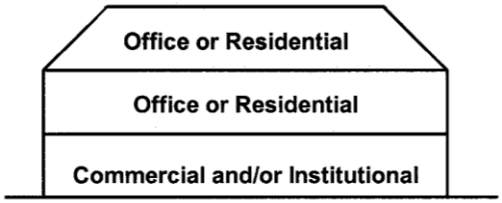
This category applies to higher-density residential developments, mostly apartments. Densities are generally at least eight (8) units per acre with most complexes developed at densities of 12 to 14 units per acre. Some townhouse developments also exist within this category, usually at lower than average densities. These character areas are located within or adjacent to the Roswell Road corridor or in between GA 400 and Roswell Road. Character consists mostly of "garden style" apartments. In the case of fee-simple townhouses, character consists of small, narrow lots (20' by 100' typical) oriented to a public or private street grid pattern. These areas may undergo some rehabilitation of housing units over time, or conversion to condominiums. Redevelopment of obsolete complexes is considered desirable, in order to improve neighborhood conditions. Some apartment complexes may convert to condominiums. With regard to their character, urban residential areas are served mostly by private streets, and some apartment complexes provide their own amenities. Very little vacant land exists within these character areas. Land uses other than multi-family are unlikely, although institutional and recreational facilities serving the developments may exist or be permitted. Redevelopment of urban residential may properly integrate neighborhood-serving retail and services uses. Some of these communities may be gated (restricted access). Most of these areas are within walking distance to bus transportation (i.e., along the Roswell Road corridor).

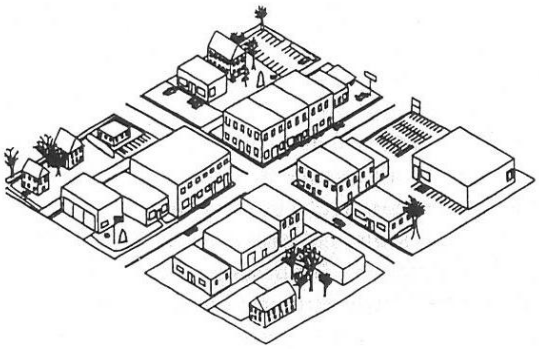
Land Uses:	Predominantly multi-family housing
Character:	Urban
QCOs Implemented:	Housing Opportunities; Transportation Alternatives
Implementation:	Multi-family zoning districts of varying densities

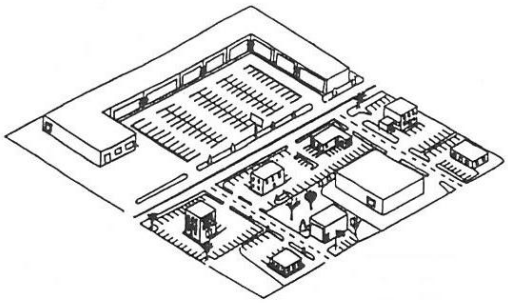


Mixed Use – Neighborhood Scale

This character area corresponds primarily to properties along Roswell Road. A wide variety of land uses exists within areas designated as neighborhood-scale mixed use. Currently, though different land uses may exist, few if any of them are presently developed as horizontally integrated and connected mixed uses. Therefore, the mixing of uses will take place in the form of redevelopment that adds additional height, non-commercial building intensity, and residential uses. The scale of redevelopment remains one that will serve immediate residential neighborhoods, however, as opposed to a community or regional market.







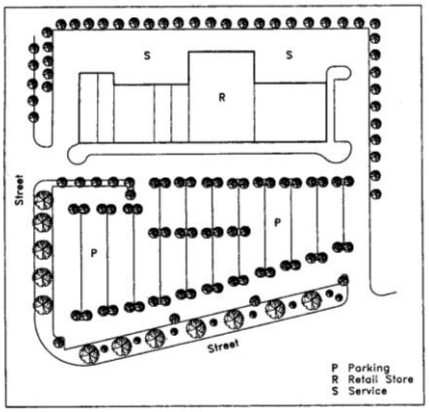
Conventional suburban development patterns can be transformed into neighborhood mixed-use developments.

Land Uses: Predominantly commercial uses, including highway businesses, some offices and institutions; but which through redevelopment will become pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use activity centers including residential uses, with intensities greater than that found in existing suburban commercial development but still compatible with abutting residential neighborhoods

Character:	Compact, pedestrian-friendly mixed use, following principles of new urbanism
QCOs Implemented:	Appropriate Business; Employment Options; Sense of Place; Infill Development; Housing Options; Transportation Alternatives
Implementation:	Mixed use zoning districts or form-based codes; design review; public and private expenditures for art, signage, streetscape improvements, and other unique identifying amenities

Mixed Use – Community Scale

This character area is similar to the mixed use – neighborhood scale character area but with additional intensity. It applies to the area on the east side of Roswell Road near the Chattahoochee River in the north part of Sandy Springs. In the case of the southern part of the Roswell Road corridor, it applies to relatively compact future "nodes" at Belle Isle and Windsor Parkway. Existing development in this character area is primarily suburban shopping centers and multi-family complexes to the rear of the commercial corridor.



Conventional shopping center layouts offer opportunities for mixed-use redevelopment

The vision for the community-scale mixed use character area is one of redevelopment into pedestrian-friendly mixed-use centers. Shopping centers on larger parcels provide the best prospects for redevelopment at higher intensity with mixed uses with a pedestrian and transit orientation. Redevelopment may require the introduction of parking decks, since new buildings are likely to replace some of the surface parking, particularly within existing suburban shopping centers.

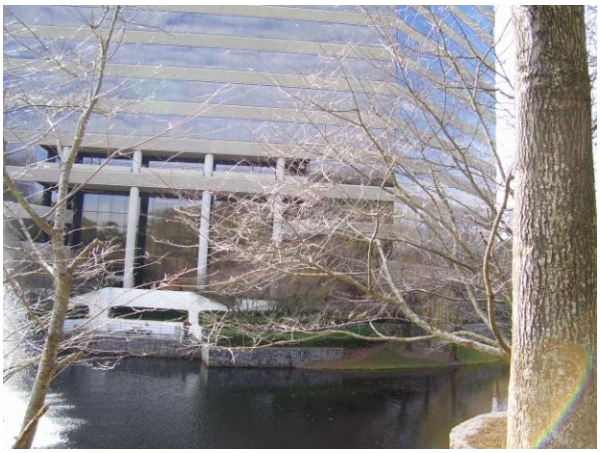
The vision also includes refurbishment and redevelopment of multi-family complexes for higher quality residences, at greater density and height than provided in existing complexes. Attention will be given during redevelopment to connections between the mixed-use areas and predominantly multi-family residential (redeveloped) complexes.

Land Uses:	Suburban shopping centers redeveloped into compact, mixed-use activity centers; Multi-family complexes redeveloped for higher-end, higher density housing
Character:	Redevelopment following principles of New Urbanism
QCOs Implemented:	Regional Identity; Appropriate Business; Employment Options; Housing Opportunities; Transportation Alternatives; Sense of Place
Implementation:	Mixed-use redevelopment zoning; multi-family redevelopment zoning; form-based code

Employment

This category corresponds with places near Interstate 285 (at Powers Ferry) and SR 400 that have been developed primarily as multi-story office towers. Some commercial uses may also exist in these developments. The character of these districts is one of the automobile taking precedence, though provisions for accommodating pedestrians are provided. Development in this district usually has a campus-type environment, with edges defined by generous landscaping and buildings set back far from the road. Residential development does not exist in employment centers, but the introduction of housing within or close by achieves objectives of more balanced jobs and housing in specific locations. Parking is provided primarily in decks. Some employment areas are lower intensity, single-story office and business parks. These districts are close to commercial areas and are generally served by bus transit.

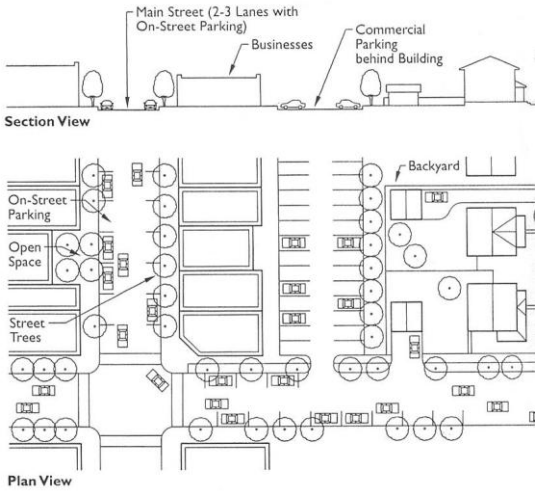
Land Uses:	Predominantly office and institutional uses, though some neighborhood commercial uses may also exist
Character:	Urban, campus style setting
QCOs Implemented:	Appropriate Business; Employment Options
Implementation:	Office and business park zoning districts



Downtown Redevelopment

This area is linear and stretches along Roswell Road from Glenridge Road at the south, across Interstate 285, to Abernathy Road. Presently, some pedestrian amenities exist and streetscape improvements have been installed or are planned. Sandy Springs' downtown will be the subject of concerted efforts to redevelop properties into compact, pedestrian-friendly mixed use developments, on a scale and intensity that is greater than neighborhood-scale and community-scale mixed use character areas. The downtown is served by bus transit. Automobile parking will be primarily structured (deck) parking with several opportunities for shared parking (common multi-user parking lots).

