

Strategic Economic Development Plan

City of Sandy Springs, Georgia

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction	1-1
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CHAPTER 2: SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS

A. Introduction	2-1
B. Major Findings	2-1
C. Methodology	2-2
1. Study Areas	2-2
2. Data Sources	2-3
D. Population Trends and Projections	2-3
E. Population by Age	2-5
F. Race & Ethnicity	2-6
G. Households	2-7
H. Household Income	2-9
I. Educational Attainment	2-12
J. Conclusion	2-13

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

A. Introduction	3-1
B. Major Findings	3-1
C. Methodology	3-2
D. Labor Force Characteristics	3-3
1. Job Growth	3-3
2. Employment by Age	3-4
3. Employment by Educational Attainment	3-5
4. Unemployment Rate	3-6
5. Commuting Patterns	3-7
6. In-Commuting	3-9
7. Out-Commuting	3-10
E. Employment Trends	3-10
1. 2-Digit NAICS Industry Growth Trends	3-11
2. 4-Digit NAICS Industry Sector Trends	3-12
3. 4-Digit NAICS Industry Sector Projections	3-14



CHAPTER 4: REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS

A.	Introduction	4-1
B.	Major Findings	4-1
C.	Methodology and Data Sources	4-2
D.	Non-Residential Land Use Patterns	4-3
1.	Current Land Use	4-3
2.	Recent Development	4-4
3.	Planned and Proposed Developments	4-6
E.	Office Market	4-8
1.	Vacancy and Net Absorption	4-9
2.	Lease Rates	4-11
3.	COVID-19 Impacts	4-12
F.	Retail Market	4-14
1.	Vacancy and Net Absorption	4-14
2.	Rental Rate	4-14
3.	Supportable Retail Space	4-15
4.	COVID-19 Impacts	4-19
G.	Residential Market	4-19
1.	Housing Type Diversity	4-20
2.	Housing Price Diversity	4-21
3.	Economic Development Outlook	4-22

CHAPTER 5: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

A.	Introduction	5-1
B.	Methodology	5-2
C.	Business Climate Factors	5-2
1.	Financial Assets and Income	5-4
2.	Business and Jobs	5-4
3.	Housing and Home Ownership Opportunities	5-5
4.	Healthcare	5-5
5.	Education.....	5-6
D.	Site Selection Criteria	5-7
E.	Competitive Assets and Constraints	5-9
1.	Strengths	5-10
2.	Weaknesses.....	5-11
3.	Threats	5-12
4.	Opportunities	5-14
F.	Sandy Springs Business Development Opportunities.....	5-16
1.	Professional and Business Support Services	5-17
2.	Internet of Things (IoT)	5-18
3.	Cottage Production	5-19
4.	Environmental Sciences.....	5-20



CHAPTER 6: OPPORTUNITY SITE ANALYSIS

A.	Introduction	6-1
B.	City Springs District	6-4
C.	Northridge District	6-9
D.	North Springs MARTA	6-13
E.	Medical District	6-18
F.	Perimeter District	6-23
G.	Powers Ferry Road	6-28
H.	Roswell Road South	6-32

CHAPTER 7: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A.	Introduction	7-1
B.	Proposed Economic Development Goals	7-1
1.	Implementation Goals	7-1
2.	Operational Goals	7-3
C.	Building for Success	7-5
D.	Priority Actions	7-6
1.	Business Retention and Expansion	7-7
2.	Business Recruitment	7-10
3.	Asset Development	7-11
4.	Toolbox Development	7-12
5.	Outreach, Marketing, and Communication	7-14
6.	Organization and Coordination	7-19
E.	Implementation Matrix	7-30

APPENDIX

A.	Working Group	A-1
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1 INTRODUCTION

The City of Sandy Springs incorporated in 2005, and it is the sixth largest city in Georgia and the second largest city in the metropolitan Atlanta area. Prior to 2005, Sandy Springs residents relied upon a large, traditionally modeled county government for the provision of services—including economic development—which residents felt did not adequately meet their needs. In 2012, the City completed its first strategic economic development plan (2012 Plan) to guide the City’s economic development efforts. The City’s public private partnership approach included contracting its economic development efforts. However, in 2019, the City transitioned its general services, including economic development activities, from a contracting arrangement to full-time city-held positions.

As part of this transition process, the City’s leadership identified that many of the 2012 Plan tactics and strategies have been successfully implemented and the City and its business community have realized strong economic growth. However, the City’s leadership also recognized the need to set forth a new plan of action that elevates the economic development program’s services and solidifies the City’s status as a competitive destination for businesses to locate and grow.

The City’s elected leadership, administration, business community, and key Sandy Springs stakeholders were engaged over a ten-month process to identify the City’s emerging economic development goals, review the market findings and opportunities, and prioritize recommended strategies. This Strategic Economic Development Plan (SEDP) is intended to provide the City of Sandy Spring with an action plan that guides the City’s efforts over the next five years. The report includes:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Demographic Analysis
- Chapter 3 – Economic Base Analysis
- Chapter 4 – Real Estate Market Analysis
- Chapter 5 – Target Industry Analysis
- Chapter 6 – Opportunity Site Analysis
- Chapter 7 – Implementation Strategy



2 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic analysis provides the foundation for understanding a community, its economy, and its potential. The consultant analyzed recent demographic trends for the City of Sandy Springs' local and regional markets to understand the City's past and current market context. The analysis in this chapter also allows the Consultant to assess the Sandy Springs resident and workforce, how they have changed over time, and how they compare to the local and regional marketplace.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

- The City of Sandy Springs is an integral player in the affluent North Fulton economy and has competitively strong labor force characteristics – The span from 2010-2018 has seen a steadily growing marketplace as Sandy Springs continues to benefit from its participation in the vibrant Atlanta metropolitan area. Its large concentration of highly educated residents supports impressive FinTech, medical, and business services ecosystems. Being centrally located to the entire metro workforce provides strategic opportunities for continued growth.
- Along with the greater North Fulton region, unbalanced aging of the workforce is a mid-term and long-term concern that could dampen continued prosperity in Sandy Springs – While a mature and educated workforce has many positives, Sandy Springs must continue to accommodate growth AND strategically replace retirees in order to encourage long-term economic growth and social stability. Planning and policy decisions that allow for residents to age-in-place through new residential development types can address the needs of the retiring Baby Boomer generation while creating housing choice for the next generation of workers. Encouraging housing typology and price diversity also addresses the City's high—and rising—housing costs, as this is one of the major obstacles to attracting a larger, more inclusive, and more sustainable workforce.
- The degree to which Sandy Springs can envision and adopt a forward-thinking and holistic approach to economic development will be critical to its long-term economic sustainability – The live-work-play development pattern has been employed and proven within



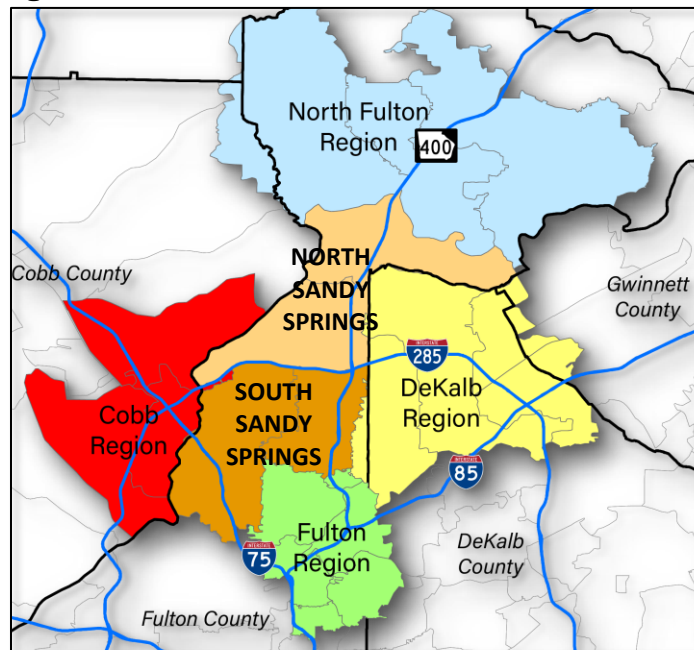
North Fulton with projects such as Avalon in neighboring Alpharetta. These types of developments can provide for increased housing options, impressive commercial lease rate appreciation, and engaging social interactions. Still, many neighboring communities are generally less friendly to higher density housing as a concept. This position underestimates the positive impact that housing diversity has on preserving and attracting workers for entry and mid-level jobs being sustained and created locally. These workers are essential providers of the services and amenities that contribute to Sandy Springs' desirability as a place to live.

C. METHODOLOGY

1. STUDY AREAS

RKG Associates used municipal boundaries for the economic base and real estate analysis where possible. Some data sources do not line up with municipal boundaries. These sources follow Census Tract boundaries. For these efforts, RKG had to use such boundaries to simulate the City of Sandy Springs. The North Sandy Springs and South Sandy Springs boundaries effectively cover all of the City. In addition to assessing Sandy Springs, RKG Associates also analyzed local and regional comparative boundaries to understand unique characteristics surrounding Sandy Springs, and how they affect economic development opportunities for the City. These boundaries also follow census tract boundaries as identified in Figure 2-1. These areas were chosen based on their economic activity level and relevance to Sandy Springs' competitive marketplace. The following analysis focuses on Sandy Springs, the four surrounding local markets identified in Figure 2-1, the Greater Sandy Springs Market Area (the combination of the six local marketplaces identified in Figure 2-1), Fulton County as a whole, and the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Each section of this analysis will detail the boundaries used.

Figure 2-1





2. DATA SOURCES

Primary data sources used for this analysis include demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau and current estimates and projections from ESRI and EMSI, both are nationally recognized third-party data providers that use U.S. Census data to generate estimates and projections of a variety of socioeconomic variables for a range of geographic areas. Any additional data sources not outlined here are noted within that respective section.

D. POPULATION TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS

Sandy Springs is the largest city within north Fulton County. In 2018, the population of Sandy Springs was estimated to be 105,411, approximately 11,000 people more than the next largest city (Roswell). The six north Fulton County cities constitute approximately 40% of the total Fulton County population.

Table 2-1

North Fulton County Population Growth by City
2010-2018

Jurisdiction	2018 Population	2010-18 % Growth
Sandy Springs	105,411	+16.1%
Alpharetta	64,672	+18.2%
Johns Creek	83,637	+15.1%
Milton	38,171	+31.0%
Roswell	94,257	+10.1%
Fulton County Total	1,021,902	+15.2%

Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates, 2020

Recent population growth trends indicate that Sandy Springs and north Fulton County are reaching buildout. Until recently, Sandy Springs and all of north Fulton County experienced substantially faster population growth than the rest of Fulton County. However, recent trends show this growth is more in line with the overall County growth levels (Table 2-1). Sandy Springs experienced a 16.1 percent increase since the 2010 Census, only slightly higher than the Fulton County growth rate of 15.2 percent. Population projection data indicate north Fulton municipalities will continue to increase at a pace consistent with Fulton County and the greater metropolitan Atlanta region (Figure 2-2). This finding suggests that north Fulton County is reaching build out, accommodating fewer new ‘greenfield’ developments, and therefore slowing resident growth.

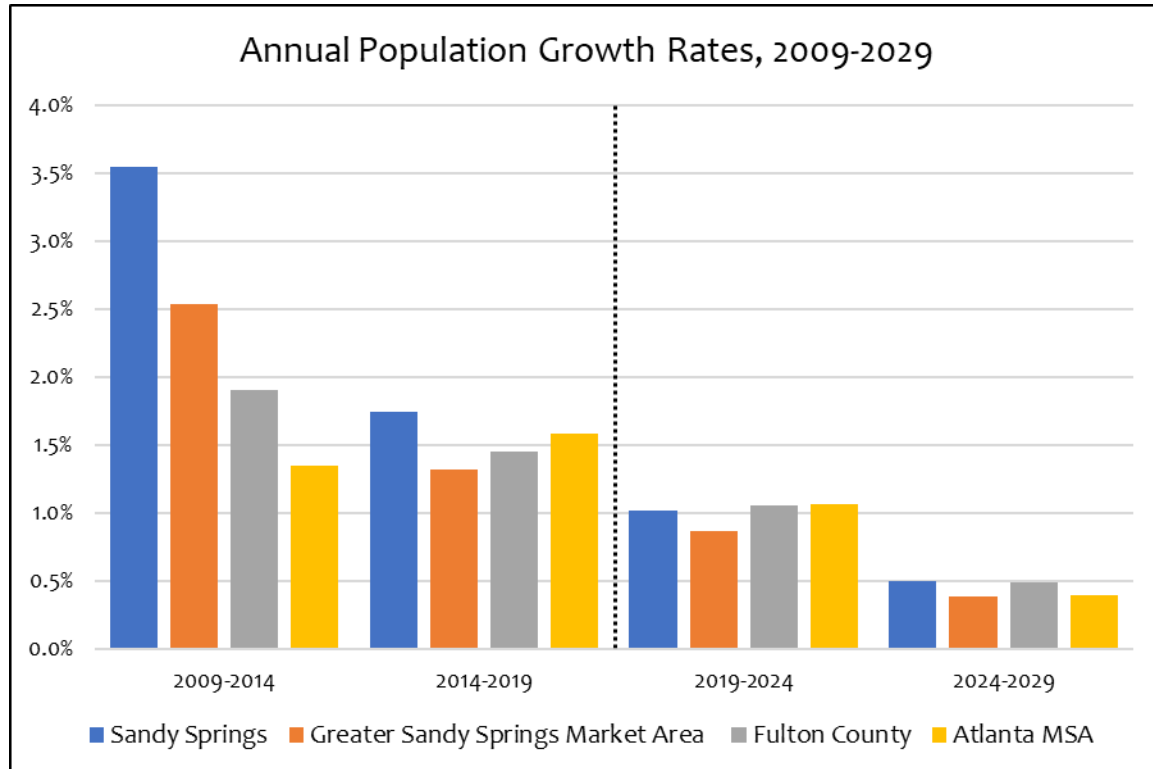
Projections from EMSI, an economic and demographic data aggregator, suggest that the rate of population growth in Sandy Springs and the surrounding area will slow over the next decade. From 2010 to 2019 the population of Sandy Springs increased at an annual rate of 2.0 percent. This rate is expected to slow to just 0.8 percent annually from 2019 to 2029. The growth rates of North Fulton Market area and the metro Atlanta area are also both expected to slow significantly in the next 10 years. The population growth rate in



Sandy Springs is still expected to be higher than either the North Fulton Market area or the metro Atlanta area from 2019 to 2029 (Figure 2-2). It must be noted that these projections are pre-COVID-19, so the impact of the pandemic on future growth is still being considered.

The concerns of an aging workforce (discussed in the next section) and slowing population growth has the potential to adversely impact local businesses. Simply put, a large part of the Sandy Springs workforce is reaching retirement. With few opportunities for greenfield development, new residential development will have to come through infill or redevelopment. The City's policy and land use regulations will need to promote higher mixed-use densities to address the supply side challenges contributing to these changing demographic conditions.

Figure 2-2



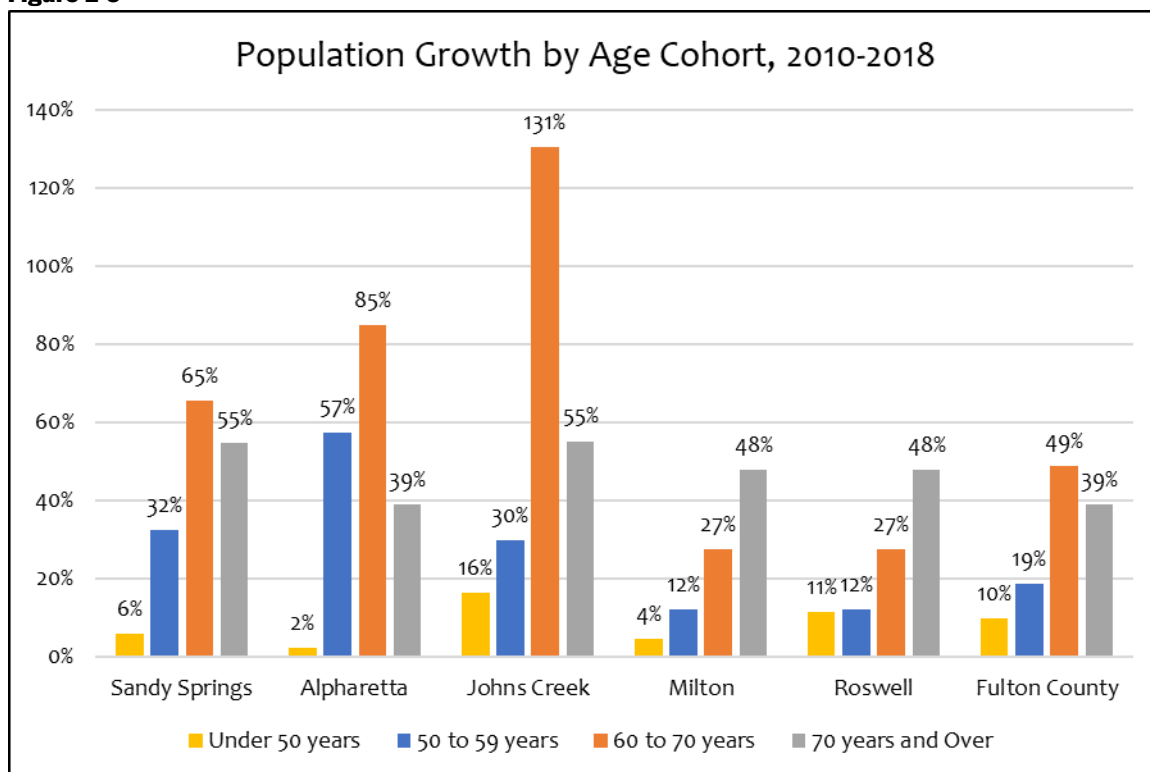
Sources: EMSI and RKG Associates, 2020



E. POPULATION BY AGE

Like many suburban communities across the country, Sandy Springs is home to an aging population, with a swelling number of post-retirement-age residents. From 2010 to 2018 the number of residents in Sandy Springs aged 70 years or older increased by 55 percent, well above the countywide growth rate of 39 percent and tied with Johns Creek for the top growth rate among north Fulton cities (Figure 2-3). Sandy Springs also posted very strong growth rates among the other Baby Boomer age cohorts of 50-59 years (+32 percent) and 60-69 years (+65 percent). The City's population of all residents under the age of 50 increased by only 6 percent from 2010 to 2018, with minimal increase in the age 30-49 cohort (+3 percent). These growth rates are indicative of an area with high housing costs and limited housing opportunities for young adults and families.

Figure 2-3



Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

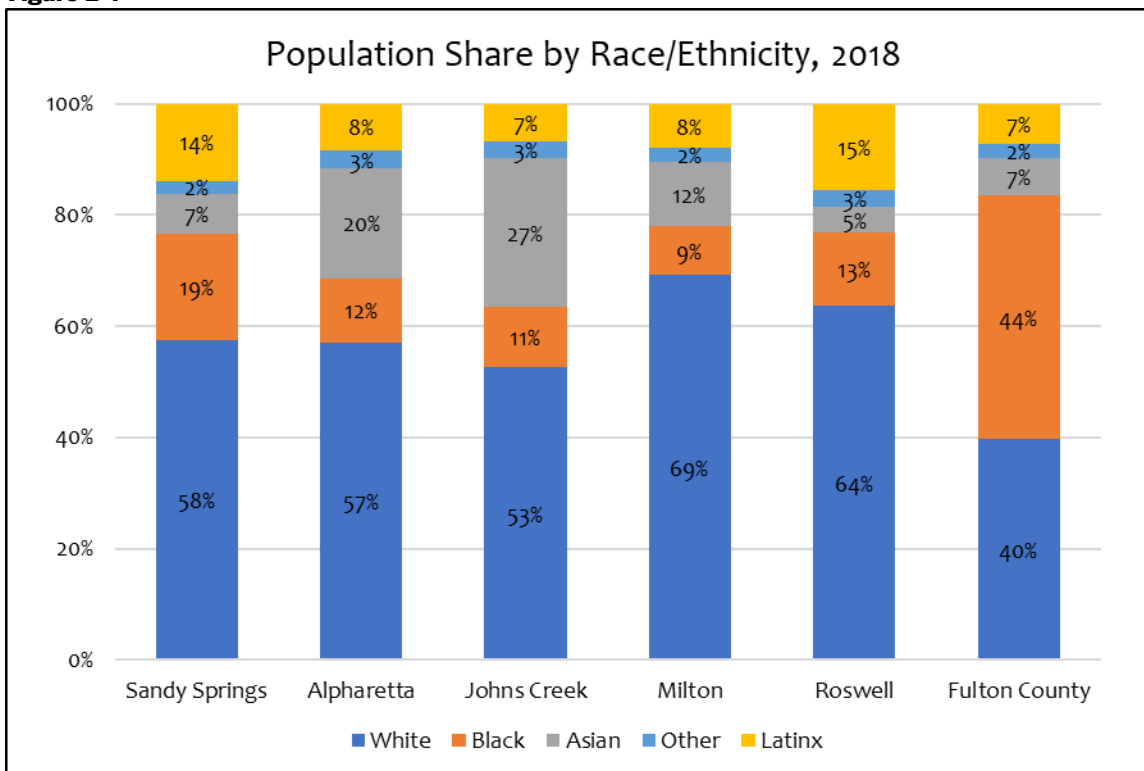
This finding is consistent with national trends and could have a substantial impact on the City's long-term economic development sustainability, as Baby Boomers are tending to age-in-place, which will adversely impact housing availability for the next generation of workers, and therefore the amount of available workforce. The City is undertaking a separate and concurrent Housing Needs Assessment to address housing needs in the City.



F. RACE & ETHNICITY

Racial diversity in north Fulton County is not as dynamic as the County as a whole and varies among the individual municipalities. The resident population of Sandy Springs is 58 percent non-Hispanic white, which is comparable to the Cities of Alpharetta and Johns Creek, but lower than Roswell or Milton. Among non-white populations, Alpharetta and Johns Creek have a higher concentration of Asian residents while Roswell and Sandy Springs have a higher concentration of Latinx residents (Figure 2-4). Sandy Springs also has the highest concentration of African Americans (19 percent).

Figure 2-4



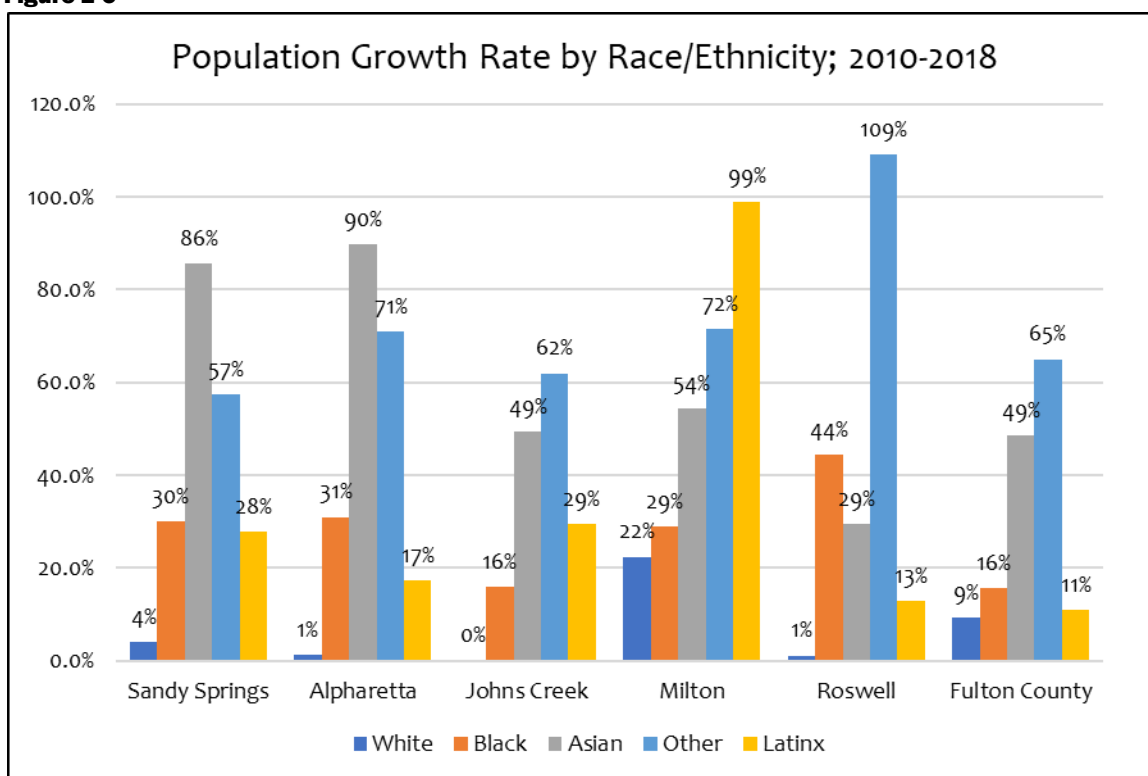
Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

That said, the City's population growth has been overwhelmingly non-white. The non-Hispanic white population in Sandy Springs increased by 4.0 percent between 2010 and 2018. In contrast, the growth rate of all other groups was much higher, with the Asian population showing the strongest increase at 86 percent (Figure 2-5). The Black population (+30 percent) and Latinx population (+28 percent) both showed strong growth as well. In total, 84 percent of the City's population growth since 2010 has been non-white. The diversity of residents provides the City an opportunity to strengthen its small business and entrepreneurial efforts targeting minority and women-owned businesses. Creating strategies that embrace the City's emerging population groups can provide a



niche for the City’s business development efforts and increase the potential business mentoring program candidates. In doing so, the City will be better positioned to retain these companies due to their full integration into the Sandy Springs community. Sandy Springs will need an intentional plan to identify, attract, and engage this growing part of the community.

Figure 2-5



Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

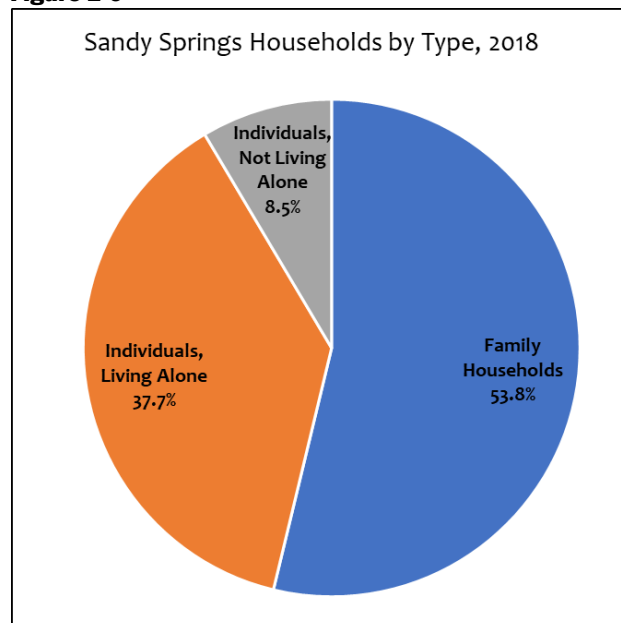
G. HOUSEHOLDS

Sandy Springs is a very diverse community in terms of the makeup of its housing stock and households. As of 2018, just 53.8 percent of the City’s residents lived in “family households,” or households with two or more people related by marriage or blood, and 37.7 percent of Sandy Springs’ households were comprised of individuals living alone (Figure 2-6). These figures are comparable to those of Fulton County as a whole, but differ greatly from other north Fulton cities, where family households dominate.



The 2018 average household in Sandy Springs contained 2.30 people, compared with 2.55 for all of Fulton County, 2.99 in Johns Creek, and 2.97 in Milton. Sandy Springs also stands out from other north Fulton communities in terms of housing tenure. As of 2018 more than half (52 percent) of all households in Sandy Springs were renters, compared with 35 percent or lower in the other north Fulton cities (Figure 2-7). Nearly all recent household growth in Sandy Springs has been among renters as well, with the number of renter-occupied units increasing by 21.5 percent from 2010 to 2018 compared with just 4.6 percent for owner-occupied units (Table 2-2). This correlates with the fact that the growth rate of non-family households (17 percent) was nearly double the growth rate of family households (9 percent). This finding is reflective of the type of residential development that occurred during this time period.

Figure 2-6



Sources: ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG, 2020

Overall, the characteristics of households and housing tenure in Sandy Springs are far more in line with those of an urban center than those of a suburban bedroom community. In its 2017 Next 10 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Sandy Springs placed great emphasis on the protection of its legacy single-family neighborhoods, which comprise about half of the City's total developed land area. These

areas will remain stable and largely off-limits to new development, meaning that nearly all new housing development in Sandy Springs will need to be concentrated in higher-

Table 2-2

**Sandy Springs Housing & Household Measures
2010-2018**

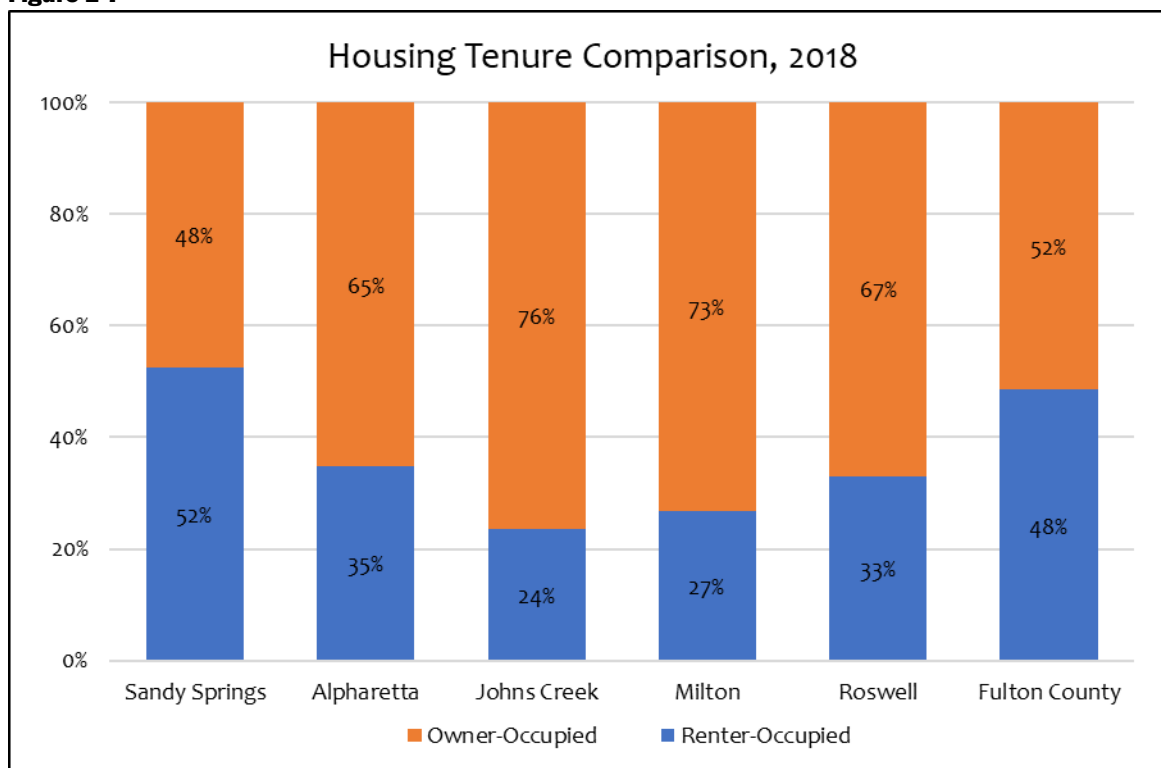
Category	2018	% Growth Since 2010
Total Housing Units	50,386	+7.0%
Total Households	45,833	+12.9%
Housing Vacancy Rate	9.0%	-4.8%
Owner-Occupied Units	21,823	+4.6%
Renter-Occupied Units	24,010	+21.5%

Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates, 2020



density developments around its commercial nodes.¹ These development patterns will likely continue to tip the balance towards smaller households and more renters.

Figure 2-7



Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates,

H. HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The population base in Sandy Springs includes high concentrations of both high-income and low-income households. The diversity of Sandy Springs is also reflected in the income profile of its households. The City's median household income in 2018 was \$74,093, which is above the Fulton County median of \$64,787, but far below the median income levels of the other north Fulton cities (Figure 2-8). The median income in Sandy Springs increased 10.2 percent from 2010 to 2018, which was a slower growth rate than for the County or most of the other north Fulton cities.²

The slower rate of income growth in Sandy Springs relative to Fulton County is likely related to the fact that recent population growth has been driven by renters and non-family households, as documented in the previous section. The expected trend toward

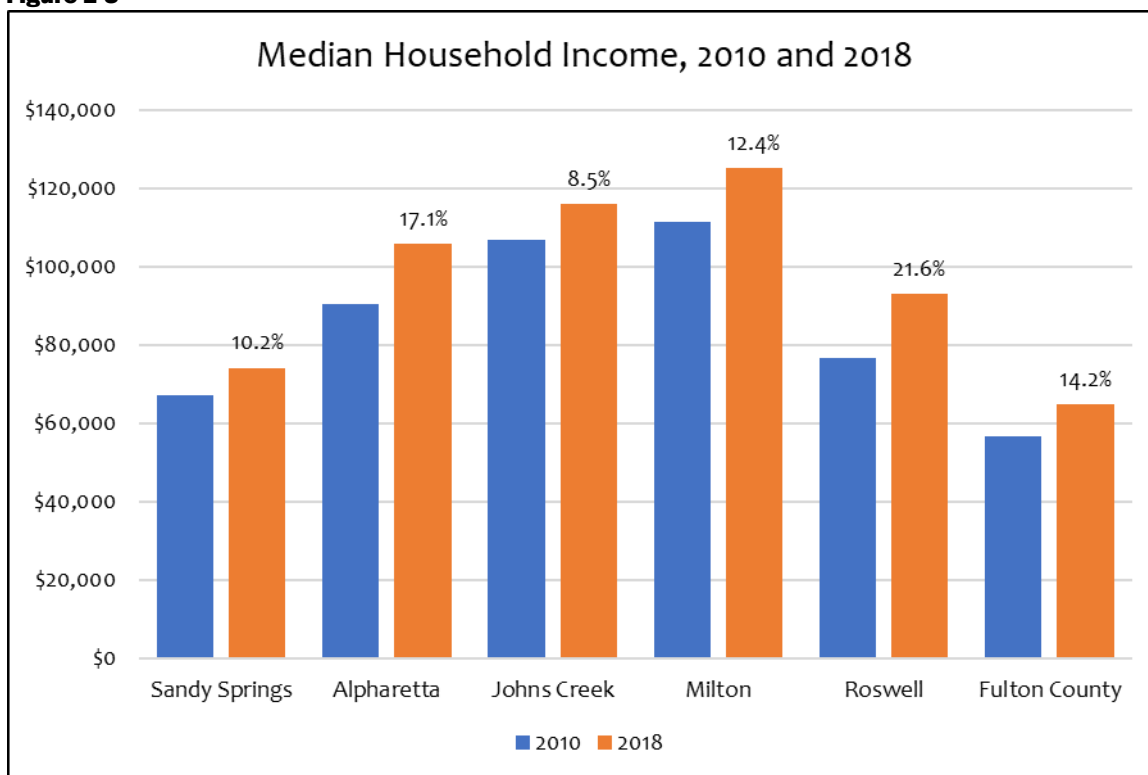
¹ The Next Ten, Comprehensive Plan, Sandy Springs, Georgia, 2017

² U.S. Census Bureau American Community Surveys 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates



smaller housing units in densely built nodes should continue to reduce household sizes and continue to increase the relative number of non-family households.

Figure 2-8



Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

Household income is far more evenly distributed in Sandy Springs than in other parts of Fulton County. The 31 percent of the City's households that earn below \$50,000 is contrasted by the 24 percent that earn \$150,000 or more. (Figure 2-9) Among the north Fulton cities only Roswell has a similar distribution of income levels. Sandy Springs also has a higher share of households earning between \$50,000 and \$74,999 than the County or the other north Fulton cities. Approximately 9.5 percent of Sandy Springs households were estimated to have incomes below the Federal Poverty Line, compared with 15.1 percent in Fulton County as a whole.³

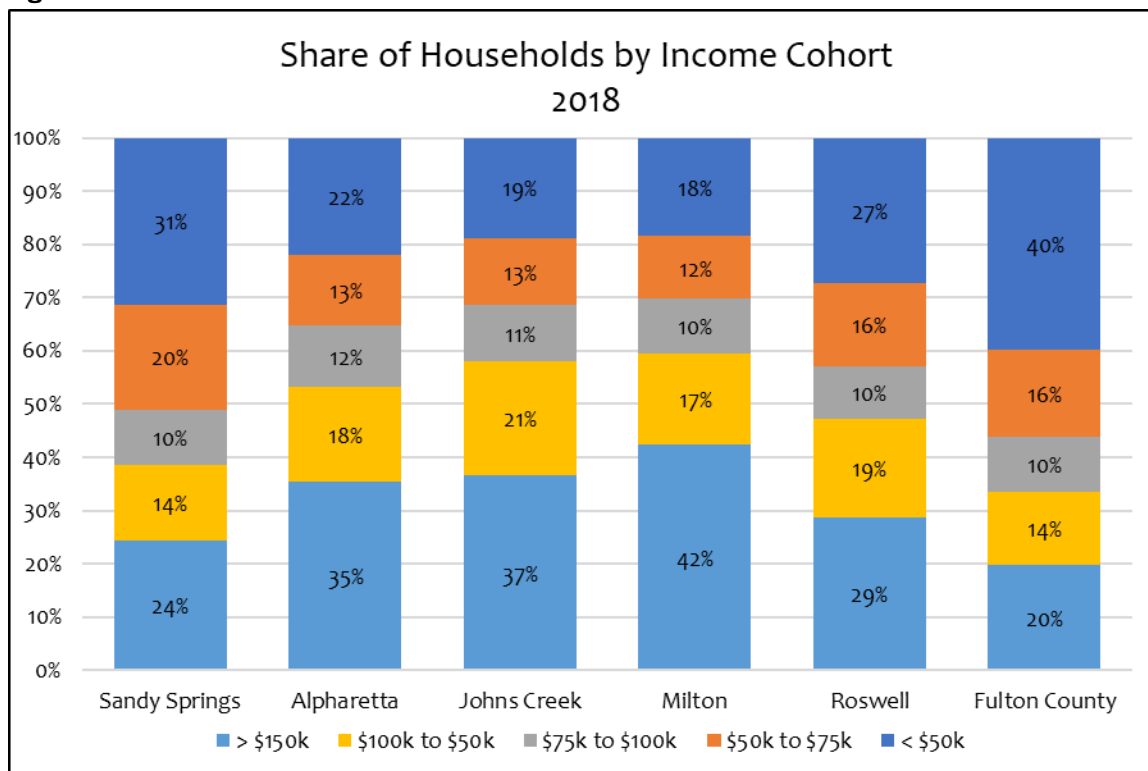
Figures 2-8 and 2-9 suggest there is an opportunity to bolster the lower- and moderate-income earners that comprise a smaller share of the overall population. At a base level, increasing opportunities for more moderate-income households can create the potential for the continuum of living, starting with early career development through maximum earning potential and then back to limited income generation during retirement. These

³ US Census Bureau, Census 2010, and American Community Surveys 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates



new residents could be the replacement workforce for the large Baby Boomer generation that is rapidly entering retirement and tending to age-in-place. More strategically, the lack of “Missing Middle” housing (as defined in the City’s Housing Needs Assessment) in Sandy Springs has been noted as a challenge by local businesses in attracting and retaining service-based and entry level workers. Not only will new residents be needed to contribute to the workforce, but providing housing opportunities for the next generation of professionals will enhance the City’s efforts to promote entrepreneurial development and help keep Sandy Springs on the cutting edge.

Figure 2-9



Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

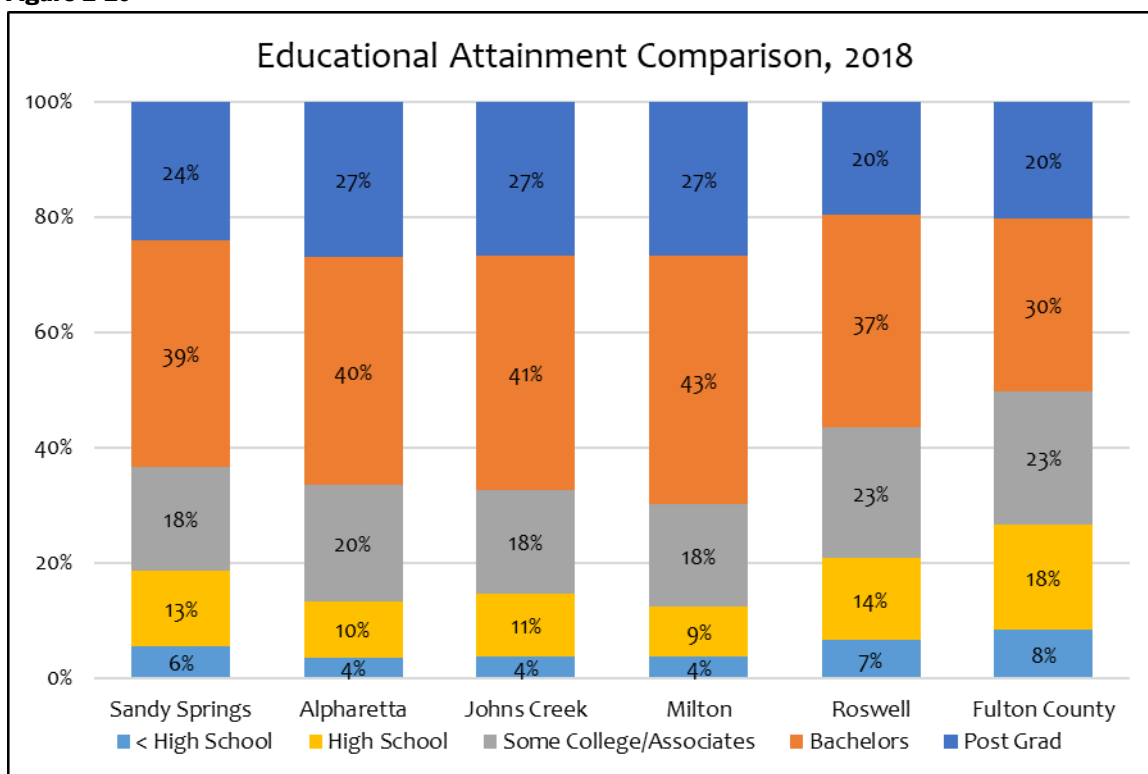
By supporting regional efforts to attract new companies to the greater metro Atlanta area, Sandy Springs would maintain a seat at the table to be able to promote the quality of life and opportunities available in the City. While the focus should be on jobs that offer better-than-average wage rates, a more holistic view considers that service sector jobs and attainable housing for lower and middle-income earners is a critical part of the market climate necessary to make Sandy Springs attractive to companies that have these jobs. Simply put, companies have shown preference in metro Atlanta for locations that can support a continuum of incomes while providing high levels of support amenities (i.e. dining and retail).



I. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Educational attainment among working-age residents of Sandy Springs is very strong; 63 percent of City residents hold a bachelor's degree and 24 percent have a master's or professional degree (Figure 2-10), comparing favorably with Fulton County (51 percent with post-secondary degrees) and is comparable to the other north Fulton cities. This highly educated population base is an integral part of Sandy Springs' appeal to firms considering a move to the area.

Figure 2-10



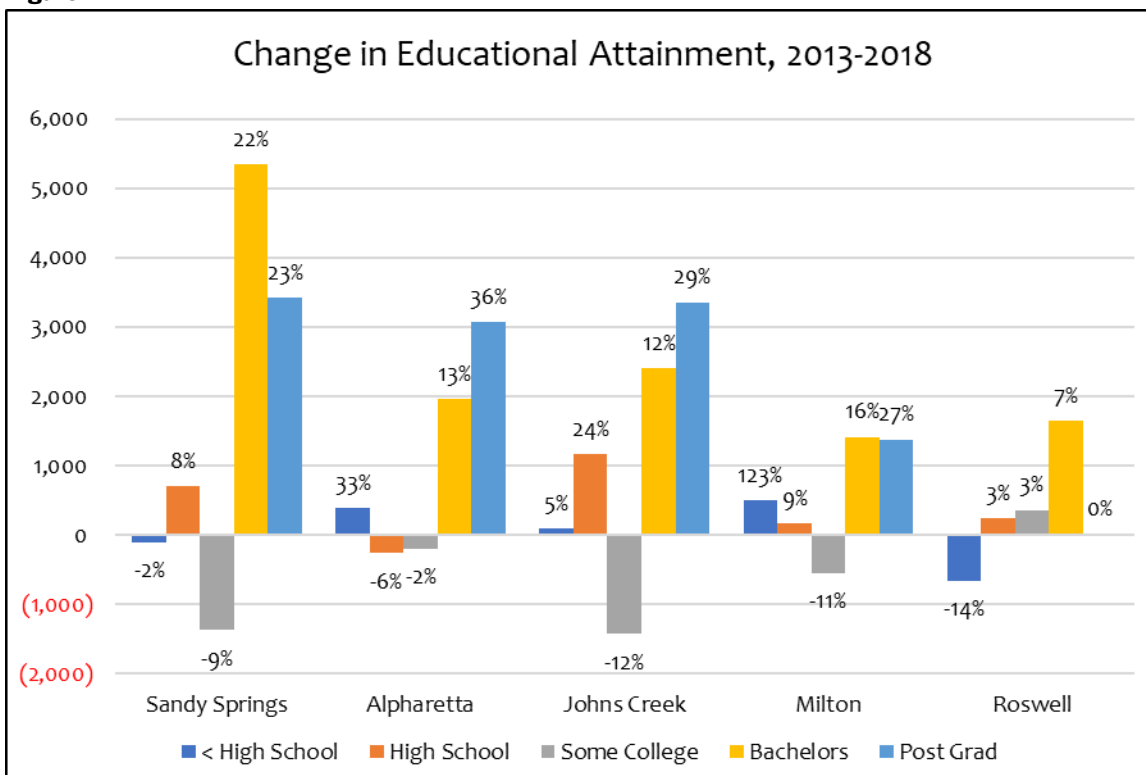
Sources: U.S. Census ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

While the overall educational attainment levels of Sandy Springs residents are consistent with Fulton County as a whole, new residents attracted by recent residential development skew towards the higher educational attainment levels (Figure 2-11). While the higher educational attainment positively impacts wages and the tax base, it must again be noted that the retail and support service sectors are underrepresented in recent population growth numbers. The City's relative attractiveness as a place to live transcends income level. Unfortunately, the City's existing housing stock is price-limited for low- and moderate-income earners. Without a strategy to address price diversity and availability, pressure will rise on the retail and service sector to meet the staffing levels



needed for local businesses to sustain support amenities and services. This also includes essential workers such as teachers, police, and fire departments professionals.