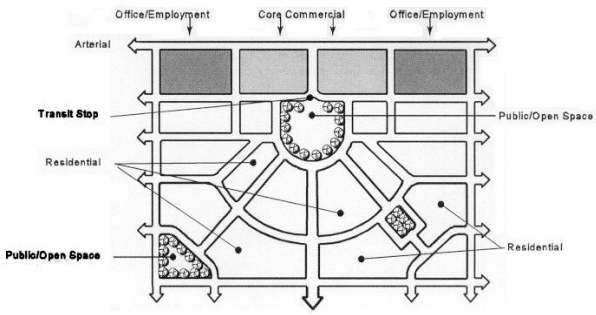
Land Uses:	Predominantly commercial uses in pedestrian retail districts, along with some offices and institutions; intensities are greater than that found in neighborhood- and community-scale mixed-use character areas
Character:	Compact, pedestrian-friendly mixed use, following principles of new urbanism; civic institutions attain prominence through urban design principles
QCOs Implemented:	Appropriate Business; Employment Options; Sense of Place; Infill Development; Housing Options; Transportation Alternatives
Implementation:	Mixed use zoning districts; design review; public and private expenditures for art, signage, streetscape improvements, and other unique identifying amenities



Within the downtown redevelopment character area, there is an "interchange focus area" that overlays properties surrounding the interchange of Roswell Road and Interstate 285. The purposes of designating the interchange focus area within the downtown redevelopment district are threefold. First, ongoing studies of I-285 and public transit suggest that the interchange may receive upgraded transit service of some sort. Secondly, the focus area may be developed at higher intensities than other parts of the downtown redevelopment district. Third, within the interchange focus area it is recognized that pedestrian-oriented retail and "walkability" is difficult to achieve given the function of the highway interchange.

Regional Transit-Oriented Activity Center

This designation corresponds with one large regional employment center between SR 400 and the DeKalb County line. It joins the Perimeter Mall area in DeKalb County. This area includes the Perimeter Center Community Improvement District (CID) in Fulton County. Development consists of high-intensity, mid- and high-rise office towers, and an orientation to (and connection with) MARTA rail stations.



In the parts of this district not within reasonable walking distance of MARTA rail stations, development is or will be oriented toward bus transit available along major corridors. Residential development currently exists in parts of the activity center but is developed as single use rather than multiple or mixed uses. However, mixed use developments have zoning approval, and some are underway. These areas do not necessarily have uses mixed on the same property or site presently, though mixed-use redevelopment is strongly encouraged if not required.

The area is also out of balance, with many more jobs than housing, and concerted efforts will be made to balance the jobs and housing on existing properties and within the center's boundaries as a whole.

Land Uses:	Predominantly mid- and high-rise office buildings with supportive retail commercial uses, along with some offices and institutions; intensities are greater than that found in neighborhood and community mixed use character areas
Character:	Compact, pedestrian-friendly mixed use, following principles of transit-oriented development
QCOs Implemented:	Appropriate Business; Employment Options; Sense of Place; Infill Development; Housing Options; Transportation Alternatives; Regional Cooperation and Regional Solutions (with DeKalb County and the CID)
Implementation:	Mixed use zoning districts; design review; public and private expenditures for art, signage, streetscape improvements, and other unique identifying amenities; Community Improvement District (CID)

SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL APPENDIX

This section of the Community Assessment Report provides a summary assessment of findings and observations articulated in the Technical Appendix (a lengthy document that accompanies this report). This section is organized according to the chapters of the Technical Appendix (i.e., population, housing, economic development, etc.).

Population

Sandy Springs had a population of 85,790 in the year 2000, and as of 2006 the estimated population is 89,311. The long-term population projection for the city (year 2025), is 95,722 persons, which is considerably lower than the year 2025 projection provided in the Interim Comprehensive Plan for Sandy Springs (105,861 persons). That projection assumes little remaining vacant residential land and most additions of housing units (and population) occurring within a redevelopment context and focused primarily in the Roswell Road corridor.

In Sandy Springs in 2000, households were split almost exactly equal between “family” and “non-family” households. The average household size in Sandy Springs in 2000 was substantially lower than that of the state as a whole. Household size is expected to remain relatively steady in future decades, as opposed to following prior trends of a steeper decline. For purposes of projecting population, a constant overall household size of 2.17 persons in Sandy Springs is assumed.

The population age 65 years and over is increasing dramatically as the “Baby Boom” begins to enter this age group. If life expectancy is increased significantly by medical breakthroughs, the senior population could increase even more (Source: Interim Comprehensive Plan, Sandy Springs, adopted June 2006).

Age characteristics of the population in Sandy Springs in the future are likely to be similar to trends in the U.S. and Georgia as a whole. With regard to race, the population in Sandy Springs in 2000 was predominantly White (77.5 percent of the total population). Blacks comprised ten percent of the population in the Sandy Springs CDP in 2000. Much of the remaining population had races as of 2000 described as “other” (5 percent) and Asian (3.3 percent).

The population in Sandy Springs in general has high educational attainment. Per capita incomes were more than double those of the state and nation as of the year 2000. Only 6.4 percent of the total population in Sandy Springs in 2000 met the threshold of poverty status; as of 2005 that figure was 7 percent according to recent Census data.

Housing

Sandy Springs had 42,794 housing units in 2000. As of 2006, the city has an estimated 44,545 housing units. Total housing units will increase in Sandy Springs from 2006 to 2030 by a net 3,200 units. The total number of housing starts during that planning horizon will be considerably higher than the “net” increase of 3,200 units, because some housing units will be demolished during redevelopment efforts and may or may not be replaced. The housing stock in Sandy Springs in 2000 was majority (59.6 percent) multi-family and occupied by renter households (54.3 percent).

Sandy Springs has only a small percentage of very old (pre-1950) homes, but the housing stock contains a more significant percentage (6.2) of homes built during the 1950s. As noted above, homes built in prior decades tend to be much smaller in size, and hence older homes can become increasingly obsolete. That obsolescence often will lead either to conversion to rental occupancy, or in other cases demolition and replacement with a larger home. For renter-occupied units crowding and severe overcrowding is considered significant. Housing units are considered to be "overcrowded" if there is more than one person per room. Severely overcrowded is considered 1.51 or more persons per room.

The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Sandy Springs in 2000 was $316,600. As a basis of comparison, the median value of all owner-occupied housing units for Georgia's housing stock in 2000 was $100,600, for Roswell's, $204,700, and for Fulton County's, $175,800. With such a high median housing value (and also high median gross rents in 2000) significant numbers of workers in some occupations (e.g., retail workers) probably cannot afford to live or rent in Sandy Springs.

Economic Development

There was a resident labor force in Sandy Springs in 2000 of 53,524 persons, of which 54 percent were males and 46 percent were females. Males 16 years and over in Sandy Springs in 2000 had much greater participation in the labor force than their counterparts in the state and nation as a whole. Unemployment rates were low in 2000 for both males (2.7 percent) and females (3.1 percent), as was the overall unemployment rate in 2000 (2.9 percent). The majority (52.7 percent) of Sandy Springs' resident work force in 2000 was employed in a single occupational category, managerial and professional. That figure is substantially higher than the state or nation as a whole, where managerial and professional occupations comprise approximately one-third of the total occupational mix. Professional, scientific, and management jobs (industries) are much more important industry sectors to Sandy Springs' working residents as of 2000, employing more than twice the percentage they do in the State of Georgia or United States as a whole. Similarly, finance, insurance, and real estate as an industry sector is much more heavily represented in terms of the jobs employing Sandy Springs' resident labor force when compared to the state and nation as of the year 2000.

There is much uncertainty when it comes to estimating current employment and projecting employment in future years, for the City of Sandy Springs. There is also significant variation among sources of data. For instance, a special spreadsheet on "daytime population," produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and made available via the Atlanta Regional Commission, indicates the year 2000 employment (total workers working) in the Sandy Springs Census Designated Place (CDP) was 79,417. This is the most reliable estimate of employment in Sandy Springs. Of the 79,417 persons who worked in Sandy Springs in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 12,370 persons who also lived in Sandy Springs. This means that, in 2000, only 15.6 percent of the resident labor force in Sandy Springs actually worked within Sandy Springs (the CDP in 2000).

Between 2006 and 2030, Sandy Springs is projected to add another 26,844 jobs. Jobs in Sandy Springs will increase from 85,981 in 2006 to 112,825 in the year 2030. Projections are based on Atlanta Regional Commission *Envision 6+* data, assuming that Sandy Springs will maintain a constant share of total county employment of 11 percent.

Natural Resources

The Chattahoochee River is the most significant natural resource in the City of Sandy Springs, and it is protected by various means, including a regional river corridor plan, Metropolitan River Protection Act reviews of development proposals, and local environmental and land use regulations. Other natural resources worthy of further consideration for protection in the planning process include steep slopes (15 percent or more), forested areas in the city, and potential scenic views and sites.

Historic Resources

There is only one property within the city listed on the National Register of Historic Places – Glenridge Hall (listed in 1982). The Heritage Sandy Springs site contains a 1859 farm house and history center which should be acknowledged, even if it is not on the National Register of Historic Places. Sandy Springs has not adopted a local historic preservation ordinance and does not have a Historic Preservation Commission. Consideration should be given to whether or not such a commission should be established. There exists a non-profit organization, Heritage Sandy Springs, which is dedicated to preserving the community history of Sandy Springs. A historic resources survey was conducted in 1996. Most of the remaining historic resources in the city are residential dwellings.

Community Facilities and Services

Sandy Springs established a police force on July 1, 2006, and its own Fire Department in December 2006. It provides a multitude of other services as well, including finance and administration, public works, and community development, among others. Fulton County Government remains an important service provider, providing such services as libraries, emergency management, water and sewer, and human/social services. All of the elementary schools in Sandy Springs operated by Fulton County are over capacity. There is also a high concentration of private schools and significant private school enrollment in Sandy Springs. A master plan is being prepared for recreation and parks facilities.

Recreation and Parks

The Technical Appendix addresses recreation and parks in the chapter on Community Facilities and Services. That chapter provides an inventory of the various types of recreation facilities and parks and identifies current conditions of facilities. A separate master plan for recreation and parks is being prepared, though major features of that plan will be integrated into the Community Agenda. The public participation process has entailed separate public meetings and focus group sessions on topics of recreation and parks. That input has been reflected in the “issues and opportunities” section of this Community Assessment Report.

Intergovernmental Coordination

A number of facilities and services are provided by Fulton County Government to the residents of Sandy Springs, making continued cooperation and coordination with the county an absolute “must.” Coordination with Cobb County and DeKalb County, via Fulton County, is needed to ensure continued treatment of wastewater from Sandy Springs. Several intergovernmental agreements exist, which are described in the technical appendix. The city will need to coordinate facilities, services, and future planning efforts with several regional, state and federal

agencies, including the Atlanta Regional Commission, Metropolitan Rapid Transit Authority, Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, and various others.

Transportation

An assessment of transportation needs in Sandy Springs was performed as a part of the Comprehensive Plan Community Assessment (see Chapter 9 of the Technical Appendix). This Transportation Needs Assessment includes automobile, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle travel modes. A wide range of planning tools, techniques and methods were employed to gain a thorough understanding of Sandy Springs' transportation needs. The paragraphs below provide a summary of the transportation needs identified through both qualitative and quantitative assessments of Sandy Spring's multimodal transportation system.

Roadway Capacity and Safety

The assessment of roadway capacity and safety has examined several areas of transportation needs in categories as indicated below.

1. Examination of roadway functional classification and its relationship to service of adjacent land use and alternative travel modes.
2. Operational improvement of critical intersections along roadways identified as congested in future years.
3. Operational improvements to enhance traffic flow and pedestrian crossing capabilities along Roswell Road from I-285 through Abernathy Road, in the traditional Sandy Springs business core.
4. Capacity enhancement of roadways identified as congested in future years.
5. Management of access points along arterial corridors to ensure throughput capacity is preserved.
6. Identification of appropriate parallel routes and connections to reduce local trip loading on the arterial roadway network.
7. Improvement of freeway access through capacity and operational enhancement of congested interchanges.
8. Improvement of I-285 and SR 400 corridors so that capacity constraints on these major facilities do not shift traffic to the City roadway network.
9. Safety improvements along roads with high crash rates.
10. Focused pedestrian safety improvements along Roswell Road.
11. Regular maintenance and improvement of existing infrastructure to preserve the existing transportation network.

Transit

The assessment of transit has identified several improvement needs, as indicated below.

1. Travel time benefits for bus service along key corridors to encourage commute riders.
2. Bus frequency sufficient to encourage new ridership along routes through congested areas.
3. Effective feeder network for service to MARTA rail stations.
4. Incorporation of walkable communities and transit oriented development near MARTA rail stations.
5. Examination of local circulation routes within walkable activity centers to link MARTA Rail with walkable areas.

6. Examination of applicability of BRT or other premium transit service in Sandy Springs.

Pedestrian

The assessment of pedestrian movement and facilities has identified several needs, as indicated below.

1. Safe and efficient connection between neighborhoods and community facilities, such as schools, libraries, and parks.
2. Sidewalk present in activity centers of sufficient width and separation from traffic to encourage pedestrian movement.
3. Combine pedestrian and transit circulatory strategies to provide for local trip making within activity centers.
4. Safe and ADA-compliant pedestrian connections to transit to provide a means of access to bus and rail routes.
5. Effective pedestrian routes to enhance walk ability within transit oriented areas.

Bicycle

The assessment of potential bicycle travel and destinations has identified several needs, as indicated below.

1. Safe and efficient connection for bicycles, as well as pedestrians, between neighborhoods and community facilities, such as schools, libraries, and parks.
2. Facilities to accommodate longer distance travel and connectivity to important recreational resources along the Chattahoochee River.
3. Development of an off-road trail system to accommodate recreational use and park access for users not comfortable with travel in mixed traffic.
4. Bike access to employment centers and MARTA for commuter use.
5. Development of bike routes and facilities to make cycling a viable mode within walkable activity centers.
6. Enhancing safety of bicycle travel through development of appropriate facilities and standardized intersection and trail crossing treatments.

Railroad, Trucking, Port Facility, and Airports

The assessment of travel needs for access to railroads, port facilities, and airports, as well as to accommodate truck traffic has identified several needs, as indicated below.

1. Railroad and port facility access accommodated primarily via I-285 and SR 400 and should be coordinated with regional and statewide efforts.
2. Maintaining truck movement through Sandy Springs along I-285 and SR 400.
3. Maintaining local truck routes and prohibitions to allow service to businesses without impacting local streets.
4. Providing efficient access to MARTA rail stations for use in passenger access to Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.
5. Providing adequate long term parking to facilitate use of MARTA for passenger access to Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.
6. Recognizing transit circulation needs in Sandy Springs to facilitate use of MARTA for passenger access from Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.

CONSOLIDATED LIST OF POTENTIAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section provides a consolidated list of issues and opportunities that have been identified by the City's planning staff and planning consultants, the Citizens Advisory Committee, and citizens who participated in community meetings on November 29th and 30th, 2006. This list of issues and opportunities in preliminary, and will be vetted during community visioning forums in February 2007. After those visioning forums are completed, a final set of issues and opportunities will be completed, which will form the basis for preparing the community agenda portion of the comprehensive plan.

POPULATION

1. Determining desired future population in Sandy Springs

The comprehensive plan can be used as a growth management tool, ultimately influencing (through land use policies) the timing and amount of population growth. Some citizens might prefer to limit population levels and set policies that limit growth, either directly or indirectly. Others anticipate that zoning already approved will result in higher population levels than desired. At the time of this Community Assessment,[2] projections of future population in Sandy Springs range from an increase of only 6,071 persons (planning consultant projection based on cursory land supply analysis), to as much as 16,212 persons (Focus Fulton 2025 plan) between 2007 and 2025. Should Sandy Springs set a "desired" or "target" future population level?

2. Accommodating additional group quarters population

As the residents of Sandy Springs age, there may be a need for new and different group quarters accommodations, such as nursing homes.

3. Serving an increasingly diverse population

The population in Sandy Springs may become increasingly diverse, given increases in the region in Hispanic and Latino populations. If such an increase occurs in Sandy Springs in the future, this may have an impact on how Sandy Springs provides and delivers services (e.g., bi-lingual police officers and clerks, publication of city newsletters in Spanish, etc.)

HOUSING

4. Specifying the desired mix of housing types and altering the existing mix

At issue is whether the comprehensive plan can, and should, attempt to alter the mix of housing unit types (detached, single-family, townhouses, apartments, etc.). For instance, some residents and leaders would like to reduce the number of apartments, while housing needs assessments may call for more affordable rental housing opportunities. Some communities use

[2] Planners cannot realistically "assess" needs without using some projection, forecast, target, or design population. There has to be some basis for assessing future needs, and that is why population projections need to be provided in the Community Assessment, even if they are only "provisional" in nature and subject to the influences of policy (for instance, adding more limits on infill development, or pursuing aggressive mixed-use redevelopment strategies). On the other hand, population projections are a function of land supply, which is dictated by the future land use plan and redevelopment opportunities, which suggests that population projections should be refined after determining the limitations placed on development by the future land use plan (including redevelopment opportunities).

the comprehensive planning process as an opportunity to establish targets for mixes of housing units and then design their regulations (including the zoning of land) to pursue the target mix.

5. Addressing affordable housing needs

Sandy Springs faces challenges if it wants to provide housing that is affordable for low- and moderate-income households and workforce households (which include not only blue-collar workers but also police officers, teachers, and other young professionals who would like to own homes in Sandy Springs but can only rent their homes or cannot afford to live in the city at all. The Community Agenda should articulate policies regarding whether, and if so, how, the city will address affordable housing needs. (Note: a number of more specific issues and opportunities regarding affordable housing are included below).

6. Guiding the city's community development program

Sandy Springs is in the process of preparing a consolidated plan for community development to qualify for Community Development Block Grand (CDBG) "entitlement" funds (see glossary). At issue is the overall direction and emphasis of the city's community development program. There is much discretion on how CDBG funds can be used (within some constraints), so long as they benefit low- and moderate-income households. For instance, funds can be targeted to provide infrastructure or be directed at upgrading and expanding the affordable housing stock.

7. Providing for "starter" housing

Sandy Springs is an affluent community, and its detached, single-family housing stock serves primarily upper-middle and upper income families and households. A majority of the housing units are rental. With the exception of some older neighborhoods with smaller homes, there are very limited opportunities for first-time homebuyers. At issue is whether the city's Community Agenda should strive to provide for "starter" housing (see glossary).

8. Considering mixed-income housing

One opportunity for promoting more affordable housing in Sandy Springs is to consider a policy of providing housing for people with mixed incomes in the same development or neighborhood.

9. Exempting affordable housing from development impact fees

Georgia's development impact fee law authorizes the waiver of impact fees for affordable housing, if the local government has an adopted policy to that effect in its comprehensive plan. If affordable housing is exempted, the impact fee enabling statute requires the city to pay the impact fee so waived with revenue sources other than impact fees.

10. Responding to homelessness

At issue is the role that city government might play in the future in attempting to respond to the needs of homeless persons and households in Sandy Springs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

11. Diversifying the city's economic base

Sandy Springs has few if any industrial or manufacturing uses. The city has a healthy, robust economy, but one that is focused in certain employment sectors (e.g., finance, insurance, real estate, telecommunications, etc.). At issue is whether the city should try to diversify its economy to include some manufacturing or industrial uses, and if so, how such uses can be accommodated in the city.

12. Encouraging and financing redevelopment

The citywide vision emphasizes the redevelopment of properties along Roswell Road, and the revitalization and redevelopment of the center of Sandy Springs. There are opportunities in the Community Agenda to articulate more specific revitalization and redevelopment (and redevelopment financing) strategies for the Roswell Road corridor and the downtown redevelopment area. Financing redevelopment could include multiple mechanisms, which can be articulated in the Community Agenda, as appropriate. One such financing measure is the technique called "tax increment financing" (see glossary). Because Fulton County established a Sandy Springs redevelopment area and approved a tax allocation district, the Community Agenda in its discussion of all redevelopment financing options should specifically address whether a tax allocation district will be included as a part of the city's redevelopment strategies.