Figure 2-11



Sources: U.S. Census, ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates and RKG Associates, 2020

J. CONCLUSION

On the surface, the demographic analysis reveals that Sandy Springs is in an enviable position from an economic development competitiveness perspective. The City has a large, well-educated, and diverse population. Regional data indicate that Sandy Springs has a strong foundation to attract larger companies with high demand for a professional workforce.

While this is true, there also are some challenges identified in this analysis. Most notably, the City's large proportion of Baby Boomers entering retirement can create a challenge for companies in staffing needs. As noted, this generation is less likely to relocate after retiring, exacerbating the already tight housing market in Sandy Springs. The effect is a shrinking labor force and rising housing costs. This trend not only impacts those businesses needing highly educated workers, but also the support service industries that contribute to making Sandy Springs a desirable place to live and work in the first place.



3 ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

RKG Associates analyzed the current and recent socioeconomic trends for the City of Sandy Springs' local and regional market to understand the City's current and potential economic opportunities and challenges moving forward. This data also helps to identify the characteristics of the current workforce. Additionally, economic data helps to identify recent trends in both the local and regional marketplace and existing strengths and potential opportunities for future economic development.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

- Sandy Springs cemented its status as an economic leader in the Metropolitan Atlanta region as its economy experienced robust growth during the 2010s – Having fully recovered from the Great Recession, north Fulton County is an affluent and economically vibrant sector of the metro Atlanta area. Yet, Sandy Springs led even this region in terms of percentage job growth. It even outpaced its neighbors in working-age population growth, while also boasting an unemployment rate under 3.5 percent. It remains to be seen what the long-term impact of COVID-19 will have on the broader economy, but the strength of the economy going into this downturn should supply the reserves necessary to overcome any pending obstacles.
- Over time, Sandy Springs has developed robust employment niches which must be studied and understood to sustain and promote their growth – With its educated workforce and its central location within the Atlanta region, Sandy Springs has been able to attract and encourage a strong healthcare industry and establish itself as a destination for corporate headquarters, including many Fortune 500 companies. However, the gap between Sandy Springs and surrounding areas is shrinking. To offset this trend, Sandy Springs must leverage its many assets. One such asset is the City's MARTA access, which offsets the significant transportation challenges in certain areas of the City.



- *Sandy Springs' aging workforce and resident base creates a unique economic development threat that must be addressed* – The demographic findings from the analysis indicates that the current trajectory is an unsustainable aging of the workforce and resident base that threatens both mid-term services and long-term growth. In addition, the onerous commuting distance/travel time already presents a challenge regarding attracting and retaining a workforce capable of operating the service economy. Further intensification of traffic over time, along with tightening demographics, threatens to further choke the workforce pipeline for the service sector and other low and moderate-paying occupations, thus impacting the quality of life for all residents. There is also the danger that the next generation of early professionals cannot integrate into the community due to housing cost barriers, which may adversely impact the City's future growth.
- *The mismatch between the current local workforce and the diversified skills needed will increase the challenge for businesses* – The magnitude and opportunity of employment offered throughout the metro Atlanta area provides a challenge in regards to retaining lower-level positions that are less specialized. These workers have the choice to work closer to home or anywhere else within the broader Atlanta area. The consultant has conducted interviews with local business owners and business leaders which have provided anecdotal reports of companies with high turnover in lower and mid-level jobs. Economic development policy must not ignore the connection between housing development (affordable and workforce) and how a lack of such housing can result in increased workforce dislocation.

C. METHODOLOGY

A variety of data sources were used to analyze the economic base for the City's local and regional market. Like the Demographic Analysis, population characteristics were provided by Esri and the U.S. Census Bureau. Information about employment trends was gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau's County Business Patterns data and EMSI, a global data vendor of employment trends and projections. Worker characteristics, labor force data and occupational skill level was provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Georgia Department of Labor. Commuting pattern data was generated and presented by the *OnTheMap* service provided by the U.S. Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies. Major employer data was provided by the City of Sandy Springs. Any additional data sources not included above will be noted when appropriate throughout the chapter.



D. LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

The labor force in and around Sandy Springs provides existing and new businesses with a source of potential workers. Labor force trends also provide additional depth to understanding Sandy Springs' economy and its position within the larger region.

1. JOB GROWTH

Employment growth in Sandy Springs has kept pace with the strong regional growth in the surrounding market area. Between 2010 and 2019 the city's job base increased from 96,348 to 128,929 jobs, a growth rate of nearly 34 percent (Table 3-1). This growth rate was slightly higher than the growth rate for the surrounding Market Area (+29 percent), and comparable to the growth rate for the Fulton Region. The only subarea with a stronger rate of employment growth is Cobb Region¹ (which includes the Cumberland/Galleria area), which had a growth rate of 40 percent.²

Table 3-1
Job Growth by Study Area
2010-2019

Study Area	2010 Jobs	2019 Jobs	Growth % Since 2010
Sandy Springs North	55,881	75,599	35.3%
Sandy Springs South	40,467	53,330	31.8%
Sandy Springs Total	96,348	128,929	33.8%
Fulton Region	162,320	213,502	31.5%
DeKalb Region	82,082	93,120	13.4%
Cobb Region	94,431	132,202	40.0%
North Fulton Region	91,979	116,851	27.0%
Market Area Total	430,812	555,675	29.0%

Sources: EMSI Industry Tables 2010-2019

In a sea of prosperity, Sandy Springs has exhibited exemplary economic performance. But the City must not become complacent in its successes. Significant capital and time were required to engage and attract many of these industries. Logically, additional capital will presumably be required to retain and grow those most promising industries. It is necessary to understand these businesses, how they work, and their challenges to be able to foresee the challenges and opportunities that must be met. To this point, retention efforts will become equally important, if not more important, than recruitment efforts in the future.

To address this challenge, Sandy Springs must engage the business community with an intentional plan of advocacy. This plan would allow for a transfer of ideas where City

¹ The submarket boundaries used for this analysis are detailed in Chapter 2.

² EMSI Industry Tables, 2010-2019, for ZIP codes shown in footnote of Table 2.1



leaders would learn what the business community needs to continue striving, while also recruiting and engaging the business community in forward-looking development efforts. For example, the City's recent survey outreach effort during the COVID-19 shutdown allowed Sandy Springs to collect substantial information with comparatively less effort. This proactive engagement would result in a more centralized and broadened data collection effort to better inform economic development actions and policies. By amassing actionable data that is broader and more meaningful, the City will be in a stronger position to engage with regional partners more effectively on goals that meet the current and long-term needs of the business community.

2. EMPLOYMENT BY AGE

As mentioned earlier in the Socioeconomic section of this report, while the growth rates for workers over 55-years old is strong within Fulton County, it is even stronger within Sandy Springs. From 2010-2018, Fulton County had a growth rate of 10 percent for residents under age 50, while the cohorts of 50 to 59, 60 to 70, and over 70 grew respectively by 19 percent, 49 percent, and 39 percent. In contrast, Sandy Springs exhibited much greater growth in its older cohorts, with those under 50 years of age at only 6 percent growth, versus persons 50 to 59 at 32 percent, persons 60 to 70 at 65 percent, and those 70 and over growing at 55 percent.

While acknowledging that a mature and experienced workforce does provide positive fiscal outcomes in the present as well as potential entrepreneurial development, continuing this trend into the future most likely will create an unsustainable labor force dynamic. The lack of a sizeable population of early-career professionals suggests that companies may be unable to fill their pipeline with new talent. If unaddressed, such limitations would place constraints on the magnitude and/or pace of corporate growth, or even necessitate relocation altogether as a basic response.

Table 3-2
Fulton County Employment By Age Trends
2010 - 2019

Age Group	2010 Jobs	2019 Jobs	Growth	% Growth
14-18	6,419	12,031	5,612	87.4%
19-21	18,793	28,054	9,261	49.3%
22-24	32,350	46,176	13,826	42.7%
25-34	164,553	213,538	48,985	29.8%
35-44	185,523	211,476	25,953	14.0%
45-54	164,549	200,342	35,793	21.8%
55-64	91,545	135,123	43,578	47.6%
65+	21,471	41,812	20,341	94.7%
TOTAL	685,203	888,552	203,349	29.7%

Source: U.S. Census and RKG Associates, 2020



One solution is a stronger effort to empower entrepreneurs and small business owners to start and grow businesses in Sandy Springs. These businesses could serve not only as the small businesses which support the broader service sector, but they also have the potential to grow into some of the more cutting-edge technology companies that exhibit outsized growth. A more intentional engagement policy would allow the City to tailor the financial support, the technical support, and the mentoring opportunities to both meet the needs that the City exhibits while also providing for unique visions to reveal new paths of opportunity.

3. EMPLOYMENT BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Job growth in Fulton County is strongest in positions that do not require post-secondary education (Table 3-3). In contrast, Sandy Springs, and North Fulton County as a region, are more balanced in terms of skill requirements for newly created jobs. This data reveals a diversity of the local market.

Table 3-3

**Fulton County Employment by Education Attainment
2010-2019**

Age Group	2010 Jobs	2019 Jobs	Growth	% Growth
< High School	61,155	105,098	43,943	71.9%
High School/GED	143,542	196,697	53,155	37.0%
Some College	191,404	239,669	48,265	25.2%
Bachelors or More	231,539	260,828	29,289	12.6%
Not Available	57,563	86,262	28,699	49.9%
TOTAL	685,203	888,554	203,351	29.7%

Source: U.S. Census and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

The level of educational attainment among working-age residents of Sandy Springs is very strong; 63 percent of city residents hold a bachelor's degree and 24 percent have a master's degree or doctorate. As noted, the level of educational attainment in Sandy Springs compares favorably with the Fulton County level of 51 percent of adult residents with a post-secondary degree and is comparable to the attainment levels in the other North Fulton cities. The contrast between income levels and educational attainment in Sandy Springs speaks to the city's appeal to educated workers of all ages and income levels. This well-educated population base is an integral part of Sandy Springs' appeal to firms considering a move to the state. This data also suggests that Sandy Springs is a potential landing spot for any inter-county and intra-county relocation.

To leverage this competitive advantage, Sandy Springs must continue to support regional efforts to attract new companies that offer better-than-average wage rates. An overall strong North Fulton region creates the opportunity for shared prosperity with its peer



communities while also understanding that Sandy Springs is very competitive within this dynamic. Thus, business recruitment is more a regional effort than an endeavor for Sandy Springs to perform alone.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

Population growth has not kept up with regional job growth, resulting in extremely low unemployment rates. While COVID-19 has temporarily impacted this trend for all businesses, the effect has been much stronger in the retail-service businesses. It must be further noted that the retail market in Sandy Springs is challenged by its proximity to four major regional retail nodes. Sandy Springs is located directly between four of the largest retail nodes in the Atlanta region, so most resident demand for apparel, furnishings, and luxury goods is spent in those locations. The market for retail demand in Sandy Springs will be driven instead by restaurants, grocery stores, and other locally oriented uses. However, even for those types of retail, demand growth for these businesses will primarily be generated by new residential growth around existing commercial nodes due to the City's built out nature.

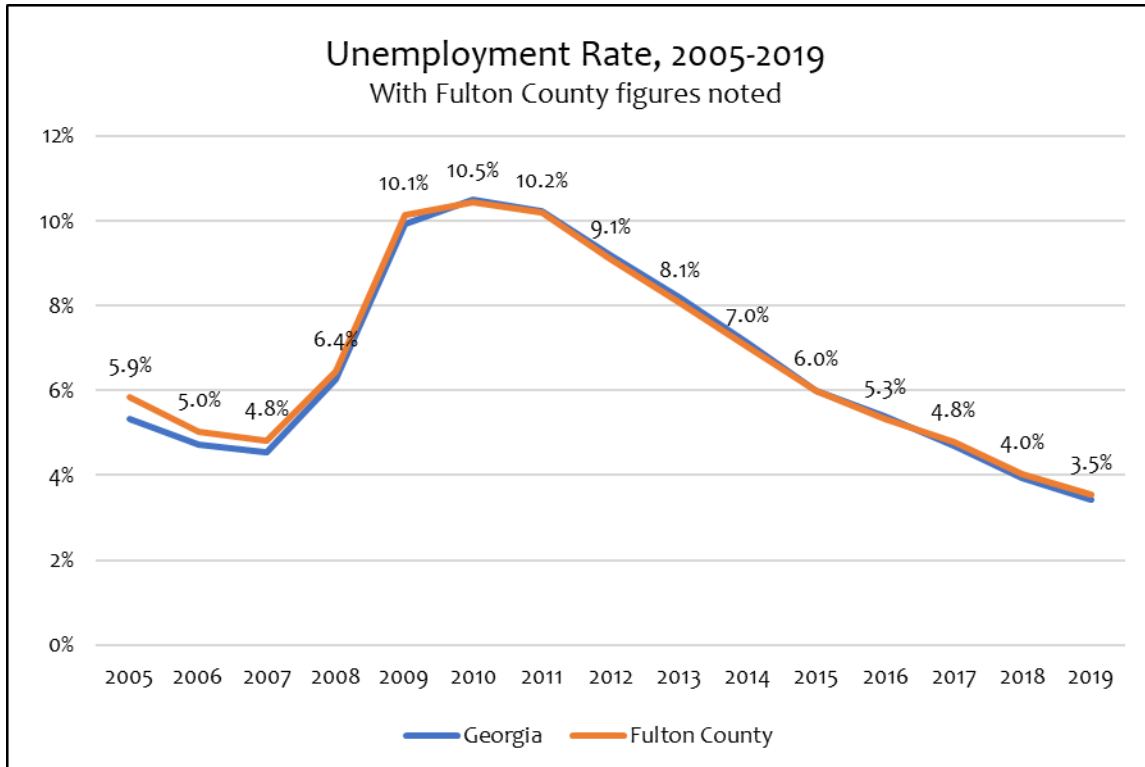
Unemployment in metro Atlanta decreased rapidly in the years after the Great Recession, according to data from the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Federal Reserve. The unemployment rate in Fulton County has tracked on an almost identical level with the overall unemployment rate for the State of Georgia during this time. After peaking at 10.5 percent in 2010, unemployment in Fulton County declined every year for the rest of the decade; by 2019, the annual average rate was just 3.5 percent (Figure 3-1).

Metro Atlanta's tight labor market has presented a challenge for recruiting top talent and has fueled the continued population growth in the region. In this environment local governments have had to ramp up efforts to attract relocating residents by investing in quality-of-life enhancements such as transit access, a variety of nearby housing options, and accessibility to amenities including retail, restaurants, public space, and cultural outlets.

The writing of this report coincides with the global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented event caused an immediate surge in unemployment claims in early 2020 and will certainly continue to impact the unemployment rate for the foreseeable future. While the full effect of the crisis will not be known for some time, Fulton County is well positioned to recover from the short-term shock due to its very low unemployment rate prior to the crisis and its strong and diverse employment base.



Figure 3-1



Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce LAUS and RKG Associates, 2020

A specific takeaway is that the retail sector is challenged by a tight labor market, unfavorable commuting, and an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. All these issues combine to make the recruitment and retention of service workers more difficult. In response, the City must engage the business and development community to promote ideas that seek to offset these challenges. These solutions could include increasing and diversifying housing options and providing transportation incentives/stipends within existing jobs, both of which seek to either eliminate the need to commute, or at least lessen its impacts.

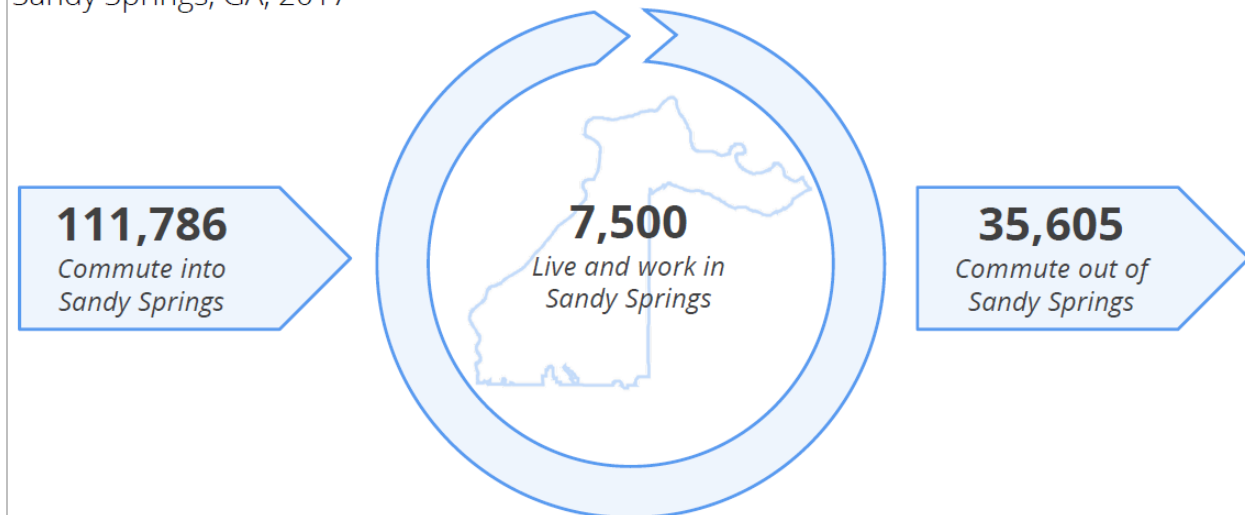
5. COMMUTING PATTERNS

Sandy Springs is a work destination, with a daytime population that is more than 2x larger than the resident base. The evolution of Sandy Springs from a bedroom suburb into an urban center is underscored by its commuting patterns. According to data from the US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program, there were 119,286 private primary jobs located within the City of Sandy Springs as of 2017; this “daytime population” of workers exceeds the city’s resident population of about 105,000 people (Figure 3-2).

Figure 2-3

INFLOW/OUTFLOW OF PRIVATE PRIMARY JOBS

Sandy Springs, GA, 2017



Sources: U.S. Census LEHD, RKG Associates, HR&A Advisors, 2020

The net result of these commuting patterns is that more than 150,000 people must travel in or out of Sandy Springs each day just to get to work. With most of the City's jobs not located near high-capacity transit stations, the vast majority of in-commuters have little choice but to drive to work, placing a huge strain on I-285, GA 400, and major surface arterials like Johnson Ferry Road, Abernathy Road, Roswell Road, and Mount Vernon Highway, and contributing to severe traffic congestion. The City's 2017 Next 10 Comprehensive Plan presents a series of strategies to improve access to jobs in Sandy Springs, including extending high-capacity transit service to key corridors, improving pedestrian and bicycle connections in areas surrounding MARTA stations, establishing local connector shuttle service between Central Perimeter, City Springs, and MARTA stations, and developing infill housing close to job centers.³ These initiatives will be essential to the City's efforts to retain and attract economic development activity in the future.

Traffic impacts are a key factor in attracting and retaining critical talent. This is especially true for entry-level and lower income workers that are less able to afford long commutes. It also negatively impacts community cohesion because of the lack of opportunity for workers to also live in the community where they work, thus planting roots. Considering these challenges, the City must find ways to boost the attractiveness of Sandy Springs to a broader range of workers while also addressing the issues of commuting.

³ The Next Ten, Comprehensive Plan, Sandy Springs, Georgia, 2017



6. IN-COMMUTING

Workers are coming from all over the region, with fewer than 33 percent living within 10 miles of the City. While the benefits of being an employment destination are appealing, this level of traffic heightens the existing challenge of East-West connectivity as presented by the presence of Interstate 285 and GA 400.

The daytime worker population is almost exclusively comprised of people who live elsewhere—just 7,500 of those employed locally (6.3 percent) also reside in Sandy Springs, and the remaining 111,786 workers commute to their jobs in Sandy Springs from other locations (Table 3-4). These in-commuters come from all over the metro Atlanta area, with no single jurisdiction accounting for more than 17 percent. Most of the leading places of origin of in-commuters are locations with no direct transit service to Sandy Springs such as Cobb, Gwinnett, and Forsyth counties. Many of the City’s workers also travel long distances to their jobs, as 68 percent of those employed in Sandy Springs live more than 10 miles from their workplaces.⁴

Table 3-4

**In-Commuting: Where Sandy Springs Workers Live
2017**

Location	% of Workers
Cobb County	16.9%
Gwinnett County	11.9%
Atlanta	9.8%
Sandy Springs	6.3%
Forsyth County	5.2%
Roswell	3.3%
Dunwoody	2.3%
Johns Creek	2.2%
Alpharetta	2.1%
Brookhaven	1.9%
All Other Locations	38.1%

Sources: US Census LEHD Database, 2020

As noted earlier, traffic impacts are a key factor in attracting and retaining critical talent. It also negatively impacts community cohesion by the lack of opportunity for workers to also live in the community where they work. Moreover, additional commuter traffic on GA 400 further divides the City into east and west, with some residents hesitant to cross the divide due to the growing congestion at the few connection points (i.e. Hammond Drive).

⁴ US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data, 2017



7. OUT-COMMUTING

The ratio of residents that live and work in Sandy Springs is inconsistent with other major employment areas, but it is consistent with the north metro area. Therefore, Sandy Spring must remain mindful of how this critical factor affects the City's regional and national recruitment efforts.

Looking at the resident workforce of Sandy Springs, a total of 45,260 were employed in primary jobs as of 2017, and 37,612 of these workers (83 percent) commute to jobs outside of the City. This share of out-commuters is lower than the other north Fulton cities but is well above the City of Atlanta's 56 percent share of out-commuters. About 40 percent of Sandy Springs residents commute to jobs either within Sandy Springs or in Atlanta. The remaining 60 percent of residents commuted to jobs scattered all over the metro Atlanta region (Table 3-5).

Table 3-5

Out-Commuting: Where Sandy Springs Residents Work 2017

Location	% of Residents
Atlanta	24.0%
Sandy Springs	16.9%
Cobb County	12.9%
Gwinnett County	8.4%
Alpharetta	6.3%
Dunwoody	4.9%
Roswell	3.4%
Forsyth County	2.2%
Brookhaven	2.2%
Johns Creek	1.6%
All Other Locations	17.2%

Sources: US Census LEHD Database, 2020

This data suggests that Sandy Springs is potentially failing to capture residents in relation to other metro communities by not providing sufficient affordable workforce housing and the live-work-play environments that have been shown to be desired in the marketplace. It would seem that a viable business opportunity exists to capture this demand share if the City and the broader business community can collaborate on the land use policies, incentives, and marketing that would be necessary to create housing product that is tailored for this commuting population.

E. EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Employment trends provide greater insight into the top industries and employers within the region and how they have changed in recent years. It also identifies the industries that have the greatest potential for growth which will be further discussed in the target industry analysis.



1. 2-DIGIT NAICS INDUSTRY GROWTH TRENDS

Sandy Springs predominantly is a white-collar employment market. The five largest industries in the City have concentrations of highly skilled white-collar jobs, constituting almost two-thirds of the City's total employment base. The largest employment industry in Sandy Springs is Health Care and Social Assistance, which has 26,400 jobs and represents more than 20 percent of all jobs in the City. The Health Care industry is concentrated in the Medical District area that includes three major hospitals: Northside Hospital, Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite. These three facilities alone account for 40 percent of all hospital beds in the metro Atlanta area.⁵

Table 3-6
Sandy Springs Industry Sector Employment Trends
2010-2019

2-Digit NAICS Industry	2010 Jobs	2019 Jobs	Job Growth	Growth %
			2010-2019	Since 2010
Health Care and Social Assistance	18,765	26,446	7,681	40.9%
Administrative and Waste Management Services	10,516	16,150	5,635	53.6%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	11,894	15,574	3,679	30.9%
Finance and Insurance	10,501	14,105	3,604	34.3%
Management of Companies	4,755	8,176	3,420	71.9%
Information	6,070	7,775	1,705	28.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	4,842	6,276	1,435	29.6%
Educational Services	4,176	5,229	1,053	25.2%
Construction	2,142	3,105	963	45.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	3,793	4,712	919	24.2%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	4,452	5,253	801	18.0%
Retail Trade	4,845	5,589	744	15.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,148	1,662	514	44.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	577	1,051	475	82.3%
Manufacturing	384	514	130	33.7%
Wholesale Trade	2,798	2,777	(21)	-0.8%
Utilities	71	27	(44)	-62.5%

Sources: EMSI and RKG Associates, 2020

The next four largest sectors in Sandy Springs all fall into the white-collar professional services category: Administrative and Support Services; Professional, Scientific, and

⁵ Presentation by Sandy Springs Economic Development to Leadership North Fulton, November 2019



Technical Services; Finance and Insurance; and Management of Companies. These sectors together account for approximately 62,000 jobs (Table 3-6).

While employment growth has been robust across almost all of the industries in Sandy Springs, the five largest industries also account for the majority of employment growth since 2010. Health Care and Social Assistance experienced a net increase of 7,681 jobs since 2010, a 41% increase. Each of the remaining four largest sectors grew by at least 28 percent from 2010 to 2019, accounting for almost 75 percent of the total employment growth in the City. This set of industries drives demand for office space and includes most of Sandy Springs' top employers.

While these industries are top heavy, with a few large employers constituting the majority of jobs, 86% of all companies in Sandy Springs employ ten or fewer workers. This statistic includes the aforementioned largest employment industries. To this point, the City's success at attracting large companies and corporate headquarters (i.e. Mercedes Benz USA), these businesses have created a critical mass that has attracted thousands of smaller companies. Further, the City effectively is becoming built out, limiting the City's potential to grow economically simply by building new office towers and attracting the next large headquarters operation.

Therefore, long-term sustainability will be dependent on several factors closely related to retention, expansion, and small business support and development. At a base level, the success of the City's white-collar industries will be dependent, in part, on ensuring there is sufficient supply of professionals to succeed the aging Baby Boomer generation. Given the proclivity of the Baby Boomer generation to 'age-in-place,' access to housing and price diversity of housing will be critical to supporting the City's employment base.

More strategically, enacting programs and policies that support entrepreneurs and small business owners will benefit substantially more existing – and potential – companies operating in Sandy Springs. Given larger companies' growth and retraction are more heavily influenced by national and global economic cycles, there is little the City of Sandy Springs will be able to do to promote their growth. In contrast, small businesses are much more sensitive to local market influences and can achieve greater success through the City creating a more conducive local marketplace.

2. 4-DIGIT NAICS INDUSTRY SECTOR TRENDS

As noted, the City of Sandy Springs experienced substantial job recovery and growth between 2010 and 2019. Seventeen different 4-digit industry sectors experienced a net job growth exceeding 500 jobs (Table 3-7). Only one of these sectors, Residential Building



Construction (606 net new jobs), is production-based. The remaining largest growth sectors represent businesses concentrated in high-skilled white-collar jobs, such as Management of Corporate Headquarters, Hospitals, and Employment Services. Growth from these 17 sectors accounted for 76 percent of all job growth in the city during this time period while representing less than 15 percent of all 4-digit sectors.

Table 3-7
Sandy Springs Largest Employment Growth Sectors
2010 - 2019

NAICS	Industry Sector	Job Growth 2010-2019	Growth % Since 2010	Average Wage
5613	Employment Services	4,040	84.0%	\$59,275
5511	Management of Companies and Enterprises	3,420	71.9%	\$185,809
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	3,365	38.9%	\$77,759
6211	Offices of Physicians	2,110	47.4%	\$117,198
5242	Agencies, Brokerages, and Insurance	1,714	49.7%	\$133,859
5182	Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	1,298	251.4%	\$164,080
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	1,278	32.9%	\$26,579
6111	Elementary and Secondary Schools	1,125	36.4%	\$53,657
5416	Management, Scientific, and Tech Consulting	958	47.0%	\$136,045
6216	Home Health Care Services	885	108.3%	\$41,600
5223	Activities Related to Credit Intermediation	858	61.4%	\$163,226
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	850	28.2%	\$139,189
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	647	30.8%	\$122,547
2361	Residential Building Construction	606	112.6%	\$126,596
5112	Software Publishers	602	64.6%	\$152,211
5412	Accounting, Tax, Bookkeeping & Payroll Services	594	33.8%	\$117,176
5239	Other Financial Investment Activities	531	59.1%	\$235,922

Sources: EMSI and RKG Associates, 2020

The average wage among these top growing sectors was \$85,600, and most of the top sectors have average wages well in excess of \$100,000. The wages of these high-growth sectors reflect the diversity of the local economy, with growth coming from very high-wage sectors (Management of Companies and Enterprises, Data Processing, Software, Financial Investment), moderate-wage sectors (Employment Services, Hospitals, Schools), and low-wage sectors (Restaurants, Home Health Care).⁶

⁶ EMSI Industry Tables, 2010-2019, for ZIP Codes 30327, 30328, 30342, and 30350



3. 4-DIGIT NAICS INDUSTRY SECTOR PROJECTIONS

Job growth projections indicate Sandy Springs will benefit from ‘more of the same’ employment growth. According to estimates from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and EMSI, many of the strongest sectors in Sandy Springs are likely to see continued growth over the next decade. The Management of Companies of Enterprises sector, which is comprised of the holding companies of corporations, is expected to lead the City in job growth, with 4,000 new jobs by 2029.

Table 3-8
Sandy Springs Projected Employment Growth Sectors
2019 - 2029

4-Digit NAICS Industry Sector	Projected Job Growth	Projected % Growth
Management of Companies and Enterprises	4,012	49.1%
General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	2,814	23.4%
Offices of Physicians	1,931	29.4%
Employment Services	1,294	14.6%
Agencies, Brokerages, and Insurance	1,204	23.3%
Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	1,125	62.0%
Home Health Care Services	1,012	59.5%
Elementary and Secondary Schools	922	21.9%
Computer Systems Design and Related Services	833	21.6%
Restaurants and Other Eating Places	720	13.9%
Management, Scientific, and Tech Consulting	602	20.1%

Sources: EMSI and RKG Associates, 2020

There are 11 sectors projected to add at least 600 jobs in Sandy Springs from 2019 to 2029 (Table 3-8). These sectors are expected to add about 16,500 jobs, representing 75 percent of the total projected job increase of 21,800 jobs.⁷ These growth sectors are concentrated in the Health Services, Professional Services, and Information industries. Other sectors that are expected to grow locally include Elementary and Secondary Schools (this excludes public schools) and Restaurants. Most of the sectors that are expected to drive growth in Sandy Springs are similar to those projected to grow in the surrounding Greater Sandy Springs Market Area (as defined in Chapter 2). The one notable exception is Motion Picture and Video Industries, which has a strong presence in the Cumberland, North DeKalb, and Midtown/Buckhead areas, but a very limited base in Sandy Springs.

⁷ EMSI Industry Tables, 2010-2019, for ZIP Codes 30327, 30328, 30342, and 30350



The projected patterns of job growth will drive strong demand for high-quality office space. Given recent trends toward corporations favoring transit-accessible locations, most of the demand is likely to be concentrated around MARTA stations, particularly along the Peachtree Dunwoody Road corridor near the Sandy Springs station. There will also be strong demand for additional medical office space in proximity to the Medical Center MARTA station. The expected growth in employment for private schools and restaurants will drive demand for commercial space. This demand will be distributed around the City in areas with concentrations of residential and office space.

The data suggest there are opportunities to capture the growth that is leaking to neighboring communities. In addition to prior recommendations regarding strategies that engage existing businesses and entrepreneurs, the City should consider land use strategies that will maximize the yield of the City's waning (re)developable land resources. With the limited number of large-sized lots remaining for development, a coordination between property owners could result in the packaging and marketing of properties eligible for redevelopment, such as the City's undertaking in the North End. If these parcels are proactively rezoned, the opportunities could be more attractive to would-be developers. Simply put, urban-scale planning solutions similar to projects such as Avalon in Alpharetta could attract additional employment growth while addressing the job-housing balance.



4 REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

Attracting new businesses and encouraging the expansion of existing businesses is an important part of economic development. To do so, a community must have a sufficient supply of appropriate space for these companies. Understanding the dynamics of the real estate market in Sandy Springs and the surrounding area are essential to evaluating economic development potential within the City and developing a strategy for growth in the future. In order to evaluate the non-residential market, RKG Associates analyzed the current land use patterns within the City as well as the recent trends at both a local and regional level for specific property types including office, industrial, retail and accommodation.

B. MAJOR FINDINGS

- *Sandy Springs is a large and diverse community with multiple concentrations of employment and commercial activity* – Sandy Springs is situated at the economic “center of gravity” of the metro Atlanta region around the Georgia 400/I-285 interchange. Most of the office employment in the City is concentrated in this area and there are many more opportunities for continued growth here. Though this area remains largely automobile dependent, there has been increasing emphasis on adding residential density near major employers and transit stations. There is still significant opportunity to add density and better multimodal transportation connections in these areas to continue to add development while mitigating traffic congestion.
- *The Roswell Road corridor is in the early stages of a transformation but still presents a great deal of opportunity* – The City Springs development has been very successful at creating a new civic and cultural heart for Sandy Springs, but there are still many additional opportunities for redevelopment along Roswell Road. There are infill and redevelopment opportunities in other older commercial areas of the city as well. The City’s ongoing small area plan for the north Roswell Road area will build upon the City Springs successes and catalyze the evolution of that area.



- The retail market in Sandy Springs is challenged by its proximity to four major regional retail nodes – Sandy Springs is located directly between four of the largest retail nodes in the Atlanta region, so most resident demand for apparel, furnishings, and luxury goods is spent in those locations. The market for retail demand in Sandy Springs will be driven instead by restaurants, grocery stores, and other locally oriented uses. Demand for these businesses will necessarily be generated by new residential growth around existing commercial nodes. Rather, the City should focus regulatory policy to continue to create “places” like City Springs. These policies should focus to support residents and businesses. Most notably, there is potential to keep integrating aged strip centers into vertical mixed-use developments (detailed in Chapter 6).
- Market competitiveness has—and will—define Sandy Springs’ office success – The substantial assets for Central Perimeter make it an ideal location for corporate headquarters. However, these companies tend to lease, rather than own space. The leasing market is more sensitive to price and amenity variations. New construction, near MARTA, that is amenity-rich and walkable will win the day.
- Recent and current market trends place high value on live-work-play employment centers – The Millennial and Baby Boomer generations are disproportionately larger than all other working-age generations. As Baby Boomers continue to age into their ‘golden years,’ their housing and recreating habits are shifting to smaller housing options in strong amenity-laden, mixed use developments. Similarly, the Millennial generation is seeking similar accommodations that are integrated into their working environments. The Avalon development in Alpharetta epitomizes the emerging trend for both companies and individuals seeking an integrated live-work-play environment. Long-term market sustainability will be influenced by the extent that Sandy Springs embraces infill development and/or redevelopment in its existing employment centers.

C. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

The data used for the non-residential market analysis was gathered from a few key sources. Current land use patterns for non-residential property came from the Fulton County property tax assessment database. RKG Associates analyzed this source for relevant information and used averages to estimate when data was missing. Therefore, while the real property data used for this analysis is not a complete accounting of all non-residential property within the City of Sandy Springs, it is the most accurate information available.



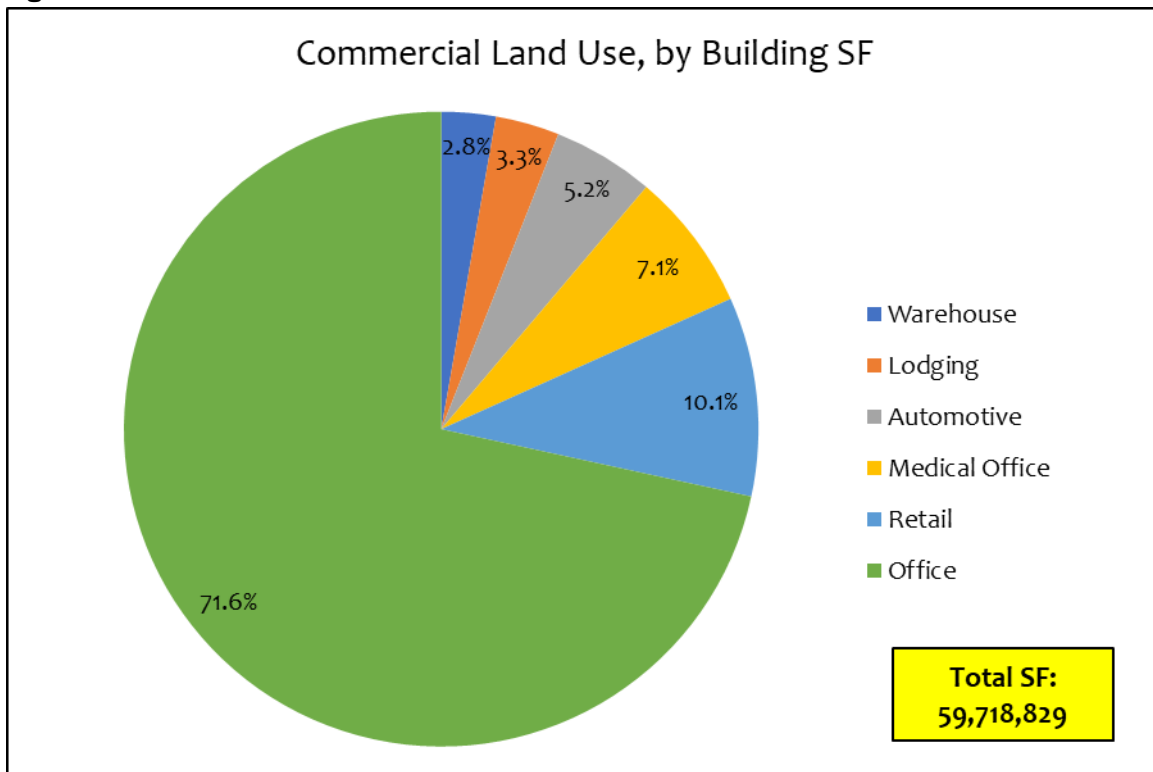
For the larger market analysis, information on a variety of market metrics (vacancy, absorption, rental rates) and current market inventory data was provided by CoStar, an industry recognized third party data provider. Retail property within Sandy Springs was also evaluated on the basis of supportable square footage determined by an analysis of retail supply and demand data provided by Esri. Any additional sources used for this analysis not mentioned above will be noted within this chapter.

D. NON-RESIDENTIAL LAND USE PATTERNS

1. CURRENT LAND USE

Sandy Springs has evolved from bedroom community to the City of Atlanta into a regional employment center centrally located at the intersection of Georgia 400 and Interstate 285. According to the City's property assessment database, the City has almost 60 million square feet of non-residential building space. Almost 80% of this space (47 million square feet) is office or medical office space (Figure 4-1). The vast majority of the non-residential development is located along Georgia 400 corridor from the medical district south of I-285 to the northern edge of the City.

Figure 4-1



Source: City of Sandy Springs and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020



The office space inventory is almost exclusively concentrated at Central Perimeter, with most of the medical office space located on Medical District. Approximately 14% of space in Sandy Springs, or 9.1 million SF, is retail/service space concentrated in a few commercial nodes throughout the City, but primarily along GA 400 interspersed with the office development. Industrial/warehouse space totals less than 1.7 million SF and is concentrated along GA 400 north of Central Perimeter and North Springs MARTA station.

As noted in the Economic Base Analysis section, there is little undeveloped land in Sandy Springs dedicated to non-residential development. There are a few parcels within the Central Perimeter and Medical District areas but are controlled by large employers as part of a larger corporate campus. To this point, there is very little developable land left for additional non-residential development. Any net new non-residential space will result for infill development or complete redevelopment programs (i.e. City Springs).

2. RECENT DEVELOPMENT

The vision for future growth presented in Sandy Springs' Next 10 Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the current land use findings presented in the previous section. New growth occurring in Sandy Springs is a result of infill and/or redevelopment projects. Based on the City's property assessment data, approximately 6.6 million SF of the non-residential development (11%) in Sandy Springs was delivered since 2010 (Table 4-1). Office space (5.6 million SF) constituted most of this activity, including 5901 Peachtree Dunwoody Road in the Palisades Office Park and the Mercedes Benz USA headquarters. Retail development since 2010 totaled slightly more than 660,000 SF and is concentrated in two projects south of I-285 along Roswell Road (The Prado and Gateway). Interestingly, both large retail projects were bond-lease deals with either the City's Development Authority or the Fulton County Development Authority.



Table 4-1
Commercial Development Trends
City of Sandy Springs, GA

	Units/ Properties	% of All Units/ Properties	Acreage	% of All Land Area	Total Bldg. SF	% of Building SF	Avg. Bldg. SF	Land Appraisal Value	Building Appraisal Value	Total Appraisal Value	Avg. Land AV/Acre	Avg. Bldg. AV/SF	FAR
PRE 2000													
Lodging	25	3.2%	61	4.2%	1,827,795	4.3%	73,112	\$63,690,800	\$223,765,900	\$287,456,700	\$1,038,686	\$122	0.68
Restaurant/Food Service	37	4.8%	30	2.1%	187,636	0.4%	5,071	\$32,862,500	\$12,661,300	\$45,523,800	\$1,077,512	\$67	0.14
Automotive Services	69	8.9%	93	6.4%	2,043,027	4.8%	29,609	\$65,626,269	\$24,007,700	\$89,633,969	\$704,219	\$12	0.50
Shopping Centers	44	5.7%	258	17.9%	3,357,637	7.8%	76,310	\$222,848,700	\$148,381,200	\$371,229,900	\$862,559	\$44	0.30
Medical Office	24	3.1%	55	3.8%	3,240,348	7.5%	135,015	\$22,321,400	\$197,533,200	\$219,854,600	\$407,042	\$61	1.36
Office	418	54.1%	694	48.0%	29,785,508	69.4%	71,257	\$467,098,230	\$2,012,329,452	\$2,479,427,682	\$673,372	\$68	0.99
Retail	140	18.1%	170	11.8%	1,092,158	2.5%	7,801	\$125,759,275	\$61,196,144	\$186,955,419	\$738,391	\$56	0.15
Warehouse	16	2.1%	84	5.8%	1,409,531	3.3%	88,096	\$36,400,790	\$41,846,100	\$78,246,890	\$434,128	\$30	0.39
TOTAL	773	84.7%	1,446	83.7%	42,943,640	71.9%	55,555	\$1,036,607,964	\$2,721,920,996	\$3,758,528,960	\$716,861	\$63	0.68
2000 TO 2009													
Lodging	6	6.7%	1	0.6%	34,634	0.1%	5,772	\$1,011,800	\$888,200	\$1,900,000	\$1,013,219	\$26	0.80
Restaurant/Food Service	6	6.7%	4	2.3%	25,181	0.1%	4,197	\$4,859,300	\$3,040,600	\$7,899,900	\$1,246,262	\$121	0.15
Automotive Services	7	7.9%	14	8.6%	842,295	2.0%	120,328	\$9,834,600	\$20,360,800	\$30,195,400	\$690,947	\$24	1.36
Shopping Centers	5	5.6%	40	24.0%	520,503	1.2%	104,101	\$36,003,084	\$29,461,546	\$65,464,630	\$903,600	\$57	0.30
Medical Office	4	4.5%	1	0.3%	983,514	2.3%	245,879	\$2,261,600	\$106,656,425	\$108,918,025	\$4,172,694	\$108	41.66
Office	45	50.6%	77	46.4%	7,382,803	17.2%	164,062	\$58,936,200	\$524,634,266	\$583,570,466	\$764,900	\$71	2.20
Retail	15	16.9%	29	17.2%	236,198	0.6%	15,747	\$14,715,950	\$11,834,550	\$26,550,500	\$516,164	\$50	0.19
Warehouse	1	1.1%	1	0.6%	143,165	0.3%	143,165	\$445,500	\$8,926,000	\$9,371,500	\$454,592	\$62	3.35
TOTAL	89	9.7%	166	9.6%	10,168,293	17.0%	114,250	\$128,068,034	\$705,802,387	\$833,870,421	\$771,470	\$69	1.41
2010 TO 2018													
Lodging	1	2.0%	1	1.1%	79,013	0.2%	79,013	\$468,000	\$7,987,900	\$8,455,900	\$360,000	\$101	1.40
Restaurant/Food Service	8	15.7%	5	4.6%	22,776	0.1%	2,847	\$6,925,500	\$3,091,200	\$10,016,700	\$1,309,936	\$136	0.10
Automotive Services	4	7.8%	8	6.7%	202,773	0.5%	50,693	\$7,086,000	\$1,846,200	\$8,932,200	\$917,721	\$9	0.60
Shopping Centers	1	2.0%	17	14.9%	179,351	0.4%	179,351	\$11,535,800	\$24,764,200	\$36,300,000	\$675,003	\$138	0.24
Medical Office	1	2.0%	1	0.6%	3,351	0.0%	3,351	\$845,800	\$166,500	\$1,012,300	\$1,260,507	\$47	0.12
Office	21	41.2%	50	43.8%	5,587,428	13.0%	266,068	\$38,864,500	\$215,780,300	\$254,644,800	\$772,677	\$39	2.55
Retail	14	27.5%	31	26.6%	431,114	1.0%	30,794	\$28,575,500	\$21,242,200	\$49,817,700	\$936,668	\$119	0.32
Warehouse	1	2.0%	2	1.6%	100,890	0.2%	100,890	\$1,862,000	\$4,463,500	\$6,325,500	\$1,012,507	\$44	1.26
TOTAL	51	5.6%	115	6.6%	6,606,896	11.1%	129,547	\$96,163,100	\$309,342,000	\$405,505,100	\$838,283	\$47	1.32
TOTAL INVENTORY (PRE 2000 - 2018)													
Lodging	32	3.5%	64	3.7%	1,941,442	3.3%	60,670	\$65,170,600	\$232,642,000	\$297,812,600	\$1,024,418	\$120	0.70
Restaurant/Food Service	51	5.6%	40	2.3%	235,593	0.4%	4,619	\$44,647,300	\$18,793,100	\$63,440,400	\$1,125,056	\$80	0.14
Automotive Services	80	8.8%	115	6.7%	3,088,095	5.2%	38,601	\$82,546,869	\$46,214,700	\$128,761,569	\$716,895	\$15	0.62
Shopping Centers	50	5.5%	315	18.3%	4,057,491	6.8%	81,150	\$270,387,584	\$202,806,946	\$473,194,530	\$857,699	\$50	0.30
Medical Office	29	3.2%	56	3.2%	4,227,413	7.1%	145,773	\$25,428,800	\$304,356,125	\$329,784,925	\$453,672	\$72	1.73
Office	484	53.0%	821	47.5%	42,755,739	71.6%	88,338	\$564,898,930	\$2,752,744,018	\$3,317,642,948	\$688,053	\$64	1.20
Retail	169	18.5%	229	13.3%	1,759,470	2.9%	10,411	\$169,050,725	\$124,272,894	\$293,323,619	\$737,140	\$71	0.18
Warehouse	18	2.0%	87	5.0%	1,653,586	2.8%	91,866	\$38,708,290	\$55,235,600	\$93,943,890	\$446,632	\$33	0.44
TOTAL	913	100.0%	1,727	100.0%	59,718,829	100.0%	65,409	1,260,839,098	3,737,065,383	\$4,997,904,481	\$730,178	\$63	0.79

Source: Fulton County, GA and RKG Associates, Inc., 2020



3. PLANNED AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Several large-scale infill/redevelopment projects are under construction or are in the development pipeline. The City provided a list of these projects. Each of them has some form of infill/redevelopment and are concentrated in the Central Perimeter and GA 400 corridor. They include:

- Northpark 700 – Hines is looking to develop a 26-story, 468,000 SF office tower as the fourth building in the Northpark campus on Abernathy Road, adjacent to the Sandy Springs MARTA station. Construction will not begin until an anchor tenant has been secured.¹
- NorthPlace – This development site at Mount Vernon Highway and Barfield Road was approved for up to 370,000 SF of office space with building heights up to 10 stories. The landowner is marketing it to developers as a medical office building or campus.
- Mayson House Hotel – Glenridge Green Partners has filed for the necessary variances to build a 242-room hotel and conference center adjacent to the Mercedes-Benz USA headquarters and the Aria residential community. However, the project is on hold pending clarity in the hospitality market due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Glenpoint – Richmond Honan has proposed to build a two-building, 500,000 SF project on an infill site at Glenridge Drive and Johnson Ferry Road. The project would include a mix of uses, including medical office, assisted living, hotel, and retail.

There are three mega-projects that were announced several years ago but never executed. These are:

- Northpark – Hines proposed this development in 2013 in the southeast quadrant of Georgia 400 and Abernathy Road. It was set to include 1.5 million SF of office space, including a 50-story tower, along with 500 apartments, a hotel, and retail space. The plan was shelved in 2017 after a court ruling that the plan would require a rezoning from the City of Sandy Springs.
- Abernathy 400 – A partnership including Ackerman, Cousins, and HJ Russell proposed to build a 570,000 SF office, retail, and hotel project in the southwest quadrant of the Georgia 400/Abernathy Road interchange. The project has a zoning entitlement, but has not proceeded.
- 1117 Perimeter Center West – In 2016 Hong Property Trust and JLL filed plans for a five-tower project containing 1.5 million SF of office, 1,600 residential units, and 200,000 SF of retail space on a site surrounding an existing office building. The project has a zoning entitlement but has not proceeded.

¹ <https://atlanta.curbed.com/2019/4/17/18411872/hines-office-tower-sandy-springs-mixed-use-marta>



Beyond these projects that are already in the development pipeline, there are several other priority development areas that have been identified by the City for future opportunities. These include:

- Costco/Home Depot site – The City has expressed a desire to transform the big box center on Peachtree Dunwoody Road at Crestline Parkway into a mixed-use urban district. This vision would fit into the larger vision to transform Peachtree Dunwoody Road into an urban boulevard.
- North End Revitalization parcels – The City of Sandy Springs has engaged a design and planning consulting team to study the future development potential of four key commercial parcels located on the northern end of Roswell Road. These sites are [1] North Springs Center (7330 Roswell Road), [2] Northridge Shopping Center (8331 Roswell Road), [3] Loehmann’s Plaza (8610 Roswell Road), and [4] North River Village (8830 Roswell Road).²
- North Springs MARTA area – The City wants to direct high-intensity office and residential development along Peachtree Dunwoody Road near the North Springs station and to improve transit access to Glenlake Parkway by adding a bicycle/pedestrian connection over GA 400.³
- Future Northridge MARTA station – The Georgia Department of Transportation’s planned Georgia 400 Express Lanes project will include high-capacity transit along the GA 400 corridor from the North Springs MARTA station in Sandy Springs to McGinnis Ferry Road in Milton. This project will include a transit station near the Northridge Road interchange, and Sandy Springs has identified two potential sites for this station. One of the key criteria in choosing the site is future potential for residential and office development around it, so whichever site is selected will present development opportunities.⁴
- Powers Ferry Village – The City of Sandy Springs has developed a small area plan that presents a vision for a mixed-use village adjacent to the Publix shopping center on Powers Ferry Road just south of I-285. This village would include residential and neighborhood retail uses and would be part of an effort to make this area more accessible for bicycles and pedestrians and to improve access to the Chattahoochee River.

The development programs for these projects are concentrated in Class A office development and/or multifamily residential development, focusing on the strongest market sectors within Sandy Springs.

² <http://www.north.place>

³ <https://www.reporternewspapers.net/2019/11/12/large-hotel-planned-on-former-glenridge-hall-estate-in-sandy-springs/>

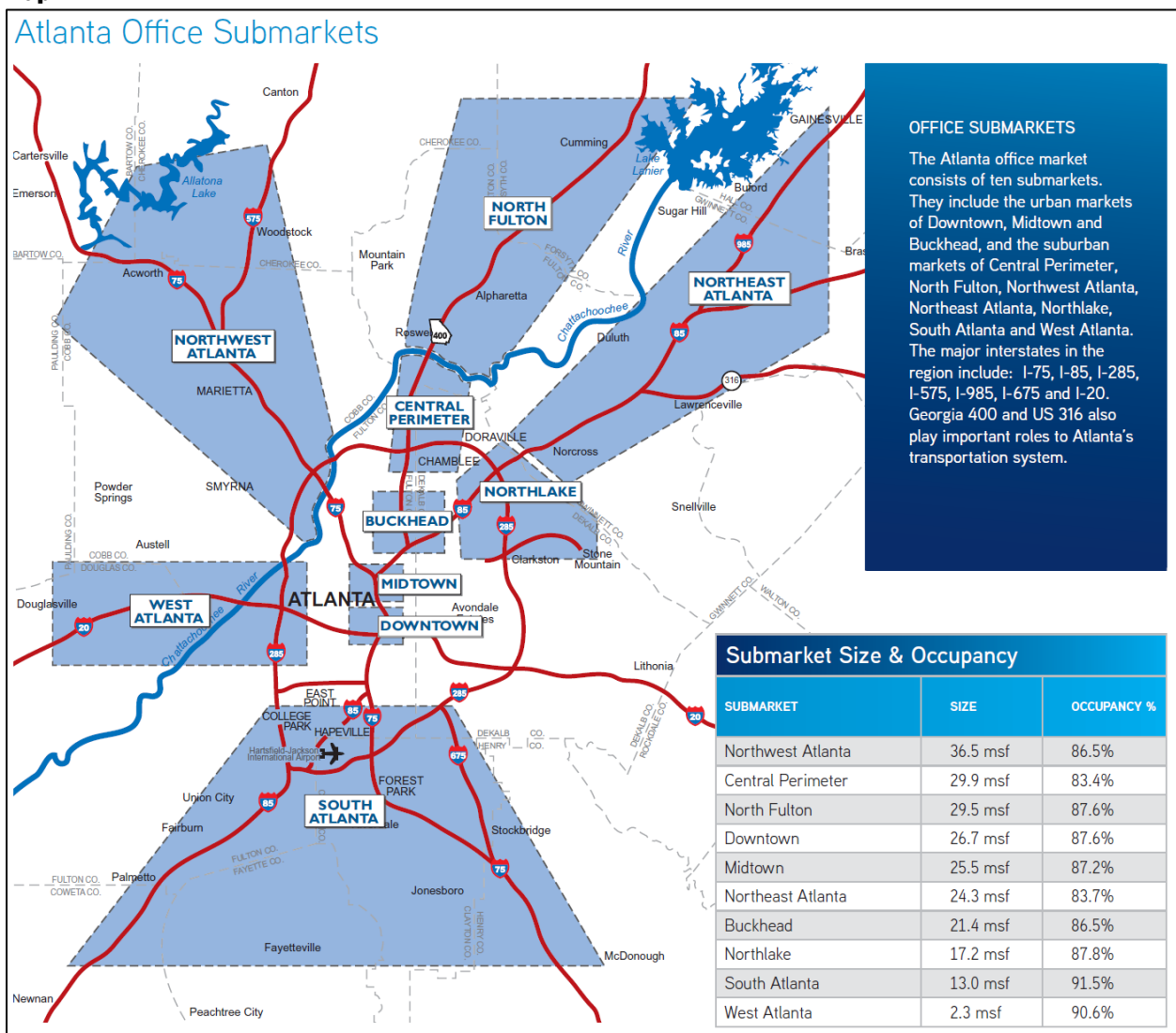
⁴ <https://atlanta.curbed.com/2019/1/10/18174588/sandy-springs-northside-hospital-mixed-use-perimeter>



E. OFFICE MARKET

The office market in Sandy Springs is mainly concentrated around the I-285/GA 400 interchange and most of the City's inventory is concentrated in the Central Perimeter submarket (Map 4-1). According to Colliers International, the Central Perimeter area contains 29.9 million SF of space and is the second largest office submarket in the Atlanta region, trailing only Northwest Atlanta (36.5 million SF). Most of the office space in Central Perimeter is located in Sandy Springs, including major office parks like Concourse and Northpark, but the submarket also includes areas of Dunwoody and Brookhaven.

Map 4-1



Source: Colliers international, 2020



The Central Perimeter market is home to the headquarters of many major corporations such as Mercedes Benz USA, Newell Brands, State Farm, United Parcel Service, Veritiv, and WestRock. These employers serve as an anchor for hundreds of professional, business, technology, and financial services companies that are also located in the area.

The Central Perimeter area has been the beneficiary of the recent trend towards corporations seeking to locate in transit accessible areas. In the last decade, 60 percent of new metro Atlanta office space has been built within a half-mile of a MARTA rail station. Within the Central Perimeter area, the recent decisions by Mercedes-Benz USA to relocate to Sandy Springs and State Farm to move to Dunwoody were both driven in part by each site's proximity to MARTA. Nearly all recent deliveries and proposed office developments in the area are concentrated along the GA 400 corridor between Abernathy Road and the Glenridge Connector.

With the City of Sandy Springs looking to add thousands more housing units to this area and transform Peachtree Dunwoody Road into walkable urban boulevard, the potential is very high for this area to continue its transformation to an urban center. According to a leading market researcher, "the Hammond Drive corridor near I-285 could eventually look like a couple of blocks in Midtown, or at least like The Battery."⁵

Despite this vision for the future, the present is a bit more challenging for the Sandy Springs office market. There are many older Class B and C office buildings located elsewhere in the City that do not have the same locational advantages as the Central Perimeter area. These include the cluster of office buildings around the Northridge Road/GA 400 interchange, the Powers Ferry area, and the Roswell Road corridor. Over time many buildings in these locations may no longer be viable for office uses and the sites could become redevelopment opportunities.

1. VACANCY AND NET ABSORPTION

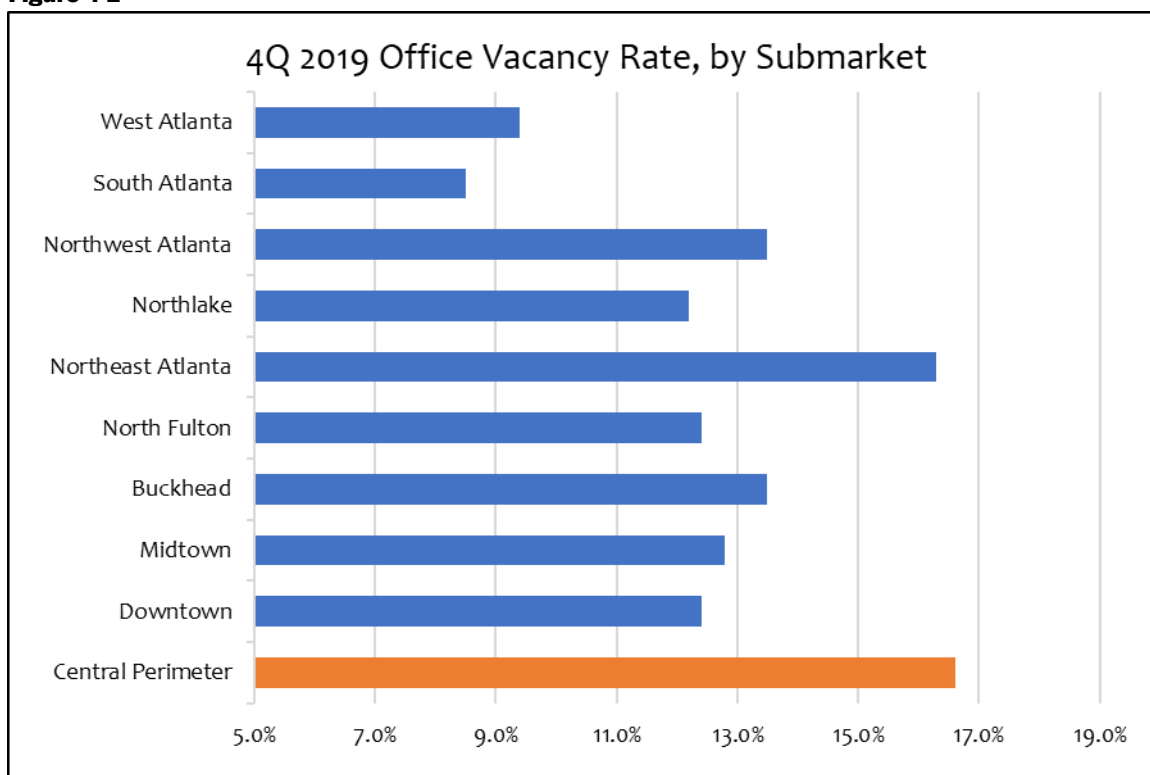
The for-lease office market in the Central Perimeter area is comparably softer than other office submarkets within the Metro Atlanta region. The overall office vacancy rate in the Central Perimeter submarket was 16.6 percent at year's end of 2019. In total, more than 4.6 million SF of space was available at that time. This vacancy rate is higher than the overall metro Atlanta rate (12.8 percent) and higher than all other submarkets in the region (Figure 4-2). However, it is important to note that vacancy analyses do not consider owner-occupied buildings.

⁵<https://www.bisnow.com/atlanta/news/mixed-use/density-turning-central-perimeter-more-into-midtown-99099>



The Central Perimeter submarket experienced a negative net absorption during 2019, with a net increase of 488,000 SF of vacant space during the course of the year (Figure 4-

Figure 4-2



Source: Colliers International and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

3). Central Perimeter was the only submarket in metro Atlanta with negative absorption during 2019, contrasting the net positive 1.9 million SF of office space absorbed within the greater Atlanta marketplace. According to Colliers International, the net negative absorption was a combination of businesses downsizing and relocating, as well as the impact of State Farm vacating leased space as they move into their new headquarters. The Colliers analysis indicated that the absorption trend was likely to reverse in 2020, with several tenants announcing lease signings for early 2020.

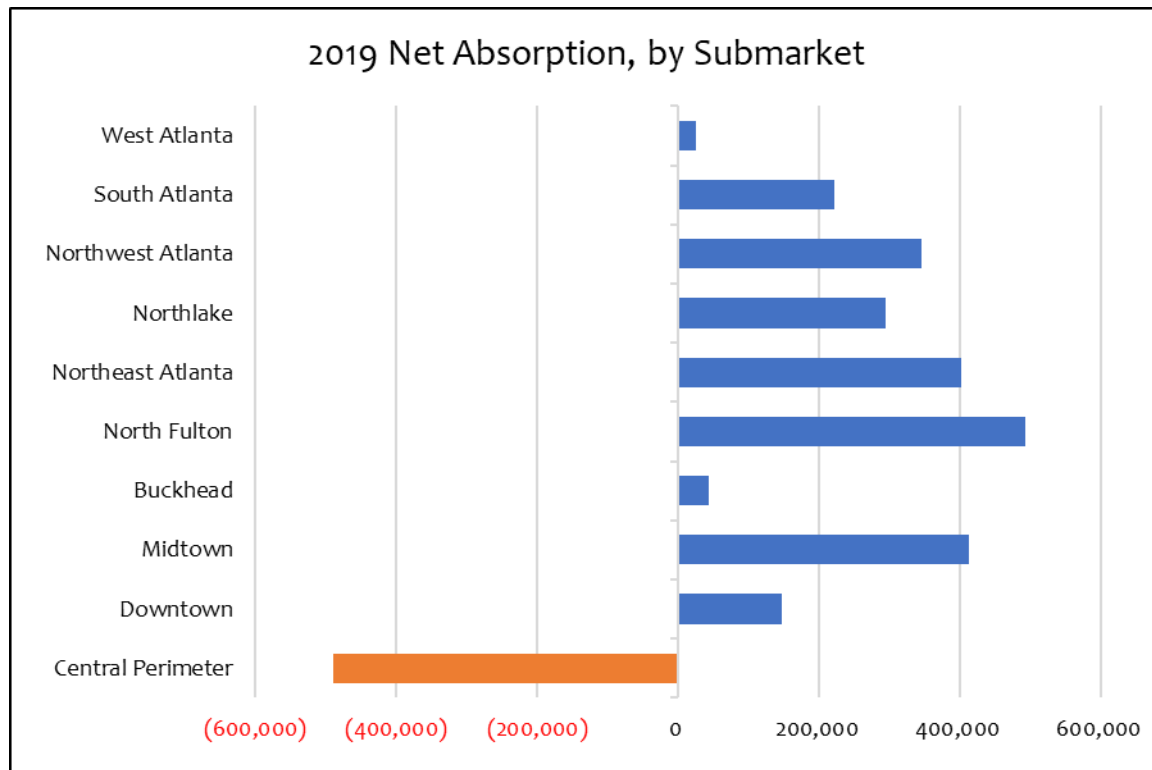
While there was no new office construction in progress in Sandy Springs as of year-end 2019, there are three buildings under construction in the Central Perimeter submarket. These include the next phases of the State Farm campus and the Twelve24 tower that is pre-leased to Insight Global, but both of these projects are located in the City of Dunwoody.



2. LEASE RATES

The Central Perimeter marketplace remains the premier suburban office location, balancing the conveniences of location and transportation access (especially MARTA) with the relative affordability compared to ‘Inside The Perimeter’ (ITP) office market locations. Central Perimeter rents have been stable over the past seven quarters (from 2Q 2018 to 4Q 2019) due to negative absorption and delivery of more than 330,000 SF of space during that time period. Class A rents in the Central Perimeter market averaged \$30/SF at the end of 2019 (Figure 4-4). This average is the highest rate among suburban submarkets, but far below the average Class A rents in Midtown (\$40 PSF) or Buckhead (\$36 PSF). Current asking rents for the premier office properties in the Central Perimeter area are in the range of \$33 to \$36 per SF reflecting the premium businesses are willing to pay for stronger amenities and proximity to MARTA. The value of amenities is more evident in The Avalon project in Alpharetta, with asking rents listed between \$38 and \$46/SF⁶. Absorption has been strong in this development despite a comparatively less advantageous location to Central Perimeter and Sandy Springs.

Figure 4-3



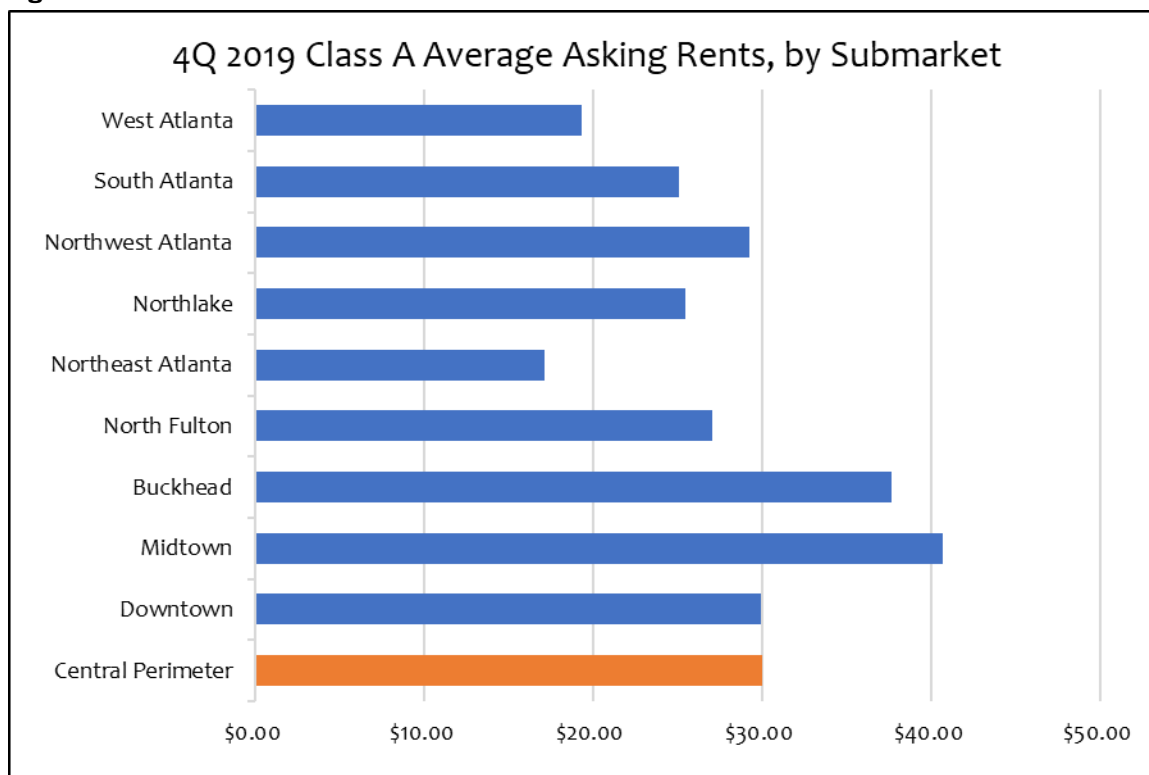
Source: Colliers International and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

⁶ CBRE and REIS listings, 11/19/2020



3. COVID-19 IMPACTS

Figure 4-4



Source: Colliers International and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

RKG Associates interviewed several real estate professionals during the course of this analysis to understand the ongoing impacts that COVID-19 is having on the office, retail, and hospitality markets. While anecdotal in nature, given the impacts are ongoing, RKG was able to capture the prevailing opinions around the short-term and long-term impacts that COVID-19 will have on office market demand regionally and in the Sandy Springs/Central Perimeter marketplace. It is important to note that opinions varied, and there is no unified perspective on the overall impacts. The following narrative summarizes RKG's primary takeaways from those conversations.

- Telecommuting likely will have mid-term/long-term impacts on at-work employment counts – The immediate impacts of businesses having to embrace telecommuting was evident. Companies were required to accelerate any plans to allow/expand telecommuting options. Many businesses have learned that productivity spiked at the beginning since workers were not having to commute to Central Perimeter (reportedly as long as 2-hours each way). Both landlord brokers and tenant brokers acknowledged that companies may maintain more robust telecommuting policies longer-term.



- *Social distancing requirements will reverse years-long declines in space per employee* – However, there was a mixture of opinion on how this would impact overall leasing demand and activity. Most notably, business representatives indicated that social distancing required the companies to use more space to create appropriate distancing in their respective offices. Landlord representatives corroborated this finding, indicating that several tenants have already requested to perform improvements in their spaces to create greater distances between workers and accommodate larger common areas and waiting spaces. There was a general sense that overall net office space demands likely will not change by company as the increase in telecommuting will be offset by greater square footage needs to accommodate the remaining in-office staff.
- *Opinions vary on long-term impacts of telecommuting on productivity* – Those real estate professionals interviewed expressed varied opinions about the long-term impacts and viability of telecommuting. Respondents who thought telecommuting will continue to expand expressed the belief that companies will continue to see productivity gains and are planning on how to have non-essential staff work remotely. Those more skeptical of the long-term viability of telecommuting commonly believed that productivity gains will wane as workers become more accustomed to the new paradigm, having companies revert back to more traditional in-office requirements. Regardless, respondents interviewed by RKG Associates expressed belief that any COVID-related impacts to office demand will be temporary as regional marketplace dynamics are predicted to remain strong.

From an economic development perspective, the impacts of COVID-19 and telecommuting likely will impact Sandy Springs/Central Perimeter in the short-term. However, this impact will be similar to changes in demand throughout the Metro Atlanta marketplace. The City remains an advantageous place to locate, given its central location, access to amenities, and strong transportation connectivity. Even if COVID-19 does have notable short-term and mid-term impacts on demand, the effect will manifest as a delay in new product delivery and not a wholesale shift in market preference away from Sandy Springs/Central Perimeter to other locations in the Metro Atlanta region. To this point, economic development efforts to retain existing office users and coordinate with regional partners to attract new users remain critical initiatives for the City. The proposed annual business survey effort will provide the City with current information that can be shared with property owners to encourage informed decisions.



F. RETAIL MARKET

The City of Sandy Springs retail market historically has been focused on meeting neighborhood and daytime population market needs. The current retail inventory of 6.2 million SF of retail space in Sandy Springs accounts for less than 2.0% of the metro area's inventory. The City is surrounded by the four largest retail concentrations in the Atlanta region: Perimeter Mall in Dunwoody, Cumberland/Galleria area in Cobb County, Lenox Square/Phipps Plaza area in Buckhead, and North Point Mall in Alpharetta. These centers have long been home to the major anchors, specialty shops, and restaurants that draw customers from a regional market. This analysis details the current retail market climate and identifies opportunities for business expansion and recruitment based on unmet needs.

1. VACANCY AND NET ABSORPTION

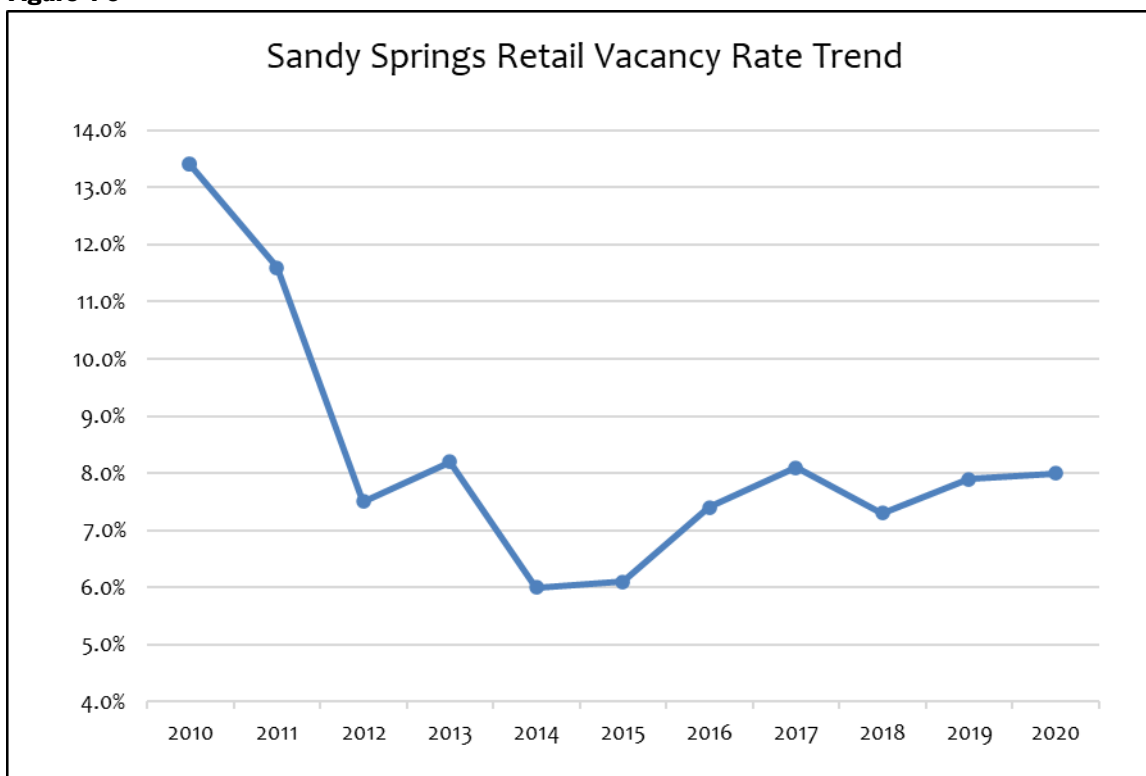
Sandy Springs retail market prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was healthy, but less dynamic than the metro Atlanta region. The City's estimated vacancy rate is 8.0%, which is higher than the regional vacancy rate of 5.1%. Recovery from the Great Recession has been robust, with the City's vacancy rate declining from over 13% in 2010, despite the delivery of more than 610,000 square feet of space during that time period, due to a positive net absorption of more than 542,000 square feet (Figure 4-5). This trend is consistent with the metro region's market net absorption and development rates. The strength of both Sandy Springs' and the greater metro area's retail market has been their respective continued residential and primary employment growth. Simply put, both the City and the metro Atlanta region continue to be a premier location for business expansion and relocation. As a result, the region is an attractive location for new residents seeking employment as well as retirees that want major metropolitan amenities with a wide variety of community and housing choice.

2. RENTAL RATE

Despite being a small part of the metro area's retail marketplace, the City of Sandy Springs has a higher average asking rent than the region as a whole. In 2020, CoStar estimates the average asking rent in Sandy Springs is \$23.28 PSF, which is well above the regional average of \$17.68 PSF. The heightened rental rate likely is the result of the City's neighborhood and community focus, combined with the relative affluence of City residents. Simply put, local spending on retail goods and services is comparably higher in Sandy Springs than the region as a whole, increasing the local per store sales capture. Further, the City's retail business is boosted by the substantial daytime population (in-commuters) that adds tens of millions in retail spending in the City.



Figure 4-5



Source: CoStar and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

Asking rents for existing retail space in Sandy Springs vary greatly depending upon the location and character of the property. Older spaces at the north end of Roswell Road have the lowest asking rents in the City, with spaces available as low as \$9 PSF. For older shopping centers along Sandy Springs Circle such as Centre Court, Cornerstone Square, The Springs, and Springs Landing are leasing in the range of \$16 to \$25 PSF. Centers in the Roswell Road corridor that have undergone renovations such as Sandy Springs Plaza and The Exchange have asking rents in the range of \$25 to \$31 PSF. Newly built space on the ground level of new multi-family buildings or new free-standing spaces like City Springs have asking rents as high as \$40 PSF.

3. SUPPORTABLE RETAIL SPACE

RKG Associates performed a retail gap analysis to understand current unmet retail needs within the City. The analysis focused on the City as a whole and then each commercial submarket area within the City (see the Opportunity Site chapter for more detail on each commercial center). The retail gap analysis examines the difference between the supply (existing establishment sales) and the demand (consumer household spending) for a variety of different types of retail stores. The analysis is presented for the entirety of



Sandy Springs as well as for a 7-minute drive time radii around the City's key retail nodes.

Comparing the demand and supply data can help the City gauge the potential support for additional retail within each commercial center. This demand-supply comparison identifies "sales leakage." Sales leakage occurs when local consumer demand for retail goods exceeds the amount of sales that are captured by local retail establishments. High sales leakage generally indicates that the local marketplace is underserved in that specific retail category, oftentimes with an insufficient number or quality of product lines and/or fewer businesses than can be supported. The results of the analysis can help to identify any retail "gaps" that can be filled by new store openings if the area has the economic ability to support them.

The following summarizes the retail gap analysis findings:

- *Sandy Springs has substantial spending leakage* – Esri Business Analyst estimates that the City has \$2.64 billion in 2019 annual retail demand between residents and daytime workers. In comparison, businesses in the City captured \$1.87 billion in sales, indicating approximately \$772 million in sales leaking from the City.
- *At a base level, the City of Sandy Springs is underserved in retail* – Of the 24 retail industry groups studied for this analysis, only four had more sales capture by local businesses than demand from residents and daytime workers (Table 4-2). The City has the most notable leakage in retail industry groups that typically have larger, more regionally focused businesses (i.e. Department Stores at \$261.7 million). Only General Merchandise Stores (i.e. Sam's Club, Target) and Grocery Stores had much higher capture rates than local demand.
- *Sandy Springs businesses are more successful capturing demand for retail categories that are locally oriented* – The City has a surplus of \$45.6 million for Grocery Stores; this category is likely helped by the presence of destination stores such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. Sandy Springs has relatively small retail gaps relative to the amount of demand for other businesses that typically serve residents. For example, the local retail gap for Restaurants is \$50.0 million, but that is compared to a demand base of \$258.9 million. As such, a much smaller share of demand for restaurants and bars is lost from Sandy Springs than for many types of retail goods.



Table 4-2
Retail Supply and Demand for Select Industry Groups
City of Sandy Springs, 2019

Retail Industry Group	Demand	Supply	(Gap) Surplus
Furniture Stores	\$52,132,616	\$20,651,078	(\$31,481,538)
Home Furnishings Stores	\$43,213,529	\$25,638,371	(\$17,575,158)
Electronics & Appliance Stores	\$85,573,709	\$54,263,620	(\$31,310,089)
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	\$134,929,545	\$74,641,595	(\$60,287,950)
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	\$8,434,602	\$1,040,154	(\$7,394,448)
Grocery Stores	\$362,704,104	\$408,281,933	\$45,577,829
Specialty Food Stores	\$23,844,269	\$9,404,869	(\$14,439,400)
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	\$28,605,381	\$18,733,751	(\$9,871,630)
Health & Personal Care Stores	\$142,462,483	\$110,303,249	(\$32,159,234)
Gasoline Stations	\$267,619,817	\$107,415,772	(\$160,204,045)
Clothing Stores	\$82,482,272	\$47,398,838	(\$35,083,434)
Shoe Stores	\$18,577,087	\$4,732,497	(\$13,844,590)
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	\$24,757,632	\$15,654,952	(\$9,102,680)
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	\$57,004,053	\$22,521,365	(\$34,482,688)
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	\$9,671,008	\$10,031,285	\$360,277
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$309,524,529	\$47,832,545	(\$261,691,984)
Other General Merchandise Stores	\$112,430,279	\$198,218,706	\$85,788,427
Florists	\$3,362,012	\$2,132,593	(\$1,229,419)
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	\$16,520,794	\$12,611,846	(\$3,908,948)
Used Merchandise Stores	\$15,019,300	\$9,920,824	(\$5,098,476)
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$47,744,321	\$16,470,252	(\$31,274,069)
Special Food Services	\$2,756,536	\$2,627,644	(\$128,892)
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$6,444,759	\$9,412,703	\$2,967,944
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	\$258,809,086	\$208,793,702	(\$50,015,384)

Source: ESRI and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

- However, surrounding retail nodes will make it very difficult for the City to capture much of these sales back – The results of the retail gap analysis bear out the challenges and opportunities that result from Sandy Springs being located between four major commercial nodes. While the City analysis reveals there are several retail categories leaking outside Sandy Springs, the individual node analyses reveal that neighboring communities are capturing all, and more, of the City's leaking demand. For example, a 7-minute drive time analysis from the Powers Ferry Road commercial node reveals a retail surplus of more than \$281 million due to the presence of Cumberland/Galleria.



Table 4-3

Retail Gap Analysis for Key Nodes (7-Minute Drive Time)

All Figures in \$Millions

	City Springs	Roswell Rd North	Roswell Rd South	Sandy Springs MARTA Area	Powers Ferry
All Retail Sales					
Demand (Retail Potential)	\$1,098.7	\$888.5	\$984.5	\$1,113.5	\$518.0
Supply (Retail Sales)	\$1,240.3	\$652.4	\$814.3	\$2,077.4	\$799.4
Retail (Gap) Surplus	\$141.6	(\$236.0)	(\$170.2)	\$963.9	\$281.4
Retail Trade Only					
Demand (Retail Potential)	\$986.9	\$798.6	\$883.4	\$998.7	\$465.3
Supply (Retail Sales)	\$1,068.2	\$585.4	\$675.4	\$1,815.7	\$704.7
Retail (Gap) Surplus	\$81.3	(\$213.2)	(\$208.1)	\$817.1	\$239.4
Food & Drink Only					
Demand (Retail Potential)	\$111.8	\$89.8	\$101.0	\$114.9	\$52.6
Supply (Retail Sales)	\$172.1	\$67.0	\$138.9	\$261.7	\$94.7
Retail (Gap) Surplus	\$60.2	(\$22.8)	\$37.9	\$146.8	\$42.0

Source: ESRI Business Analyst Retail MarketPlace Profile 2019; RKG Associates

- Although the drivetime areas for the five identified retail nodes generally have very little leakage, it does not mean they are able to serve all the needs of nearby residents – Four of the five nodes have retail surpluses, meaning that there are more retail sales within each area than there is demand generated by their residents. However, each have gaps in certain neighborhood-serving sectors that could attract new retailers.
- Attracting additional retail and restaurant activity to these nodes will largely be a function of adding more housing and households near each area – The City's Next 10 Comprehensive Plan envisions multiple high-density residential projects in four (all except Powers Ferry) of the five nodes, which will in turn create additional demand for everyday goods and services and for restaurants and bars. The Powers Ferry area, which has by far the lowest number of residents in its immediate surroundings, is not expected to attract large-scale residential development, so its retail potential will likely be more limited.
- The ongoing trends toward placemaking and experiential retail will continue to shift demand from regional malls and power centers toward more lifestyle-oriented districts – At present Sandy Springs only has a small number of such environments, most notably at City Springs. With the City's future land use plan geared around encouraging new mixed-use districts along Peachtree Dunwoody Road, Roswell Road, and Powers Ferry Road, there will be many opportunities for additional retail, restaurant, and service businesses in these areas.



- The present uncertainty may produce greater opportunity in the longer term – If older centers face vacancy and blight there will be more urgency to redevelop these properties as mixed-use projects, which will open the door for new businesses that better serve the residents that will be living in new housing units. Businesses that will be drawn to new mixed-use developments will be oriented to the daily needs and convenience of residents and will be focused on food/beverage and personal service uses.

4. COVID-19 IMPACTS

The global economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 clearly has a negative effect on the retail market in Sandy Springs in the short-term. The City's business outreach effort in April and May identified that retail businesses were the most impacted by the shut down and have been the slowest to recover once the social distancing requirements have been eased. While local, state, and federal programs have helped alleviate some of the challenges, almost 58% of survey respondents noted their concern that their business might close permanently because of the various challenges associated with shifting operations due to the pandemic. In a follow-up survey in October 2020, this share decreased to 35%.

The true impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic remain unknown at this point due to the on-going nature of addressing the health issue. However, business activity losses at many retail and service businesses in the City already have been quantified. That said, consumer habits have changed substantially (i.e. accelerated online shopping), which will have direct long-term impacts on the City's retail marketplace. The City's retail focus towards community-serving industry groups will support the recovery as many of these goods are purchased in-person. However, local real estate professionals noted that Sandy Springs has a relatively higher concentration of businesses that are not national chains, making their financial exposure more challenging.

Several respondents indicated that older commercial centers may lose tenants and face economic distress. However, this may create economic development opportunities for infill development or redevelopment, enabling the City to continue its vision of creating dynamic, walkable mixed-use commercial activity centers, bringing a more market-balanced mix of residential and commercial uses.

G. RESIDENTIAL MARKET

The City has commissioned a comprehensive housing needs assessment, which is being completed concurrently with this strategic economic development planning process.



While that assessment will provide greater detail on the recent, current, and projected housing market and affordability levels, this process needed to assess the City's housing market relative to its impact on economic development. Simply put, housing type and price diversity directly impact the attractiveness of a jurisdiction as a place to locate a business. Businesses require workers, and workers require a place to live.

The metro Atlanta region has experienced substantial job growth for the past several decades, making the regional unemployment rate very low. These two conditions mean the region must attract more workers in order to accommodate business expansion and business recruitment. This is particularly important for north Fulton County and Sandy Springs given the area was initially settled as a bedroom community and is becoming built out. In other words, economic development sustainability will require greater coordination to improve the local and regional jobs-housing balance⁷. It is through this lens that the strategic economic development plan is reviewing the City's residential market.

1. HOUSING TYPE DIVERSITY

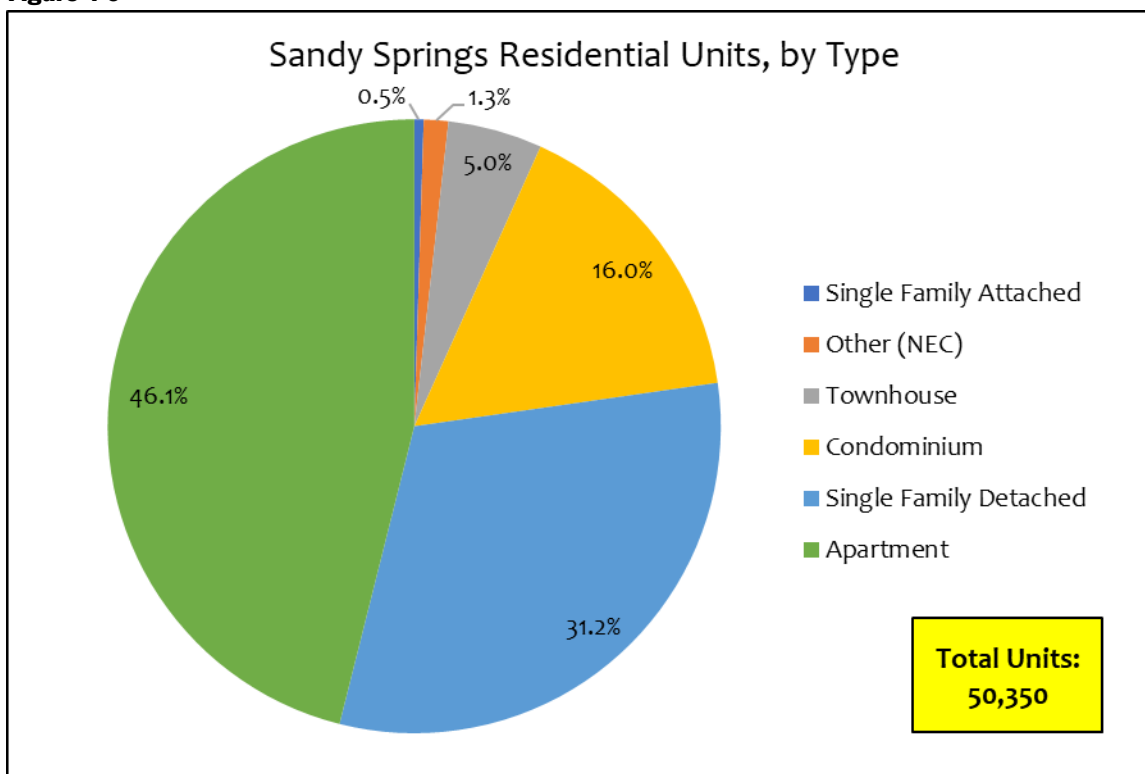
According to the Fulton County property assessor, the City of Sandy Springs has approximately 50,350 housing units. The City's housing mix is reflective of a typical inner-suburb employment center. The City has an almost even split (48%-52%) between owner-occupied units and renter-occupied units (Figure 4-6). The Sandy Springs housing market is more diverse than neighboring north Fulton County municipalities, but less diverse than similar employment centers (i.e. Buckhead and Midtown).

While the mix of housing is diverse in Sandy Springs, recent development trends reveal new housing development is skewing towards higher density residential development. Since 2010, the property assessment data identifies approximately 6,011 new multifamily rental units being developed compared to approximately 1,740 single-family attached and detached units. That said, the traditional ownership to renter ratio for the recent development (45% to 55%) is similar to the overall City levels (48% to 52%). This transition from suburban to urban scale development is consistent with the City's evolution from a traditional bedroom community to one of the largest employment centers in Metropolitan Atlanta and the State of Georgia.