13. Incorporating "place making" principles in downtown redevelopment efforts

The city's vision calls for establishment of a "sense of place" with a City Center, designed for gathering and social interaction. How will these be articulated in the Community Agenda in a way that will influence downtown redevelopment efforts?

14. Reconsidering the Tax Allocation District

Fulton County had established a redevelopment area in Sandy Springs, within which the financing technique called "tax increment financing" (see glossary) could be used. At issue is whether the city should continue to pursue that technique as a part of its redevelopment strategies.

15. Emphasizing transit-oriented development

The citywide vision calls for concentration of new development within areas served by transit, and there is an opportunity in the planning process to link that vision to the city's economic development strategies.

16. Leveraging private reinvestment with municipal capital projects

There is an opportunity for the city to use its investment in civic buildings to strategically leverage and enhance private reinvestment in redevelopment areas.

17. Exempting extraordinary economic development from impact fees

Georgia's development impact fee law authorizes the waiver of impact fees for extraordinary economic development, if the local government has an adopted policy to that effect in its comprehensive plan. If extraordinary economic development is exempted, the impact fee enabling statute requires the city to pay the impact fee so waived with revenue sources other than impact fees.

18. Assessing the role of home-based businesses

The city's zoning ordinance allows for home occupations. Over time, with changes in the national and global economy, more and more people are able to work from home and/or establish home-based businesses. At issue is whether the economic development strategy of the city should emphasize or encourage home occupations given other, possible conflicting objectives of protecting neighborhoods (see also discussion under "land use, protected neighborhoods."

NATURAL RESOURCES

19. Protecting waters

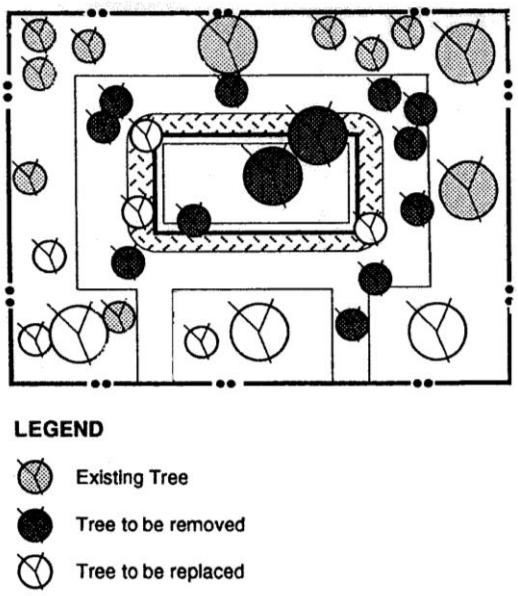
In addition to federal and state regulations, the City of Sandy Springs has a number of regulatory measures in place to protect the quality of streams, drainage ways, and the Chattahoochee River. Despite such protection measures, however, water quality does not comply with certain federal requirements. At issue is whether local protection measures already in place are adequate, or whether the citizenry desires higher levels of local protection in order for water quality to meet existing standards.

20. Protecting trees during development

Sandy Springs has a tree protection ordinance which is currently undergoing review by a citizens committee. At issue is whether the protection measures already in place for the protection of forests and trees are adequate, or whether the citizenry desires higher levels of protection.

21. Maintaining and enhancing tree canopy

At issue is whether the city has adequate information regarding its tree canopy, and whether specific measures are needed to maintain and enhance the city's tree canopy (versus a focus simply on trees).



Illustrative, conceptual tree protection for a given site.

22. Limiting or regulating development on steep slopes

Sandy Springs does not have a specific ordinance that regulates development on steep slopes. At issue is whether additional ordinance provisions are needed to regulate land development on steep (15 percent grade or higher) slopes.

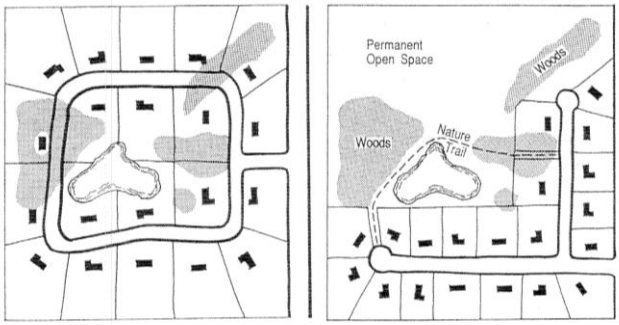
Steep slope (left) and residence constructed on rock outcropping (Old Riverside Drive).

23. Identifying and protecting scenic views and sites

There is an opportunity, during preparation of the Community Agenda, to identify areas with scenic views, and/or sites that have scenic value, and to determine whether specific measures should be included in the comprehensive plan to protect or enhance such scenic views and sites.

24. Protecting resources and promoting open space through conservation subdivisions

Sandy Springs does not have a conservation subdivisions ordinance. At issue is whether Sandy Springs has enough vacant land with subdivision potential left to warrant a conservation subdivision ordinance, which would promote the protection of natural resources and promote additional permanently protected open space in the city. Also at issue is whether additional density should be allowed in exchange for providing more open space.



Comparison of Conventional and Conservation Subdivision Designs

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

25. Updating the historic resources survey

Since the historic resources survey was conducted some ten years ago, some structures may have been demolished, while others may have earned eligibility as a historic resource during that time. An updated historic resources survey would give a more accurate reflection of the status of historic resources in the city. At issue is whether a survey update should be included in the city's short-term work program.

26. Preserving individual landmarks or historic districts by ordinance

Sandy Springs has some historic resources remaining, but they are relatively few. At issue is whether the city needs and wants to adopt a local historic preservation ordinance, which would establish a Historic Preservation Commission and establish a process of reviewing building demolitions and additions or new structures for appropriateness with their historic context.

27. Staffing for historic preservation

Sandy Springs may want to consider providing staff with some expertise in historic preservation. Such staff members might encourage and assist property owners with nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (see glossary), using or reusing vacant historic buildings, and educating the public on the benefits of historic preservation.

28. Developing a heritage tourism program

There is an opportunity for Sandy Springs to consider developing a heritage tourism program, which could be a part of its overall economic development strategy.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

29. Ensuring adequate water and sewer capacity

After determining the amount, intensity, and location of future growth in Sandy Springs, there is a need to determine whether sufficient water and sewer capacity will be available at the time such development occurs.

30. Financing capital improvements with development impact fees

The city has already committed to initiating a development impact fee program. Such a program raises various issues, such as the impact on affordable housing and economic development (and whether waivers should be permitted).

31. Determining level-of-service standards and/or performance measures for facilities

There may be an interest in developing level-of-service standards for various city facilities and services. For those facilities the city will collect an impact fee, level of service standards are required and will be prepared and adopted. For other facilities and services, such standards are optional. Similarly, performance standards might be used to guide future planning and provision of certain facilities and services in Sandy Springs.

32. Assuring equity in facility and service provision

There may be segments of the city's population that are inadequately served by existing public facilities and services, and there may be parts of the city that receive inadequate facilities and services. At issue is whether such inequities exist, and if so, how they can be reconciled.

33. Addressing social service needs and homelessness

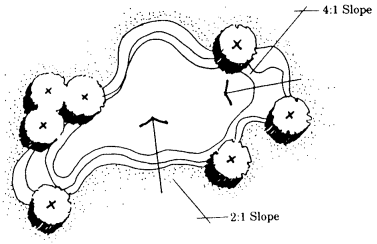
At issue is the role city government can, and should, play in terms of municipal services and facilities directed at social service needs and homelessness.

34. Assessing opportunities for public-private ventures in service provision

There is an opportunity for the plan to focus attention on innovative public-private ventures in the arrangement, provision, and delivery of various public facilities and services.

35. Developing a stormwater utility

The city has determined that a stormwater utility may be a viable approach to correcting existing storm drainage problems, maintaining stormwater detention ponds, and enhancing stormwater management (and, therefore, water quality). At issue is whether development of a stormwater utility should be included in the city's short-term work program and, if so, the particulars of such a program.



Maintenance of existing stormwater ponds requires dedicated funding sources.

36. Addressing infiltration and inflow problems in the sewer system

During public testimony it was pointed out that stormwater flows into sanitary sewer manholes in some places of the city. There is an opportunity in the Community Agenda to identify this problem as a community concern and to determine how the Fulton County Department of Public Works can address such problems.

37. Complying with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Requirements

Sandy Springs, like other local governments, has responsibilities for insuring that its community facilities comply with ADA requirements. The Community Agenda represents an opportunity to fully assess how its facilities, including City Hall, parks, and sidewalks at intersection, meet all applicable requirements. Deficiencies should be remedied through the city's capital improvement program and short-term work program.

38. Designing and developing a City Hall complex

The city anticipates building its own municipal complex for administrative and public safety personnel. Major issues exists, such as when, how large, and where the city should invest in municipal capital facilities. The city recognizes the opportunity of "place making," or in other words, using its investment in civic buildings to strategically leverage and enhance private reinvestment in redevelopment areas.

39. Assuring adequate public school education

The city is presently inadequately served by overcrowded elementary schools. At issue is whether the Fulton County Board of Education (the current service provider) can correct for

such inadequacies, and if not, whether the creation of a City of Sandy Springs School District is feasible and an acceptable alternative to be included in the City's Community Agenda.

RECREATION AND PARKS

40. Providing additional park land in light of land scarcity

Land is at a premium in Sandy Springs, and there are few large, contiguous parcels of land remaining within the present corporate limits that are suitable for the development of parks. Such limits on land will require Sandy Springs to think more innovatively about adding to its parks and recreation land inventory.

41. Determining innovative ways to address future park needs in light of land scarcity

Given the lack of large parcels for new park development in Sandy Springs, the city has an opportunity to consider new, innovative ways to responding to future park needs. Such innovations might include, for instance, using power line and sewer easements for trails, designating "community greens" within developed areas, reclaiming space behind shopping centers or within shopping center parking lots, installing gardens on top of buildings, and considering "community based asset management strategies, among others.