⁷ Jobs-Housing Balance measures the ratio of primary employment opportunities with existing housing units in that area. The measure is one analysis point in understanding the need for new housing.



Figure 4-6



Source: City of Sandy Springs and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

2. HOUSING PRICE DIVERSITY

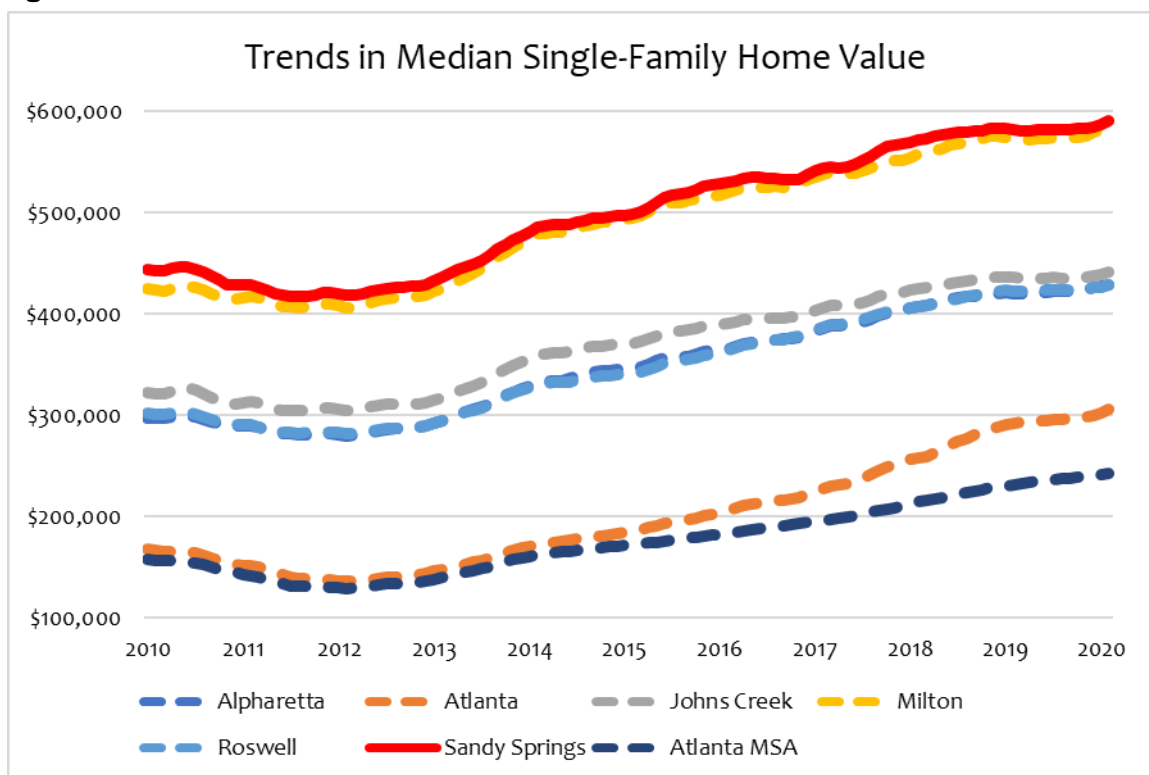
While Sandy Springs has a more diverse housing stock than the rest of North Fulton County, housing cost is very high. As of early 2020, Sandy Springs has the highest median home value (almost \$530,000) and monthly asking rent (\$1.38 PSF) in north Fulton County (Figures 4-7 and 4-8). Although there are some pockets of affordability within the City (particularly along Roswell Road north of City Springs), pricing trends show that housing costs have exceeded annual income growth since 2010.

For traditional ownership housing, new construction housing has similar value (on a per unit and per square foot basis) to older housing units. Generally, new single-family and townhouse development is similar in size and price to the City's existing housing stock, on average. In contrast, new construction apartments typically have a much higher cost on a per unit basis than the City's older housing stock. While newer developments tend to carry a premium due to better, more modern amenities, the multifamily disparity also is due to location. Older apartment complexes do not have the same proximity and convenience to the City's transportation infrastructure, services, and employment base. The City's condominium market has a similar price dichotomy. Older condominium



developments are not well amenitized and most are geographically isolated from the City's amenities currently valued in the consumer market.

Figure 4-7



Source: Zillow and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK

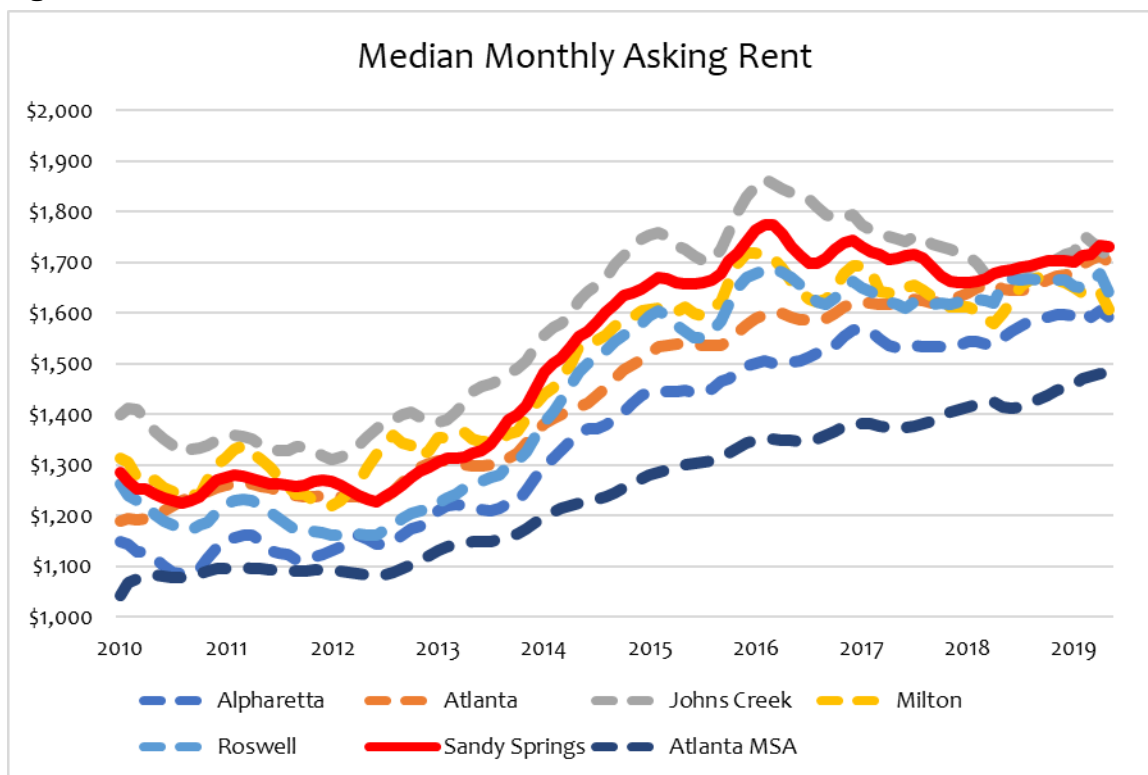
As mentioned, there is a direct correlation between economic development sustainability and housing diversity and affordability. The connection between the two was a common discussion point with the business leaders interviewed during this process. Several employers, particularly larger employers, cited the challenge of finding and retaining entry-level professionals and service workers. These employers commonly identified the challenge for these workers to find suitable and affordable housing within close proximity to Sandy Springs.

To this point, the lack of price diversity — along with the escalating housing prices — could have a negative impact on the City's business retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts, as companies will seek locations within the region that offer more affordable housing prices. Based on interviews with local real estate professionals, this already is occurring. It was noted that speculative investment is increasing in the Powers Ferry Road and Cumberland/Galleria marketplace due to increased market demand. These



locations offer a cheaper alternative for office space and are more convenient to the comparatively less expensive Cobb County housing market for employees.

Figure 4-8



Source: Zillow and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020



5 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

The City of Sandy Springs has experienced substantial business and job growth for decades. Being located within the MARTA heavy rail system (Central Perimeter), at the intersection of I-285 and Georgia State Route 400, and within the region's most educated workforce has benefited the City's economic development efforts. In fact, economic development success in Sandy Springs began well before the City was incorporated and had professional economic development staff. The efforts of Fulton County, Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Power, and the State of Georgia spurred Metro Atlanta region's second largest office submarket.

This business development identification is not intended to supplant the regional and statewide business recruitment efforts. In fact, RKG Associates and the Working Group strongly encourage the City to continue to leverage those relationships and resources to focus on business attraction related to the regional target industries. Rather, this business development cluster analysis aims to guide the City's direct business recruitment and entrepreneurial development efforts. The recommendations herein focus on augmenting the City's existing business climate, complement regional efforts, and support existing industry clusters in Sandy Springs/northern Fulton County.

To this point, this chapter aims to identify those industries that can be most impactful and that would provide the best chance for successful retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts implemented by the City's economic development staff. In addition to informing recruitment efforts, a focus on growing these industries can help officials to identify and refine appropriate land use policies and prioritize incentives and capital investments that promote infill/redevelopment projects that encourage the types of buildings best-suited for a targeted use or industry.

The business development clusters identified are not the only sectors that could view Sandy Springs favorably as a place to do business. That said, they are likely the sectors to which the City should prioritize human and financial resources pursuing due to the City's relative competitiveness in each respective cluster.



B. METHODOLOGY

Before arriving at the identified business development clusters, this chapter analyzes the local and regional business climate, how the City measures up to typical site selection criteria, recent and projected job growth patterns, and community preference. The City's strengths and weaknesses in each of these areas may make it more or less competitive to businesses and site selection professionals considering sites in Metro Atlanta and can dictate which industries have the greatest chance of success. Sandy Springs' opportunities are explored in part by analyzing the State of Georgia's performance against several business climate criteria and identifying ways that the City might set itself 'apart from the crowd.'

C. BUSINESS CLIMATE FACTORS

Prior to examining Sandy Springs' strengths and opportunities for business retention and recruitment efforts, it is worth evaluating the City's overall business climate in comparison with its state and the country. Doing so can assist in identifying programs or initiatives that can differentiate Sandy Springs from local, regional, and national competitors.

While quantifying specific business climate factors is difficult at the local level, the non-profit group Prosperity Now's annual Development Report Card for States provides this valuable information at the state level. The group's 2020 report ranks each state and the District of Columbia in 51 unique economic metrics related to Financial Assets and Income, Business and Jobs, Housing and Homeownership, Healthcare, and Education.

Analyzing Georgia's standing within these categories can have a number of benefits for Sandy Springs. In categories where the state performs extremely well, like Microenterprise Ownership Rate (7th in the nation), Sandy Springs can determine if it is keeping pace, and if not, implement programs targeting the creation and growth of microenterprises (Table 5-1). In categories where the state does not do as well, like Business Value by Race and Gender (41st and 49th respectively), Sandy Springs can create and implement programs to target small business development for minority-owned or women-owned businesses.

These choices can help make the City more competitive to firms looking to expand, relocate, or put down roots, and can help the employees of those firms to see Sandy Springs as a great place both work and live.



Table 5-1

**Economic Assets and Opportunities Scorecard
Georgia and Comparison States**

Category	Score		Rank				
	Georgia	US	Georgia	North Carolina	South Carolina	Tennessee	Texas
FINANCIAL ASSETS AND INCOME							
Access to Revolving Credit	69.1%	74.0%	39	34	42	44	40
Asset Poverty Rate	27.3%	24.1%	34	29	24	28	16
Bankruptcy Rate	4.10	2.30	48	11	11	50	9
Borrowers Over 75% Credit Card Limit	30.9%	25.4%	48	40	43	38	46
Consumers with Collections	28.9%	21.2%	45	41	50	40	48
Consumers with Prime Credit	42.4%	53.0%	49	37	46	40	47
Fell Behind on Bills	13.3%	13.2%	25	39	20	13	19
Low Financial Well-Being	20.0%	18.0%	9	37	23	3	15
Households with Savings Accounts	64.2%	71.4%	45	19	33	40	41
Households with Zero Net Worth	17.2%	15.7%	10	25	28	17	28
Income Inequality	4.87	4.93	36	27	31	32	35
Income Poverty Rate	13.7%	12.7%	38	33	42	41	40
Income Volatility	20.5%	20.1%	24	28	31	17	38
Liquid Asset Poverty Rate	48.0%	36.9%	37	26	29	33	28
Net Worth	\$61,020	\$92,110	32	19	24	26	25
Saved for Emergencies	52.2%	57.8%	43	28	32	36	39
Severely Delinquent Borrowers	20.0%	14.8%	44	38	50	43	47
Unbanked Households	10.6%	6.5%	48	26	33	40	47
Underbanked Households	24.1%	18.7%	49	25	33	40	50
BUSINESSES AND JOBS							
Average Annual Pay	\$57,834	\$57,266	13	21	44	20	8
Business Ownership by Gender	1.19	1.25	14	28	42	21	8
Business Ownership by Race	19.3%	17.6%	8	20	31	15	11
Business Value by Gender	4.03	3.03	49	39	39	32	24
Business Value by Race	\$374,615	\$440,190	41	39	42	38	22
Employers Offering Health Insurance	42.4%	46.8%	40	44	45	5	12
Low-Wage Jobs	25.4%	18.7%	41	38	46	39	35
Microenterprise Ownership Rate	20.4%	18.2%	7	22	28	15	11
Underemployment Rate	7.1%	7.3%	28	33	19	9	26
Unemployment Rate	3.7%	3.7%	30	36	9	19	23
HOUSING AND HOMEOWNERSHIP							
Affordability of Homes	3.23	3.71	20	22	21	24	16
Delinquent Mortgage Loans	1.3%	1.1%	39	34	36	31	25
Foreclosure Rate	0.7%	0.9%	19	21	29	15	18
High-Cost Mortgage Loans	8.6%	7.6%	42	26	25	29	49
Homeownership Rate	63.8%	63.9%	40	36	12	23	46
Housing Cost Burden - Homeowners	25.1%	27.7%	22	21	25	19	33
Housing Cost Burden - Renters	49.8%	49.7%	38	25	33	32	33
HEALTH CARE							
Employee Share of Premium	31.5%	27.8%	43	48	21	40	37
Employer Provided Insurance Coverage	57.5%	59.5%	35	38	40	36	46
Forgoing Doctor Visit Due to Cost	18.2%	13.0%	51	44	45	45	49
Poor or Fair Health Status	19.1%	18.4%	34	34	32	46	34
Uninsured Low-Income Children	11.4%	7.1%	48	28	26	31	51
Uninsured Rate	15.7%	10.4%	48	41	41	38	51
EDUCATION							
Borrowers with Student Loan Debt	25.0%	21.9%	45	13	31	11	19
Disconnected Youth	12.6%	11.3%	38	33	37	42	39
Early Childhood Education Enrollment	49.2%	48.2%	13	30	34	46	41
Four-Year College Degree	31.9%	32.6%	21	21	38	41	28
High School Graduation Rate	79.4%	84.1%	44	22	33	8	5
Math Proficiency - 8th Grade	31.1%	33.8%	31	20	40	30	35
Median Student Loan Debt	\$20,727	\$18,366	49	38	43	28	10
Reading Proficiency - 8th Grade	32.1%	33.6%	31	27	39	33	46
Severely Delinquent Student Loan Debt	18.3%	15.2%	38	32	41	42	33

Source: Prosperity Now and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020



1. FINANCIAL ASSETS AND INCOME

The Financial Assets and Income metrics measure wealth and income equality for individuals across the state. From an economic development perspective, states with broader wealth and income distribution tend to be more prosperous and have more dynamic entrepreneurial marketplaces.

Overall, Georgia is a low-wealth state. The average household net worth in Georgia is \$61,020, substantially below the national average of \$92,110. The bankruptcy rate of 4.1 per 1,000 residents is nearly double the national rate and ranks Georgia 48th overall out of 51 states and Washington DC (Table 6-1). Other metrics where Georgia does not perform well are Consumers with Prime Credit (49th) and Unbanked/Underbanked Households (48th and 49th respectively). These figures highlight the diverging fortunes of Metro Atlanta and the state as a whole. Sandy Springs and the other North Fulton cities have largely prospered at levels well above national averages while income inequality has grown. However, there is a sizable contingent of Sandy Springs households that have these financial challenges. The divergence of wealth and prosperity among the City's residents is evident in the demographic data.

Most potential remedies for improving net worth and asset poverty involve housing affordability, workforce development, and entrepreneurial opportunities. At a base level, having price appropriate housing for existing residents who work retail/service and entry level jobs can have a substantial impact on household financial stability. Sandy Springs can combat income inequality by committing to the development of quality low- and middle-income housing. Given the City's (and region's) historically low unemployment rate, building skills and providing entrepreneurial opportunities to the City's underemployed working population may prove to be a more effective way to build wealth than focusing on programs that cater specifically to the unemployed.

2. BUSINESS AND JOBS

The Business and Jobs metrics address the quality of jobs and access to business ownership opportunities for existing residents. Georgia performs well in several Business and Jobs categories, including Microenterprise Ownership Rate (7th), Business Ownership by Race (8th) and Business Ownership by Gender (14th). Looking at these metrics independently would indicate that Georgia's proportion of Black, Asian, Latino, and other minorities that own businesses is actually higher than the proportion of White workers that own businesses. However, Georgia's rankings of 41st in Business Value by Race and 49th in Business Value by Gender indicate that the vast majority of Georgia's



minority-owned and women-owned businesses are small, relatively low-revenue enterprises.

From an economic development perspective, this data presents opportunities for Sandy Springs. On one hand, the strong entrepreneurial spirit in Georgia provides Sandy Springs a substantial economic development opportunity to connect with the City's existing, established workforce that may desire to start their own company. These individuals represent potential entrepreneurs/business owners that a local program could help encourage. More specific to the research findings, an entrepreneurial/small business program that targets minority-owned and women-owned businesses could help address the value divide while appealing to the largest portion of the City's resident growth over the past 18 years.

3. HOUSING AND HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

One of Metro Atlanta's (and Georgia's) most notable advantages versus other strong job markets like Boston and New York City is its lower cost of housing. Still, the state's relatively low wages and educational attainment mean that housing and homeownership are a challenge for too many. This challenge is even more acute in Sandy Springs. The City has the highest median single-family home value and median apartment rent in north Fulton County, and well above the metro Atlanta region. From a macroeconomic perspective, the concentration of wealth in Sandy Springs is not a substantial deterrent, given the relative affordability in other areas surrounding the City of Atlanta. From a City-centric perspective, the lack of housing affordability has become a challenge for businesses to attract service workers as well as entry and mid-level professionals. Simply put, workers in the lower 75% of the earning spectrum in Sandy Springs are challenged to find sufficient housing within close proximity of the City that meets their space needs/preferences. This challenge could limit the City's long-term success in continuing to attract larger employers with a diverse workforce base.

4. HEALTHCARE

Healthcare metrics provide insight into residents' access to health insurance, their overall health status, employers' share of healthcare premiums, and other measures. In this category, Georgia is one of the country's poorest-performing states. Nearly 16 percent of residents are uninsured, the 3rd highest uninsured rate in the country. Further, more than 11 percent of Georgia's low-income children are uninsured. It should be noted that the Prosperity Now measures, in focusing on insured rates and overall health, do not factor in measures of actual patient care. While Sandy Springs' more affluent composition



limits the number of uninsured persons or low-income children, the low-income households in Sandy Springs do experience these challenges.

To this point, the City of Sandy Springs is the juxtaposition of health care and access to healthcare. The City is home to several of the South's most famous and elite medical institutions in a state that has one of the country's highest uninsured rates. While issues related to healthcare policy are typically settled at the federal and state levels of government, Sandy Springs has the unique opportunity to engage with its resident healthcare providers to investigate the potential for local programs to assist residents and employees of local businesses (direct action) and/or advocate for legislative policies at the state/federal level (indirect action) to enhance access to healthcare for its residents.

5. EDUCATION

High-performing schools are critical to attracting and retaining new firms and residents, especially those that wish to “put down roots” in the community for the long term. Separating “successful” schools and districts from the pack is difficult, as success can be measured in many different ways. Standardized test scores and graduation rates are among the most commonly cited measures, but fail to account for socioeconomic factors that may be driving them; a graduation rate of 85 percent in “community X” may actually represent a more impressive performance than a 90 percent graduation rate in “community Y” if the former faces starker economic or social challenges. That said, traditional measures of school district success are readily available online and can dramatically affect the marketability of a community in the eyes of prospective firms and residents.

Sandy Springs diverges from the state rankings as it relates to schools. The ProsperityNow scorecard reveals some of the challenges of Georgia's overall educational attainment. Most notably, the high school graduation rate in Georgia (79.4%) is the 44th lowest in the U.S. However, this does not reflect the performance of Sandy Springs schools (Table 5-2). Sandy Springs has well performing public schools, including the 3rd ranked high school in the state (Riverwood International Charter) and the 9th ranked middle school (Ridgewood Charter). Only one school (Ison Springs Elementary) received a grade below “B” from Niche, a nationally recognized school achievement assessment organization.



Table 5-2

Public Schools by Niche Rating (Pre-K to High School)

City of Sandy Springs, GA & Surrounding Counties

School	Rating	Location	Grade	Rank	Per Area
North Springs High	A-	Sandy Springs	9-12	83	GA
Riverwood International Charter	A	Sandy Springs	9-12	3	GA
Ridgeview Charter Middle	B+	Sandy Springs	6-8	9	GA
Sandy Springs Middle	B	Sandy Springs	6-8	16	Fulton
Dunwoody Springs Elementary	B+	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	321	GA
Heards Ferry Elementary	A	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	15	Fulton
High Point Elementary	B+	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	441	GA
Ison Springs Elementary	B-	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	N/A	N/A
Lake Forest Elementary	C+	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	N/A	N/A
Spaulding Elementary	A-	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	195	GA
Woodland Elementary	A-	Sandy Springs	PK, K-5	241	GA
Counties					
Fulton County Schools	A-	Fulton	PK, K-5	30	GA
Cobb County Schools	A-	Cobb	PK, K-5	16	GA
DeKalb County Schools	C+	DeKalb	PK, K-5	N/A	N/A
Gwinnett County Schools	A-	Gwinnett	PK, K-5	21	GA

Source: Niche.com and RKG Associates, Inc., 2020

Notes: Ranking considers 182 school districts, 422 public high schools, and 1,261 public elementary schools in GA

Fulton County Schools has 20 high, 27 middle, and 64 elementary schools

Ranking considers 19 charter high schools, 46 charter middle schools, and 54 charter elementary schools in GA

D. SITE SELECTION CRITERIA

Site-specific selection factors are key criteria when firms weigh decisions about where to locate, move, or remain. Are there vacant parcels or adaptable structures available for development? Does a site have good access to highways or public transportation? Is it available at a reasonable cost? In addition to a site being physically and financially within reach, business leaders evaluate factors like local labor costs, tax rates, and labor availability, among others. Area Development Magazine, a site and facilities planning publication, releases an annual ranking of top site selection factors according to a survey of American corporate executives. The information in the ranking highlights the relative importance of a variety of factors, ranging from quality of life to available labor, when making site selection decisions. While the survey results are not specific to any geographic area, they help communities like Sandy Springs to understand how they can meet firms' most pressing site selection needs, and where to focus efforts to improve.

Firms' most important selection criteria have shifted over time. While highway accessibility and labor costs have consistently been the two most important factors in site selection since at least 2000, firms now pay much closer attention to "soft criteria" like the availability of skilled labor and the quality of life that communities can offer would-be employees (Table 5-3). A necessity to seek out sites that offer high quality of life may be reflective of a more employee-focused culture in which firms feel the need to court



prospective workers that change jobs relatively frequently. The strong national economy that has emerged since the 2008 financial crisis has also seen firms place relatively less importance on a state or municipality's incentive packages.

Table 5-3
Executives' Top Site Selection Criteria: Changing Preferences
2000-2019

2019	2018	2010	2000
Highway Accessibility	Availability of Skilled Labor	Highway Accessibility	Highway Accessibility
Availability of Skilled Labor	Labor Costs	Labor Costs	Labor Costs
Labor Costs	Highway Accessibility	Tax Exemptions	Availability of Skilled Labor
Quality of Life	Corporate Tax Rate	Occupancy or Construction Costs	Corporate Tax Rate
Occupancy or Construction Costs	Tax Exemptions	State & Local Incentives	State & Local Incentives
Corporate Tax Rate	Quality of Life	Corporate Tax Rate	Tax Exemptions

Source: Area Development Magazine Corporate Survey and RKG Associates, Inc., 2020

Sandy Springs has a competitive advantage in almost all of the top site selection criteria, explaining the City's extremely successful business attraction for the past several decades (Table 5-4). The City's location at GA 400 and I-285 as well as its multiple MARTA stations in the Perimeter and Medical Districts make it proximate to all of the region's other employment centers, Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, and Peachtree DeKalb Airport. The area's well-educated population means a strong availability of skilled labor, although the City's and region's low unemployment rate means new college or high school graduates often present the largest pool of residents actively looking for jobs. While state and local incentives and tax exemptions are available in Sandy Springs, there are relatively few programs that cannot be found elsewhere in Metro Atlanta.

Metro Atlanta is a low-cost market compared to many of the country's most competitive urban centers. As one of the country's ten most populous metro areas and one of its fastest growing, Atlanta is able to offer a quality of life that, while improvable, offers tremendous value for the cost. Its tremendous diversity, arts and culture scene, sports teams, universities, hospitals, and unique neighborhoods—not to mention its mild winters—would appeal to most firms considering a move. That said, continued progress on some



Table 5-4

National Top Site Selection Factors, 2000 - 2019
Sandy Spring, GA Strengths and Opportunities

Rank	Factor	
1	Highway Accessibility	▲
2	Availability of Skilled Labor	▲
3	Labor costs	—
4	Quality of Life	▲
5	Occupancy or Construction Costs	▼
6	Corporate Tax Rate	▲
7	Energy Availability and Costs	▲
8	Tax Exemptions	—
9	Environmental Regulations	▲
10	Proximity to Major Markets	▲

Source: Area Development Magazine and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

social issues, governmental priorities, and land use decisions will be needed to keep up with the country's highest-flying metros. Despite Sandy Springs' relatively socially progressive and tolerant population, Georgia's conservative political landscape is often out of step with the young talent that will drive economic growth in the years to come. Metro Atlanta's historic preference, including Sandy Springs, for designing itself around the needs of cars, rather than human-centric design, means more traffic and fewer walkable neighborhoods than some competitive cities. Continued efforts to create vibrant, walkable live-work-play destinations in the City's commercial centers will strengthen the City's competitive position within the region and foster long-term sustainability as other areas/regions continue investment in dynamic employment centers.

E. COMPETITIVE ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS

This section summarizes Sandy Springs' economic development strengths and weaknesses based upon conversations with business owners, local and regional implementation partners, elected officials, community organizations, and the general public. The findings are grouped into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Feedback from stakeholders is combined with summarized findings and analysis as presented in other sections of this SEDP report.



1. STRENGTHS

The City of Sandy Springs has several competitive advantages when it comes to economic development, business attraction and growth, and quality of life amenities. The following attributes were the most consistently identified by local business and community leaders as positing the City for success in business attraction, retention, and expansion.

- *Sandy Springs is centrally location to labor force and employment centers* – As noted, the City is ideally located in heart of metro Atlanta’s most robust employment and activity centers as well as most of the region’s highest skilled labor force.
- *Sandy Springs’ transportation connections* – In addition to being located at the intersection of I-285 and GA400, Sandy Springs is the terminus for MARTA’s north-south line, with three stations in Sandy Springs (and one located immediately adjacent in Dunwoody).
- *Sandy Springs has three major health centers* – In addition to being an industry cluster unto itself, Sandy Springs offers almost all specialties of general, acute, and emergency healthcare services, and is home to both Children’s Hospital of Atlanta and Emory Healthcare’s primary campuses.
- *The Sandy Springs government’s focused, progressive leadership embraces market opportunities* – The City was founded on the concept of public-private partnerships. This has carried over into the City’s perspective and approach to engaging and assisting businesses.
- *Sandy Springs residents have a strong sense of community pride to maintain the City’s competitive position* – Many City residents understand the connection between high quality of life, low taxes, and economic strength and sustainability. This manifests itself both as a strong local drive to support City businesses as well as vocal advocacy for pro-business policies/legislation.
- *Local and regional partner coordination is strong* – As noted throughout this analysis, the City has done an excellent job in leveraging local and regional relationships to enhance its economic development capacity. This process will help forge stronger, more strategic relationships moving forward.
- *The City’s infrastructure has capacity for growth* – Sandy Springs is not limited in its ability to accommodate more real estate development because of infrastructure limitations. This is not the case in all municipalities within the Metropolitan Atlanta region.
- *The City’s existing high-quality commercial assets* – The City’s land use and building codes have yielded a physical inventory base that has positioned the City for success. Continued success and long-term sustainability will be influenced by the City’s policies evolving with market conditions.



- Sandy Springs maintains substantial demand from new and existing businesses – The other strengths enumerated here continue to drive opportunity and demand in Sandy Springs. This continued positive momentum has become a strength unto itself.
- Sandy Springs' corporate citizens are invested in the community – Both large and small businesses have engaged with the City and other community partners to maintain and enhance the City's quality of life for residents and workers.
- Sandy Springs schools are well regarded – As noted earlier, public schools in Sandy Springs are well regarded, making the City a highly desirable place to live.
- Sandy Springs is comparatively more diverse than the rest of north Fulton County – The City's diversity (detailed in the Demographic Chapter) is both a strength and an opportunity. From an economic development perspective, it signals Sandy Springs is more accepting and embracing of new ideas and perspectives.
- Sandy Springs has a range of income levels with a strong high-income resident base – This income diversity offers limited opportunities to support businesses that have a wide range of jobs, particularly those that have concentrations of highly-skilled jobs.

2. WEAKNESSES

While the City is well positioned for economic development success, there are aspects of Sandy Springs' location, regulatory environment, and community characteristics that could hinder the City's retention, expansion, and recruitment efforts. The following factors were the most commonly noted by participants in this process.

- Vehicular access in and out of Sandy Springs extremely challenging during rush hour – Traffic congestion was the most common weakness observation of participants in the economic development planning process. While the City has good connectivity, local and regional land use patterns have created substantial traffic issues during rush hour. This limit the attractiveness of Sandy Springs as a place to work for people who live elsewhere, particularly for low-paying and moderate-paying jobs.
- There is a small contingent of the City resistant to economic development – Like all other municipalities, continued economic growth and evolution of land uses to accommodate market changes is not universally supported. It was reported that there is a small contingent of vocal residents that oppose new development/investment.
- Redeveloping functional assets is financially challenging – Sandy Springs does not have widespread vacancy or disinvested buildings. Given the City is largely built out, new investments tend to be redevelopment projects. The financial challenges of redevelopment are more substantial than traditional greenfield development. Land use policies and programs need to adjust to this reality for continued investment to occur.



- The City's labor force is skewed to the highest-skilled positions. While Sandy Springs' labor force is more diverse than the rest of north Fulton County, it has limitations that makes Sandy Springs less competitive in certain industries. The City's current situation is particularly challenging for larger companies that have a substantial entry level or mid-level employment base. Existing employers noted the challenge to attract and keep these workers due to the transportation costs.
- Sandy Springs' disproportionate business base compared to overall population makes engagement challenging – Simply put, business retention and expansion must be scaled to the number of businesses. The City has many more businesses than most cities with similar populations. To this point, Sandy Springs needs to invest more to effectively run an outreach program.
- Current financial investment and staffing capacity cannot implement full strategy – The City's vision and supporting goals for economic development require greater financial investment and more staff members to reach the expected level of success. Until more resources are invested, the City should scale back expected outcomes.

3. THREATS

The 'threats' section of this narrative focuses on changing market conditions and emerging trends that could adversely impact the City's efforts to meet the defined economic development goals. To this point, these observations help inform the specific recommendations made in the Implementation Strategy Chapter.

- Commercial space and housing is becoming less price competitive in Sandy Springs – Historically, Sandy Springs offered a value alternative to Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead in Atlanta. The cost effectiveness of the Central Perimeter market combined with the desire for a more suburban location boosted the City's business attraction. However, recent market data reveal that the price differential with these other markets has reduced, impacting the City's value proposition.
- Market preference is changing from traditional suburban office parks – Similar to the pricing challenge, the market demand for isolated, landscaped office parks is diminishing in favor of highly amenitized live-work-play employment centers. The City's ability to adapt its existing commercial centers through infill and redevelopment most likely will benefit continued business attraction/retention and long-term market sustainability.
- Roles and responsibilities to implement the City's economic development efforts are not well defined -The City benefits from having several local and regional partners that are committed to economic development success. However, the City has not clearly defined its expectations of those partners. Engaging with internal and external



partners to clarify roles and responsibilities will strengthen the City's economic development efforts and reduce any overlap/inefficiencies in implementation.

- *The City can better leverage regional partners to free up resources* – One way to improve those external resources is clearly defining the City's economic development staff's roles in business recruitment, particularly for larger companies. Simply put, larger companies see Sandy Springs as a benefit for its location, not the City specifically. Further, these prospects are less likely to see the City's specific incentives as beneficial as those from the State and County. To these points, the City should clearly define its role in large-scale business recruitment and engage its regional partners accordingly.
- *The City's efforts are not robust in small business and retention efforts* – In contrast to large-scale recruitment and retention efforts, the City's economic development staff is the primary entity for small business (defined in this study as 10 employees or fewer) retention, expansion, and attraction. Increasing business outreach, establishing a more robust small business development focus are two areas the Working Group and RKG encourage the City to invest more resources.
- *The City is not collecting all the data it needs to make informed decisions* - The COVID-19 pandemic exposed some of the limitations in the way the City collected and managed data that is essential to an effective and efficient economic development program. In this instance, the City had incomplete contact information for all of the ~6,500 businesses registered with Sandy Springs. Collecting and maintaining comprehensive and accurate business, permitting, and property information will make the City's economic development efforts stronger.
- *Community engagement is a constant concern to address NIMBY* - Citizen engagement and education is one of the most important economic development activities, and one almost all communities ignore. Land use decisions are the core of economic development activity. Development in communities like Sandy Springs, which are mostly built out, tend to be infill/redevelopment of existing built properties. Infill and redevelopment are much more challenging than greenfield development because you are changing the use/intensity of a site that the community already is accustomed. Without public support, it is very challenging to garner approval for changes to land use.
- *Sandy Springs cannot solve the regional traffic issue* – The regional traffic congestions is well beyond the authority and financial capability of the City to solve independently. Unfortunately, this is not universally understood within the City. Measuring economic development efforts against the regional traffic challenges is a false comparison, as the use of roads in Sandy Springs is more affected by outside decisions than City efforts. Allowing these concerns to determine City actions around economic development most likely will adversely impact the City's efforts.



- As existing Baby Boomer residents age-in-place, housing affordability and availability issues will compound – Data show that Baby Boomers are more likely to age-in-place than previous generations. Having these residents remain in Sandy Springs is a testament to the desirability of the City as a place to live during all life cycles. However, the historic turnover in housing of retirees to new working households is being disrupted, effectively reducing the available housing supply for the next generation of workers. As noted in the Real Estate Chapter, housing availability and affordability already are challenges in the City, which it is addressing through a concurrent housing needs assessment process. Measures to increase housing options are as much an economic development issue as a community growth issue. While the region touts its housing affordability (as detailed earlier), this is not the case in Sandy Springs and north Fulton County due to an imbalance of supply and demand.

4. OPPORTUNITIES

The Implementation Strategy Chapter details all of the City's opportunities related to the City's defined economic development goals. That said, this section highlights the most common economic development opportunities mentioned by business leaders and community leaders during this planning process.

- Increase entrepreneurial and small business development activities – Small businesses are the 'backbone' of Sandy Springs economy. As noted in the Economic Base Chapter, more than 86% of the City's businesses have 10 or fewer employees. Engaging existing City residents and workers at the larger corporations likely is the most cost-effective way for the City to promote business growth and job creation. More specifically, the City should engage the growing ethnic diversity and the aging population in the community and region to mine entrepreneurs and angel investing.
- Refocus the Sandy Springs Innovation Center concept – The Working Group indicated that the Sandy Springs Innovation Center concept should be recast as an entrepreneurial and small business development program. The City will need to do further study on when and how to incorporate a physical space component.
- Continue to support and pursue live-work-play infill development – Projects like The Avalon have proven market preference is transitioning from traditional suburban, isolated office space towards integrated live-work-play activity centers. Sandy Springs already has begun enabling this type of development. The Working Group encourages the City to expand this focus to all of the commercial activity centers.
- Continue to embrace TOD development in Central Perimeter – Specifically in Central Perimeter, the Working Group and RKG Associates encourage the City to pursue more traditional transit-oriented development (TOD) in and around the MARTA



stations. The Opportunity Sites Chapter details several site-specific recommendations endorsed by the Working Group.

- Increase effort to support existing businesses, particularly smaller, locally-owned businesses – As noted in the weaknesses section, there are more existing businesses than can be adequately engaged under the City's current investment. The Working Group and RKG Associates recognize the growth potential for Sandy Springs businesses if more resources were made available to engage and assist these businesses.
- Identify strategies to enhance Roswell Road and Powers Ferry as smaller office markets – While Central Perimeter is the logical choice for continued large-scale office and mixed-use development, the City's other commercial markets have the potential to accommodate a better mix of office, retail, and service-based businesses. The Working Group has provided several location-specific recommendations in the Opportunity Sites Chapter.
- Increase networking and business-to-business connections for local businesses – Many business development opportunities occur through networking opportunities for business owners. The City and the Chamber already are engaged in networking events. The Working Group encourages the City to further invest in these events, particularly expanding industry-specific networking opportunities and information sharing opportunities.
- Expand citizen engagement to expand community support for growth – The Working Group recommends the City take a more proactive approach to engaging with Sandy Springs residents, particularly engaging citizens outside of a land use or business incentive package process. Meeting with residents to discuss economic development goals, priorities, actions, and results while listening to their questions and concerns can build trust and awareness, which potentially will increase support and decrease opposition.
- Create stronger internal (City departments) and external (implementation partner) relationships – Each department within the City and implementation partner outside of the City have specific responsibilities to achieve. Sometimes, these responsibilities conflict or oppose economic development goals and opportunities. The Working Group and RKG recognize that these other City departments and outside entities should not change to meet the singular mission of economic development. However, addressing potential challenges or finding mutually beneficial solutions are much more challenging without consistent and collaborative engagement. To this point, there is an opportunity to strengthen intra-departmental and inter-organizational collaboration through pre-project interactions and regular strategy meetings.
- Improve the City's data collection to enable proactive strategies – As noted, collecting and maintaining comprehensive and accurate business, permitting, and property information will make the City's economic development efforts stronger. RKG recommends the City create a central database for all business licensing, building



permit, and property assessment data to strengthen its marketing outreach and improve planning efforts.

F. SANDY SPRINGS BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The business development cluster analysis casts a wide net in determining potential industry sectors for the City to proactively market. Taking a more aggressive approach to identifying possible industry targets for Sandy Springs enables the City's economic development office to refine its proactive marketing and recruitment outreach efforts. In this context, aggressive means that the screening process was inclusive rather than exclusive relative to potential opportunities that may appear marginal considering historical economic trends. Being inclusive at this phase ensures any potentially viable options can be tested before being eliminated.

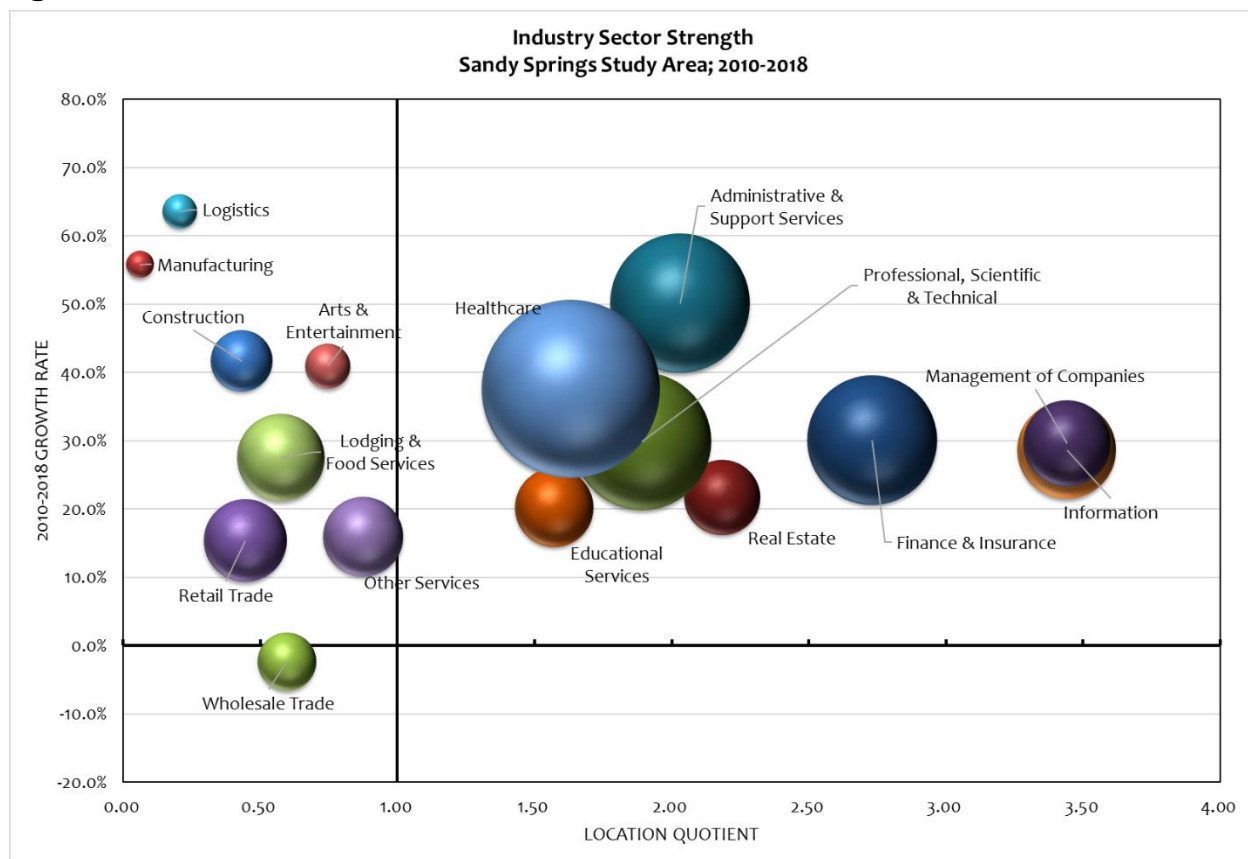
Furthermore, the business development list looks beyond just static targets. They identify vertical (supply-chain) and horizontal (market) relationships within the primary target markets. By using this methodology, Sandy Springs can apply a comprehensive approach to building upon existing industry clusters and developing new ones. This is particularly important when targeting industries that already have a relationship with an existing regional industry and/or business, such as the existing corporate headquarters in Central Perimeter.

It is important to note that the business development cluster analysis approach for Sandy Springs is different from traditional assessments. Most notably, the City staff, Working Group, and RKG Associates all recognized that the traditional target industries for north Fulton County remain relevant within Sandy Springs (Figures 5-1 and 5-2). These clusters have been inventoried and identified by the City's regional and state partners. Proactive recruitment efforts are more logically led by these regional and state partners, with the City providing any support and information, as necessary. These clusters include:

- Corporate Headquarters
- Healthcare and Social Assistance
- Financial Technology Services



Figure 5-1



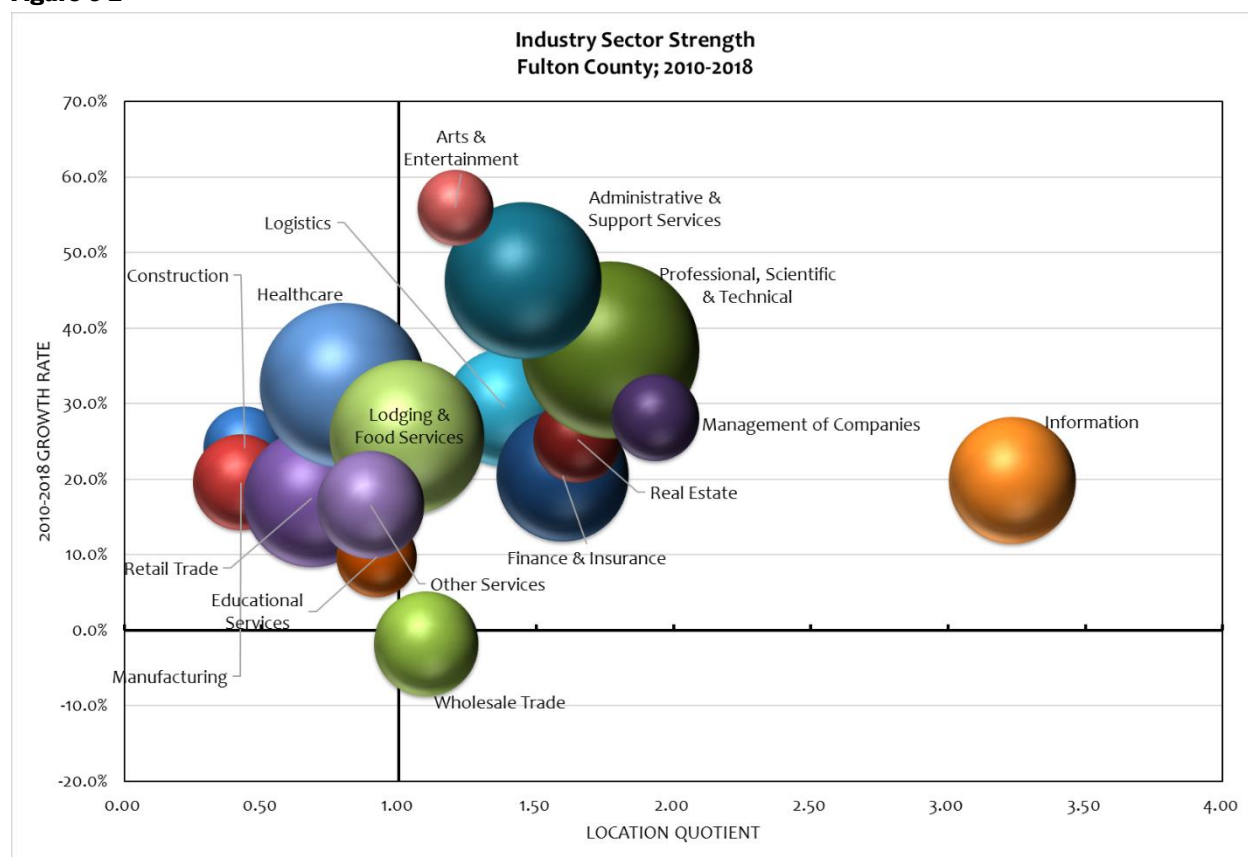
Source: EMSI and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

Rather, this approach focuses on those clusters that are scaled to the City's recruitment potential. In other words, this assessment focuses on smaller businesses that [1] are more sensitive to the specific location within Metropolitan Atlanta, [2] will not qualify for the larger incentive programs offered regionally or statewide, [3] will benefit from locating near the existing employment clusters in the City, and [4] will enhance the City's efforts to create more dynamic live-work-play centers.

1. PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

The primary business development industry cluster focuses on the City's largest existing employment cluster: Professional and Business Support Services. These companies range from traditional professional businesses (i.e. law firms, engineering firms, and accountants) to specialty niches (i.e. medical offices) to the support companies that serve these other office-based uses (i.e. cleaning services). This industry cluster constitutes more than 91,000 of the approximately 125,000 jobs in Sandy Springs.

Figure 5-2



Source: EMSI and RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

As mentioned, the City should rely on its regional and statewide partners to recruit the larger, anchor companies in this sector. The City's efforts should focus on smaller companies that would locate in Sandy Springs to be proximate to these larger companies, whose target clientele reflects the Sandy Springs/northern Fulton County demographic makeup, or are owned by existing City residents seeking to do business closer to home. The proposed entrepreneurial and small business development program should target existing businesses seeking to expand and residents and workers in Sandy Springs interested in starting their own business. Additional efforts to proactively market the City to similar businesses operating outside the City, but within the southeast region should be undertaken concurrently.

2. INTERNET OF THINGS (IoT)

The "Internet of Things," or IoT, industry cluster focuses on the ways in which the Internet and other communications technology can bring smart design to sectors like manufacturing, shipping, and consumer electronics. The Metropolitan Atlanta region already has a strong IoT recruitment strategy, with proven successes in attracting these



companies to the marketplace (i.e. IBM's Watson program in Brookhaven). The IoT cluster combines the professional services component already in place in Sandy Springs with other industries such as financial technology (prevalent along GA 400) and research and development (regionally strong through academic institutions such as Georgia Tech in Midtown Atlanta).

As noted, the City's efforts in the IoT marketplace would be smaller, start-up companies, existing workers within the IoT field seeking to start their own company, and those businesses that support the larger IoT supply chain (i.e. a software development company). Sandy Spring's high quality of life, well-educated workforce, and proximity to existing IoT centers make the City competitive in this environment. One approach would be to engage with existing office space and proposed developments to investigate the potential to dedicate space (through design or amenities) to target this marketplace.

3. COTTAGE PRODUCTION

Sandy Springs is not a production-based economy. The City has very little industrial or warehouse space, and this land use has substantial competitive disadvantages from a land value perspective. However, cottage production businesses have become a component of flex space as well as retail centers. Cottage producers are small, independent businesses that 'make' consumable goods. These businesses range from food production (i.e. cupcake companies and breweries) to artisans (i.e. carpenters or artists). Effectively, cottage production merges the manufacturing of a good at a micro scale and the retail component of selling that good.

Cottage producers already existing in Sandy Springs, north Fulton County, and throughout the Metropolitan Atlanta region. These businesses help infill existing flex space developments and retail shopping centers. Creating a strategy to proactively recruit these businesses and assist existing businesses to find permanent commercial space in Sandy Springs can benefit both the retail market segment as well as create entrepreneurial opportunities for existing/prospective residents. For example, on-site brewery/restaurants have become a staple in mixed-use commercial centers throughout Metropolitan Atlanta.

Incorporating maker space in new mixed-use development projects is one potential way to expand opportunities for these businesses. This review process already identified opportunities for the City to work with existing businesses to better use their existing assets to promote cottage production.



4. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The environmental sciences cluster includes businesses that perform research and development targeted to improve the environmental impact of other industries as well as those companies that implement these research findings through consultation with the targeted end users (i.e. office buildings, construction businesses, and manufacturers). The manufacturing side of environmental science is not a good fit for the City of Sandy Springs.

The Metropolitan Atlanta marketplace already has seen an increase in investment and spending in environmental science research and development. Like with many other economic development opportunities, Sandy Springs' location provides a competitive advantage to attracting firms seeking a central location. To maximize the potential of this initiative (and the IoT initiative as well) is the need for more dynamic live-work-play activity centers similar to Tech Village in Midtown or Ponce City Marketplace. A community like Cambridge, Massachusetts could provide a blueprint (albeit on a much larger scale than Sandy Springs) for the environment needed to succeed in this arena.



6 **OPPORTUNITY SITE ANALYSIS**

A. INTRODUCTION

As part of the strategic economic development plan, RKG Associates engaged the Working Group to assess each of the City's commercial centers for potential catalytic investment opportunities that further the defined economic development goals and priorities (detailed in the Implementation Plan chapter). The opportunity site analysis focused on six of the City's seven commercial centers as identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan (Map 6-1):

- City Springs District
- Northridge District
- North Springs MARTA
- Medical District
- Perimeter District
- Powers Ferry Road
- Roswell Road South

The strategic economic development plan process did not assess the Roswell Road North area since the City is concurrently analyzing that commercial center through a separate planning process. This planning process encourages the City to use that analysis effort to identify opportunity sites and plan regulatory and policy changes based on the recommendations therein. It is RKG Associates' assumption that the North End planning process has considered the analysis done for economic development plan and presented to the City over the past several months.

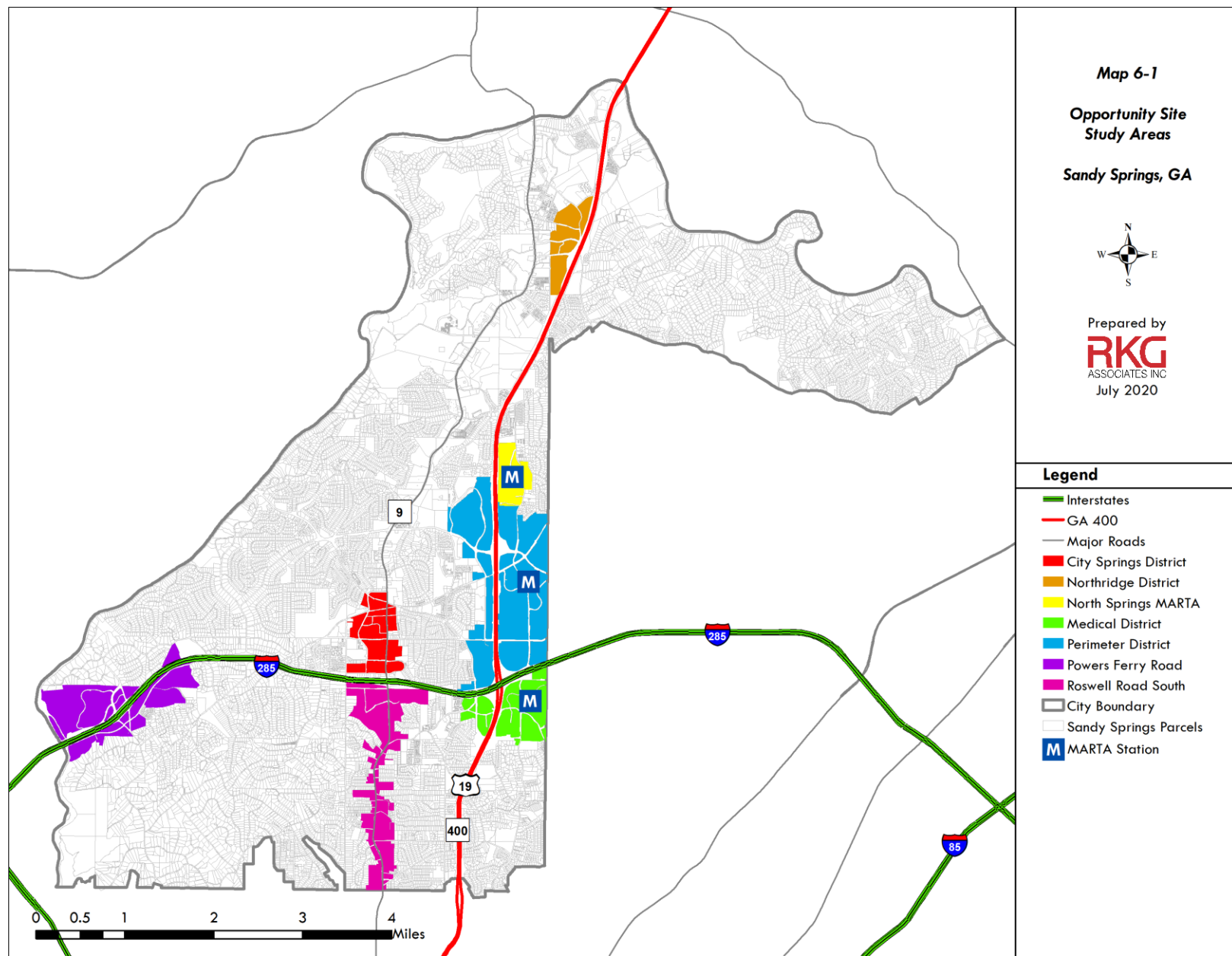
The economic development opportunity site analysis inventoried existing land uses, identified vacant and underutilized parcels, and proposes potential sites that can accommodate development, infill development, and redevelopment consistent with the economic development strategy. RKG Associates used several location-based and physical factors to identify potential opportunity sites. This includes, but is not limited to:



- Parcel size – larger parcels can more easily accommodate infill or redevelopment levels conducive to attracting investment.
- Previous priority redevelopment area (PRA) designation – The City previously has identified parcels with the potential for redevelopment. These parcels were closely considered through this process.
- Current and potential land use – RKG assessed existing land use and potential land use (under current zoning) to score individual parcels. This process indirectly considered factors such as cost of redevelopment and potential relocation challenges.
- Underutilization – RKG scored each parcel with a floor-area-ratio (FAR) less than 0.25, given the continued evolution of Sandy Springs from a suburban bedroom community to an integrated employment center.
- Vacancy – Undeveloped parcels, or parcels with substantial building vacancy were identified as priority locations.
- Potential assemblage – RKG identified clusters of parcels with high reinvestment scores and ranked them higher based on their collective potential that individually they would not be able to achieve.
- Ownership patterns – RKG considered existing ownership patterns, highlighting parcels where current ownership could be either a benefit (i.e. City-owned) or a constraint (i.e. owner-occupied housing) to infill/redevelopment.

The opportunity site analysis used these factors to identify potential opportunity sites and then further categorize the identified catalytic sites into short-term, mid-term, and long-term opportunities. RKG Associates presented the initial conclusions to the City economic development staff and the Working Group for comment, refinement, and prioritization. The final recommendations were determined through a work session with RKG, City staff, and the Working Group.

It is important to note that the recommendations presented in this chapter are the first step in the process of identifying and executing any policy or regulatory efforts. This process did not include direct outreach to property owners, and as such, these concepts have not been vetted with existing owners to determine compatibility with their respective short-term and long-term investment strategies. RKG Associates strongly recommends the City use this chapter as a foundation for engaging property owners, considering land use and economic development policy changes, and prioritizing public investment.





B. CITY SPRINGS DISTRICT

Overview

The 14-acre City Springs complex was envisioned as the ‘community heart’ of Sandy Springs. The goal was the creation of the classic live-work-play environment that could serve as the vibrant town square where all residents could greet and socialize. Located just north of the intersection of I-285 and Roswell Road, the site is the location of City Hall, entertainment venues, restaurants, and residences. The study area includes the broader developing City Springs District that provides a broad mixture of uses. It is centrally located among all of the City’s commercial activity nodes, essentially serving as Sandy Springs’ downtown.

Vision

There are several centrally located vacant pads within the City Springs district footprint that provide opportunities for catalytic development. The City envisions the addition of a new hotel and other residential development which could further enhance the foot traffic and vibrancy of the district. The City also seeks to attract additional commercial activity for increased economic activity. Land use policies that encourage further mixed-use development in the study area is recommended.

There is also a long-term opportunity to programmatically connect this district into the City’s pedestrian trails network. More specifically, the City should continue its efforts to make the City Springs district more pedestrian friendly by partnering with property owners to create inter-parcel connectivity off of Roswell Road.

Inside and neighboring the City Springs district are several pads of city-owned parcels along Hammond Drive, Mount Vernon Highway, and a third pad just north of I-285. They would need to be coordinated with additional pads along the eastern and western sides of Roswell Road to increase intra-parcel connectivity for City Springs. Several entertainment uses, such as the Performing Arts Center, could benefit from the synergy that could be created.

Short Term Strategies

- **CSD-1: Redevelopment** – There is a significant pad of publicly owned parcels along the south side of Mount Vernon Highway just across from City Springs that are ripe for catalytic development that could extend the scale and design of City Springs. The addition of more experiential retail and dining could establish this district as an entertainment destination and help strengthen the performing arts center housed in City Springs.



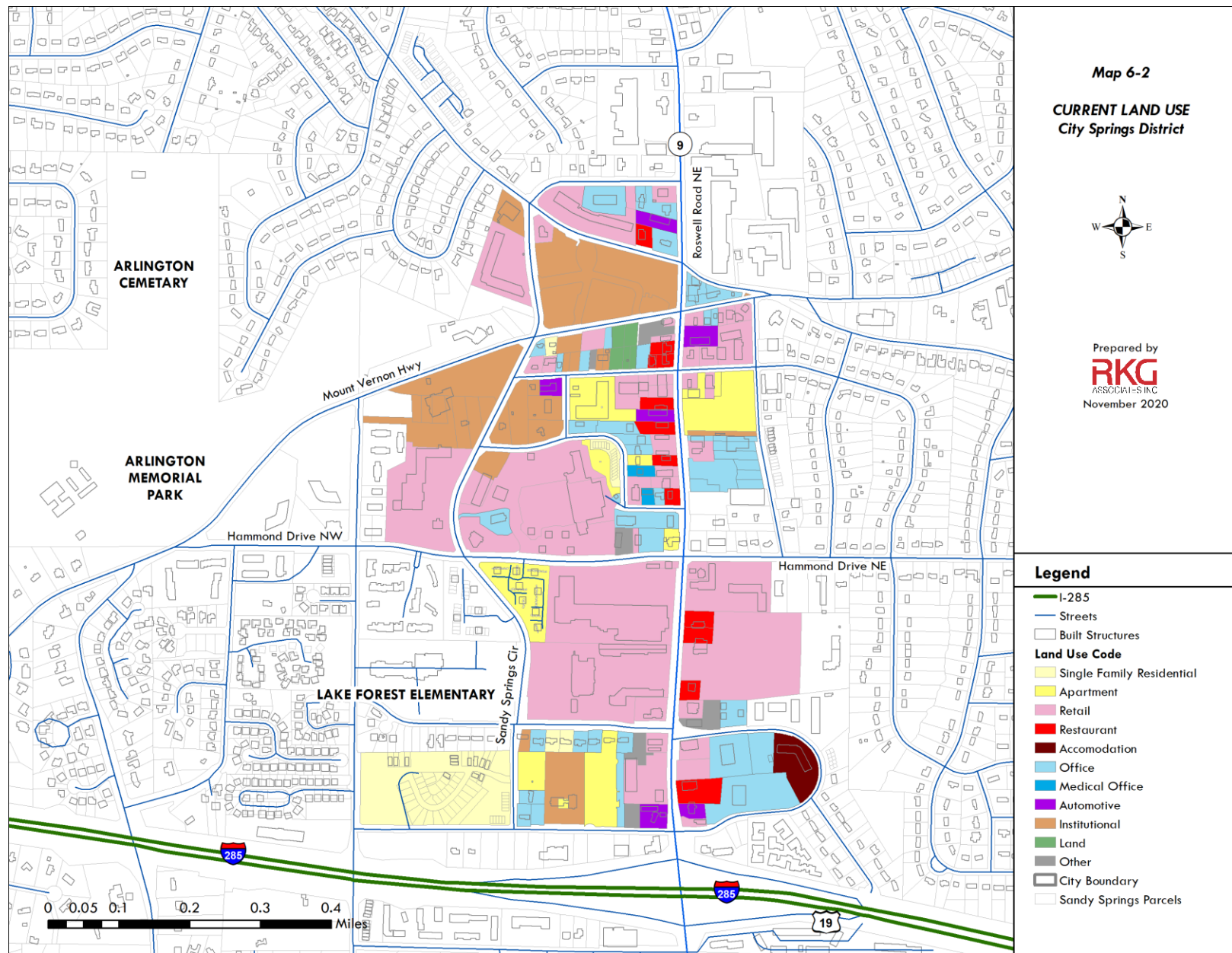
- **CSD-2: Infill** – In addition to CSD-1, there is a short-term opportunity to promote infill development at the privately-owned City Walk shopping center anchored by a Kroger grocery store. The central parking field has potential for a retail/residential wrapped parking structure that increases walkability while accommodating greater parking. This concept is especially appealing from a market strengthening perspective by adding new consumers to the City Springs marketplace.

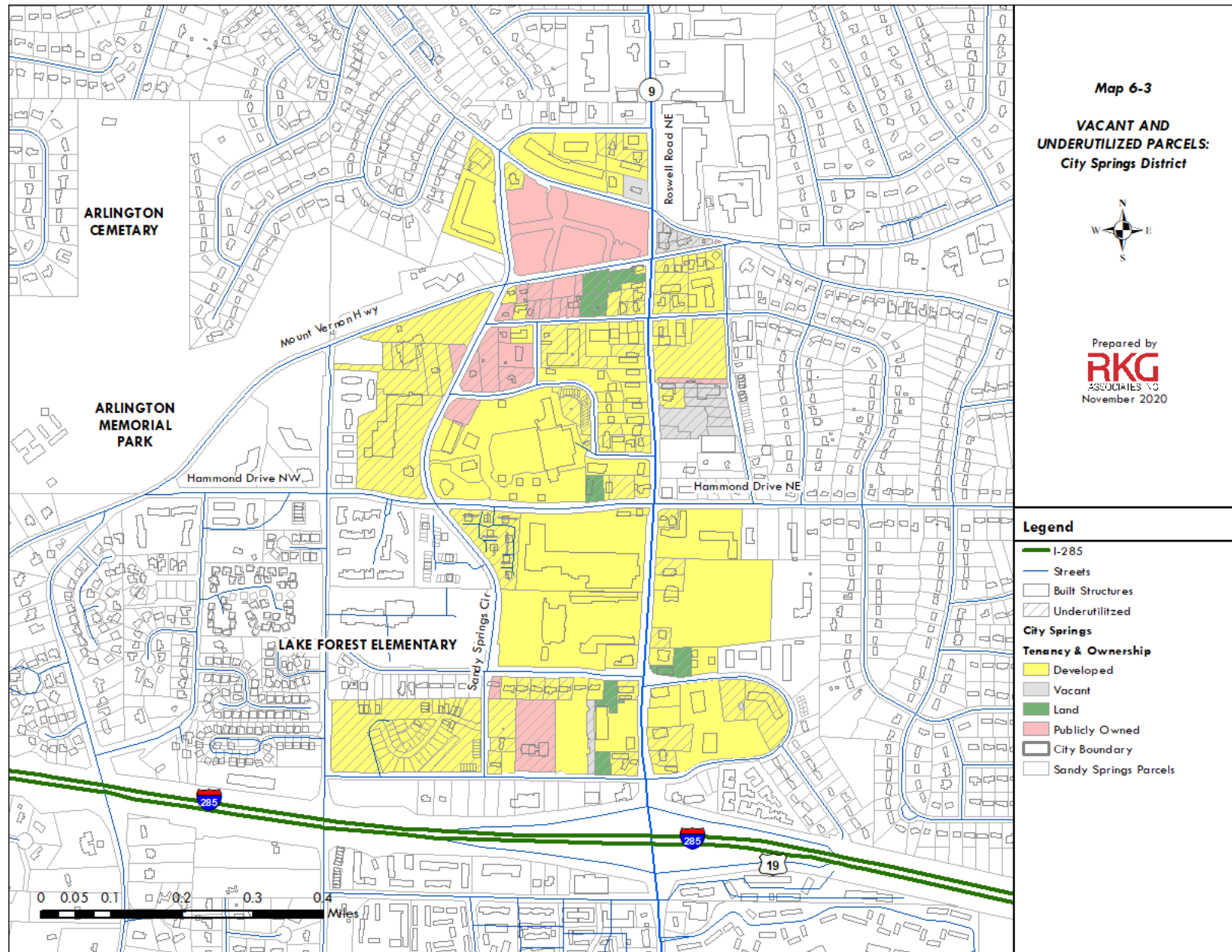
Mid Term Strategies

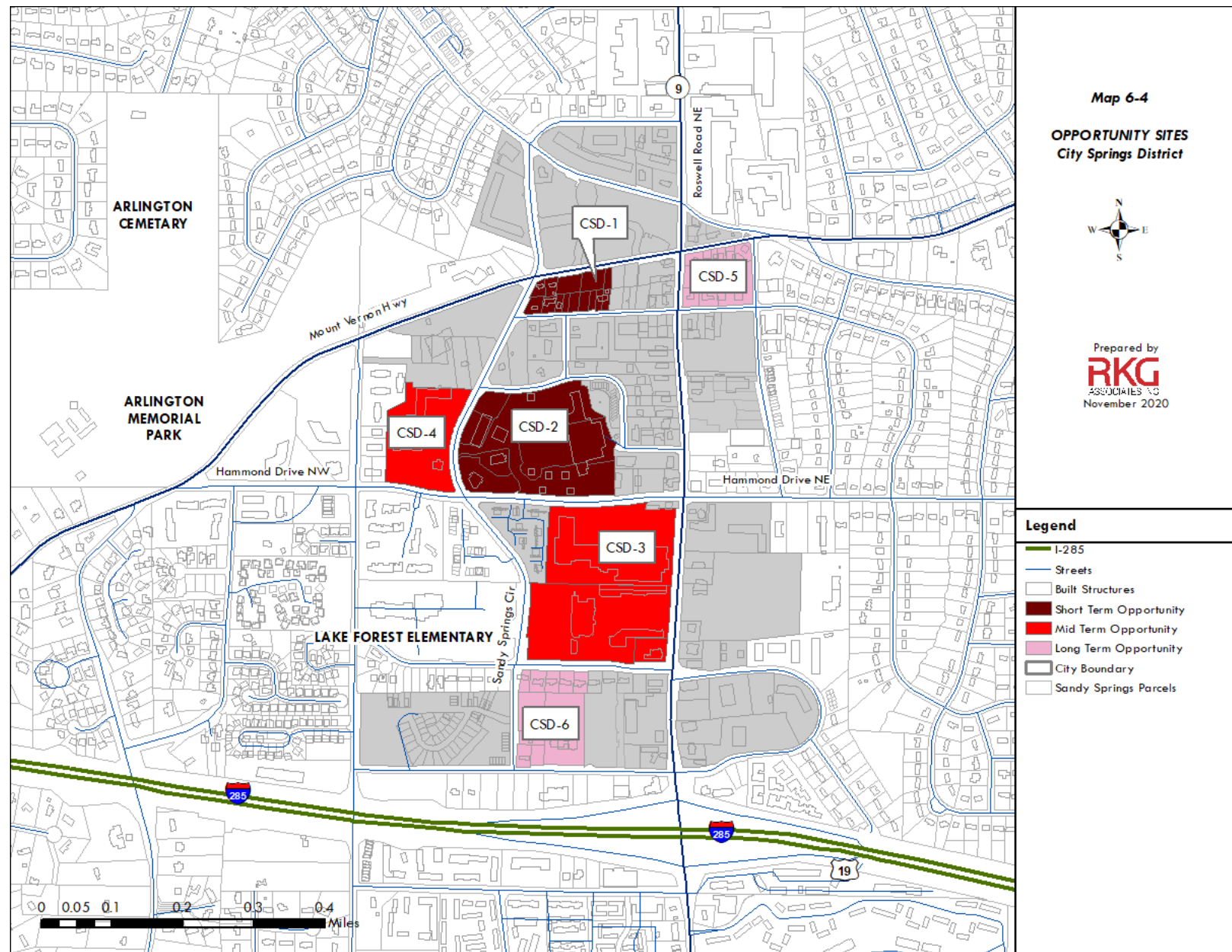
- **CSD-3: Infill** – There are two shopping centers located on the Southwest corner of Hammond Drive and Roswell Road. These shopping centers have substantial surface parking, offering the potential for infill development. A mixed use/parking wrap concept could provide the required parking and services to help support continued growth while adding more consumer spending potential to the study area. This combined site is an ideal opportunity for the City to partner on strengthening inter-parcel connectivity off of Roswell Road.
- **CSD-4: Redevelopment** – There is a declining shopping center located on the northwest quadrant of the Hammond and Sandy Springs Circle intersection. The center's grocery anchor store is vacant and likely not a strong candidate for a new grocer. The site's proximity to City Springs and location off of Roswell Road make it a candidate for a tear down & rebuild project that focuses development along Sandy Springs Circle and tapers back to the residential scale behind the shopping center. Like CSD-3, this parcel is envisioned to be a mixture of commercial space with both multifamily (frontage) and fee simple (western edge) residential development.

Long Term Strategies

- **CSD-5: Assemblage** – There is a collection of commercial properties on the southeast quadrant of the Roswell Road and Mount Vernon Highway diagonally across from City Hall. This collection of parcels have the potential to be a complementary development project to City Springs. Assemblage of these parcels likely will require coordination, given how many there are.
- **CSD-6: Assemblage** – To the south of the CSD-3 are several underutilized parcels. This assemblage could create an impactful infill, bringing together the ongoing residential development to the west (Atwater) with Roswell Road to the east. It would take considerable time and energy to clear the potential development hurdles, but the result could be the final piece needed to complete a realignment of parcels along the north-south spine of City Springs that would programmatically unite this district.









C. NORTHRIDGE DISTRICT

Overview

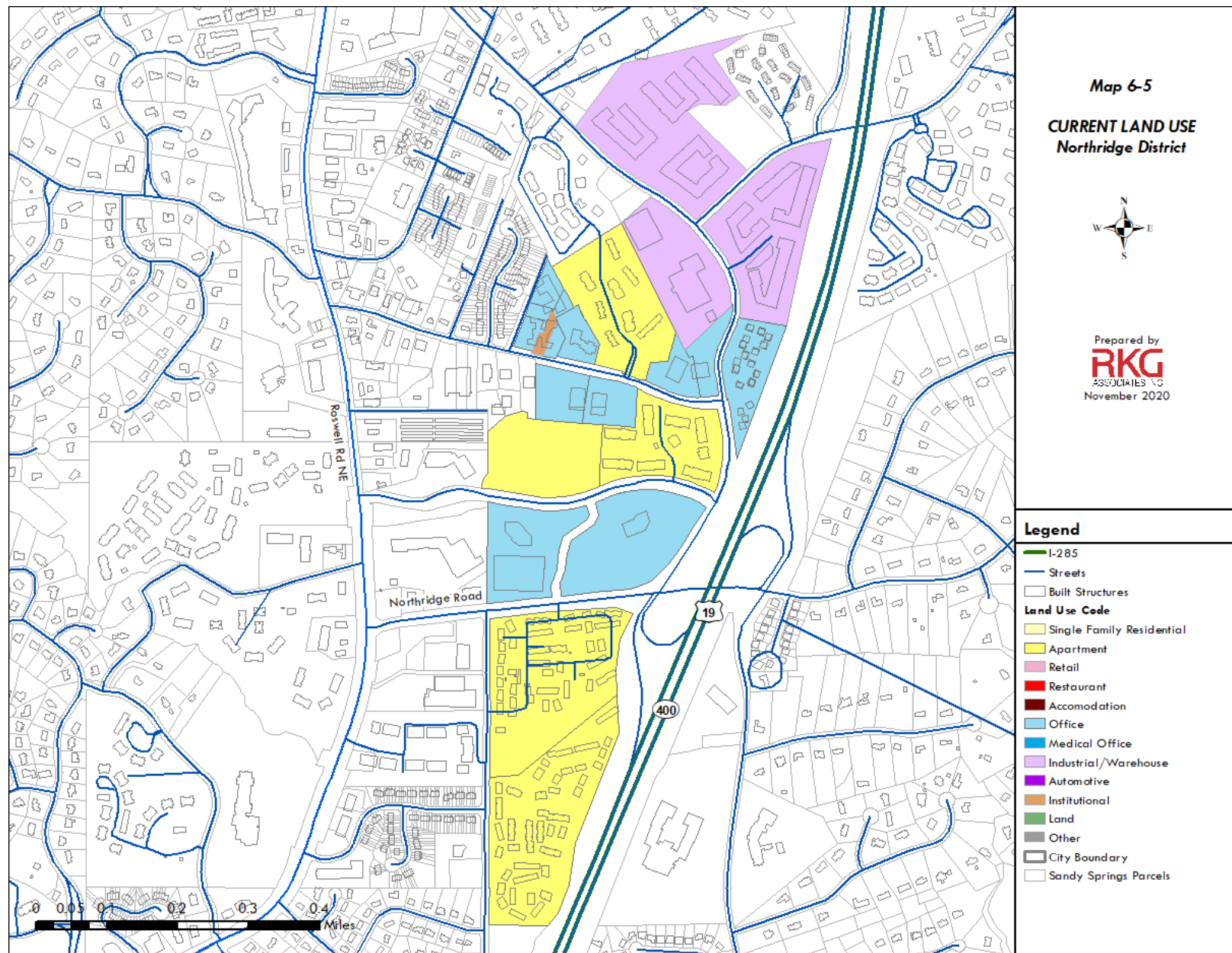
This is the first of two transit-oriented districts. Situated along the western edge of Georgia State Road 400 (GA 400), the North Springs MARTA North area is comprised of offices, warehouse/industrial uses, multifamily, and residential. This area is located in the northernmost section of Sandy Springs. The elongated commercial center district has a cluster of industrial businesses on its northern edge, then it transitions to office and multifamily uses as it extends to the south, terminating with a subdivision of single-family homes. While previously regarded as a potential location for a MARTA rail expansion, subsequent right-of-way conflicts with the Georgia Department of Transportation claims may prevent such a usage.

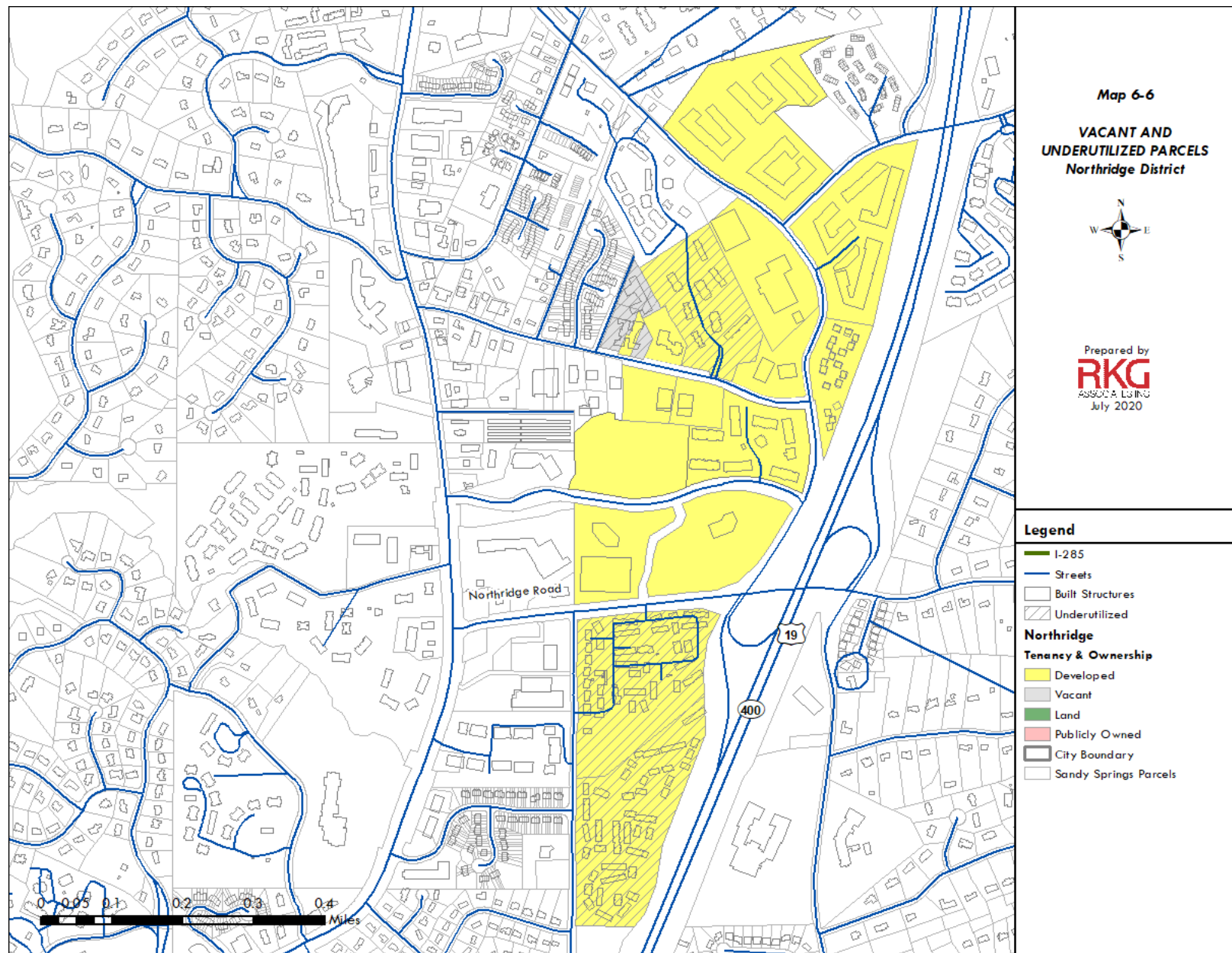
Vision

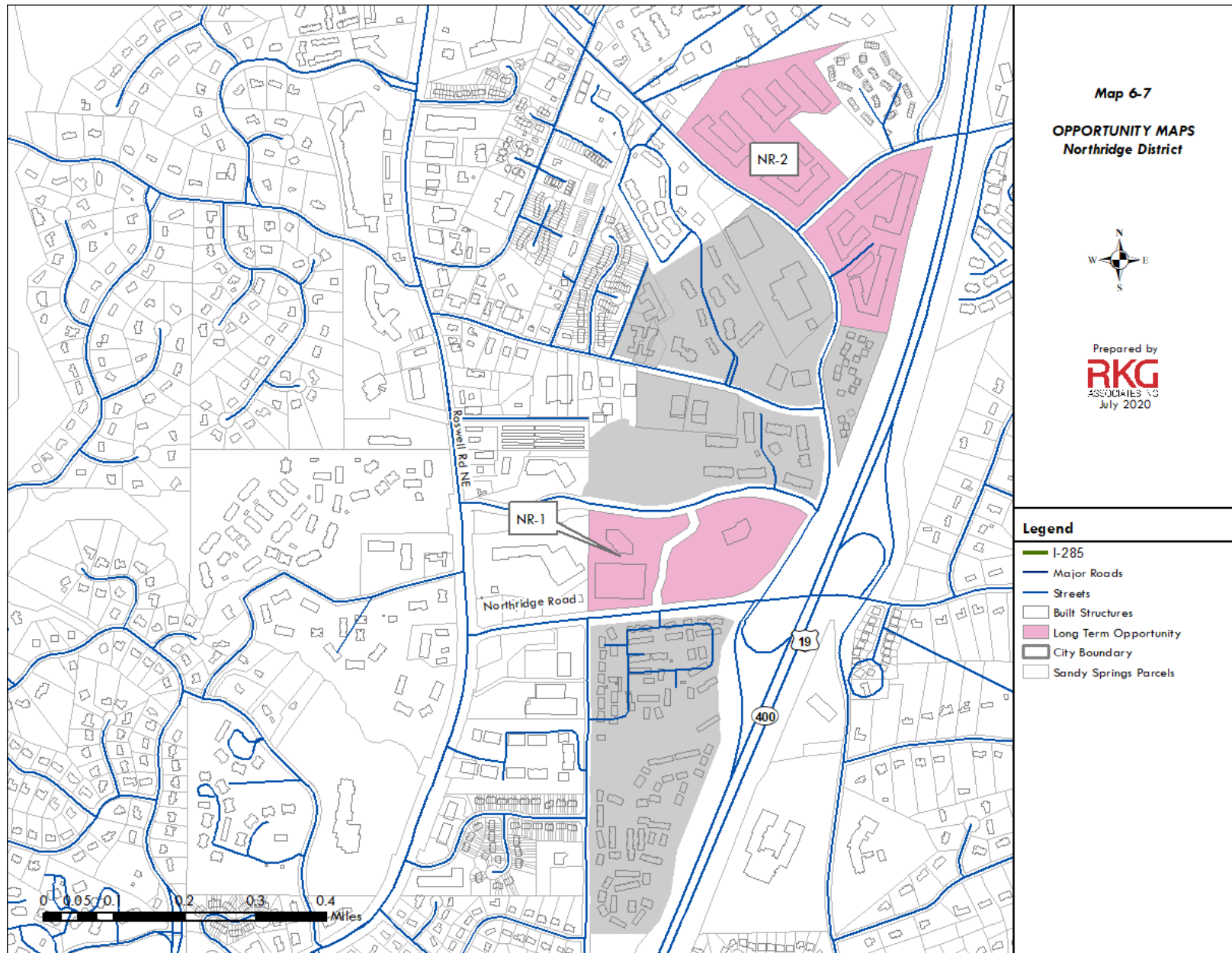
This study area is fully developed, albeit in an underutilized fashion. There are two distinct strategies for the Northridge District commercial area. The warehouse uses along Dunwoody Place north of the Northridge Road interchange are likely long-term redevelopment locations. For the office parcels north of Northridge Road, there is significant opportunity to infill and reposition portions of the study area to better accommodate the development potential of being located at an interchange along GA 400. More specifically, the large surface parking fields offer an attractive infill development strategy to higher density uses over time.

Long-Term Opportunities

- **NR-1: Infill** – As noted, the two large office parcels have the potential to accommodate infill development. While the existing surface parking lots offer an economical solution to the office building needs, there is potential to encourage infill development that utilizes structured parking to open up developable land for mixed-use, complementary development. The City may have to partner with property owners to overcome potential cost challenges with creating structured parking.
- **NR-2: Redevelopment** – As noted, the industrial/warehouse uses north along Dunwoody Place most likely will be targeted for redevelopment due to strong market forces for residential development. The City should consider a redevelopment strategy for this area that connects the Northridge Road interchange to the North End revitalization strategy recommendations (to the west of these sites).









D. NORTH SPRINGS MARTA

Overview

This is the second of the two MARTA-connected districts. Home to the North Springs MARTA station, this district is located to the east of Georgia State Road 400. In addition to this end-of-line station, a 2,300-space parking deck, light residential, and office uses populate the study area.

The North Springs MARTA South commercial center is a highly underutilized assembly of parcels. The presence of the MARTA station is currently a mismatch with the market potential for the site, as the district suffers from low visibility from GA 400. Further, this disjointed development pattern limits its value to the higher intensity residential and office development to the south. The MARTA Station site itself is an asset which could benefit from a repositioning into a signature infill development project.

Vision

The North Springs MARTA South study area has the potential to become a transit-oriented development gateway into Sandy Springs from north Fulton County. The MARTA Station site could easily support higher densities of residential and Class A office, along with supporting retail. More holistically, this particular study area should be reconsidered to take advantage of the transportation amenity of the MARTA station while better connecting to immediate properties and the Perimeter District to the South. At a minimum, measures should be taken to mitigate the current isolation from neighboring properties.

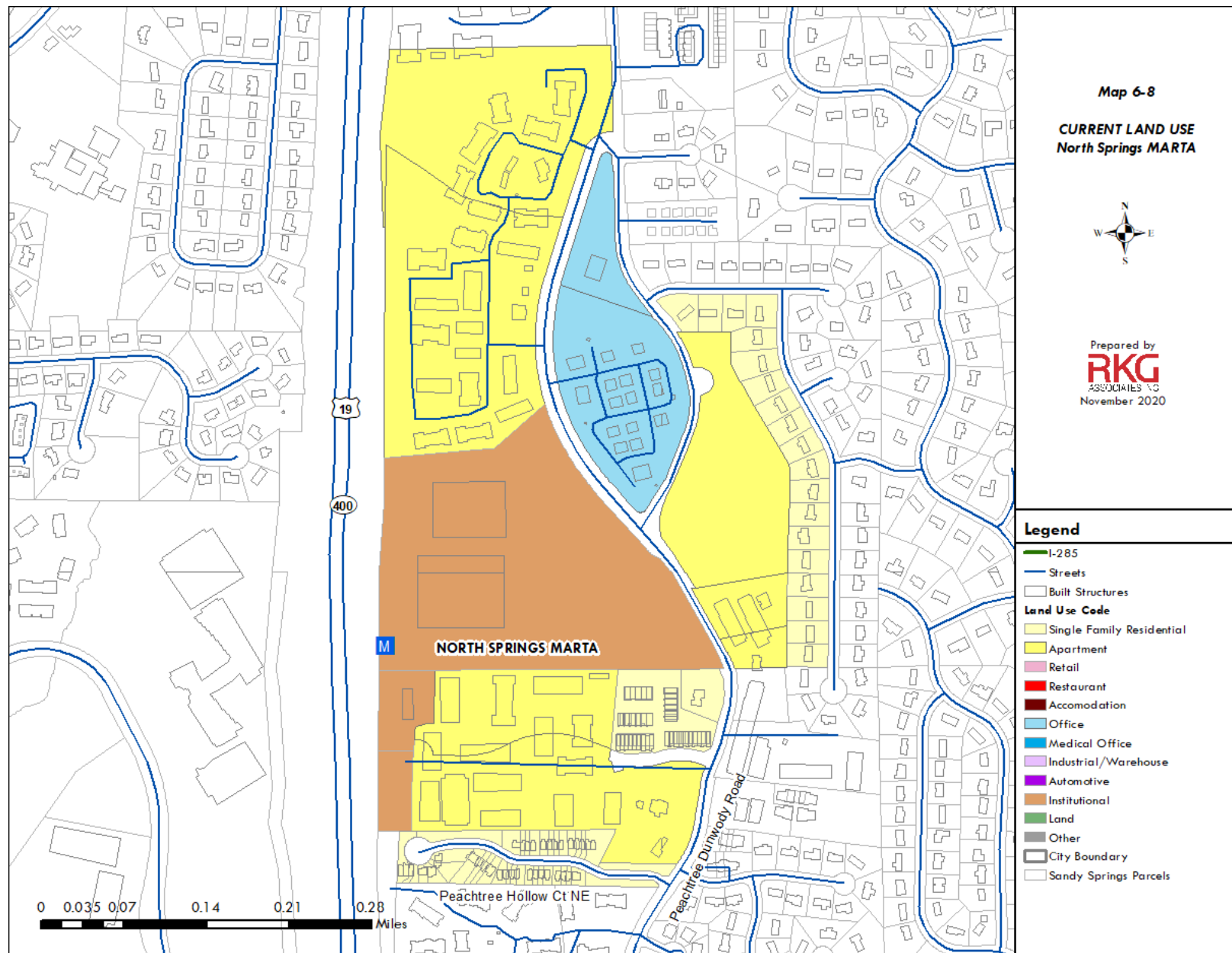
Short-Term Opportunities

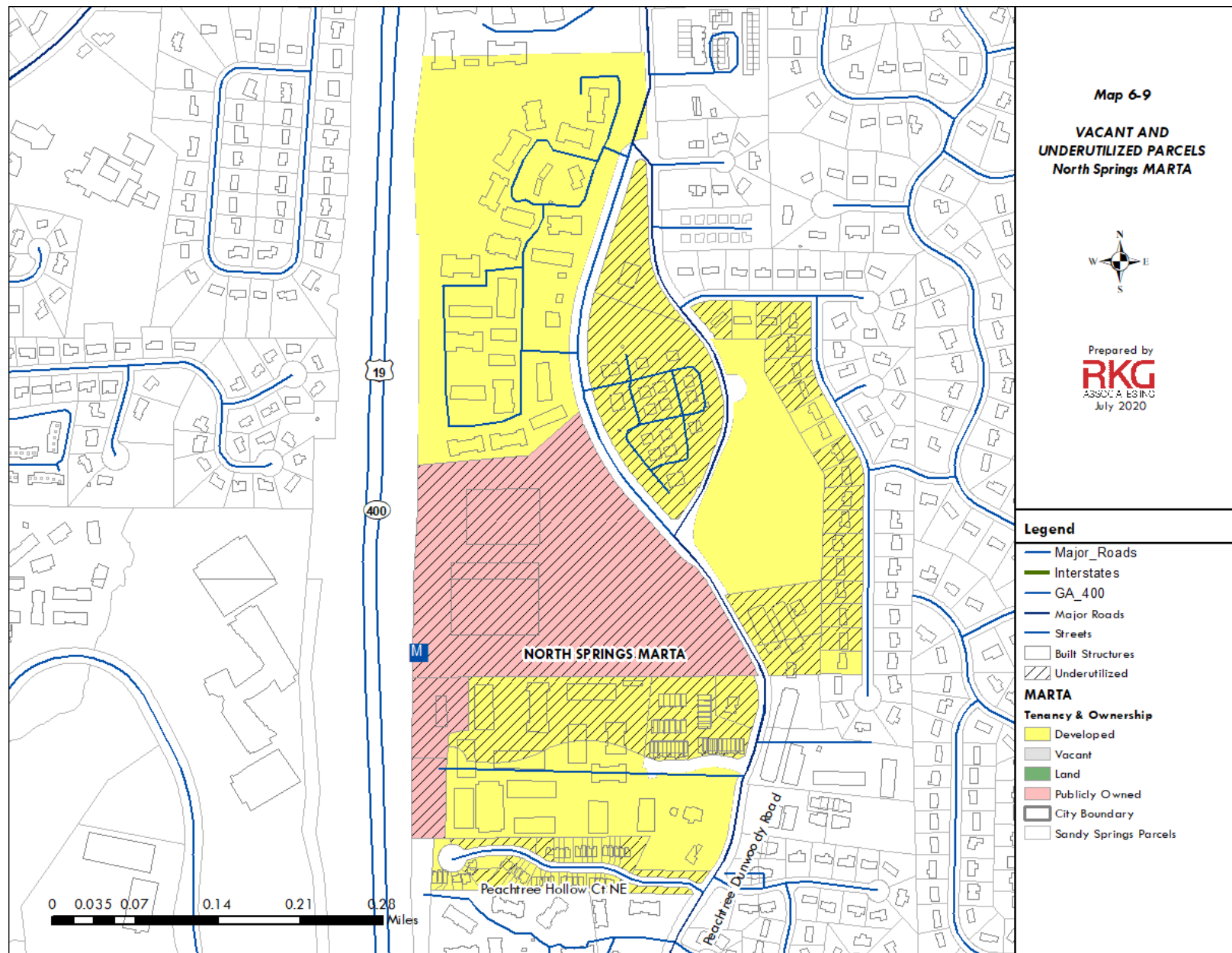
- **NSM-1: Transit-Oriented Development** – There is a viable opportunity to convert this site into a signature transit-oriented development (TOD) that has an existing MARTA rail station at its core. RKG Associates and the Working Group envision a development rivaling The Avalon in Alpharetta that offers similar (or greater) activity anchored by the MARTA station. Higher density housing, additional Class A office, and some retail would provide the creation of additional jobs, services, and workforce housing. Given this site already has been considered by MARTA for infill development, RKG and the Working Group encourage the City to proactively engage MARTA and fund the redevelopment strategic planning and co-implement the developer solicitation process.