42. Considering reuse of vacant "big box" retail stores and strip centers for community centers

There is an opportunity, when large retail establishments or shopping centers become vacant, to lease spaces for community centers and related recreation functions. Such opportunities should be further assessed in the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

43. Addressing geographic imbalances in the provision of parks

It has been observed that there are significant geographic areas within the city that lack parks. The Recreation and Parks Master Plan should consider the possibility of providing a more even distribution of parks in the city, subject to the limits on available land for park development.

44. Improving accessibility to parks

Traffic congestion in Sandy Springs may limit accessibility by residents to parks. Similarly, the Recreation and Park Master Plan needs to consider ADA accessibility requirements.

45. Improving connectivity among parks and to parks

Linkages between existing parks, and connectivity to adjacent community recreation systems, are considered inadequate. There is an opportunity to improve connectivity in the process of preparing the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

46. Balancing active and passive recreational opportunities

While Sandy Springs has some active parks, its supply of park trails and passive recreation opportunities are considered deficient, with the exception of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area sites. There is an opportunity to consider the most desired balance between

active and passive recreational opportunities and to promote desired balance of such facilities in upcoming capital improvement programs.

47. Diversifying the types of recreational facilities and opportunities

The public participation process of developing the Recreation and Parks Master Plan resulted in the identification of a wide range of facilities that residents of the community would like to be considered in developing and expanding the Sandy Springs recreation system. Facilities most mentioned include dog parks, playfields, age-specific playgrounds, trail systems, community centers, recreation centers, and a swimming center.

48. Partnering with schools and private industry

There are opportunities to provide for the use of school recreational facilities by the city. There are also opportunities to partner with businesses in the provision of recreation and parks. Those opportunities should be explored during the process of preparing the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

49. Considering additional recreational opportunities of the Chattahoochee River

There is an opportunity to promote greater utilization of the Chattahoochee River as a recreational resource.

50. Paying for new recreation and park facilities

Sandy Springs intends to institute a development impact fee program for recreation and parks. Such funding source, if approved, will only address the recreation and park needs generated by new development, and impact fees cannot be used to fund any existing deficiencies. Additionally, parks in the city are going to need significant maintenance; the city's capital improvement program will need to identify maintenance projects and funding for them.

51. Considering development "set aside" requirements for parks and greenspaces

Sandy Springs might consider whether developers can "set aside" land for parks as part of planned new projects and redevelopment efforts. This potential opportunity must be considered in light of legal limitations and the city's intentions to charge a recreation and park impact fee.

52. Continuing support for Sandy Springs Conservancy projects

There is an opportunity for the Recreation and Park Master Plan to describe how to coordinate future municipal efforts with the Sandy Springs Conservancy. The plan can also articulate how the city will continue its support for the implementation of Sandy Springs Conservancy projects (e.g., Great Park, Abernathy Greenway and Pedestrian Bridge).

53. Articulating clearly the city's intentions for river and stream greenways

During the public participation process concern was raised about green strips (reflecting conservation) of private properties abutting the Chattahoochee River. Until the Community Agenda and the Recreation and Park master plan are completed, there are uncertainties whether the city will pursue conservation objectives, recreational objectives, or both, (e.g., whether a formal greenway will be proposed, whether existing utility easements will be utilized,

whether conservation easements can be acquired, and whether such plans imply or explicitly contemplate acquisition of such lands by the city or a land trust). Plans will need to be clear on intentions to reduce uncertainty among property owners along the Chattahoochee River.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

54. Participating in the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy

The local planning requirements require that Sandy Springs become a part of the Fulton County Service Delivery Strategy and that the comprehensive plan be consistent with that strategy. The particulars of crafting and negotiating the city's participation in that strategy are issues and opportunities to be confronted in the comprehensive planning process.

55. Cooperating with the Georgia Department of Transportation to "fix" Roswell Road

It is recognized that Roswell Road is a state highway (SR 9) and that any future plans to alter the design of the roadway must gain the approval of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Historically, GDOT has been reluctant to deviate from its accepted engineering design manuals. However, that prior stance is softening some as GDOT is increasingly open to smart growth principles such as "context-sensitive" street designs. The intergovernmental coordination element of the Community Agenda should recognize GDOT's responsibilities but also articulate city objectives for improvement of Roswell Road and strategies on how to accomplish intergovernmental coordination to meet city objectives.

56. Implementing best practices for intergovernmental coordination

The Atlanta Regional Commission has best practices for intergovernmental coordination in its Regional Development Plan Guidebook. At issue is the extent to which Sandy Springs wants to, and can, implement such best practices.

57. Assessing the adequacy of existing intergovernmental agreements

A preliminary assessment of existing intergovernmental agreements is provided in the Technical Appendix. At issue is the need for further assessments, and whether new or modified intergovernmental agreements are or will be needed.

TRANSPORTATION

58. Enhancing traffic signal operations and safety

Traffic signal operations control movements at intersections, where through movement capacity is most limited. An optimally timed and coordinated signal system can significantly reduce travel delay and stops along a corridor. Intersection safety is also important, as intersections typically have more conflict points and experience more crashes than roadway segments. Improvements to reduce conflicts and enhance driver expectancy can reduce crash frequency and severity.

59. Reducing traffic congestion at "hot spots"

Traffic congestion along arterials typically occurs where two major roads cross, limiting the available green time for each road. Reducing congestion at these "hot spots" can reduce overall travel time.

60. Providing mobility for trips through, to/from, and within the city

People travel along the streets of Sandy Springs for a variety of trip purposes. Local trips satisfy needs within communities and between neighborhoods and commercial areas. Trips to and from Sandy Springs are made by those who work elsewhere and/or those who choose to satisfy a portion of their shopping and recreation outside the City. Longer distance trips through Sandy Springs are made by those who live and work beyond the City. The transportation system must provide mobility for all of these trips purposes.

61. Establishing a grid network to provide options for travel

Connectivity of the roadway network can provide additional options for travel in congested areas. A well developed grid allows dispersion of traffic over several roads. Over time, the various routes tend towards providing similar travel time. In a less comprehensive fashion, additional roadway connections can provide multiple paths for travelers to use in accessing the main roadway, reducing congestion at critical intersections. It can also provide an alternative to travel on congested arterials for those making local trips to destinations along a busy arterial corridor.

62. Improving availability of transit service

Transit is a key component to providing travel alternatives to the automobile. Frequent local transit service can provide an extension to the walking environment for travel within activity areas. Other local trips can feed activity areas so that users can avoid activity center parking and congestion. Longer distance transit trips can provide higher speed access to nearby and distant activity areas. Transit availability and frequency of service are two important factors in attracting riders as an alternative to automobile travel.

63. Incorporating BRT and other premium transit in Sandy Springs

Transit along local streets is subject to the same traffic delays as automobiles, limiting its potential effectiveness in saving time for travelers. Incorporation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or other premium transit options in Sandy Springs can provide travel time advantages along key routes. These travel time savings are critical to encouraging people to park their cars and utilize transit.

64. Satisfying parking needs in activity centers

As activity centers grow, satisfying parking needs is important to maintain the viability and attractiveness of the activity centers. Excess parking can lead activity center users to make frequent short trips via automobile within the activity center, limiting the effectiveness of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes. Limited parking can cause increases in traffic congestion, as drivers must circle the area multiple times to find a place to park. Satisfying parking needs should take both ends of the spectrum into account.

65. Calming traffic to enhance safety while maintaining connectivity

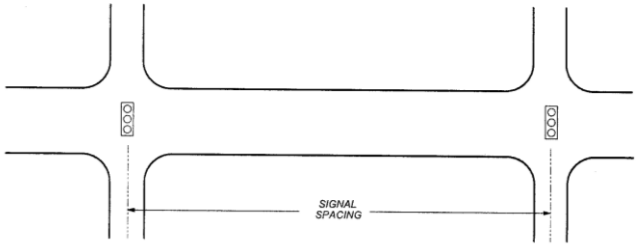
The residential neighborhoods were identified as one of the City's primary assets in discussions with the Citizen Advisory Committee. Preserving the integrity and safety within the neighborhoods is critical to the future of Sandy Springs. Traffic calming has been used effectively in many areas of the Atlanta area to enhance safety along residential streets. Although many potential traffic calming techniques have been employed throughout the United States, speed humps are the most common element employed in the Atlanta area for residential speed control. The advantage of traffic calming is that it can provide control of speeds without reducing connectivity, as would be the case with a road closure. In addition to traffic calming measures, the designation of "no truck" routes is a useful tool to calm traffic and enhance safety in neighborhoods.

66. Providing sidewalk and bicycle lanes for travel to/from destinations and access to transit

Sidewalks and bicycle lanes are critical transportation infrastructure elements necessary for providing alternative travel options versus automobile traffic. Providing connectivity to existing community facilities (such as schools, libraries, and parks) is an important use of the pedestrian and bicycle network. Providing additional connectivity to key transit facilities/routes and activity centers is another critical area to reduce the need for automobile travel.

67. Managing access points along corridors

Providing access to adjacent properties is one of the primary purposes of a road. However, when the road is a congested urban arterial such as Roswell Road, frequent parcel by parcel access can degrade operations due to the friction of turning vehicles and can provide extra conflict points, increasing crash potential. Effective management of access points can preserve through capacity along arterials. However, careful planning of access for key areas is critical to avoid impacts to properties.



Providing adequate spacing of traffic signals is one of many access management principles.

68. Assessing the need or feasibility of an additional river crossing

At one time, there was a proposal "floated" in transportation plans to provide for a new crossing of the Chattahoochee River at Morgan Falls. While that proposal was reportedly opposed by Cobb County, there is an opportunity during preparation of the Multi-modal Transportation Plan to address whether an additional crossing of the Chattahoochee River would be feasible and desirable.

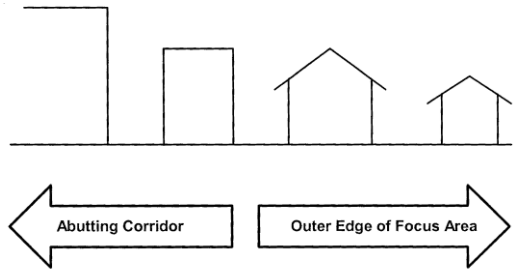
LAND USE: PROTECTION OF SINGLE-FAMILY NEIGHBORHOODS

69. Introducing a two-acre minimum category in the future land use plan

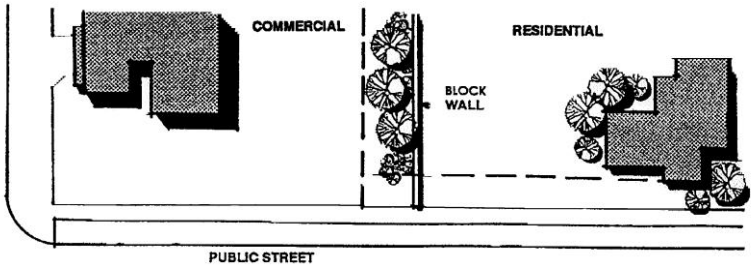
The lowest density residential category shown on the future land use plan map of the interim comprehensive plan (see glossary) is one unit per acre. However, there are residential neighborhoods in Sandy Springs that are considerably lower than that (i.e., one unit per two acres or more). There is sentiment to create a new residential land use category in the future land use plan to correspond with two-acre zoning, and protect those neighborhoods from infill development on one-acre lots, which would otherwise be considered appropriate based on policies in the interim comprehensive plan.

70. Addressing the interface between protected neighborhoods and commercial areas, especially within the Roswell Road corridor

Is the city now using best practices to minimize light, sound, traffic, and other possible conflicts between non-residential uses and single-family neighborhoods? Are there other best practices to establish firm boundaries or reduce incompatibilities of commercial developments, particularly when they abut residential areas which we wish to protect? Should increased buffers, setbacks, and/or step-back heights, be instituted for non-residential development to afford better protection to adjacent residential neighborhoods?



Decrease Height and Mass in the Focus Area
Concept of stepping down in height and intensity.



Buffers with vegetation and walls are customarily used to separate residential and commercial uses.

71. Addressing potential incompatibilities of large churches and schools in neighborhoods

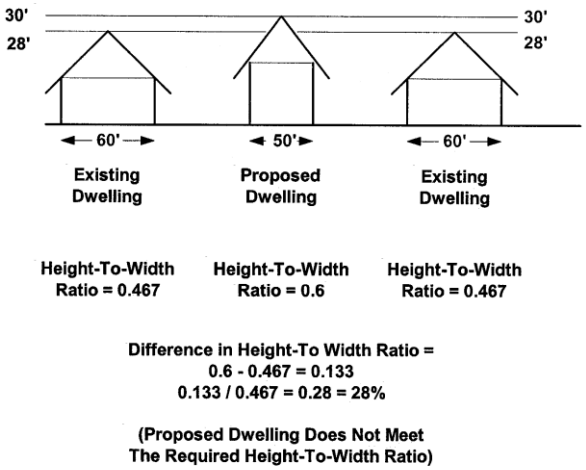
Sandy Springs has witnessed significant growth in churches and large private schools. Such institutions are often permitted outright or conditionally within single-family neighborhoods. Churches, over time, have expanded their roles to include not only religious services but also education, day care, counseling, active recreation, and in some cases social services. Activities of such churches are not limited to Sunday services and one religious service during the week. As congregations grow, they can become less and less compatible with low-density residential

use. At issue is whether the city's land use policies should place limitations or restrictions on large churches and similar institutions. The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act places some legal constraints on how local governments regulated churches; those legal limits must be taken into account if Sandy Springs proposes greater restrictions on churches.

Holy Innocents Church is a representative example of a church that has expanded its community functions over time. Pictured left is the original site of the church campus. Pictured right is the old James. L. Riley elementary school, which has been taken over by the church and operates as a school campus.

72. Addressing infill development issues

There is concern about the possibility of incompatible "infill" housing in protected neighborhoods, since residential infill development is often proposed at higher densities than exist in the surrounding neighborhood. What specific policies and measures can be developed, adopted and implemented to address these concerns?



Illustrative Height-To-Width Calculation

A "height-to-width ratio" is one mechanism to address compatibility of residential infill housing.

73. Addressing the compatibility of home-based businesses

The city's zoning ordinance allows for home occupations. Over time, with changes in the national and global economy, more and more people are able to work from home and/or establish home-based businesses. At issue is whether the city's zoning ordinance can be made more flexible to accommodate that trend, while maintaining the residential integrity of protected neighborhoods.

LAND USE: HIGH DENSITY/MIXED USE

74. Considering form-based zoning

Sandy Springs' zoning ordinance uses conventional land use techniques. In its assessment of the city's downtown redevelopment plans, the Livable Communities Coalition has been suggested that the city consider implementing form-based zoning (see glossary). Does form-based zoning hold any potential for implementing objectives for mixed-use character areas?

75. Reconsidering height limitations and contemplating floor-area ratios

Prior studies have suggested that, in order to promote redevelopment, the intensity and height controls of Sandy Springs' zoning ordinance may be too limiting and therefore work as barriers to redevelopment. Are the intensity and height controls, now in place, too limiting to be competitive? Does the use of Floor-Area Ratios (see glossary) increase the flexibility for achieving the objectives for mixed use character areas? In order to maintain protected neighborhoods, must Sandy Springs allow increased intensity, densities, and building height in areas designated for intense development? Is the vision of a Buckhead-style skyline acceptable for Sandy Springs, and if so, in what locations?

76. Redeveloping or converting older apartment complexes

Are greater heights and densities required in order to promote the redevelopment of older apartment complexes? Are high-rise projects with substantial open space an acceptable alternative to older garden apartments? Can mixed-use, live-work zoning offer sufficient incentives for redevelopment of aging multi-family communities?

77. Reassessing adopted policies about the particulars of live/work areas

Are the "live-work" descriptions in the interim comprehensive plan (see glossary) appropriate, including the locations and the descriptions of particulars?

78. Considering the need for special studies and/or small area plans

Are there areas in the city that require special study during the community assessment process? Will detailed planning efforts be needed beyond the basics of the Community Agenda?

LINKING LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION

79. "Fixing" Roswell Road

The strip commercial development pattern along Roswell Road is considered to be one of the least desirable land use characteristics in Sandy Springs. Solutions, in order to be successful, must combine transportation, land use, and urban design principles. What can be done to improve the function and appearance of the Roswell Road corridor?

80. Assessing the implications of major road improvements

Transportation projects can act as stimuli to further land use changes, which may be desirable or undesirable. What land use changes might occur when roads are widened, and what are the

most appropriate policies to handle land use changes precipitated by transportation improvements. For instance, how will Sandy Springs respond to possible land use changes resulting from the proposed Hammond Drive Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line (see glossary)?

GLOSSARY OF PLANNING TERMS

The following terms have been defined to increase reader understanding of this document. With regard to some terms, there is not a consensus in the planning profession on how they can be defined.

Active Recreational Facilities: Equipment and areas prepared for active use for recreational and leisure purposes, including but not limited to: playground equipment (swing sets and climbing structures); courts for basketball, volleyball, and tennis; leveled, striped fields for football, soccer, or multiple purposes; community picnic pavilions (including covered facilities with grills and/or fire rings); community buildings for recreational events, and golf courses. Trails and bikeways through open spaces are not typically considered active recreational facilities.

Affordable Housing: Housing that has a sale price or rental amount that is within the means of a household that may occupy middle-, moderate-, or low-income housing. In the case of for-sale units, housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance and condominium or association fees, if any, constitute no more than 28 (or 30) percent of such gross annual household income for a household of the size which may occupy the unit in question. In the case of dwelling units for rent, housing for which the rent and utilities constitute no more than 30 percent of such gross annual income for a household of the size that may occupy the unit in question.

Buildout: A theoretical condition or imagined future that assumes development occurs on all available vacant lands at densities and intensities according to the future land use plan map, or allowed by current zoning, or both. Buildout is typically quantified by assigning a land use to each vacant parcel to be developed and multiplying the acreage of vacant land by the units per acre (residential) or floor-area ratio to determine additional housing units and square footage of non-residential development.

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): A flexible, rubber-tired rapid transit mode that combines stations, vehicles, service, running ways, and intelligent transportation system (ITS) elements into an integrated system with a positive identity and unique image. In many respects, BRT is “rubber-tired” light rail transit, but it has greater operating flexibility and potentially lower capital and operating costs than light rail.

Capital Improvement: An improvement with a useful life of ten years or more, by new construction or other action, which increases the service capacity of a public facility.

Capital Improvements Element: A component of a comprehensive plan adopted pursuant to O.C.G.A. 50-8-1 et seq. which sets out projected needs for system improvements during a planning horizon established in the comprehensive plan, a schedule of capital improvements that will meet the anticipated need for system improvements, and a description of anticipated funding sources for each required improvement.

Character Area: A specific geographic area within the community that: has unique or special characteristics to be preserved or enhanced (such as a downtown, a historic district, a neighborhood, or a transportation corridor; has potential to evolve into a unique area with more intentional guidance of future development through adequate planning and implementation (such as a strip commercial corridor that could be revitalized into a more attractive village

development pattern); or requires special attention due to unique development issues (rapid change of development patterns, economic decline, etc.). Each character area is a planning sub-area within the community where more detailed, small-area planning and implementation of certain policies, investments, incentives, or regulations may be applied in order to preserve, improve, or otherwise influence its future development patterns in a manner consistent with the community vision.

Character Area Map: A map showing character areas. Local planning requirements require a "preliminary" character area map be provided in the community assessment report. In Sandy Springs, this is referred to as the Visionary Character Areas and is made a part of the community assessment report. The Community Agenda is required to contain a character area map, which is a version of the preliminary character area map that is refined during the community participation program implementation process.