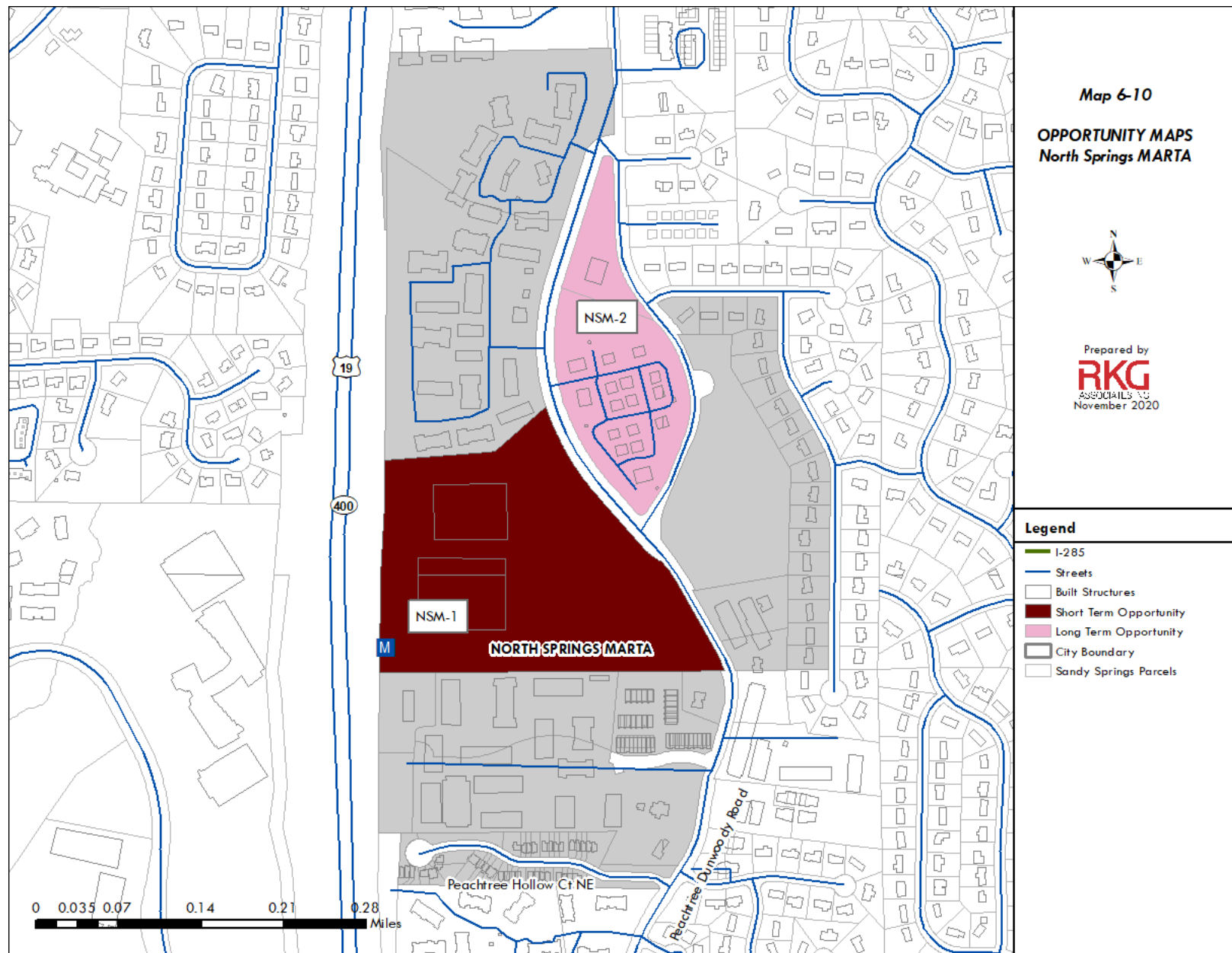


Long-Term Opportunities

- **NSM-2: Assemblage and Redevelopment** – There is a small office condominium development (Lake Ridge) along Peachtree Dunwoody Road north of the newly completed Linq at North Springs apartment complex. While market-viable, the development intensity of this complex is inconsistent with its proximity to the North Springs MARTA station. The development is ripe for reinvestment if the allowed development intensity is consistent with the cost to acquire and demolish the office park. The redevelopment strategy should require full or partial replacement of the existing office square footage.









E. MEDICAL DISTRICT

Overview

Located along the southern most edge of I-285 at the intersection with SR 400, the Medical District is home to the City's three hospitals; Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite, Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital, and Northside Hospital. The area, known as the Medical District, is a mature medical park that also has the Medical Center MARTA station.

The Medical District is a critical Sandy Springs and regional economic activity center. At a base level, it provides a wide variety of general, acute, and emergency healthcare services to the greater metro Atlanta region. More specifically, the Medical District is a major economic driver for Sandy Springs.

Vision

The overarching vision for the Medical District is to preserve and expand its primary healthcare function. As noted throughout this analysis, there is a connection between the City's jobs base and the need for a diversity of housing types and prices. Hospitals have a range of employees that earn vastly different annual incomes. To this point, there is an opportunity to encourage infill development in the Medical District that strengthens the three primary medical centers while creating an environment that supports a live-work-play market targeted to healthcare professionals.

Short-Term Opportunities

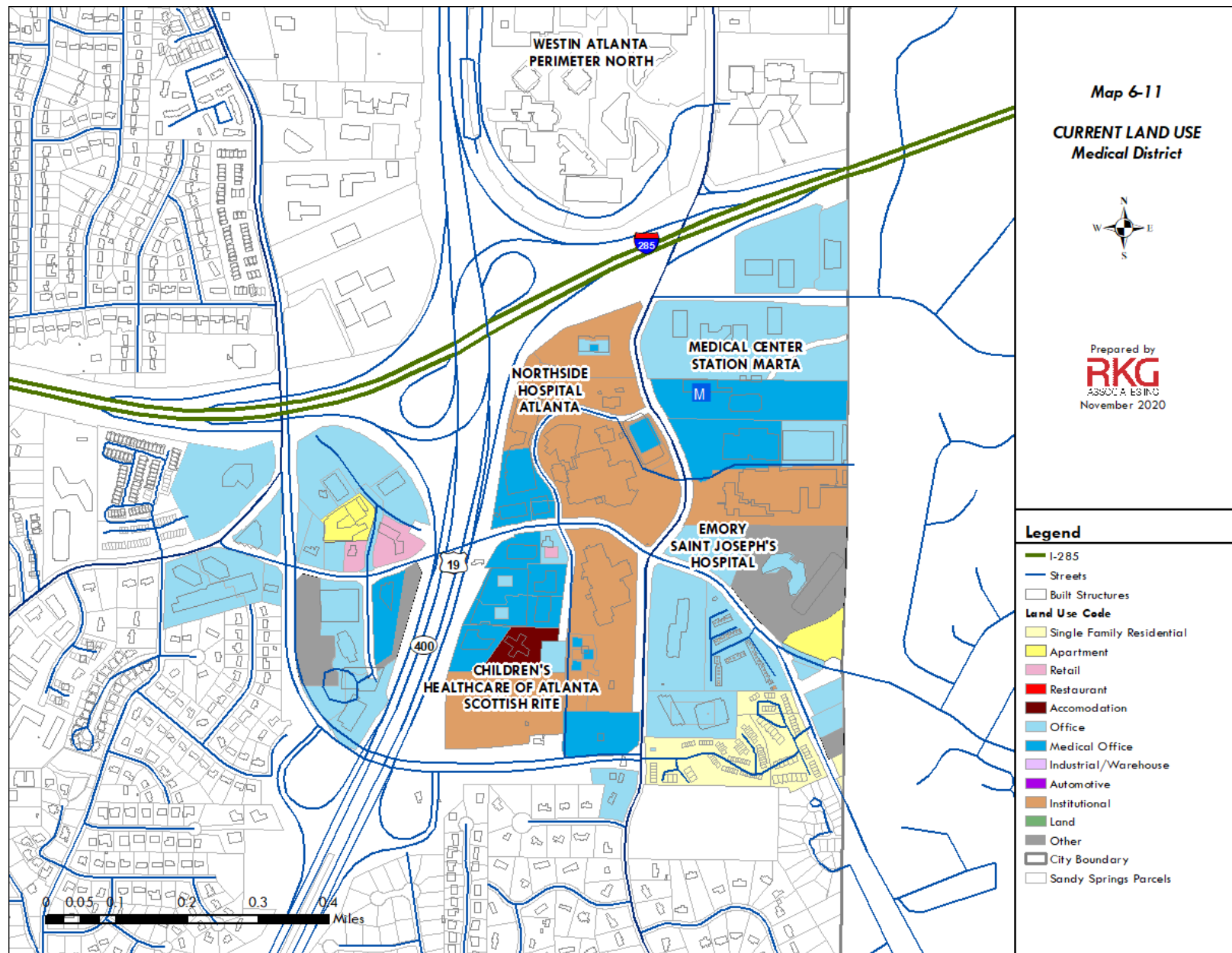
- **MD-1: Transit-Oriented Development** – The Children's Healthcare of Atlanta campus has a large, undeveloped parcel at the southern end of the study area. RKG Associates encourages the City to engage with Children's to explore the potential to both expand their operations as well as create a live-work component to the campus targeting price points affordable to support staff and entry-level healthcare professionals. The concept would be to create a transit-oriented development that offers non-automotive connections to the employment centers in the study area.
- **MD-2: Infill Development** – Similar to the Children's site, there is a large office complex located at the northern portion of the district adjacent to I-285 (The Pavilion at Lake Hearn). This complex has the potential to accommodate mixed-use infill development to enhance the live-work-play strategies being employed in other areas of the City (i.e. City Springs). The infill development strategy likely will need to be a

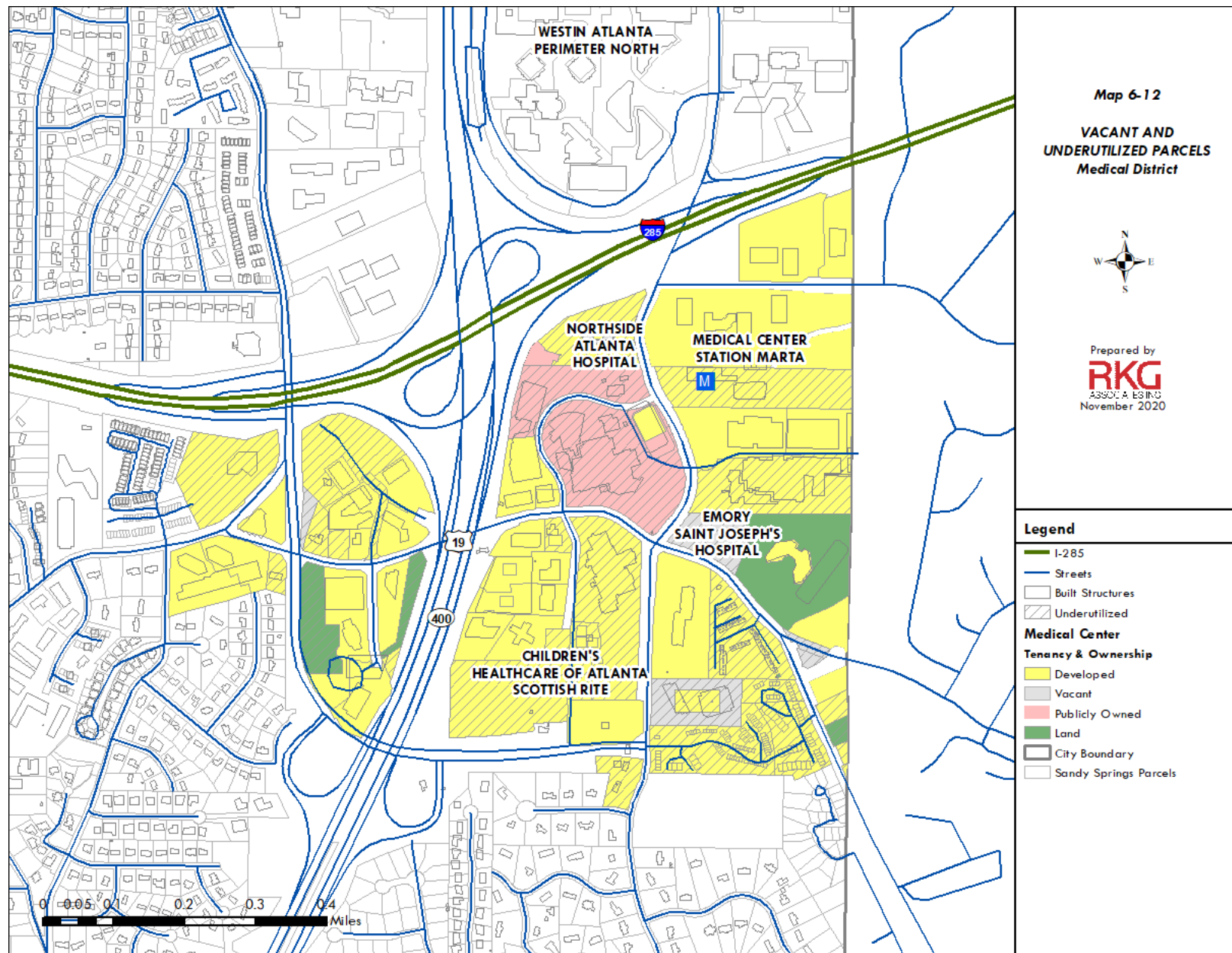


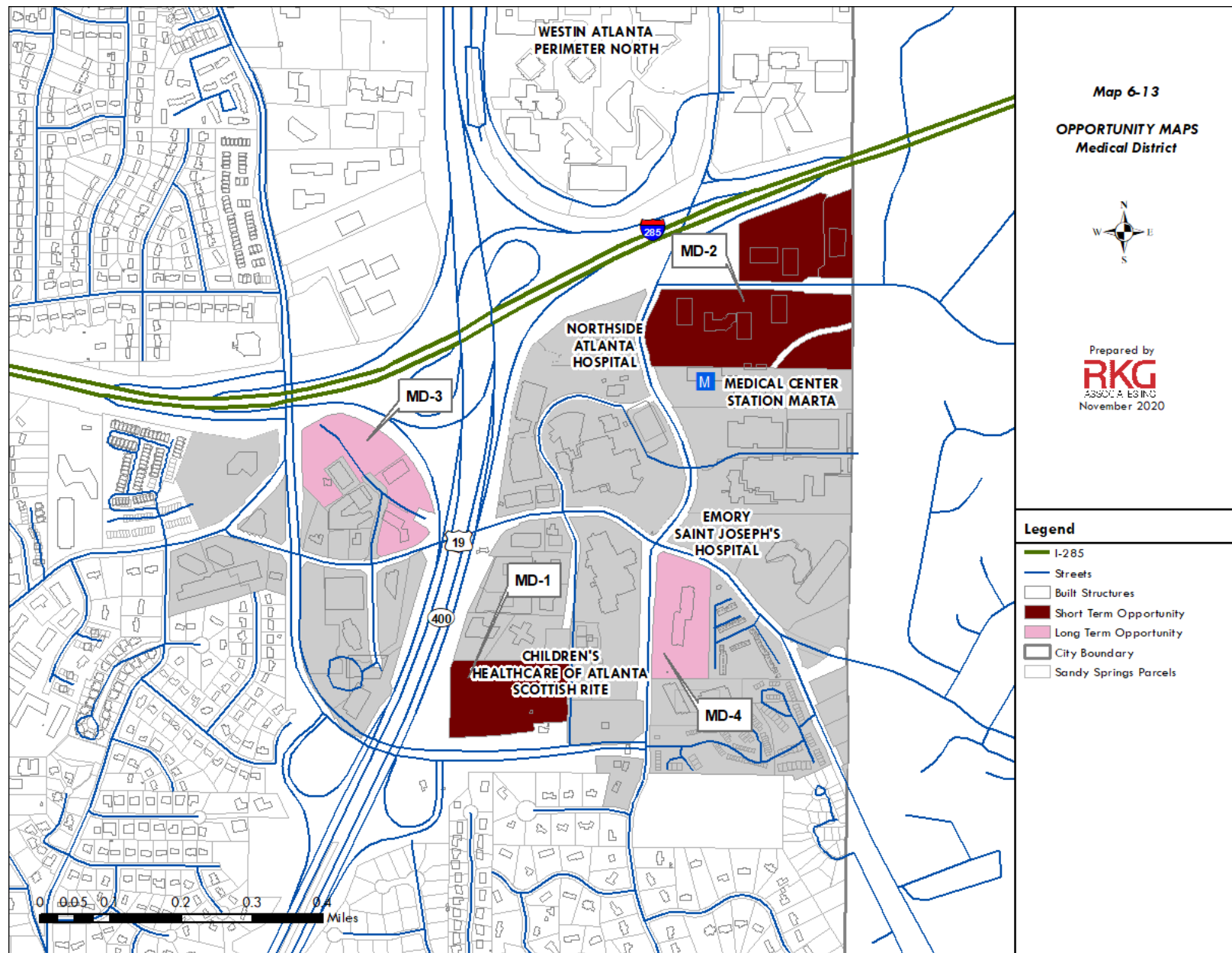
phased concept given the size of the development and the need to strategize the structured parking that will be necessary to serve the increased activity.

Long-Term Opportunities

- **MD-3: Infill Development** – Like The Pavilion at Lake Hearn, Glenridge Point located on the southwest quadrant of the I-285 and GA 400 interchange is a typical suburban-scale office development and can support infill development with a more efficient parking strategy. This location should be considered longer-term given its relative isolation across GA 400 from the rest of the Medical District and Perimeter District activity clusters.
- **MD-4: Infill Development** – The Medical Quarters, a medical office building located on the southeast quadrant of the Johnson Ferry Road and Peachtree Dunwoody Road intersection is another suburban-scale office development that does not maximize the potential for this centrally-located site in the Medical District study area. At a minimum, there is potential to do a substantial infill development that can complement the existing medical offices. More strategically, this site should be considered for a signature redevelopment strategy to integrate medical uses with greater residential and amenity commercial development.









F. PERIMETER DISTRICT

Overview

Central Perimeter is the regional employment center of Sandy Springs, Dunwoody, and Brookhaven. While the entirety of Central Perimeter expands beyond Sandy Springs' corporate boundaries, the portion in Sandy Springs (called the Perimeter District herein) contains millions of square feet of office and retail space and thousands of housing units. Most notably, this commercial center is home to several corporate headquarters (i.e. Cox Enterprises) as well as the iconic "King and Queen" buildings in the Concourse office park. Development patterns vary throughout the study area, ranging from suburban office buildings to mixed-use developments to traditional retail shopping centers to street-focused development.

Vision

The Perimeter District already is in a transition strategy to become less automobile focused and create better non-motorized connections. This strategy transcends municipal boundaries, having the Perimeter Commercial Improvement District (PCID) working to bring each municipality and the state together to fund the infrastructure projects necessary to achieve the vision. Within Sandy Springs, RKG Associates and the Working Group identifies some specific short-term and long-term land use opportunities to advance the dynamic evolution of the study area into a more multi-modal live-work-play destination that will solidify the area's economic sustainability while addressing some of the jobs-housing needs for the large employment cluster.

Short-Term Opportunities

- **PD-1: Transit-Oriented Development** – The first potential transit-oriented development site is located on the southwest quadrant of the Abernathy Road and GA 400 interchange. The site currently is vacant and is being actively marketed for office and retail development. RKG and the Working Group believe this location is better served as a signature TOD project that brings together office, residential, retail and dining/entertainment uses due to its prominent location and surrounding uses.
- **PD-2: Transit-Oriented Development** – The second potential transit-oriented development is a large, undeveloped parcel owned by Cox Enterprises adjacent to its corporate headquarters campus along the Sandy Springs and Dunwoody boundary. The site has the potential to infill Central Park Drive and create a connection to the Dunwoody MARTA station and Perimeter Mall. The City would need to coordinate

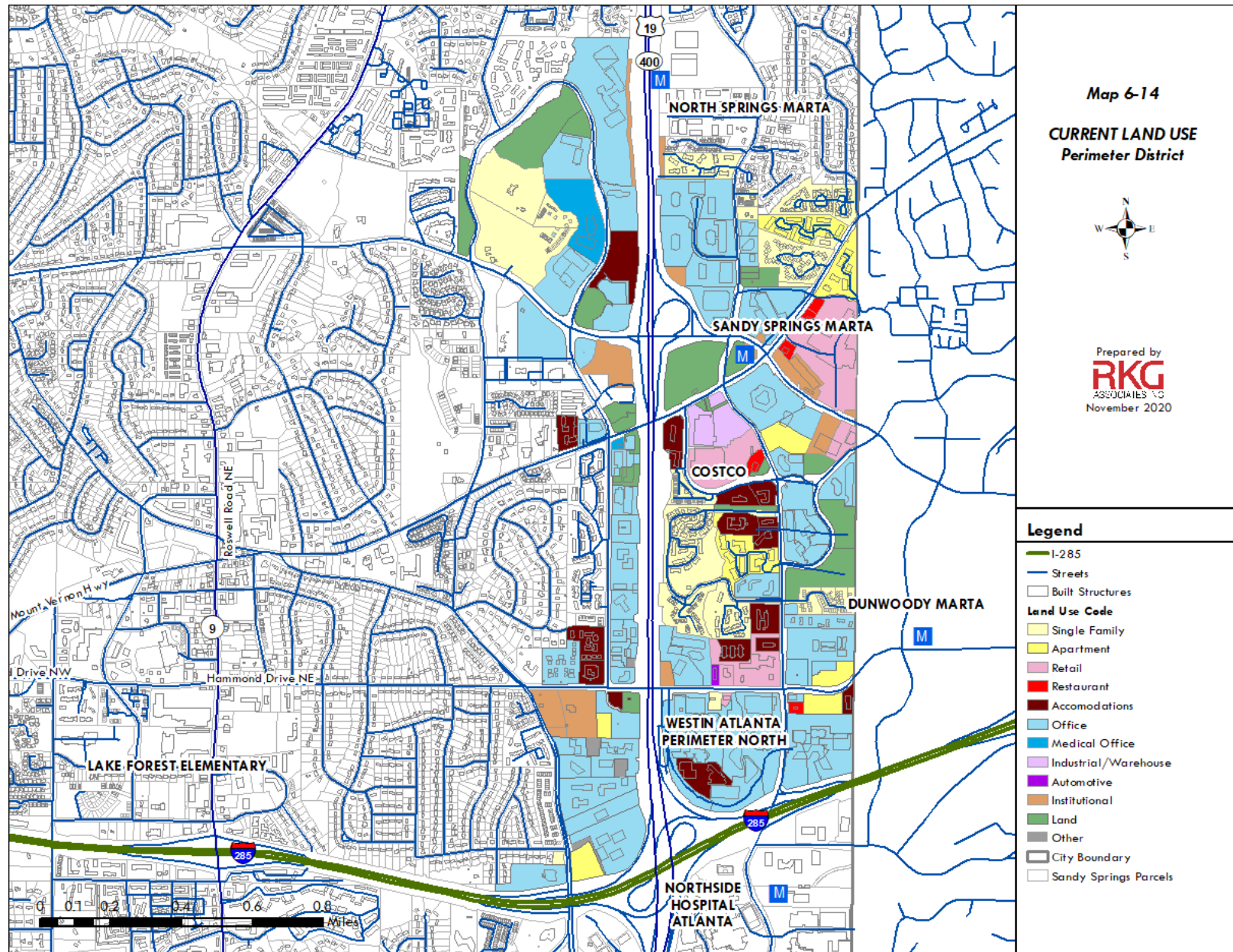


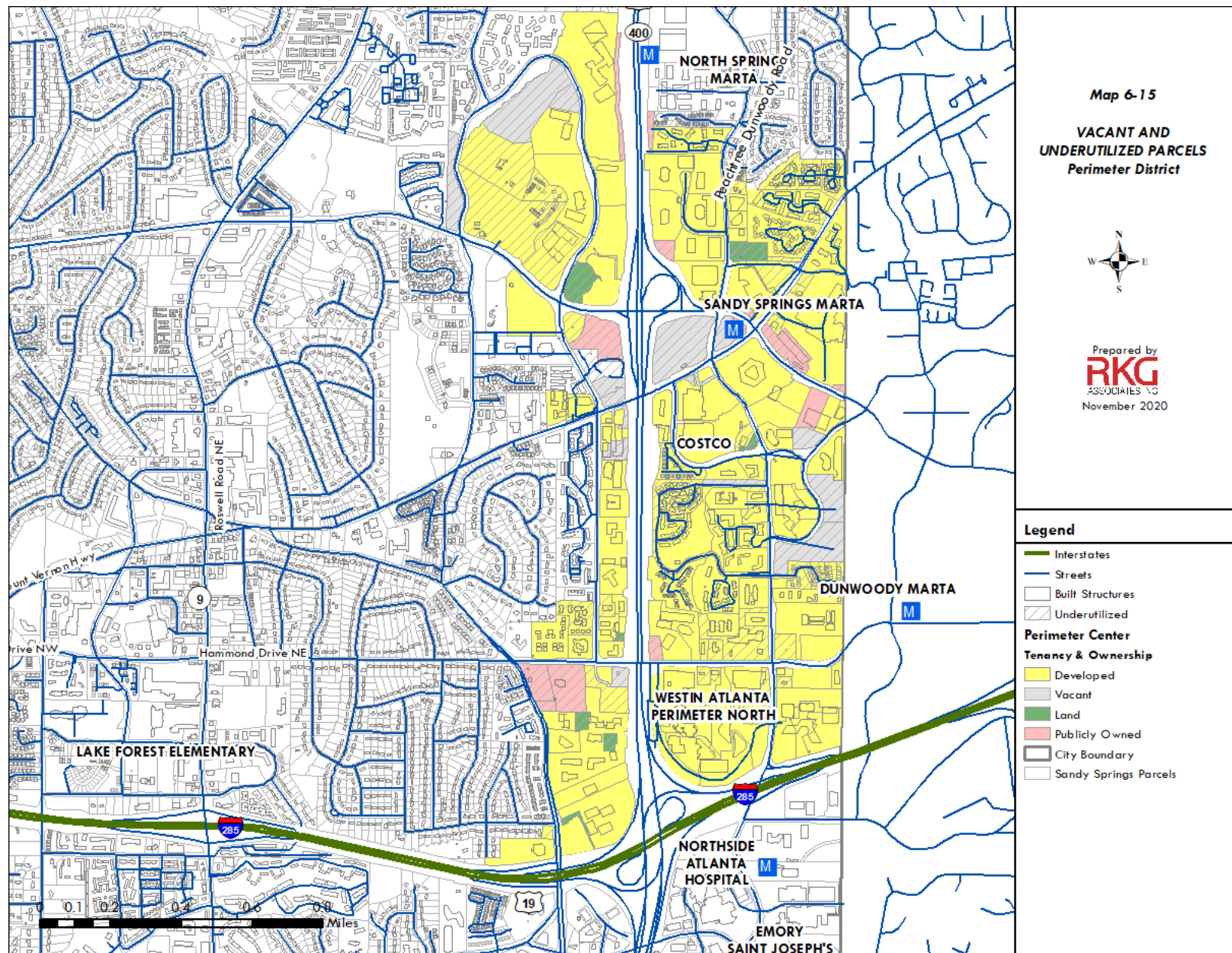
with Cox Enterprises to determine their long-term investment strategy for the site. Alternative strategies may need to be considered depending on the owner's investment plans.

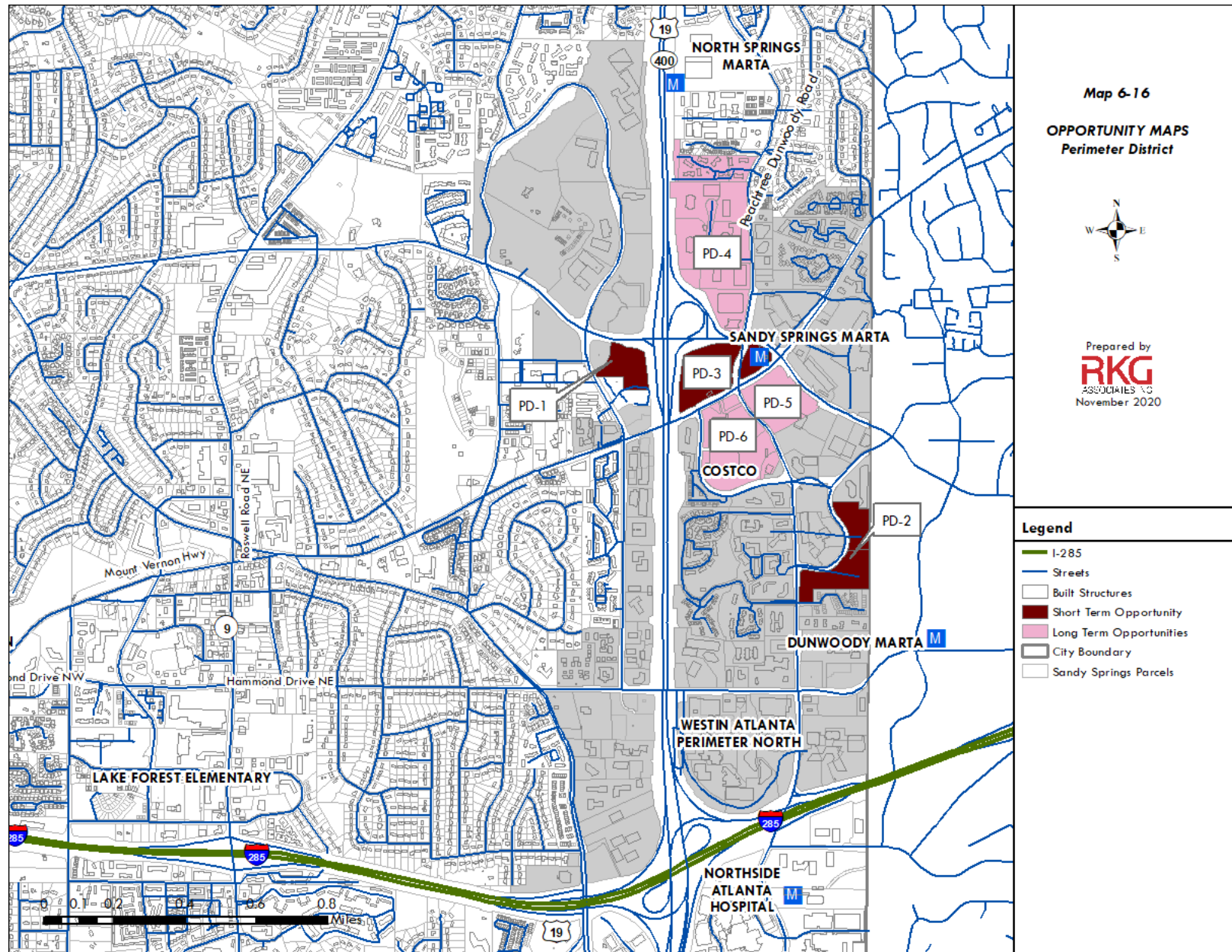
- **PD-3: Redevelopment** – There are two large parcels located on the southeast quadrant of the Abernathy Road and GA 400 intersection. The first is a small 3-acre parcel with an entrance to the Sandy Springs MARTA station. The second is across Peachtree Dunwoody Road and currently is undeveloped. Both sites could accommodate signature development strategies, enhancing the strength of the Abernathy/GA 400 interchange and creating a true central node hub that benefits from a MARTA station entrance on-site.

Long-Term Opportunities

- **PD-4: Redevelopment** – There is a mid-level office park on the northeast quadrant of the Abernathy and GA 400 interchange called Embassy Row. This parcel is immediately adjacent to the North Springs MARTA station (to the north) and bound by GA 400 and Peachtree Dunwoody Road. While the complex remains market viable, the site will have substantial infill/redevelopment pressure if the North Springs opportunity development occurs as well as the other Abernathy/GA 400 TOD proposed in this strategy. To this point, the City can create the land use plan for a large infill/redevelopment that is consistent with the other sites and brings activity to Peachtree Dunwoody Road, better connecting the North Springs MARTA station to the rest of the Perimeter District commercial node.
- **PD-5: Redevelopment** – The Eleven Seventeen Perimeter Center West parcel is centrally located in the Perimeter District commercial node. While the building is viable, it is not the most efficient use of that location, given the proposed strategies detailed in this section. The City can work with the owner long-term to consider redevelopment into a transit-oriented development that better connects with the Sandy Springs MARTA station across the street.
- **PD-6: Infill Development** – There is a retail parcel across Peachtree Dunwoody Road from Eleven Seventeen Perimeter Center West that houses a Home Depot, a Costco, and an Extra Space Storage. The parcel has the potential for infill/redevelopment to be more in line with the mixed-use, high density, transit-oriented development strategies being proposed for the entire area. Given the location of hotels to the west and south, the location is better served as Class A office with development fronting Peachtree Dunwoody Road and Mount Vernon Highway.









G. POWERS FERRY ROAD

Overview

Located along the western boarder of Sandy Springs (along Powers Ferry Road NW and Interstate 285), the Powers Ferry Road commercial node is a mixture of exurban-scale office park developments and community-serving retail concentrated at the Powers Ferry Road and Northside Drive intersection. This commercial node is bounded by the Chattahoochee River and large-lot, single-family residential.

Vision

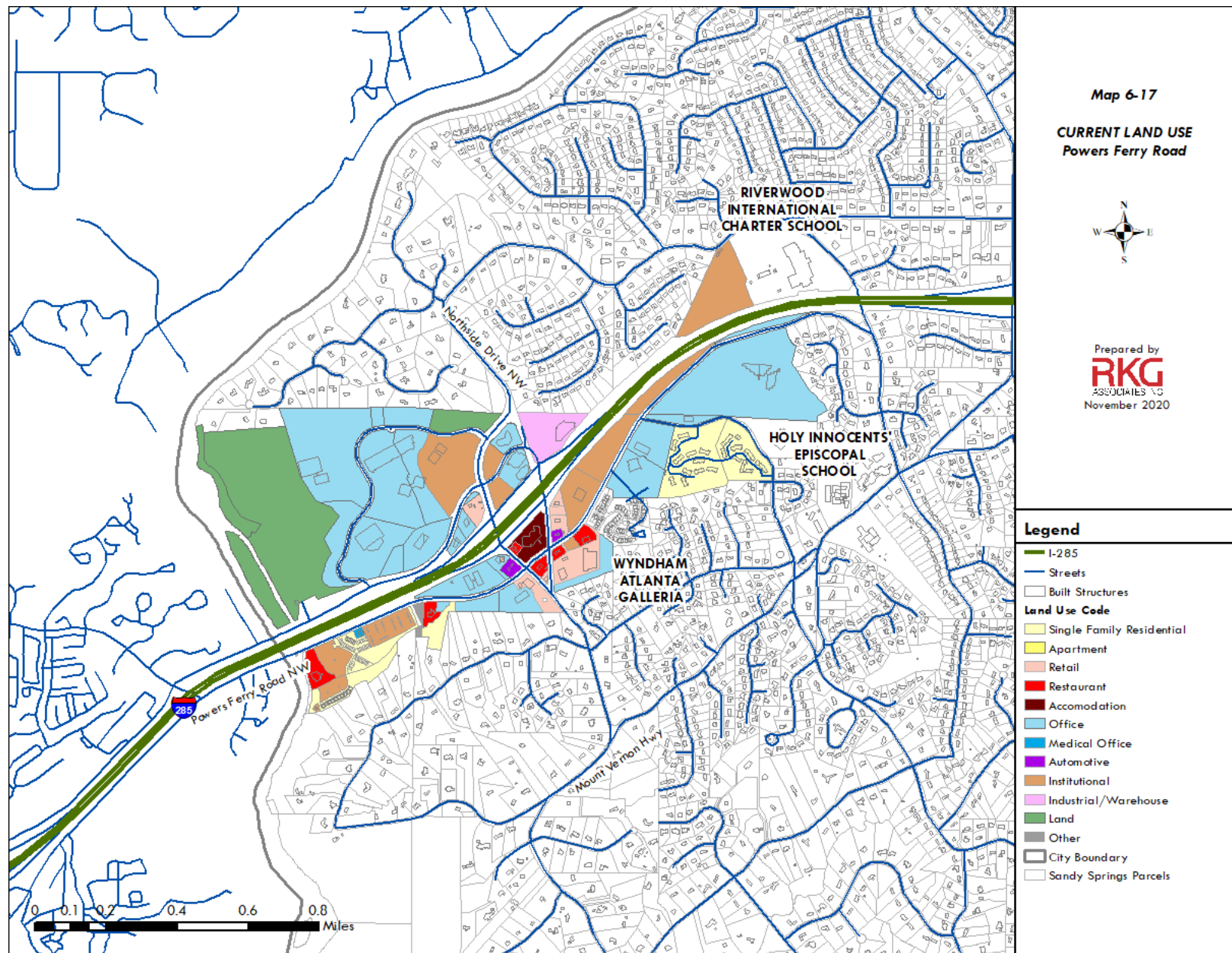
There is limited opportunity in the Powers Ferry Road commercial node given its isolated location and built-out environment. The exurban office park development does offer opportunity for infill development, but unlikely at the scale that can be achieved in the commercial centers closer to GA 400. The Next Ten Comprehensive Plan vision for the Powers Ferry Road commercial node is focused on potential infill in the office parks. This could be greater office development and/or a mixture of multifamily or traditional ownership development.

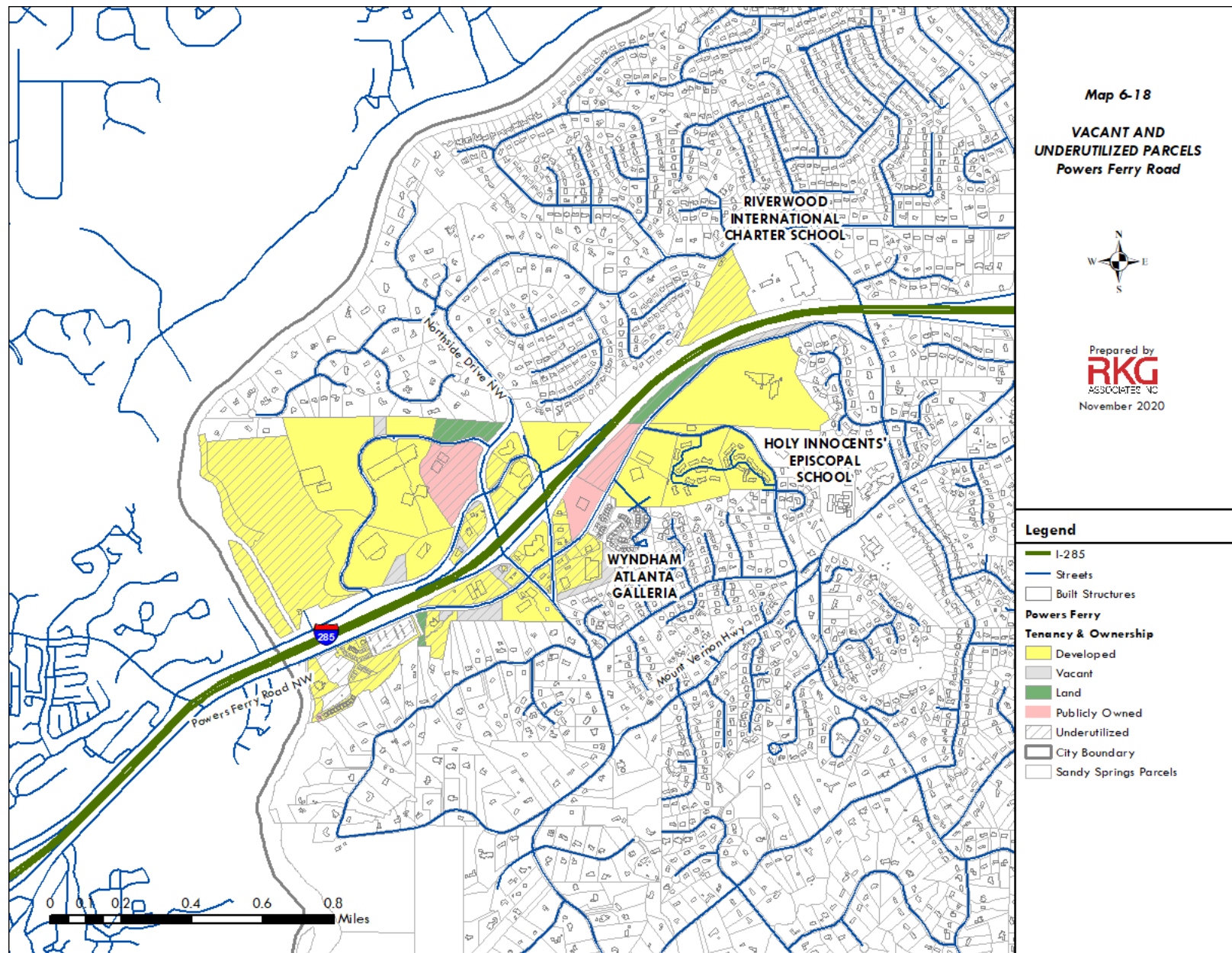
Mid-Term Opportunities

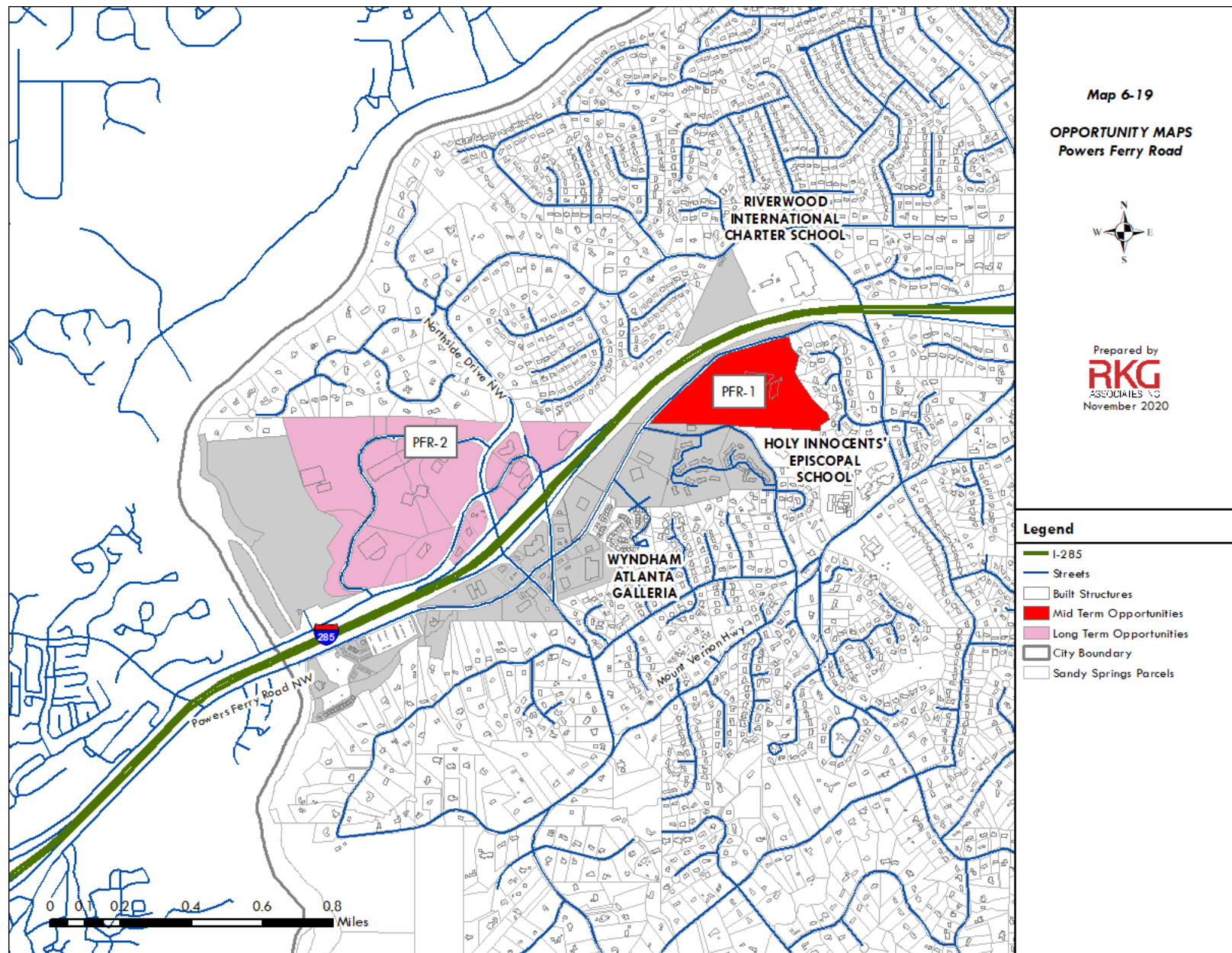
- **PFR-1: Infill** – There is a large parcel north of the Holy Innocents Episcopal School that houses two office buildings (5770 and 5780 Setty Road). One of the buildings is home to Voya Financial. The property has the potential for infill development to better utilize the large parking fields and undeveloped space. The parcel is large enough to accommodate infill development without disturbing the tree buffer with the adjacent parcels. The City could work with the property owner on understanding the financial feasibility of infill development using structured parking.

Long-Term Opportunities

- **PFR-2: Infill** – The large office park cluster locates north of I-285 and spined by River Edge Parkway has similar characteristics of 5770 and 5780 Setty Road. There are multiple parcels that accommodate very low-density office development. This area has the potential to accommodate infill office and residential development without disturbing the natural buffers with the adjacent uses. More specifically, the City should consider encouraging higher-density use in the parcels that abut I-285, potentially creating a mixed-use live-work-play node.









H. ROSWELL ROAD SOUTH

Overview

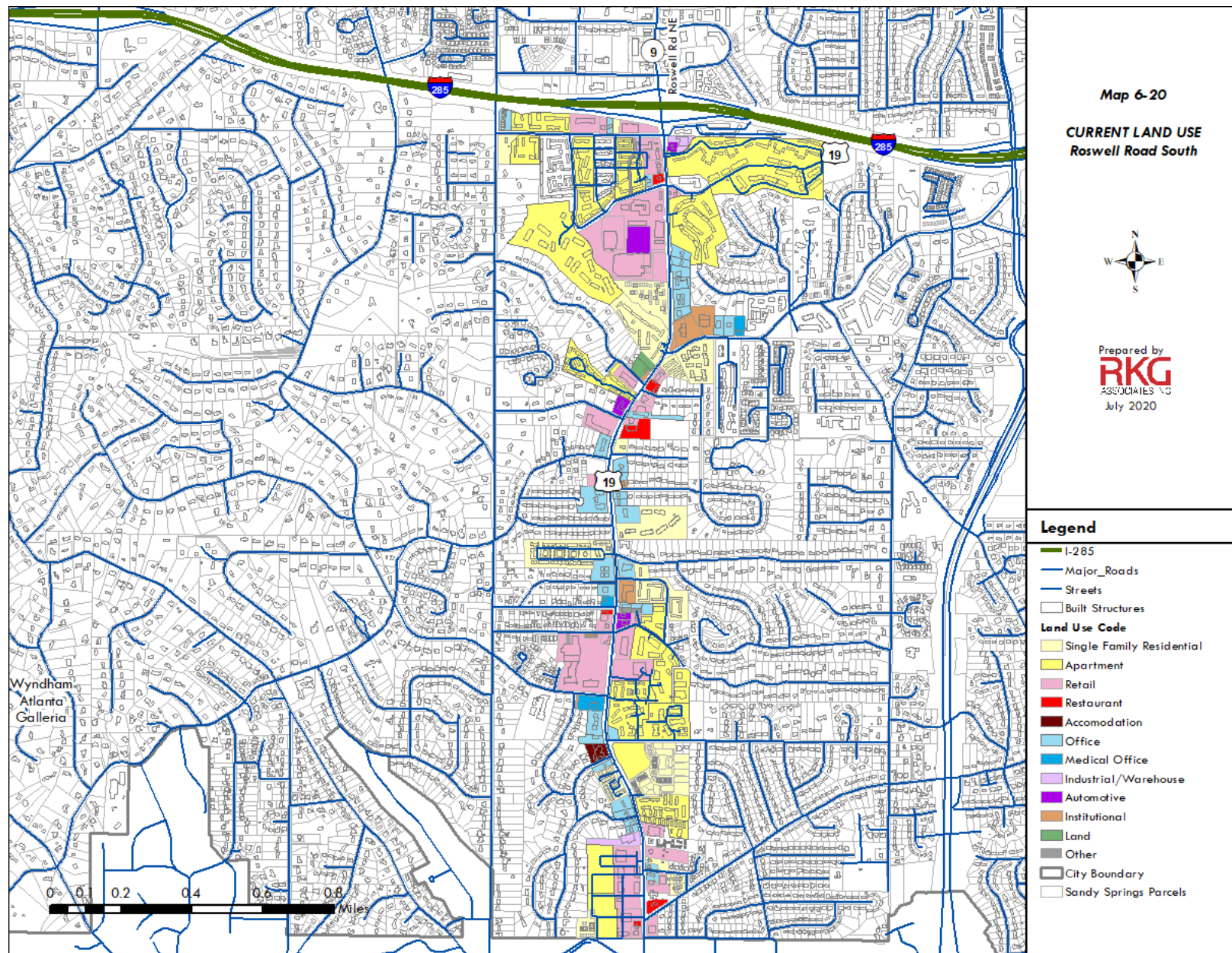
Located south of Interstate 285, the Roswell Road South commercial node is a southern gateway into the City of Sandy Springs along Roswell Road. The study area extends along Roswell Road from the Atlanta boundary north to Interstate 285. Like other, established commercial corridors in Metro Atlanta, Roswell Road South is home to older shopping centers and strip commercial development. There is a broad mixture of low-density office, retail, commercial, and residential (both single-family and multifamily). While the smaller lot sizes pose a challenge regarding assembly, the marketplace for this location has evolved beyond being simply shopping centers.

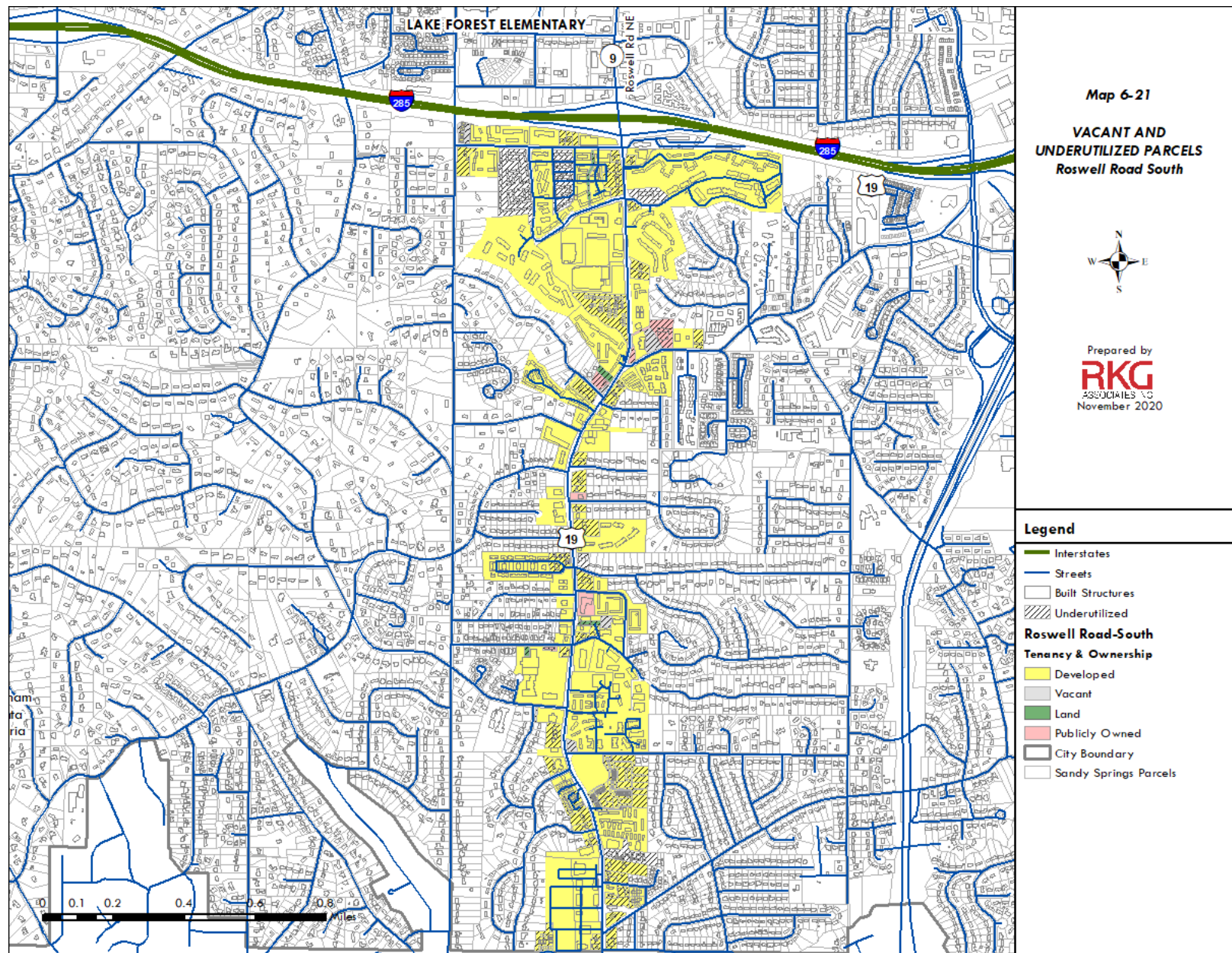
Vision

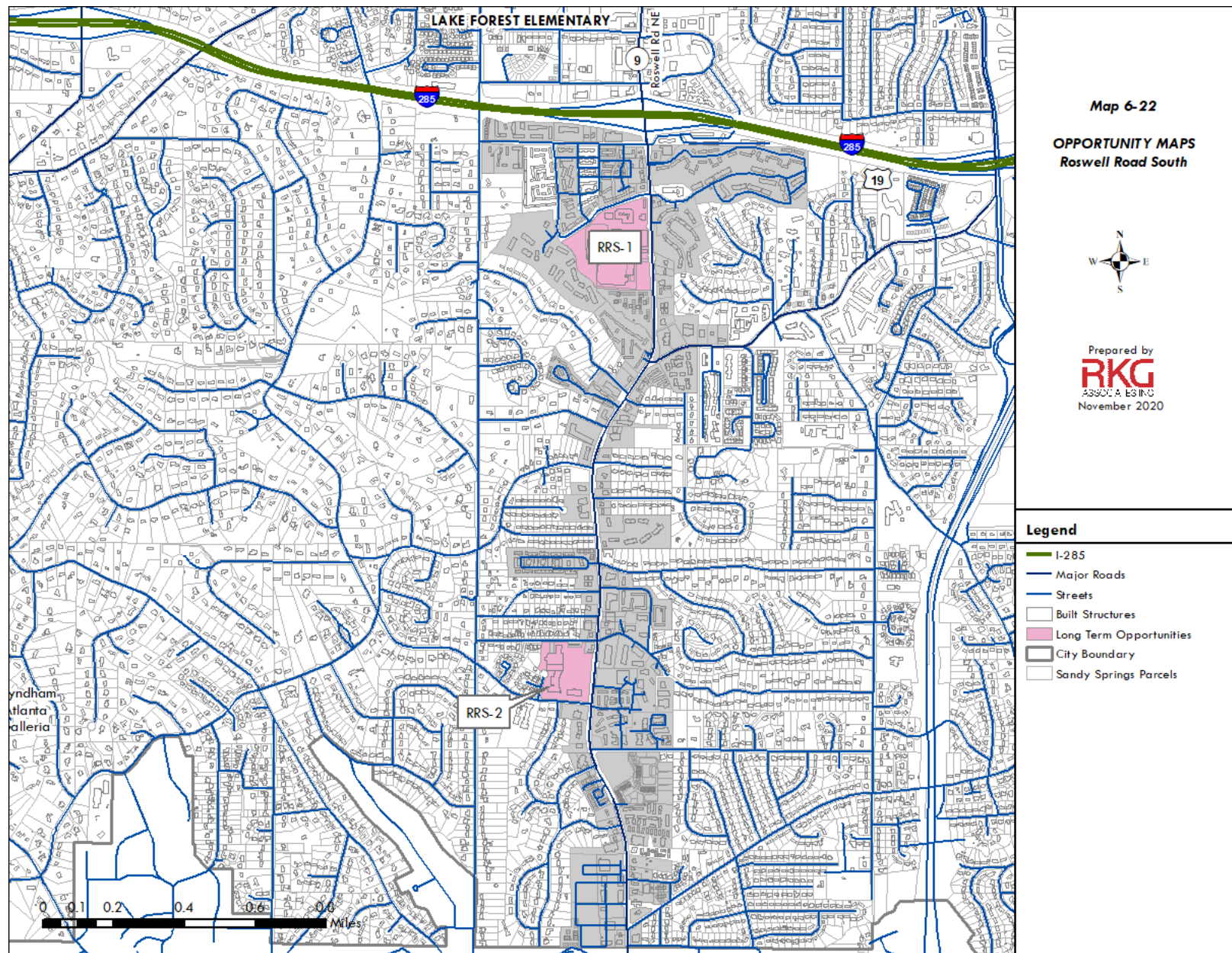
Roswell Road South has the potential to accommodate mixed-use development similar in scale to City Springs. There is an opportunity to reposition the commercial strip centers to retain the necessary commercial uses that support southern Sandy Springs with appropriately scaled multifamily that can support further economic growth and employment creation throughout Sandy Springs. By proactively changing land use codes, it is possible to stipulate the retail replacement at a level one-to-one (or greater).

Long-Term Opportunities

- **RRS-1: Redevelopment** – There are commercial shopping centers located along Roswell Road that have the potential to accommodate larger mixed-use developments that can continue to serve the South Roswell Road community while offering much-needed housing opportunities to support continued economic development growth. The first is the Prado, a strip shopping center that was renovated in 2007 using the County’s development authority. While this opportunity is longer term due to the investment, the redevelopment site has a more strategic economic development use long-term as vertically integrated mixed-use development.
- **RRS-2: Redevelopment** – The second is the Fountain Oaks Shopping Center. Like The Prado, this property has a more strategic economic development use long-term as vertically integrated mixed-use development.









7 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

A. INTRODUCTION

The following section details the recommendations for the City of Sandy Springs to consider as it creates its annual economic development business plans for the next 5 years. The implementation strategy is a culmination of the outreach efforts, the consultant's empirical research, feedback from local and regional implementation partners, the direction of the Working Group (see appendix), and input from staff and the City Council. The initial portion of this section details the principles and goals identified and defined by the project's Working Group in partnership with the City staff and the consultants. This section is followed by the discrete recommendations and implementation steps to assist the City in transitioning from vision to action.

B. PROPOSED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The City assembled a Working Group to represent the various public and private perspectives that influence—and are influenced by—the City's economic development efforts. This Working Group provided guidance and feedback throughout the development of this plan. As part of that effort, a comprehensive outreach strategy was held to identify, refine, and prioritize the City's economic development goals. These goals were presented and reviewed with the Working Group, who provided feedback on refining and prioritizing these goals. The following list represents the culmination of this input and selection process and are presented in order of the Working Group's recommended priority.

1. IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

- Create opportunities for entrepreneurs and small business owners to start and grow businesses in Sandy Springs – Sandy Springs is blessed with having a variety of company types, from a strong home-based business base to the corporate headquarters of Fortune 500 companies. That said, the 'backbone' of the City's economy is small companies. From a Sandy Springs perspective, a small business should be defined as companies with 10 or fewer employees. Based on business license data, more than 86% of the City's businesses meet this criterion. Economic



development staff, the Working Group, and RKG Associates all recognize that the greatest immediate potential to support business and job growth is a more comprehensive, proactive small business and entrepreneurial retention, expansion, and recruitment program.

- Proactively engage existing companies to strengthen business retention and expansion – While small business retention and expansion was recommended to be the primary focus, the Working Group and City staff recognized that the City needs a more comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. While some BRE efforts have been part of the City's efforts to date, the Working Group recommends more resources and dedicated staff time to increasing the number of businesses that the City directly engages each year.
- Increase community awareness of the City's economic opportunities and challenges to ensure informed decision making – Most economic development projects are focused on real estate and land use investments. Decisions on supporting (or opposing) a specific project oftentimes is reliant upon public support. Most individuals are unaware of the connection between economic development, community development, fiscal sustainability, and the local business climate. To this point, the RKG Associates and the Working Group recommend a series of community outreach initiatives aimed at engaging elected officials, business leaders, and Sandy Springs residents so that future decisions that impact economic development are balanced and well informed.
- Support regional efforts to attract new companies to Sandy Springs that offer better-than-average wage rates – Sandy Springs already has working relationships with several of the regional economic development partners focused on business recruitment including the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), the Metro Atlanta Chamber (MAC), Georgia Power Community & Economic Development, Select Fulton, and the Greater North Fulton County Chamber (GNFCC). The Working Group and RKG Associates recommend the City focus its recruitment efforts on businesses with 50 or fewer employees and leverage these regional partners focused on those larger firms that often seek incentives beyond the capacity of the City.
- Centralize and broaden the City's data collection efforts to better inform economic development actions and policies – The City's economic development effort is recommended to increase efforts on business retention and expansion. It is essential that the City have current and complete business records and real estate



market information. For example, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the City does not have a comprehensive and updated database of businesses currently operating in Sandy Springs, limiting the City's reach in engaging local businesses to offer information and assistance. The Working Group encourages that the City's economic development department enhance data collection efforts and access to information so that economic development actions and efforts are well-informed.

- Continue to build the City's implementation partner network and collaborative efforts – The Working Group and RKG Associates encourage the City to increase investments in networking and collaboration efforts with implementation partners and the City's existing business base. Increasing the opportunities for businesses to develop new relationships can create new economic development opportunities without substantial City engagement or investment. Increase proactive marketing and outreach is an important component of this goal, as businesses/partners cannot participate in events of which they are unaware.

2. OPERATIONAL GOALS

- Continue to invest in economic development through all business cycles making sure economic development efforts are properly funded – It is understandable why governments seek to reduce expenditures during economic downturns. The concern about sufficient resources requires municipalities to shift and/or reduce expenditures to ensure the community does not have a deficit. That said, economic development is one of the few efforts that is even more important during downturns. This is evident in the effort that the City's economic development staff implemented during the most recent COVID-19 pandemic. The business owners interviewed as part of this process each commented on the value to their business of having consistent communication and outreach from the City
- Correlate delivery expectations with available staff and financial resources – This strategic economic development plan identifies specific goals and preferred outcomes that exceed the City's current financial investment and staffing capacity. RKG Associates estimates the City needs an additional \$300,000 to \$500,000 investment annually to effectively pursue all of the City's economic development goals. To this point, the City leadership must scale their expectations to the investment being made. This strategy outlines the additional investments and staffing needed to fully pursue the entire plan.



- Ensure City resources target market opportunities and are deployed effectively and efficiently – The Working Group and RKG Associates acknowledge that the City's efforts to date have been prudent and effective. However, this plan outlines a shift in priority and more clearly defines expectations. The implementation strategies detailed in this chapter are intended to focus the City's investments in opportunities that offer the greatest potential to achieve success.
- Refine roles and responsibilities with new and existing implementation partners – As noted in the recruitment goal, the City already has built a network of implementation partners. However, this process also revealed there is some concerns about roles, responsibilities, and overlap of effort. The Working Group, City staff, and RKG Associates recommend continuing to build upon these successes while being more definitive in the nature of the relationships. More specifically, the implementation strategy provides specific recommendations of how local and regional relationships should be organized and codified.
- Increase engagement with property owners to assist with economic development – The Working Group recognizes that business engagement is the primary component of economic development activity. However, property owners and investors also shape economic development success through providing the necessary building space to accommodate growing and new businesses. For a city, real estate and land use issues require similar attention through economic development efforts. For example, incompatible zoning can undermine business recruitment more easily than an ill-conceived local incentive program.
- Define clear benchmarking levels to determine program/investment effectiveness – It is common for communities to define 'success' in economic development with measures that are largely outside the control of a municipal economic development department. Most notably, the benchmark of annual job creation ignores the reality that a national recession will make local job growth almost impossible. To this point, the Working Group and RKG Associates have recommended a series of benchmarks for each of the primary goals that measure the effectiveness of effort within context of the local and regional marketplace.
- Strengthen correlation of incentives to livable wages – The Working Group recognizes that establishing incentives for job creation without ensuring the jobs offer Sandy Springs residents a livable wage is counter to the City's ethos. The economic development strategic plan encourages the City to strengthen the connection to



local incentives with requirements to offer wages that are commensurate with the cost of living in the City.

- Promote diversity, inclusion and economic opportunity through economic development actions and policies – This analysis revealed that Sandy Springs' community is diversifying. The Working Group and RKG Associates both recognize the value of creating economic development opportunities for these emerging populations to grow the City's business and employment base. Most notably, RKG Associates recommends creating new entrepreneurial programs that offer specific opportunities to women and minority populations.

C. BUILDING FOR SUCCESS

Sandy Springs already has built positive momentum with their existing economic development staff and actions. This strategic plan is not intended to supplant those efforts, but rather build upon them and provide the City the tools to refocus efforts to align with current and emerging opportunities, strengthen community awareness and support of economic development, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's economic development investments.

- Scaling expectations with investment – One of the more common challenges communities have when implementing a strategic plan is to establish realistic expectations in terms of the timing and scale of results. While many of the initial actions in this plan are focused on adopting and changing policies, establishing new programs and initiatives, and collecting and tabulating the data necessary to be successful, there is a larger challenge that Sandy Springs faces as it moves forward... scaling expectations with investment. Simply put, the City currently does not fund economic development efforts sufficiently to pursue all of the proposed implementation goals. The Working Group and staff prioritized which goals should be pursued first, and which should be taken up as additional resources and staff capacity is made available.
- Be creative and flexible when implementing – The strategic economic development plan is not intended to be a literal guide for the City to follow. The concepts and strategies provided by the consultant are best practices at achieving the vision defined by the Working Group. Given the long-term timeframe of several of these recommendations, several factors relevant to Sandy Springs may (and most likely will) change over time. Market conditions and access to resources will adjust over time, requiring the City to find an alternative approach to reach the stated vision.



To this point, this document should be viewed as guidelines and not prescriptive edicts.

- *Being proactive can provide greater opportunities* – Many communities implement economic development effort by reacting to demands from the marketplace and not the vision established by processes such as these. Getting ahead of the investment market provides several benefits. Most notably, engaging with property owners before there is an established plan can lead to more creative solutions that meet the needs of both the public and private partners. At the very least, the investment community will have a greater understanding of the City’s vision and can create investment strategies to engage that vision prior to finalizing any investment plans.
- *Coordination is critical* – The City of Sandy Springs has limited staff and financial resources to achieve all the goals laid out in this document. However, there are several key investment partners that already focus on many of these opportunities. The City should continue to engage regional and state-wide economic development partners to leverage their expertise and resources to assist the City in obtaining its goals. In other words, there is no reason for Sandy Springs to ‘reinvent the wheel.’ This is particularly true with business recruitment, as there already are several well-funded and resourced entities that can represent Sandy Springs’ interests to large companies through simple coordination.

D. PRIORITY ACTIONS

The Implementation Matrix presented later in this chapter provides an easy-to-follow guide of the economic development recommendations for Sandy Springs. The recommendations are parsed into six general topic areas: [1] Business Retention and Expansion; [2] Business Recruitment; [3] Asset Development; [4] Toolbox Development; [5] Outreach, Communication, and Marketing, and [6] Organization and Coordination. The specific recommendations in this strategy were shaped through combining the vision of the Working Group, input from community stakeholders, business leaders, and elected officials, current and projected market conditions, and current/projected market opportunities.

The following action items are considered to be “priorities” for the Working Group in context of the City’s short-term implementation of an economic development business plan. They are considered critical, and in some cases catalytic, in their importance to reach the stated goals and encouraging the development of the opportunity sites detailed in chapter 6. The narrative provides context for these recommendations to help frame



the City's efforts in a manner that will maximize the effectiveness of City resources in expanding the City's economic sustainability, support new and existing businesses, expand the diversity of local housing choices, and attract further investment to Sandy Springs. While the other actions identified and detailed in the Implementation Matrix are necessary to meet the defined economic development goals, their implementation are considered to be supportive and ancillary to these efforts.

1. BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION

Business retention and expansion (BRE) efforts have the greatest economic development potential for Sandy Springs. At a base level, retaining existing businesses and/or enabling existing businesses to grow typically costs less (per job) than recruiting new companies into an area. In RKG Associates' experience, most of our municipal clients have reported lower expenses in assisting an existing company to grow than the cost to attract a new company to their jurisdiction. Similarly, recruitment typically only replaces the loss of a company that was lured somewhere else.

More strategically, approximately 5,600 businesses currently are operating within Sandy Springs (according to business license records). The City's engagement with these businesses has been limited due to [1] a low priority for BRE activities and [2] inadequate resources to proactively engage these businesses. The COVID-19 pandemic response from the City not only provided valuable support to existing businesses through information dissemination and support, it exposed the value existing businesses place on a more proactive engagement effort. A more proactive and comprehensive effort to improve the local business climate, make networking connections with suppliers/clients/partners, and address regulatory or physical impediments to success/growth should be a top priority for the City.

Objective 1.2: Implement a citywide business climate survey each year.

The City's economic development staff initiated its first business survey as part of its COVID-19 response. Not only was the response rate high due to the need/issues businesses were facing, it provided valuable information to the City on how to best strategize its regulatory and policy responses while identifying which external partners were needed/valued by local businesses. The City's follow-up survey allowed for the economic development staff to track changes in market climate, impacts of ongoing efforts, and refine approaches and strategies based on changing feedback. The Working Group and RKG Associates recommend the City adopt the business climate survey strategy as an annual effort.



Business climate surveys are a cost-efficient way for the City's economic development staff to gather information on market challenges, opportunities and needs of Sandy Springs businesses even outside the impacts of a national health emergency. The questions included in the first survey covered topics such as workforce needs, operational challenges, location/physical needs, etc. related to COVID-19. These survey topics are relevant even in "normal" times and provide a foundation for future surveys, which would include additional topics such as market growth opportunities, competition challenges, etc. Questions can be refined and updated annually through input from the economic development staff as well as the various industry roundtables recommended in the Implementation Matrix.

The survey responses provide four valuable outcomes. First, programs and policies can be created to address challenges/opportunities identified by several businesses. Second, trends/issues in each industry and/or business center within the City can be identified and mitigated through collaboration with key stakeholders. Third, individual responses can be used to ensure site visits (discussed later in this section) are targeted to those businesses that have the most immediate opportunities to grow/are at risk of downsizing or closing. Finally, survey findings can be tracked over time to identify market trends and fine tune programs based on the current and projected economic climate (similar to the COVID-19 effort).

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

Objective 1.3: Create a small business development program under the City's economic development efforts.

Small business and entrepreneurial development was the consensus priority for the Working Group. For the purposes of the City's economic development efforts, the Working Group recommended that "Small Business" be defined as a business with 10 or fewer employees. Given more than 4,850 for the City's 5,600 businesses fall into this category, these activities will require a full-time staff member committed to outreach, engagement, and assistance. As noted in the Implementation Matrix, there are several discrete actions the City should undertake to enhance small business and entrepreneurial development. These include:



- Hosting business startup seminars – The City should partner with local (i.e. other north Fulton County municipalities) and regional (i.e. Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce) partners to host seminars and informational presentations that provide information to entrepreneurs and small businesses owners. These events should be hosted by the City’s new small business development professional and offer access to the various new programs (identified in the Implementation Matrix).
- Expand mentoring opportunities beyond the local SCORE efforts – The regional SCORE group offers a good foundation of the City’s new entrepreneurial and small business mentoring efforts. However, RKG learned through this process that the number of mentors is limited and often focused in the financial services sector. The Working Group and RKG encourage the City to explore developing its own small business development program and funding the training of local mentors through programs such as the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Mentor-Protégé Program.
- Engage home-based businesses – Sandy Springs, and much of North Fulton County, has a concentration of businesses operated by sole-proprietors out of their houses. These businesses oftentimes are prime candidates for business/job growth through engagement and assistance programs. As part of the City’s new small business development strategy, the Working Group and RKG encourage the City to develop a home-based business outreach strategy that markets the City’s revised incentives and programs to these businesses (detailed on page 7-13).
- Creation of a public-private partnership (PPP) revolving loan program for start-up and small business growth – One of the largest impediments for entrepreneurial and small business development is access to capital. The City of Sandy Springs can work with local financial institutions to create a locally managed investment fund that is capitalized with City and bank monies. The City should target a 10% public investment mix. The new loan fund can offer no-interest or low-interest loans to businesses that engage in the City’s small business development program and are willing to commit to a minimum operating tenure in Sandy Springs.
- Oversee BRE engagement to micro and home-based businesses – The Working Group and staff recommends a more comprehensive and proactive BRE outreach effort. While this will require additional staffing resources, the new small business development manager should dedicate some time to support the BRE effort, particularly for micro businesses (five or fewer employees) and home-based



businesses. In these instances, the small business development professional should play a lead role in engagement.

2. BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

Business recruitment varies depending on the size of the company being attracted. Within economic development, larger companies tend to seek out regional locations (i.e. metropolitan Atlanta) rather than specific jurisdictions. For example, the Georgia 400 corridor's strong fiber optic connectivity offers a competitive advantage to attract companies needing substantial bandwidth, however, larger companies are more focused on the North Fulton County area rather than the City of Sandy Springs specifically. Smaller firms that have this need will be more likely to focus on which jurisdiction within North Fulton County to locate based on qualitative factors such as proximity to the owner's house. To this point, the City of Sandy Springs will be more effective focusing any recruitment efforts on smaller companies (RKG Associates recommends companies with 25 or fewer employees).

As noted, the City already has relationships with statewide, regional, and local economic development partners actively engaged in larger-scale business recruitment. These entities have larger budgets and can offer more substantial incentives to companies seeking to relocate to Sandy Springs. Given the resources available to the City's economic development effort, RKG Associates and the Working Group recommend the City continue to build these relationships, offering data and marketing support to their efforts.

Objective 2.2: Scale proactive marketing and recruitment efforts to best leverage the City's resources and market reach.

The City's business recruitment efforts should be focused on companies that are more sensitive to specific locations. These companies oftentimes are 'too small' for the City's regional recruitment partners, offering the City an opportunity to 'fill the gap' in providing the site location and marketing resources for these companies. For example, Georgia Power's available property database does not include office properties with less than 10,000 SF of available space. In contrast, most office-related businesses require less than 10,000 SF of space. The City can create a similar on-line tool in coordination with local real estate brokers and property owners to offer site identification assistance to these smaller companies. The recommended small business and entrepreneurial programming and the changes to the City's incentive programs align with this strategy as well. RKG Associates recommends the City create customized marketing collateral that targets these smaller businesses as detailed in the Outreach, Communication, and Marketing section.



3. ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Economic development efforts at the municipal level should have a strong connection to land use and real estate investment/planning. Asset development includes the preparation and marketing of development-ready sites and buildings. Given the built-out nature of Sandy Springs, new real estate investment will require infill development and/or redevelopment of existing properties. Infill and redevelopment efforts carry greater investment risk than traditional greenfield investment due to the increased challenges of longer construction periods, the added demolition costs, the temporary loss of revenue during demolition/construction, and the uncertainty of the marketplace at project completion. Further, Sandy Springs does not have traditional blight or vacancy issues, so redevelopment carries the additional challenge of how to address existing tenants/leases.

The speculative nature of infill and redevelopment requires a unified vision for development between the property owner and the City. Sandy Springs can alleviate some of that risk by coordinating its regulatory and policy environment with market demand and investor/owner needs. RKG Associates and the Working Group recommends the City adopt a more proactive effort to engage property owners, develop long-term visions for the City's commercial areas, and refine existing zoning and incentive programs to facilitate the execution of those strategies.

Objective 3.1: Formulate (or enact) economic development concepts for each of the City's employment centers.

The City already has engaged this strategy for the North Roswell Road commercial area. There is a concurrent effort to the drafting of this economic development plan to create a development vision and strategy for the commercial corridor along Roswell Road in the north end of the City. This proactive planning is engaging residents, business owners, and property owners to define a future for the study area and establish specific implementation strategies to execute that vision. The Opportunity Sites chapter details specific real estate opportunities identified by RKG Associates and the Working Group for each of the City's other commercial centers. The Opportunity Sites chapter can serve as the City's defined vision for these other commercial centers or provide the foundation for a more in-depth strategy similar to the effort ongoing for the north Roswell Road corridor.

Objective 3.2: Work with property owners to ensure economic development plans are consistent with short-term and long-term investment strategies.



The City needs to engage commercial and industrial property owners to coordinate future potential economic development efforts. The City is not in a position to lead real estate investment to shape future economic development efforts. The vast majority of investment will come from the private sector. To this point, aligning the City's land use and real estate development vision with the marketplace is imperative. At a base level, the City's planning efforts will yield limited results if strategies are not market viable or counter the investment strategy of a targeted infill/redevelopment site. More strategically, coordinating planning efforts and marketing strategies with property owners can identify challenges and offer creative solutions that may not have been addressed otherwise. This preemptive effort can accelerate action and result in a product that exceeds both the City's vision and the owner's investment expectations.

4. TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT

Municipalities in Georgia are limited in the tools available to them to promote and induce economic development activity. The City of Sandy Springs already has implemented most of these options (i.e. the City's Development Authority) and is regularly seeking ways to enhance policies and processes (i.e. development review). The Implementation Matrix provides specific recommendations on how to enhance these efforts.

Objective 4.3: Modify the City's incentive packages to encourage economic development and start-up companies.

RKG Associates recommends the City prioritize the refinement of its incentive package tools to better align with the Working Group's recommendation to focus local economic development efforts on entrepreneurial and small business retention, expansion, and recruitment. From a financial incentive perspective, the thresholds to qualify for the City's small businesses are too high. RKG Associates recommends reducing the job creation and capital investment requirements to coordinate with the small business development program recommendations. This will serve a larger portion of the City's existing business base and provide the City an advantage in attracting new companies since few other municipalities are employing a similar strategy. That said, continuing to require claw back measures for companies that do not meet their performance expectations is also recommended. Further, micro businesses (5 or fewer employees) should be required to work with a mentor and/or attend small business development seminars prior to receiving any incentives. Specific recommendations include:

- Redefine Tier 1 for Small Businesses as 2 jobs and \$100,000 capital investment with a 2-year commitment



- Redefine Tier 2 for Small Businesses as 5 jobs and/or \$250,000 capital investment with a 4-year commitment
- Redefine Tier 3 for Small Businesses as 10 jobs and/or \$500,000 capital investment with a 6-year commitment
- Make the small business incentives available anywhere in the City, providing the applying company currently has 10 or fewer FTE employees and annual revenues of less than \$2M
- Make the business occupant tax waiver for larger businesses last the duration of the commitment (4 years, 7 years, and 10 years respectively)
- Continue to require claw back provisions in all incentive packages to ensure compliance with stated agreements
- Consider a local match to the Opportunity Site benefits for businesses in the City's target industries that locate in an Opportunity Area (recommend a 20% match)
- Tie any incentives to businesses with five (5) or fewer employees to participating in the City's small business development program/mentorship program



5. OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING

While the City has been proactive and effective in marketing to entities outside the City, less effort has been committed to engaging with internal partners. On one hand, the City is recommended to update its marketing materials to reflect the new priorities and be more effective in its messaging. The Implementation Matrix details specific collateral recommendations as well as enhancements to the City's print and digital outreach efforts. Most notably, the City's economic development effort should have an independent, professionally developed website. While economic development efforts will remain City functions (at least into the foreseeable future), having an economic development specific website designed to be more informative and engaging has become a minimum standard in marketing and business retention/recruitment efforts.

On the other hand, additional effort needs to be made to engage the leaders, residents, and businesses within Sandy Springs to increase awareness and understanding of what economic development is, how the City is implementing its economic development efforts, and why those efforts are beneficial to everyone in the City. Given much of the City's economic development efforts require City Council support—and therefore greater community endorsement—investing resources and staff time to increasing understanding and awareness is necessary to garner greater support for the City's inevitable growth and evolution.

Objective 5.1: Create marketing collateral to 'sell' the defined economic development vision

The Working Group encourages the City to refine existing material and create new materials to be more comprehensive. Most notably, materials highlighting the City's emerging small business programming and incentives should be prioritized. Further, the City should create industry-specific materials in collaboration with regional partners to ensure consistency. It is important to note that while having marketing materials is a minimum benchmark for disseminating information, keeping those materials current is essential. This is particularly important for Internet-based materials, as having inaccurate/out-of-date data sources can harm the community's potential for a prospect before ever learning about the opportunity. Specific recommendations include:

- Quality of Life Sheet – The quality of life brochure should focus on the intangibles of living and working in Sandy Springs, highlighting the various technology, workforce, cost of living, and social amenities of the area. The content should emphasize factors such as school performance, cultural assets, proximity to road and rail transportation, access to the regional markets, and quality/variety of



leisure activities. This material is particularly valuable in the professional services recruitment and entrepreneurial development.

- Target Industry Materials – Industry-specific marketing materials for each of the target industries is important for disseminating specific data that is valuable to the City’s target industries. Each document should be customized based on the cluster (see Chapter 5). The documents should highlight information including employment and establishment growth data, regional wage rates, current businesses operating in the area, competitive advantages of operating locally, unique incentives available (where applicable) and local business contacts (ambassadors).
- Incentive Sheet – The City’s incentive marketing materials will need to be updated to reflect any of the recommended changes. Each incentive sheet should focus on those programs relevant to the industry group being targeted. Prospective businesses can use this document to gauge the financial benefits to doing business, and existing businesses may be alerted to incentive programs they were unaware of, therefore helping to ensure their continued presence in the City.
- Business Testimonial Book – RKG Associates’ efforts for this analysis has revealed several compelling “success stories” of existing businesses succeeding in Sandy Springs. However, these experiences are not chronicled or readily available to use in marketing. The Working Group recommends crafting a business testimonials book with written statements from existing industry leaders on topics ranging from quality of life, business climate, value-add created by the City, and personal preference to do business locally. Getting input from companies that have chosen Sandy Springs and thrive locally is valuable to industry recruitment. Individual testimonies of leaders from a range of businesses by size should be a priority.
- Property Assemblage Book – As noted earlier, the City’s economic development efforts should include land use and real estate marketing. The City should create a property assemblage book that highlights those catalytic land assets identified in each of the commercial centers where the City and property owner are aligned on the future development program. To this point, the assemblage book should only highlight those assets where the property owners are engaged and supportive of the City marketing their property. The book should focus on the top (5-10) catalytic projects. Each listing should provide information on all the properties as well as the community’s development vision for that area.



Objective 5.2: Create a more robust performance dashboard to better engage the Sandy Springs community.

One of the most common challenges that municipal economic development efforts face is having defined, realistic, and measurable outcome expectations. Too often communities try to define economic development ‘success’ through nominal measure of job creation, business attraction, and/or tax revenue growth. While this approach is understandable since these metrics are measurable and make sense to the general public, they are not accurate or reasonable assessments of economic development activity. Most notably, these nominal measures ignore larger economic conditions and cycles. Using a nominal year-over-year job growth measure as the benchmark for economic development success is destined to failure during a downturn or recession. For a City the size and scale of Sandy Springs, these types of measures also can be skewed by the attraction (or relocation) of a single large employer.

RKG Associates recommends the City adopt performance measures that track the effectiveness and efficiency of various implementation programs. This approach differs from the nominal approach by measuring how successful a program is compared to its investment and desired outcome. For example, a more impactful measure of an entrepreneur program is the graduation rate rather than the number of jobs created. Graduation rate can identify deficiencies in the screening process or the curriculum. If entrepreneurial development is a City priority, the investment should be tracked against the efficacy and continued improvement of the program. For nominal measures, programs should be compared to each other to determine if certain efforts produce results at a lower cost or timeframe. However, the priority of a given program should be considered along with the nominal results.

RKG Associates recommends the City establish a formal economic development dashboard to track performance across each of these topic areas (as implementation resources are added): [1] business retention and expansion, [2] business recruitment, [3] entrepreneurial development, [4] workforce development, [5] fiscal sustainability. Metrics for each topic area could include:

- **Business retention and expansion**
 - Site visits performed
 - Ombudsman assists
 - Jobs retained/expanded
 - New capital investment
 - Network event attendance



- Priority retention prospect contacts
- **Business recruitment**
 - Number of prospects assisted
 - Number of successful projects
 - Incentive cost per job created ratio
 - Average annual wage of new jobs
 - Incentive cost compared to total capital investment
 - Debrief highlights from lost opportunities and subsequent recommendations
- **Entrepreneurial development¹**
 - Enrollment inquiries versus enrollment
 - Graduation rates
 - Jobs created per graduate
 - Debrief on businesses leaving the mentorship program and subsequent changes
- **Workforce development**
 - Regional programs offered
 - Program application and enrollment of Sandy Springs businesses/residents
 - Internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements
 - Business inquiries versus program engagement
- **Fiscal sustainability**
 - Number of incentives given
 - Dollar value of incentives compared to jobs created/preserved
 - Dollar value of incentives compared to capital investment created
 - New business tax revenues
 - Other benefits (i.e. infrastructure investments)

Objective 5.3: Implement a proactive community engagement and education initiative

Many economic development decisions require elected leaders to support the use of resources to succeed. Having community support (or at least minimizing community opposition) is a critical component of having a successful economic development effort. The Working Group encourages the City to implement a series of community engagement efforts to increase Sandy Springs residents' understanding of what

¹ As programming resources are added to the City's economic development program



‘economic development’ actually is, why economic development efforts are necessary, and how economic development investment benefits them and the entire community. This effort is particularly important in Sandy Springs around land use issues. It is well documented that there are a diverse set of opinions on land use locally. The Working Group want to ensure community support/opposition to a development initiative is informed by facts and not misinformation.

One way for the City to amplify staff capacity for community outreach is to engage its citizens in the process. RKG engaged several City business leaders and residents that are well suited to engage in these roles. Specific roles include:

- Community advocates – There has not been much effort in engaging residents about the opportunities/challenges of implementing an economic development program to date. Given the challenge of reaching all the different community groups (and economic development perspectives in Sandy Springs), the Working Group recommends a select group of interested citizens assist in engaging local civic organizations (i.e. homeowner associations, social clubs...). Ideally, the community advocates would be individuals with strong ties and broad recognition within either a specific area of the City or with a civic group. Individuals selected to be advocates should be familiar with the City’s economic development efforts, can discuss and explain economic development concepts, and be well spoken. Most importantly, the advocates must be available to assist in outreach to various community (i.e. congregations) and civic (i.e. neighborhood groups) entities.
- Business ambassadors – The ambassador program is a collection of business and industry leaders that provide support to the economic development entity’s staff for industry recruitment and retention. Although these individuals will have no formal authority within the recruitment process, they provide a ‘real life’ vantage point for prospects about doing business in Sandy Springs. Their most important function is to provide a business perspective for prospects interested in locating/expanding within the City. Utilizing business leaders in the recruitment process legitimizes the recruitment effort through testimonials while leveraging the staff’s time and effort. The most effective ambassadors may not be from the largest businesses. The City should identify ambassadors from each of the major industry sectors to ensure appropriate coverage regardless of the prospect.

Community awareness and support is a critical component of implementation. Simply put, the amount of financial and political support for economic development is



influenced by the willingness of residents to endorse local action. Past actions (that occurred before initiating this effort) indicate there is not widespread understanding of economic development initiatives in the City of Sandy Springs, why it is important for future sustainability, and what needs to be done to achieve the stated vision. Increased awareness and education about economic development can only benefit the City's implementation in building sustainable and strategic relationships with all local stakeholders.