Community Agenda: The portion of the comprehensive plan that provides guidance for future decision-making about the community, prepared with adequate input from stakeholders and the general public. It includes: (1) a community vision for the future physical development of the community, expressed in the form of a map indicating unique character areas, each with its own strategy for guiding future development patterns; (2) a list of issues and opportunities identified by the community for further action; and (3) an implementation program that will help the community realize its vision for the future and address the identified issues and opportunities.

Community Assessment: The portion of the comprehensive plan that is an objective and professional assessment of data and information about the community prepared without extensive direct public participation. It includes: (1) a list of potential issues and opportunities the community may which to take action to address, (2) evaluation of community policies, activities, and development patterns for consistency with Quality Community Objectives; (3) analysis of existing development patterns, including a map of recommended character areas for consideration in developing an overall vision for future development of the community; and (4) data and information to substantiate these evaluations and the potential issues and opportunities. The product of the Community Assessment must be a concise and informative report (such as an executive summary), to be used to inform decision-making by stakeholders during development of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

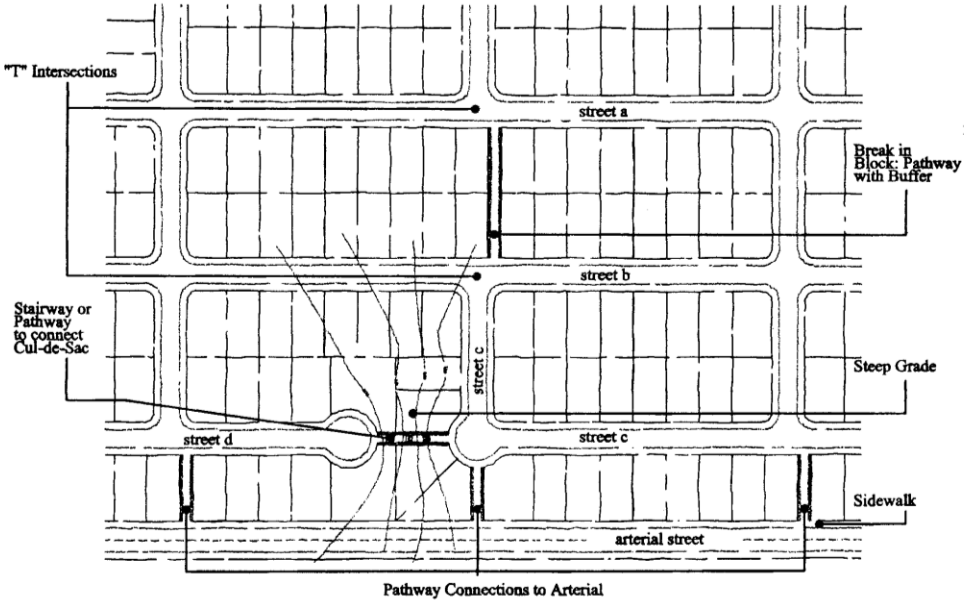
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): A grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development on a formula basis for entitlement communities, by the state Department of Community Affairs for non-entitled jurisdictions. This grant allots money to cities and counties for housing rehabilitation and community development, including public facilities and economic development.

Community Participation Program: The portion of the comprehensive plan that describes the local government's program for ensuring adequate public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Community Agenda portion of the plan.

Comprehensive Plan: A 20-year plan by a county or municipality covering such county or municipality and including three components: a Community Assessment, a Community Participation Program, and a Community Agenda. The comprehensive plan must be prepared pursuant to the local planning requirements for preparation of comprehensive plans and for implementation of comprehensive plans, established by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs in accordance with O.C.G.A 50-8-7.1(b) and 50-8-7.2.

Connectivity: A term that refers to the existing or future, desired state of connections that enable mobility between and among various uses and activities. Connectivity can refer to the street network, in terms of whether it provides connections (e.g., through streets), or is "disconnected" in terms of dead-end streets with cul-de-sacs.

Connected grid street network.



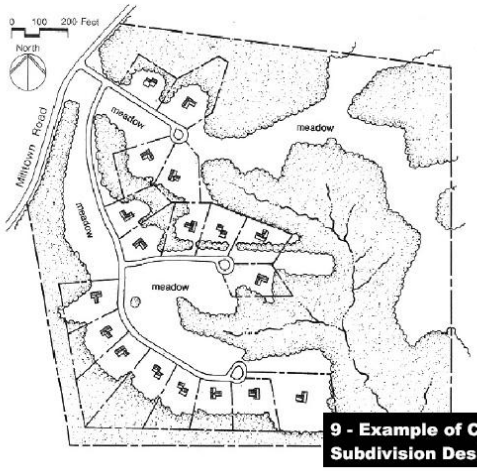
Existing neighborhoods that have cul-de-sacs and lack of sidewalks can be "retrofitted" for greater pedestrian "connectivity.

Conservation Area: Any land set aside for conservation of the land in its natural state.

Conservation Easement: A nonpossessory interest of a holder in real property imposing limitations or affirmative obligations, the purposes of which include retaining or protecting natural, scenic, or open-space values of real property; assuring its availability for agricultural, forest, recreational, or open-space use; protecting natural resources; maintaining or enhancing air or water quality; or preserving the historical, architectural, archeological, or cultural aspects of real property. (Georgia Code Section 44-10-2)

Conservation Subdivision: A subdivision where open space is the central organizing element of the subdivision design and that identifies and permanently protects all primary and all or some of the secondary conservation areas within the boundaries of the subdivision.

Corridor: An area of land, typically along a linear route, containing land uses and transportation systems influenced by the existence of that route.



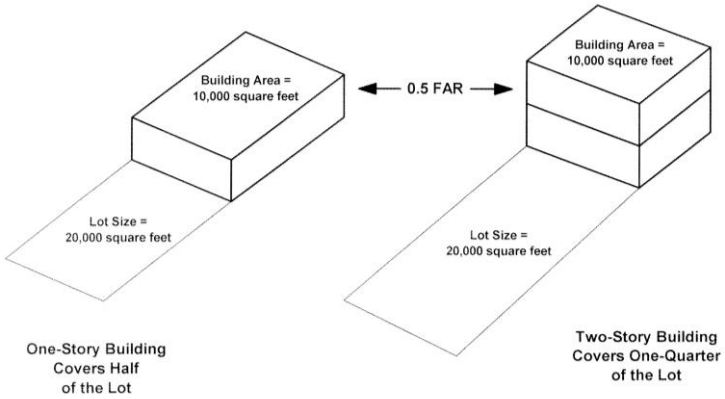
9 - Example of Conservation Subdivision Design

Density: The quantity of building per unit of lot area; for example, the number of dwellings per lot area (gross square foot or per acre).

Design Guidelines: Statements and illustrations that are intended to convey the preferred quality for a place.

Development Impact Fee: A payment of money imposed upon development as a condition of development approval to pay for a proportionate share of the cost of system improvements needed to serve new growth and development.

Floor-Area Ratio: The floor area of a building or buildings on a lot divided by the area of the lot.



Floor Area Ratio

Forecast: Judgment about the likelihood of assumptions behind a projection.

Form-based Zoning: An approach to regulating that seeks to regulate building form rather than, or in addition to, land use. It often establishes regulations based on building type and scale and character of surrounding development. Form-based codes also typically contain a "regulating plan" which identifies which building standards apply to which block frontages,

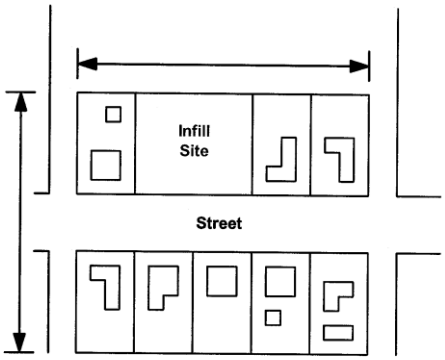
building standards that set basic parameters for building height, setbacks, roof design, and fenestration, and architectural and streetscape standards.

Future Land Use Plan Map: A map showing long-term future land uses desired in the community. Such a map is "optional" in the local planning requirements. A future land use plan map will be prepared and made a part of the Community Agenda. Once prepared and adopted it will replace the future land use plan map adopted in the Sandy Springs Interim Comprehensive Plan. The future land use plan map is different from the character area map, in that it provides specific recommendations for future land uses and generally provides detail at the parcel level.

Goal: A statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition.

Infill: Development that occurs on vacant, skipped-over, bypassed, or underused lots in otherwise built-up sites or areas.

Interim Comprehensive Plan: The comprehensive plan adopted by the Sandy Springs Mayor and City Council on June 20, 2006, which contains a future land use plan map and which serves as a guide to policy. The adopted plan is "interim" because it was adopted in anticipation of serving an interim period, until a new comprehensive plan for the city can be prepared and adopted. See also definition of comprehensive plan.



Infill Site and Established Residential Area

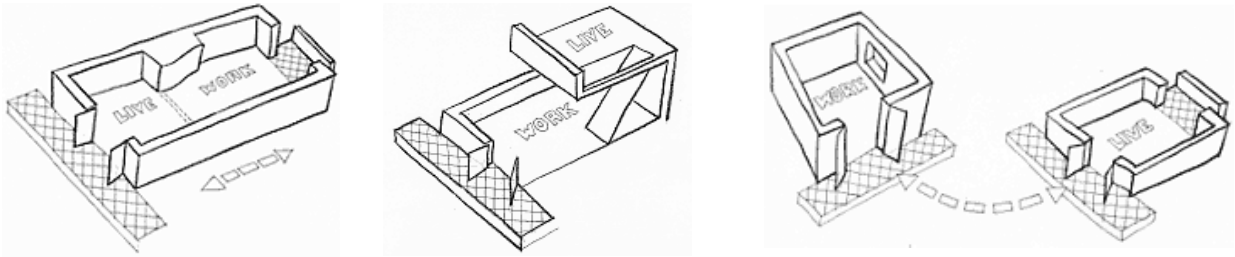
Jobs/Housing Balance: An examination of the relationship between jobs and housing, and between where jobs are or will be located and where housing is or will be available. Jobs/housing balance is often expressed in terms of a ratio between jobs and the number of housing units. The higher the jobs/housing ratio, the more jobs the area has relative to housing. A high ratio may indicate to a community that it is not meeting the housing needs (in terms of either affordability or actual physical units) of people working in the community.