- Include an economic development section in the community eNewsletter – The Working Group recommends modifying the community eNewsletter to include an economic development section targeting residents. This content should vary slightly from those targeting stakeholders, partners, and prospects by presenting the data in less industry-focused language. The Working Group and RKG Associates encourage the inclusion of small educational components or editorials that better explain the more technical content presented. Content could include a “Message from the Director” that highlights a relevant piece of the next upcoming edition of the economic development eNewsletter within context of why it is important and the benefits created by that effort/success. The community eNewsletter can include instructions for residents to sign up for the economic development eNewsletter that offers greater detail about economic development efforts.
- Host community update meetings – RKG Associates observed that proactive engagement and communication with the City's residents about economic development is limited to City Council meetings and workshops. This disconnect enables naysayers to “define the reality” of economic development efforts and their impact on the community. The Working Group recommends City engage the Community Advocates to meet with citizen and civic groups to provide annual updates on the actions of the organization and the benefits being generated for the community. This effort can dovetail into a staff-led town hall presentation/discussion to be held at different locations throughout Sandy Springs, enabling community members to hear about economic development efforts and ask questions/give feedback. The town hall event is more formal, focusing on the “state of economic development.”

6. ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION

Economic development must be led by a team of dedicated professionals with the capability to execute the implementation plan and meet the community's defined goals. There are several successful models that a community can emulate ranging from internal



economic development staff to a privately funded, not-for-profit organization that operates on behalf of the community. Even within the Metro Atlanta marketplace, several different approaches are taken. A community must consider the various advantages and disadvantages of each option, particularly within context of issues such as market realities, partner interest/viability, leadership preference, and available resources. To date, the City of Sandy Springs has implemented its economic development efforts through an internal department overseen by an Assistant City Manager.

This process included a review of the City's existing approach and external partnerships to identify any potential recommendations for an organizational structure that maximizes the City's potential for success at retaining, expanding, and attracting businesses and investment. The Working Group engaged with RKG Associates to provide feedback on different potential organizational structures, including the strengths and weaknesses for each option. Specific areas of interest identified were:

- Focusing the City's economic development efforts based on available resources and community priorities,
- Formalizing relationships with implementation partners to mitigate any confusion and/or overlap in activities,
- Identifying the skills necessary to implement the prioritized economic development actions effectively and efficiently, and
- Leveraging the City's engaged private sector to increase competencies and resources.

RKG Associates reviewed the City's existing approaches and organization; assessed existing and potential relationships with other local, regional, and state-level partners; engaged several community leaders and key stakeholders (including existing and potential partners); and compared the defined goals and objectives with current staffing and financial resources. The results of this work produced three primary findings:

1. *There is a passionate and engaged business community in Sandy Springs* – The SEDP process has revealed there are several business leaders willing/interested in engaging with the City with its economic development efforts. This offers the City an opportunity to leverage the knowledge, experience, relationships, and resources of Sandy Springs businesses to better leverage City resources.
2. *Current relationships with implementation partners generally are not well defined* – The Sandy Springs Economic Development Department has developed positive



relationships over the years with all of the potential implementation partners. However, those relationships are not defined, and has resulted in lack of clarity about what entities are responsible for which actions. Clearly defined relationships should be a priority to provide better clarity and transparency in implementation.

3. The City's existing investment in economic development is not consistent with desired outcomes – The City currently employs two full-time economic development professionals and invests less than \$400,000 annually. This investment does not match the City's desired outcomes. Additional staff and financial resources are necessary for Sandy Springs to achieve the success framed by its economic development goals. Without additional resources, the City's economic development efforts need to be scaled to the staff and financial capacity.

Each of these points are addressed in the following priority actions.

Objective 6.1: Consider establishing a 501(c)(3) public-private partnership (PPP) implementation entity to increase private sector engagement and enhance the City's effectiveness and efficiency at business retention, expansion, and recruitment.

The public-private partnership (PPP) economic development model effectively takes the day-to-day economic development activity responsibilities from within the City administration and places them into an entity that has shared board representation between the City and business/partner investors to oversee operations. The new PPP-entity Board of Directors would have appointees from the City government as well as members elected by the organization's investors.

RKG Associates has provided a 'straw-man' example of how this board could be elected/appointed to ensure that all investor perspectives are given a voting seat for decision making on the entity's priorities and actions in the Implementation Matrix at the end of this Chapter. As shown in the Implementation Matrix, the prototype board would have 11 seats, with two appointed by the City, one by Visit Sandy Springs, one by the Perimeter CID board, one by the Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber, and six at-large, private sector representatives. Specific recommendations for seating the PPP entity include:

- Funding commitment for seat activation – Each seat could require a financial contribution to the new economic development entity for any at-large voting Board member. The threshold for the required level of investment would be



determined through engagement with business leaders and the City administration. Requiring this 'pay-to-play' environment ensures all voting decision makers are directly invested in the effort and enhances the City's investment through private/outside dollars.

- Maintain majority of private board members – A hallmark of almost all PPP entities is ensuring that private sector investors would have a majority of voting seats. Having a majority of voting seats controlled by the public body creates a disincentive for outside investors to get involved. Business entities tend to shy away from investing in economic development entities that do not offer direct representation.
- Keep financial tool decision making outside the PPP – The City Council and the existing Development Authority each review and approve their respective financial incentive programs. Keeping all financial decisions outside the PPP removes potential impropriety concerns around a non-publicly appointed body controlling the use of public funds. Under this approach, the PPP entity could recommend the use of financial tools. The ultimate decision still rests with the City Council or the City-appointed, independent board of the Development Authority.

STRENGTHS OF PPP APPROACH

- Enhances collaboration – The greatest strength to this approach is that it would bring a larger, more committed pool of decision makers to the City's economic development efforts. Currently, private sector partners are reactive to the City's efforts. With no decision-making authority, their experience and insight oftentimes come after decisions are made and/or are isolated to a few individuals/perspectives. Creating a Board of Directors that invites a diverse group of interested business leaders to collaborate with the City's administration will ensure all perspectives are considered when individual operation decisions are made.
- Decision makers are all direct investors – At a base level, having private sector investment in economic development operations leverages the City's investment and expands operations without more money from the City. This review process found the City needs to invest more to reach the defined goals, how much will be determined—in part—by the private sector support. Furthermore, having Board of Director membership for the private sector that requires 'skin in the game' ensures better participation, more engagement during decisions, and deeper



commitment to success. The small sampling of business leaders that RKG Associates has been exposed to would bring greater perspective and information that would enhance economic development operations and decision making. Opening up opportunities to the Sandy Springs business community at large most likely would have an even greater positive impact.

- De-politicizes operational decisions – Moving the economic development operations from inside the City would further ensure that economic development activities are being done outside of the political arena. Economic development success relies on private sector investment. Even public investment projects (i.e. City Springs) are done—in part—to attract private investment. These decisions are made based on market strength and financial stability, and not political considerations. Decisions on ‘what’ economic development programs to pursue and ‘how’ to pursue them should be pragmatic, based upon market and economic factors. Using a 501(c)(3) structure for the public private partnership is consistent with the entity’s advisory role to the City while removing any potential political conflict of other organizational structures. For example, a 501(c)(6) not-for-profit is allowed to campaign and endorse political candidates.
- Defines roles and responsibilities – Creating a City-endorsed economic development entity would be a strong indication of how the City wants its economic development operational efforts carried out and decisions made. Anecdotally, there is concern that there, ‘already are several organizations involved in economic development’ and that this approach would, ‘just add to the confusion.’ However, a City-sponsored PPP entity would eliminate that confusion and empower the City leadership and business community by collaborating on how to manage those relationships and which ones are the most beneficial to the goal of attracting and retaining jobs and investment to Sandy Springs.
- Maintains the City’s financial control – The City most likely will be the primary funder (and likely the only funder initially). This approach retains the City’s ultimate control of operation via control of the flow of public dollars by having a defined memorandum of understanding (MOU) that details the City’s economic development priorities and mission of the new PPP. If this new PPP entity diverges from this mission, the City retains the right to de-fund it and claw back any unused funds. Many of these PPP agreements provide semi-annual payments, minimizing the maximum exposure of the jurisdiction.



CHALLENGES OF THE PPP APPROACH

- Consistency in operations – Creating an economic development organization (whether a public-private partnership or not) is time consuming and complex. This is not a process that will be completed without some disruption of staff time and effort. As noted earlier, further engagement with the business community needs to be completed to understand the extent of potential financial support that can be garnered. If Sandy Springs' business community is unwilling to commit to investing in its economic development operations, the effort to establish this entity may not be viable. Conversely, maintaining the same organizational approach within City Hall will have the least disruption for operations. The City's economic development department will continue as-is, hiring new staff to accomplish the goals and objectives spelled out in this SEDP as City resources allow.
- Requires trust from the City – Regardless of the strength and clarity of the memorandum of understanding, the City is giving some level of day-to-day control of economic development operations to an outside Board of Directors. While Sandy Springs was built upon the public-private partnership concept, the focus and effort of economic development staff will not be able to be diverted or refocused as quickly outside the City's administration. More specifically, the PPPs economic development staff will not be as accessible to the City Council or the City Manager, from a mission prioritization perspective. The new Board of Directors will collectively determine the specific path taken to meet the City's economic development vision, of which the City leadership will be one of many voices.
- Buy-in from partners and community – As noted, there is some concern around the number of entities (including the City) that are engaged in some form of business engagement and development within Sandy Springs. While creating a new public private partnership entity will better define those relationships, it also will mean some organizations currently engaged—or wanting to be engaged—will have their roles changed or diminished. While streamlining economic development implementation should be seen as a positive, RKG Associates recognizes the potential challenges those changes bring about.

RECOMMENDATION

Ultimately, the City's leadership will need to determine the organizational structure that is in the City's best interests for both the short- and long-term. From a technical advisor



perspective, RKG Associates recommends that the City create a path forward that follows the public-private partnership approach.

Based upon analysis and information gathered throughout the SEDP process, RKG believes that the benefits to the City will outweigh the short-term inconvenience of transitioning economic development operations outside the City administration structure. Most notably, this approach offers the potential to leverage public dollars to attract private investors and it augments the City's leadership with knowledgeable and capable private sector partners to make the most informed decisions regarding approach to reach the City's defined economic development goals.

However, RKG Associates also recommends that the City take a calculated approach to moving to this model, ensuring a seamless and organized transition. At a base level, further engagement with the City's business community is necessary to fully understand the potential time and resource commitment available to Sandy Springs. More strategically, organizing and implementing an entity like this should be done in coordination with the City's education and outreach effort to local businesses and residents. Transparency of intent and execution should be prioritized.

Regardless of the ultimate approach the City chooses to take, the following two priorities need to be addressed to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the City's economic development effort moving forward.

Objective 6.3: Staff the economic development organization commensurate with stated goals.

The City's stated economic development goals are comprehensive, asking the existing economic development staff to lead the City's business retention and expansion, small business and entrepreneurial development, business recruitment, and community engagement. Simply put, the current staff of two is not sufficient to be able to accomplish all of these efforts. If Sandy Springs is to be successful in each of its economic development efforts, additional financial and staff resources will be necessary. More specifically, RKG Associates recommends the City (or the economic development entity) create specific positions and hire professionals with the technical expertise for each given focus area. RKG Associates recommends creating the following positions (in sequential order) based on the priorities established by the Working Group and the City's existing economic development staff.

- Small Business/Entrepreneurial Development Professional – Small business and entrepreneurial development was the consensus priority for Sandy Springs. As



noted in the Implementation Matrix, there are several discrete actions the City should undertake to enhance small business and entrepreneurial development, including overseeing the entrepreneurial program and engaging the City's home-based businesses. RKG Associates envisions the small business professional also would contribute to the retention efforts, focusing on BRE visits to small independent business owners. There was consensus in the Working Group that "Small Business" should be defined as a business with 10 or fewer employees. Given more than 4,850 for the City's 5,600 businesses fall into this category, these activities will require a full-time staff member committed to outreach, engagement, and assistance.

- Business Retention and Expansion Specialist – Business retention and expansion has been recognized as a core function for the City's economic development efforts. Current staffing levels allow for a modest number of BRE visits and time committed to assisting these businesses. As noted above, the City has 5,600 existing businesses. A full-time staff person committing 100% of their efforts to BRE would be able to engage 30-35 businesses a week, not accounting for follow-up items raised in the BRE interview. This translates into less than 2,000 visits a year, or slightly more than one-third of existing businesses. While RKG envisions each staff member would have some commitment to BRE (i.e. the small business professional position described), having a professional committed to BRE full time should be a minimum commitment by Sandy Springs.
- Ombudsman – While small business development and business retention and expansion are the priorities the Working Group recommends immediate action, enhancing the City efforts (both real and perceived) to make permitting and review more 'user friendly' also should garner more dedicated staff time. RKG Associates' business engagement interview process revealed a dichotomy in perceptions of the City's friendliness to businesses.

On one hand, there is a consensus that the City wants to support new and existing businesses. The economic development staff was complimented consistently in working with businesses that have sought help. On the other hand, some businesses shared experiences where City policies and processes were cumbersome, excessively costly, or not well defined.

The ombudsman position is focused on providing property owners and investors technical and process-oriented assistance when going through the development review and entitlement processes. Whether it is a rezoning or variance request,



the ombudsman program is intended to assist applicants in effectively and efficiently navigating the relevant City rules and regulations. The position has two priorities. First, the ombudsman must be familiar with all procedures and expectations in Sandy Springs and be able to advise applicants on how to ensure a complete application package. Second, the ombudsman must be able to collaborate with industry professionals (i.e. engineers) to provide advisory services when it comes to technical needs. It is envisioned that this assistance will be advisory in nature, and not provide technical requirements directly to the applicant. The existing staff provides these services on an ad hoc basis when time is available. However, a more comprehensive business outreach and engagement strategy most likely will identify sufficient need to have a dedicated position to provide support and liaison services.

- Economic Development Operations Manager – As additional staff is added to the economic development effort, the executive director will have to use more time to oversee operations and manage staff efforts. Committing these resources internally adversely impacts the executive director's capacity to be the outward-facing individual of the City's economic development efforts. To this point, RKG Associates recommends the creation of an economic development manager position. This position would be responsible for oversight of internal operations (i.e. staff management, scheduling), overseeing the marketing and outreach efforts, and augmenting each of the specific economic development efforts. RKG envisions this position engaging directly with the executive director on strategic decision-making while supervising the day-to-day operations.

RKG Associates recognizes that hiring these new positions simultaneously will carry a financial commitment currently unavailable. More likely, these positions will be created over time as resources are made available (this timeline may be accelerated through the PPP process). As noted, RKG recommends the City create these positions sequentially in order of description to be consistent with the Working Group's identified priorities.

It is important to reiterate that the City's two full-time economic development professionals and less than \$400,000 annual investment does not match the stated economic development outcomes. Both RKG Associates and the Working Group recommend that the City's economic development outcome expectations be scaled to the staff and financial capacity. To this point, metrics assigned to positions that have not been created should be set very low, given the limited capacity of the City's economic development team.



Objective 6.4: Create greater coordination and collaboration with economic development entities and partners.

The metropolitan Atlanta region is extremely active in business recruitment, expansion, and retention. There are dozens of municipalities and organizations within the region actively engaged in these areas. The City's Economic Development Department oversees this activity within Sandy Springs. However, this department is not the only entity active within the city limits. Other local organizations (i.e. the Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber) and regional entities (i.e. the Metro Atlanta Chamber) engage with the City's staff as well as with local businesses.

This regional engagement is beneficial to the City, as it offers the potential to leverage these external resources to promote and support Sandy Springs' economic development efforts. The City's existing economic development staff have been effective at maintaining and increasing their strategic relationships with local and regional economic development partners. RKG Associates spoke with several of these partners, with all of them noting that their current relationship with the City's Economic Development Department is the most engaged it has been. This is a testament to the existing—and ongoing—effort of the City's staff to increase services to Sandy Springs businesses without increasing local spending.

However, there also is an opportunity to improve these relationships. At a base level, there is not a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities amongst these partners. The existing relationships generally are loosely defined and not well understood outside the immediate partners. More strategically, RKG has identified certain instances where the lack of clarity has caused misunderstandings and some levels of overlap in perceived responsibility.

To these points, the City's economic development efforts (whether continued City department or in a public private partnership) should take leadership in defining the roles and responsibilities for partners engaging in economic development within the City limits. While the ultimate relationship structure will be defined by the City and the respective partners, RKG Associates and the Working Group recommend the following arrangements for consideration.

- City of Sandy Springs – Primary funding source for economic development efforts (only source if a City department), engaging with economic development staff to consider new/refining policies and processes. The City should define the goals



and desired outcomes to be measured by the economic development staff and reported on a semiannual basis.

- Sandy Springs Development Authority – Remain an economic development incentive tool to provide tax relief for projects that meet the City Council’s defined criteria. The board structure should remain in place, with the chair (or other designated representative) serving in a ex officio appointed position for the City to the PPP entity.
- Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber (SSPC) – Continue serving the Sandy Springs business community through networking and social events as well as being the advocacy arm for any recommended policy/regulatory changes. The Chamber and the economic development staff can work collaboratively on engaging existing businesses, potentially co-sponsoring the annual business survey.
- Perimeter Community Improvement District (PCID) – The PCID is a self-taxing district that uses the collected revenues to fund infrastructure projects. The PCID and the City’s economic development staff should continue to coordinate on projects that will benefit the City—and can benefit from the City’s involvement. RKG recommends the CID have an ex officio voting seat on the PPP entity, if created.
- Visit Sandy Springs – Continue collaboration on economic development efforts that impact and address the City’s tourism businesses, particularly hospitality, dining, and entertainment. The economic development staff should continue mutual information sharing and outreach efforts related to these business sectors.
- Kennesaw State University (KSU) – Continue to develop the research/degree partnership with KSU to provide continuing education opportunities to business leaders in Sandy Springs while attracting additional research and development efforts within Sandy Springs.
- Neighboring Cities (Alpharetta, Brookhaven, Dunwoody, Milton, Roswell) – The economic development staff from Sandy Springs has been engaged with their counterparts from neighboring communities for years. The COVID-19 pandemic strengthened this collaboration through mutual strategy development and information sharing. This relationship should be formalized and continue on a regular interval. RKG recommends bi-monthly coordination meetings.



- Regional Partners (Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Select Fulton, Metro Atlanta Chamber, Georgia Power Community & Economic Development, Georgia Department of Economic Development) – There are several organizations focused on business recruitment and engagement for the greater Atlanta region. These organizations typically focus on larger-scale projects (i.e. the recent Deluxe Corporation process). The City should support these organizations as necessary to continue to represent Sandy Springs in these recruitment endeavors and proactive marketing. This will allow the City’s recruitment efforts to focus on entrepreneurial and small business recruitment, as defined earlier.

RKG Associates recommends the City (or its PPP entity) create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the local partners detailing their respective support roles in local economic development efforts. If a PPP entity is created, the monthly board meetings will serve as the ideal venue for engagement and coordination with these entities. If economic development remains a City department, quarterly coordination meetings should be scheduled with all implementation partners to discuss any ongoing or upcoming coordination efforts.

E. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following Implementation Matrix presents the full range of objectives and corresponding action items for the City’s consideration. As noted, this matrix should serve as a reference document as the economic development staff craft their annual business plan. The timelines, estimated costs, and implementation partners for each action item identified in the matrix reflects RKG Associates professional recommendation guided by input from City staff and the Working Group. The City’s economic development annual business plan should be structured to advance the vision and goals established through this effort but prioritized and scaled based on the available staffing and capital resources available at that time. The final timing, focus, and potential costs for each action item should be refined by staff and/or the responsible implementation partner when implementation occurs.



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION															
Objective 1.1	Create a more comprehensive business contact list to ensure retention and expansion efforts reach all Sandy Springs businesses														
	Action 1.1.1 Reconfigure the business licensing process to require business and contact information as part of the filing Use this information to build a more comprehensive contact list	COSS, EDO												ST	One Time
	Action 1.1.2 Provide opportunity for businesses to register to the business list through the City's economic development website	COSS, EDO												Included 5.6.1	Annual
	Action 1.1.3 Coordinate with the Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber of Commerce and the North Fulton County Chamber of Commerce on their respective contact lists (as it relates to Sandy Springs businesses)	EDO, SSPC, GNFCC												ST	Annual
	Action 1.1.4 Use sign-in sheets at City-sponsored business events to collect and verify existing data for the business list	EDO, COSS, SSPC												ST	Annual
	Action 1.1.5 Implement volunteer walks, having 10-15 volunteers canvas the City's various employment centers to gather contact information	EDO	N											A	Bi-Annual
	Action 1.1.6 Ask industry roundtable members to advertise volunteer walks and engage their relationships to build the database	EDO	I											ST	Bi-Annual
Objective 1.2	Implement citywide business climate survey each year														
	Action 1.2.1 Establish a fixed date (i.e. week) that the survey will be released. This should be consistent year over year. Recommend the Fall	EDO												A	Annual
	Action 1.2.2 Work with the Chamber and industry roundtables to refine questions and expand awareness of the survey each year	EDO, SSPC, GNFCC	I											ST	Annual
	Action 1.2.3 Invest in multimedia marketing and outreach at least 2 months prior to the release of the survey each year (i.e. print, social media, direct outreach)	EDO												Included 2.2.2	Annual
	Action 1.2.4 Share general results of the survey with roundtables, partner organizations, and the community through the monthly newsletter	EDO												ST	Annual
	Action 1.2.5 Use results of survey to prioritize retention/expansion visits for the year	EDO, COSS	I											ST	Annual
	Action 1.2.6 Work with respective roundtables about industry-specific findings from survey to determine annual action items	EDO	I											ST	Annual
	Action 1.2.7 Retain all survey results to create a longitudinal assessment tool (i.e. Excel database) that can help economic development efforts become more predictive to changing market climates	EDO												ST	Annual
Objective 1.3	Build industry roundtables in a number of different market areas														
	Action 1.3.1 Create an industry roundtable for every key market sector including [1] Healthcare & Health Research [2] IT/FinTech; [3] Professional Services; [4] Cottage Producers; [5] Dining & Hospitality; and [6] Retail	EDO	I											ST	One Time
	Action 1.3.2 Make sure all partner organizations have representation on roundtables that crossover missions (i.e. MAC, Georgia Innovation Crescent...)	EDO, SSPC, GNFCC, PCID, GP, MAC, SF												ST	One Time
	Action 1.3.3 Meet each roundtable quarterly or semiannually as necessary, with one meeting targeted immediately after the release of the business survey results	EDO	I											A	Semiannual
	Action 1.3.4 Use roundtable meeting to discuss: [1] market climate; [2] regulatory issues; [3] growth opportunities; [4] implementation coordination	EDO	I											ST	Annual
	Action 1.3.5 Use feedback from roundtables to help set annual action plan	EDO, COSS												ST	Annual



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION															
Objective 1.4	Create a small business development program under the City's economic development efforts														
Action 1.4.1	Hire a full-time staff member dedicated to small business development and entrepreneurial activity	EDO, COSS												Included 6.3.1	Annual (Salary)
Action 1.4.2	Expand information seminars in partnership with local (i.e. Roswell) and regional (i.e. North Fulton Chamber) partners on how to start, operate, and grow a business (i.e. how to secure financing)	EDO, NFC, GNFC	C, I											B	Annual
Action 1.4.3	Partner with the existing SCORE program to expand mentoring of existing businesses in Sandy Springs	EDO, SSPC	I											A	Annual
Action 1.4.4	Fund the training of 2-3 new mentors each year, selecting within business sectors that are underrepresented, particularly women and people of color	EDO	I											B	Annual
Action 1.4.5	Proactively market small business initiatives to existing businesses, focusing on home-based businesses in Sandy Springs using updated business tracking data	EDO												Included 2.2.2	Annual
Action 1.4.6	Work with local banks to create a PPP revolving loan fund that offers low/no-interest loans and/or gap financing to start-ups and small businesses seeking to grow. Target an 80% private/20% public resource pool	EDO, COSS	F, I											F	One-Time
Objective 1.5	Activate the City's existing business leaders in economic development efforts														
Action 1.5.1	Develop at least eight (8) business ambassadors, individuals who can work with economic development staff to promote the City and engage existing/prospective business owners in targeted industries. Train more as necessary	EDO	I											A	Bi-Annual
Action 1.5.2	Build a network of mentors in each of the City's target industries, focusing on developing women, minority and young business owners to reach the City's diverse business base	EDO	I											Included 1.4.4	Annual
Action 1.5.3	Develop at least four (4) engaged Sandy Springs residents as advocates that can assist in community outreach and resident interaction	EDO	N											A	Bi-Annual
Action 1.5.4	Create a Sandy Springs Business-2-Business database that businesses can access to find specific services/networking opportunities	EDO	I											A	Continuous
Objective 1.6	Enhance outreach efforts to existing businesses														
Action 1.6.1	Use the comprehensive business list to identify new companies to visit and track past visit efforts. Do not concentrate on the same businesses year over year	EDO	I											ST	Continuous
Action 1.6.2	Establish quotas for number of monthly visits, starting with ten (10) per month, expanding as more staff is hired (i.e. the small business development manager)	EDO												ST	Bi-Annual
Action 1.6.3	Use business survey results to prioritize outreach efforts to companies that indicate growth needs or challenges to maintain operations	EDO, COSS												ST	Annual
Action 1.6.4	Coordinate with economic development partners for business visits (i.e. MAC for corporate headquarters and Visit Sandy Springs for hotels)	EDO, MAC, GNFC, SSPC, VSS												ST	Continuous
Action 1.6.5	Hire a business ombudsman that can assist businesses through the City's entitlement processes and can oversee community engagement efforts for economic development	EDO, COSS												Included 6.3.3	Annual
Action 1.6.6	Maintain database of visited businesses to track frequency and results of the visit through a Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) software	EDO												B	Annual
Action 1.6.7	Activate business ambassadors to assist in outreach, providing them training on questions to ask and how to track the conversation	EDO	I											Included 1.5.1	Annual
Action 1.6.8	Create a direct "help line" initiative on the City's economic development website that allows businesses to connect to an economic development staff member for assistance	EDO												Included 5.6.1	One-Time



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix				Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
				Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
BUSINESS RECRUITMENT																	
Objective 2.1	Continue to strengthen the City's strategic networking and data collecting practices to promote business recruitment			EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, GDEcD, SF EDO, COSS/GIS EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, GDEcD, SF EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, GDEcD, SF	R, O												
	Action 2.1.1	Engage with regional partners quarterly or semi-annually on recruitment trends, opportunities, and City priorities (including MAC, Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce, Georgia Power, and GDEcD)														A	Annual
	Action 2.1.2	Maintain local property and land database, coordinating with partners on maintaining an accurate and up-to-date list (especially Georgia Power's Site Selection Tool)														Included 3.2.1	Annual
	Action 2.1.3	Work with regional partners to build relationships with site selectors in target industry sectors, adding them the City's economic development newsletter distribution list														ST	Annual
	Action 2.1.4	Collaborate on leads collected through business outreach and marketing efforts by the City														ST	Annual
Objective 2.2	Scale proactive marketing and recruitment efforts to best leverage the City's resources and market reach																
	Action 2.2.1	Work with industry roundtable members to identify potential business recruitment targets that have a business connection to Sandy Springs (i.e. suppliers)		EDO	I											ST	Annual
	Action 2.2.2	Continue advertising through relevant digital and print mediums annually to tout Sandy Springs' opportunities		EDO, COSS												C/D	Annual
	Action 2.2.3	Create a searchable online database of available commercial space and land for prospectus businesses to review to augment the Georgia Power Site Selection Tool (see ASSET DEVELOPMENT section)		EDO	C											Included 3.2.1	Annual
	Action 2.2.4	Create a 'tip line' for citizens to call/Email/text ideas on business recruitment and any leads they may have on businesses that may wish to relocate or expand to Sandy Springs		EDO												Included 5.6.1	One Time
	Action 2.2.5	Develop/refine the City's business recruitment collateral (see OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING section)		EDO, COSS	C												Included 5.1.1
ASSET DEVELOPMENT																	
Objective 3.1	Formulate (or enact) economic development concepts for each of the City's employment centers			EDO COSS EDO EDO, COSS	R, O, I C												
	Action 3.1.1	Use the Opportunity Sites chapter of the SEDP as an initiation point for engagement and action; with the concurrent effort for North Roswell Road to define the strategy for that area														ST	Annual
	Action 3.1.2	Enact regulatory changes to allow defined visions to occur (see TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT section)														ST	One Time
	Action 3.1.3	Create a marketing brochure for each employment center/commercial corridor that encapsulates the vision														Included 5.1.7	Bi-Annual
	Action 3.1.4	Encourage elected leadership to engage in the study and champion the results														ST	Annual
Objective 3.2	Work with property owners to ensure economic development plans are consistent with short-term and long-term investment strategies			EDO, COSS EDO EDO	O C												
	Action 3.2.1	Create a comprehensive ownership database of all commercial properties in each of the opportunity sites to begin a dialogue about their property interests and investment priorities														C	One Time
	Action 3.2.2	Continue dialogue with owners, particularly catalytic parcels, on a regular basis to track changing strategies and create new opportunities														ST	Annual
	Action 3.2.3	Create a catalyst sites prospectus, defining property ownership, implementation concepts, and available incentives to help bring the vision to fruition														Included 5.1.6	Bi-Annual



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix	Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
	Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
ASSET DEVELOPMENT														
Objective 3.3 Create a locally-controlled comprehensive property and asset database														
Action 3.3.1 Inventory all existing vacant commercial and industrial land and buildings in collaboration with local real estate listing entities	EDO	C, O, R											ST	Annual
Action 3.3.2 Connect with all property owners to detail price, availability, and vision for those asset; include in online listings	EDO	O											ST	Annual
Action 3.3.3 Create a web-accessible database of those assets to connect to the economic development website	EDO	C											Included 3.2.1	One Time
Action 3.3.4 Create an 'open source' database for property owners and brokers to submit new listings and changes to existing listings	EDO	C											Included 3.2.1	
Action 3.3.5 Work with regional and state implementation partners to make sure their asset lists are current and complete	EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, GDEd, SF												ST	Annual
Action 3.3.6 Maintain regular communication with property owners to ensure occupied/developed land is removed	EDO	O											ST	Annual
TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT														
Objective 4.1 Match land use regulation to economic development vision														
Action 4.1.1 Repeal building code that requires concrete construction of any building over 3 stories, to add opportunities for housing options throughout City.	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.1.2 Rezone opportunity sites to meet City-finalized vision for those areas including housing-focused mixed-use development for infill/redevelopment. Consider overlay zones if easier than rezoning process	COSS												ST	Annual
Action 4.1.3 Refine the City's Priority Redevelopment Areas to align with the proposed opportunity sites (or those sites endorsed by the City leadership)	COSS; EDO												ST	One Time
Objective 4.2 Build more consistent and predictable review and approval processes														
Action 4.2.1 Make access to expedited review processes for any project in an identified opportunity area	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.2.2 Integrate greater administrative approvals (department heads) for projects/applications that fall below a certain size (i.e. any sign application less than 2'x2' can be approved administratively)	COSS; EDO												ST	Continuous
Action 4.2.3 Incorporate concurrent review for all real estate development applications that require multiple department reviews	COSS												ST	Continuous
Objective 4.3 Modify the City's incentive packages to encourage entrepreneurial development and start-up companies														
Action 4.3.1 Redefine Tier 1 for Small Businesses as 2 jobs and \$100,000 capital investment with a 2-year commitment	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.3.2 Redefine Tier 2 for Small Businesses as 5 jobs and/or \$250,000 capital investment with a 4-year commitment	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.3.3 Redefine Tier 3 for Small Businesses as 10 jobs and/or \$500,000 capital investment with a 6-year commitment	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.3.4 Make the small business incentives available anywhere in the City, providing the applying company currently has fewer than 10 FTE employees and annual revenues of less than \$2M	COSS												ST	One Time



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix	Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
	Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
TOOLBOX DEVELOPMENT														
Objective 4.3 Modify the City's incentive packages to encourage entrepreneurial development and start-up companies														
Action 4.3.5 Make the business occupant tax waiver for larger businesses last the duration of the commitment (4 years, 7 years, and 10 years respectively)	COSS												ST	One Time
Action 4.3.6 Continue to require claw back provisions in all incentive packages to ensure compliance with stated agreements	COSS												ST	Continuous
Action 4.3.7 Consider a local match to the Opportunity Zone benefits for businesses in the City's target industries that locate in an Opportunity Area (recommend a 20% match)	COSS												E	Annual
Action 4.3.8 Tie any incentives to businesses with less than five (5) employees to participating in the City's small business development program/mentorship program	COSS; EDO												ST	Continuous
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING														
Objective 5.1 Create marketing collateral to 'sell' the defined economic development vision														
Action 5.1.1 Create all materials listed below in print and digital format, updating regularly (minimum once a year)	EDO	C											C	Annual
Action 5.1.2 Create target industry-specific fact and information sheets	EDO	C											Included	Annual
Action 5.1.3 Refine the existing marketing document to reflect recommended changes where applicable (i.e. incentives)	EDO	C											Included	Annual
Action 5.1.4 Create quality of life information sheets on livability and amenities in Sandy Springs	EDO	C											Included	Annual
Action 5.1.5 Create materials to market the new ombudsman program	EDO	C											Included	Annual
Action 5.1.6 Create a property prospectus book detailed in 3.2.3 (digital only)	EDO	C											Included	Annual
Action 5.1.7 Create employment marketing brochured detail in 3.1.3	EDO	C											Included	Bi-Annual
Objective 5.2 Create a more robust performance dashboard to better engage the Sandy Springs community														
Action 5.2.1 Establish a formal economic development dashboard to track performance across each of these topic areas: [1] retention, [2] recruitment, [3] entrepreneurial development, [4] workforce development, [5] fiscal sustainability	EDO, COSS												ST	One Time
Action 5.2.2 Retention metrics should include: [1] site visits performed, [2] ombudsman assists, [3] jobs retained/expanded, [4] capital investment, [5] network event attendance, [6] prospect contacts	EDO												ST	Semiannual
Action 5.2.3 Recruitment metrics should include: [1] number of prospects, [2] successful projects, [3] total jobs created, [4] average annual wage, [5] total capital investment, [6] debrief highlights from lost opportunities	EDO												ST	Semiannual
Action 5.2.4 Entrepreneurial metrics should include: [1] enrollment inquiries, [2] business enrollment, [3] graduations, [4] jobs created, [5] debrief on businesses leaving the mentorship program	EDO												ST	Semiannual
Action 5.2.5 Workforce metrics should include: [1] programs offered, [2] program applications and enrollment, [3] internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements, [4] businesses assisted, [5] business inquiries	EDO												ST	Semiannual
Action 5.2.6 Fiscal sustainability metrics should include: [1] number of incentives, [2] dollar value of incentives, [3] jobs created/preserved from incentives, [4] capital investment created, [5] new tax revenues, [6] other benefits (i.e. infrastructure investments)	EDO												ST	Semiannual
Action 5.2.7 Provide regular updates to the City Council (recommended semi-annually)	EDO												ST	Semiannual



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.3 Implement a proactive community engagement and education initiative															
Action 5.3.1	Hold an annual town hall meeting open to the public (and televised) to discuss accomplishments and ongoing efforts for the previous/upcoming year	EDO, COSS	N											A	Annual
Action 5.3.2	Implement a biannual resident survey to gauge the goals and concerns of Sandy Springs residents about the City's economic development efforts. Use the results to inform any changes to approach	EDO, COSS	N											ST	Bi-Annual
Action 5.3.3	Hold a community outreach meeting in each employment center annually to engage business leaders and residents on economic development issues, opportunities, and challenges those areas are facing	EDO, COSS												A	Annual
Action 5.3.4	Host four (4) to six (6) expert panelist discussions on topics of economic development each year. These discussions should address specific market/location opportunities and challenges facing Sandy Springs businesses	EDO	I, C											B	Quarterly
Action 5.3.5	Provide an online tool for citizens and groups to submit questions, provide feedback on content, or request meetings on the economic development website	EDO												ST	One Time
Objective 5.4 Continue the regular (monthly) newsletter focusing on recent, current, and future economic development activities															
Action 5.4.1	Highlight recent economic development activity and successes, maintaining a 'running tally' dashboard of accomplishments for the year	EDO												ST	Monthly
Action 5.4.2	Publish regular opinion editorials from Board members, partner organizations, or invited guests focused on topics that influence (or are influenced by) economic development in Sandy Springs	EDO												ST	Monthly
Action 5.4.3	Include separate topic-themed City Manager/Economic Development Manager messages in each newsletter	EDO												ST	Monthly
Action 5.4.4	Implement, monitor, and report the results of opinion polls and business surveys through the newsletter	EDO												ST	Monthly
Action 5.4.5	Highlight a different City businesses (preferably from the target industries) in each newsletter	EDO	I											ST	Monthly
Action 5.4.6	Target writing two (2) or three (3) industry/market white papers each year focused on educating local businesses and residents about current or impending market shifts and how they will impact Sandy Springs/North Fulton County	EDO												ST	Monthly
Objective 5.5 Improve awareness and relationships with the business and economic development community															
Action 5.5.1	Cohost at least three (3) networking/marketing events annually with the SSPC and other municipal/regional partners (i.e. Roswell and Alpharetta)	EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, PCID, SF												B	Quarterly
Action 5.5.2	Host monthly/quarterly networking events for local investors, developers, and business leaders, focusing on specific industry sectors for each event	EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, PCID, SF	I, O, R											B	Monthly
Action 5.5.3	Hold three (3) to four (4) lecture/guest speaker events; bringing in regional/national industry leaders to discuss sector/market trends. This can be co-hosted with regional partners	EDO, SSPC, GNFC, MAC, PCID, SF												C	Quarterly
Action 5.5.4	Host a "State of the City" event for business leaders to discuss activities over the past year, successes, opportunities, and share the business plan for the next year	EDO	I											B	Annual
Action 5.5.5	Create a "Lessons Learned" report every six months that details the successes and opportunities to share with the site selector and investor contacts	EDO												ST	Semiannual



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
OUTREACH, COMMUNICATION, AND MARKETING															
Objective 5.6 Improve Sandy Springs' electronic and social media presence and activity															
Action 5.6.1	Create a separate website for the City's economic development that is linked to the City's official page	COSS; EDO	C											C	One Time
Action 5.6.2	Update the website with a more dynamic design and organization based on the proposed new/revised content in this implementation matrix (i.e. Citizen Engagement section, local source site database)	EDO	C											Included	One Time
Action 5.6.3	Ensure weekly use of the City's social media platforms (i.e. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook...)	EDO	C											Included	One Time
Action 5.6.4	Host the City's annual business and citizen surveys on the website in its own section, with results of previous efforts posted for public review	EDO	C											Included	One Time
Action 5.6.5	Add a target industry section to the website where information and the marketing collateral can be kept	EDO	C											Included	One Time
Action 5.6.6	Use the website to collect information, allow individuals to sign up for the newsletter, and better engage economic development staff	EDO	C											Included	One Time
Action 5.6.7	Create a citizens section on the website with access to educational information, the annual survey and results information, contact information for the assigned staff liaison, and the newsletter registration	EDO												Included	One Time
ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION															
Objective 6.1 Consider establishing a public-private partnership (PPP) implementation entity to increase private sector engagement and enhance the City's effectiveness and efficiency at business retention, expansion, and recruitment.															
Action 6.1.1	Create a non-profit (recommend a 501(c)(3) structure) board structure that provides representation to public and private entities	COSS	I, O											C	One Time
Action 6.1.2	Ensure the board structure maintains a private-sector majority voting ratio	COSS												Included	One Time
Action 6.1.3	Provide two (2) appointed seats for the City (recommend Assistant City Manager and at-large business interest), and one (1) appointed seat for SSPC, Visit Sandy Springs, and the Perimeter Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)	COSS, SSPC, PCID, VSS												Included	One Time
Action 6.1.4	Create at least six (6) at-large private sector board seats	COSS	I, O											Included	One Time
Action 6.1.5	Ensure all board members must be financial or in-kind contributors (set a minimum investment requirement of \$10,000 annually)	EDO												Included	One Time
Action 6.1.6	Appointment seats can only be filled if the appointing entity meets the contribution threshold	EDO												Included	One Time
Action 6.1.7	Codify that elected officials cannot serve as an executive officer for the new implementation entity	EDO												Included	One Time
Action 6.1.8	Create a long-term (recommend 3-5 years) memorandum of understanding that details the City's implementation expectations and requirements to maintain funding	EDO, COSS												A	Tri-Annual
Action 6.1.9	Transfer the City's annual appropriation for economic development efforts to the new entity	COSS												Included 6.2.1	Annual
Action 6.1.10	Retain the City's economic development staff as City employees, but answerable to the new implementation entities Board of Directors	COSS; EDO												Included 6.3	One Time
Objective 6.2 Fund the new implementation entity commensurate with outcome expectations															
Action 6.2.1	Increase economic development funding proportional to the City's implementation expectations, recommend minimum \$600,000 annually by year 3	COSS; EDO												E	Annual
Action 6.2.2	Work with the new implementation entity to target a 25% match from the private sector (only if EDO is created)	EDO, COSS	I, O, R											ST	Annual
Action 6.2.3	Transfer any net revenues from the Development Authority's financing efforts to fund the Small Business Investment Fund (see 1.4.6)	COSS												ST	Annual



City of Sandy Springs, Georgia Strategic Economic Development Plan Update Implementation Matrix		Implementation Lead		Implementation Timing (Year)										Estimated	Cost
		Public/NP	Private	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Cost	Type
ORGANIZATION AND COORDINATION															
Objective 6.3 Staff the economic development organization commensurate with the stated goals															
Action 6.3.1	Hire a small business/entrepreneurial development director (see 1.4.1)	EDO, COSS												D	Annual (Salary)
Action 6.3.2	Increase the business retention and expansion efforts by one (1) full-time professional	EDO, COSS												D	Annual (Salary)
Action 6.3.3	Hire an ombudsman position (see 1.6.5)	EDO, COSS												D	Annual (Salary)
Action 6.3.4	Hire a full-time economic development manager to support the executive director by overseeing internal day-to-day operations.	EDO, COSS												D	Annual (Salary)
Objective 6.4 Create greater coordination and collaboration with economic development entities and partners															
Action 6.4.1	Create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the SSPC detailing its support role in business engagement and networking events/activities, revisit every two years and adjust as necessary based on its capacity	COSS, EDO, SSPC												ST	Bi-Annual
Action 6.4.2	Develop similar operational agreements with other City partners (i.e. public schools, Visit Sandy Springs, Metro Atlanta Chamber...)	EDO, COSS, MAC, VSS, GNFC												ST	Bi-Annual
Action 6.4.3	Provide a regular progress report (either in person or in writing) to the City Council on status of projects and progress in metrics (see 5.2)	EDO												ST	Semiannually
Action 6.4.4	Continue to develop the partnership with Kennesaw State University to attract research and development efforts within Sandy Springs	COSS, TC, UN												Unknown	Continuous
Action 6.4.5	Establish a quarterly coordination meeting with all implementation partners to discuss any ongoing or upcoming coordination efforts	EDO, COSS, MAC, VSS, GNFC												A	Quarterly
Action 6.4.6	Establish a formal quarterly or semiannual coordination meeting with the other North Fulton County municipalities	EDO, COSS, NFC												ST	Quarterly
Action 6.4.7	Maintain the focused role of the Development Authority as their state-defined role of providing specific financing tools for economic development efforts	SSDA, COSS, EDO												ST	Annual
Objective 6.5 Enhance strategic relationships with local and statewide implementation partners															
Action 6.5.1	Establish a quarterly strategic meeting schedule with regional and statewide partners including: Georgia Department of Economic Development, Metro Atlanta Chamber, and Georgia Power Community and Economic Development	EDO, GDEcD, GP, MAC, SF												A	Quarterly
Action 6.5.2	Create a quarterly coordination meeting schedule with representatives from Select Fulton, reviewing initiatives in Sandy Springs	EDO, SF												A	Quarterly
Action 6.5.3	Have a staff member serve as direct liaison to each industry segment team for the Metro Atlanta Chamber, making sure to have representation at regular meetings	EDO, MAC												ST	Monthly
Action 6.5.4	Provide quarterly/semiannual reports to regional and statewide partners on activity and successes	EDO												ST	Quarterly



LEGEND

Implementation Leaders

Public

COSS	City of Sandy Springs
SF	Select Fulton
GDEd	Georgia Department of Economic Development
NFC	All other North Fulton Cities

Partners

SSPC	Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber of Commerce
GNFCC	Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce
PCID	Perimeter Community Improvement Districts
SSDA	Sandy Springs Development Authority
EDO	Economic Development Organization (New)
GP	Georgia Power
GIC	Georgia Innovation Crescent
MAC	Metro Atlanta Chamber
TC	2-Year Colleges
UN	4-Year Colleges
VSS	Visit Sandy Springs

Private

C	Consultant
F	Financial Institutions
I	Industry Leaders
N	Neighborhood Residents
O	Property Owners
R	Realtors/Brokers

Cost Estimate Legend:

ST	Staff Time
A	Under \$1,000
B	\$1,000 to \$10,000
C	\$10,000 to \$50,000
D	\$50,000 to \$100,000
E	\$100,000 to \$250,000
F	\$250,000 to \$500,000
G	Over \$500,000

 Action



A APPENDIX

The Working Group was comprised of local business owners, representatives from partner organizations, and other stakeholders:

- Ann Hanlon, *Perimeter Community Improvement Districts*
- Brandt Gully, *Springs Cinema & Taphouse*
- Brooke Perez, *Georgia Power*
- Clayton Gunter, *The Simpson Organization*
- Dan DiLuzio, *Henssler Financial*
- Dan Gianinni, *Sandy Springs Innovation Center Board Member (absorbed by Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber)*
- Dennis Marrow, *Kennesaw State University*
- Gregg Simon, *Metro Atlanta Chamber*
- Mark Goodman, *Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce*
- Mark Rosenthal, *Northside Hospital*
- Michael Robertson, *Sandy Springs Innovation Center (absorbed by SSPC)*
- Nima Ghomghani, *CBRE*
- Paula Owens, *Wells Fargo*
- Rebecca Jordan, *Metro Atlanta Chamber*
- Samir Abdullahi, *Select Fulton*
- Tom Mahaffey, *Sandy Springs Perimeter Chamber*