Land Trust: A private, nonprofit conservation organization formed to protect natural resources, such as productive farm or forest land, natural areas, historic structures, and recreational areas. Land trusts purchase and accept donations of conservation easements. They educate the public about the need to conserve land and some provide land-use and estate planning services to local governments and individual citizens.

Level of Service: A measure of the relationship between service capacity and service demand for public facilities in terms of demand to capacity ratios or the comfort and convenience of use or service of public facilities, or both.

Live-Work Unit: Buildings or spaces within buildings that are used jointly for commercial and residential purposes where the two uses are physically connected in one unit and residential use of the space is accessory to the primary use as a place of work. This term is distinguished from a home occupation and from a mixed-use building. Live-work units may have larger work spaces than permitted by home occupation, and live/work units design the floor space for both living and working areas. Live-work units are distinguished from mixed-use buildings in that a

mixed-use building has residential and nonresidential uses in the same building, but the residential and nonresidential spaces are not necessarily connected or used by the same person.



Source: Drawings by Noel Isherwood Associates – Architects and Urban Designers, London, England. In "Live/Work and Work/Live Spaces: Potential Economic Development Applications," By Jennie Geisner, *Practicing Planner*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2006).

Local Historic Preservation Ordinance: An ordinance that identifies procedures for creating local historic districts and administering the review of building renovations or alterations to properties located within the district. It typically establishes a historic preservation commission that is charged with the review of development proposals within historic districts.

Local Planning Requirements: The standards and procedures for local government planning that shall be followed in preparation of local comprehensive plans, for implementation of local comprehensive plans, and for participation in the comprehensive planning process.

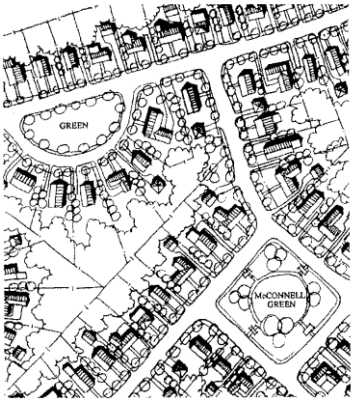
Lot, Flag: A tract or lot of land of uneven dimensions in which the portion fronting on a street is less than the required minimum width required for construction of a building or structure on that lot. Also called a panhandle lot.

Mixed-Use Development: A single building containing more than one type of land use; or a single development of more than one building and use, where the different types of land uses are in close proximity, planned as a unified, complementary whole.

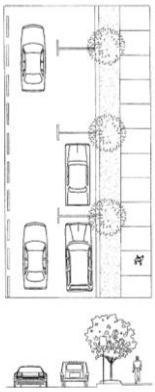
Mixed-Income Housing: Housing for people with a broad range of incomes on the same site, development, or immediate neighborhood.

National Register of Historic Places: The federal government's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation, documented and evaluated according to uniform standards established by the National Park Service, which administers the program.

New Urbanism: A set of principles or school of thought that suggest neighborhoods should be built like those that existed before the advent of the automobile. Characteristics of new urbanism or new urban developments include a street network that forms a connected grid, houses built close to the street (i.e., little or no setback) with front porches, alleys (where appropriate) and garages located at the rear of the lot, and on-street parking, among others. For more information see the Charter for the New Urbanism.



Illustrative new urban or traditional neighborhood development.



On-street parking is one characteristic of "new urban" developments.

Objective: A statement that describes a specific future condition to be attained within a stated period of time. Typically, objectives are more numerous than goals, and they are typically organized according to the topics in the goals statements.

Overlay District: A defined geographic area that encompasses one or more underlying zoning districts and that imposes additional requirements above those required by the underlying zoning district. An overlay district can be coterminous with existing zoning districts or contain only parts of one or more such districts.

Pedestrian-Friendly: Physical attributes, characteristics, and designs that are intended to be more accommodating to pedestrian traffic than what is typically achieved by conventional designs.

Passive Recreation: Recreational activities and places that generally do not require a developed site. This generally includes such activities as hiking, horseback riding, and picnicking, provided that such activities occur in a manner that is consistent with existing natural conditions.

Projection: A prediction of future conditions that will occur if the assumptions inherent in the projection technique prove true.

Qualified Local Government: A county or municipality that: adopts and maintains a comprehensive plan in conformity with the local planning requirements; establishes regulations consistent with its comprehensive plan and with the local planning requirements; and does not fail to participate in the Georgia Department of Community Affairs' mediation or other means of resolving conflicts in a manner in which, in the judgment of the Department, reflects a good faith effort to resolve any conflict.

Redevelop: To demolish existing buildings or to increase the overall floor area existing on a property, or both, irrespective of whether a change occurs in land use.

Redevelopment Area: An area identified as requiring specific action by the local government for revitalization, reinvestment, and/or reuse to occur.

Rules for Environmental Planning Criteria: Those standards and procedures with respect to natural resources, the environment, and vital areas of the state established and administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources pursuant to O.C.G.A. 12-2-8, including, but not limited to, criteria for the protection of water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountains and protected river corridors.

Service Area: A geographic area defined by a municipality, county or intergovernmental agreement in which a defined set of public facilities provides service to development within the area. Service areas shall be designated on the basis of sound planning or engineering principles, or both.

Service Delivery Strategy: The intergovernmental arrangement among city governments, the county government, and other affected entities within the same county for delivery of community services, developed in accordance with the Service Delivery Strategy Law. A local government's existing Strategy must be updated concurrent with the comprehensive plan update. To ensure consistency between the comprehensive plan and the agreed upon Strategy: (1) the services to be provided by the local government, as identified in the comprehensive plan, cannot exceed those identified in the agreed upon strategy and (2) the service areas identified for individual services that will be provided by the local government must be consistent between the plan and Strategy.

Stakeholder: Someone (or any agency or group) with a "stake," or interest, in the issues being addressed.

Starter Housing: Generally, housing that is affordable for first-time homebuyers to own. The term usually refers to detached, single-family dwellings, though it is not necessarily limited in that respect.

State Planning Recommendations: The supplemental guidance provided by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to assist communities in preparing plans and addressing the local planning requirements. The plan preparers and the community must review these recommendations where referenced in the planning requirements in order to determine their applicability or helpfulness to the community's plan.

Short-Term Work Program: That portion of the Implementation Program that lists the specific actions to be undertaken annually by the local government over the upcoming five years to implement the comprehensive plan.

Streetscape: The design of a street, including the roadbed, sidewalks, landscape planting, furnishings along the street, and the character of the adjacent building façade.

Tax Allocation District: (see "Tax Increment Financing")

Tax Increment Financing: A financing technique that allows a local government or redevelopment agency to target a group of contiguous properties for improvement – a TIF district or, in Georgia, tax allocation district – and earmark any future growth in property tax revenues in the district to pay for initial and ongoing improvements there. This growth in tax revenue is the "tax increment."

Traffic Calming: The combination of primarily physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use. Measures may include speed humps, raised crosswalks, speed tables, textured surfaces, traffic circles, and others.

Transit: Bus, light rail, and heavy rail facilities. See also "Bus Rail Transit" in this glossary.

Textured surfaces are one type of "traffic calming".

Transit-Oriented Development: Compact development built around transit stops, especially rail transit; Development that is located within a 10-minute walk, or approximately 0.5 mile, from a light rail, heavy rail, or commuter rail station. It also includes development along heavily used bus and bus rapid transit corridors. Transit-oriented development is characterized by a mix of uses, including housing, retail, office, research, civic and other uses.

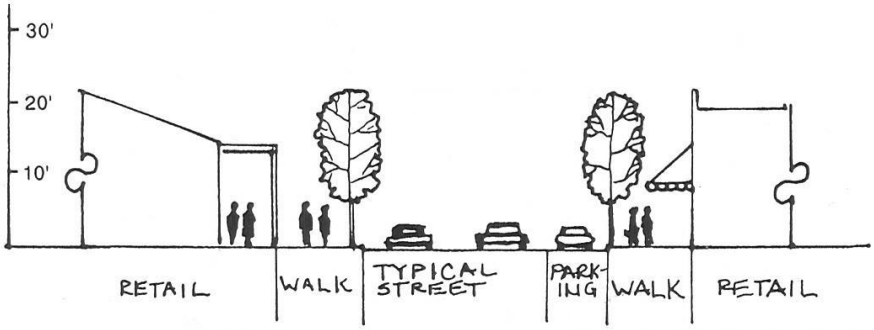
Viewshed: An area visible from a point, a line, or a specific locality. It is the visual equivalent of a watershed; the sum total of the area covered by views along a road, trail, or other point or place.

Vision: A written statement that is intended to paint a picture of what the community desires to become, providing a complete description of the development patterns to be encouraged within the jurisdiction."

Visioning: A planning process through which a community creates a shared vision for its future.

Volume-to-capacity Ratio: A measure of the operating capacity of a roadway or intersection, in terms of the number of vehicles passing through, divided by the number of vehicles that theoretically could pass through when the roadway or intersection is operating at its designed capacity. Abbreviated as "v/c." At a v/c ratio of 1.0, the roadway or intersection is operating at capacity. If the ratio is less than 1.0, the traffic facility has additional capacity.

Walkable or Walkability: The broad range of community design features that support walking.



Workforce household: A family or household that earns no more than eighty percent (80%) of the area's median household income.

Workforce housing: Housing that is affordable to workforce households.

Source: Compiled by Jerry Weitz & Associates, Inc., from various sources, including regulations prepared by the same firm, Rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, *A Planners Dictionary* (Michael Davidson and Fay Dolnick, Planning Advisory Service Report No. 521/522, 2004), and *Planning and Urban Design Standards*, 2006, by American Planning Association and John Wiley & Sons, Inc.