

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

for Downtown Powder Springs, Georgia



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City of Powder Springs, Georgia

ON THE COVER: Marietta Street, Downtown
Powder Springs, Georgia. (ULI)



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The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 45,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 81 countries. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

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

About ULI Atlanta

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

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ULI Advisory Services: National and Global Programs

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

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

Learn more at americas.uli.org/programs/advisory-services.

Technical Assistance Program (TAP)

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

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

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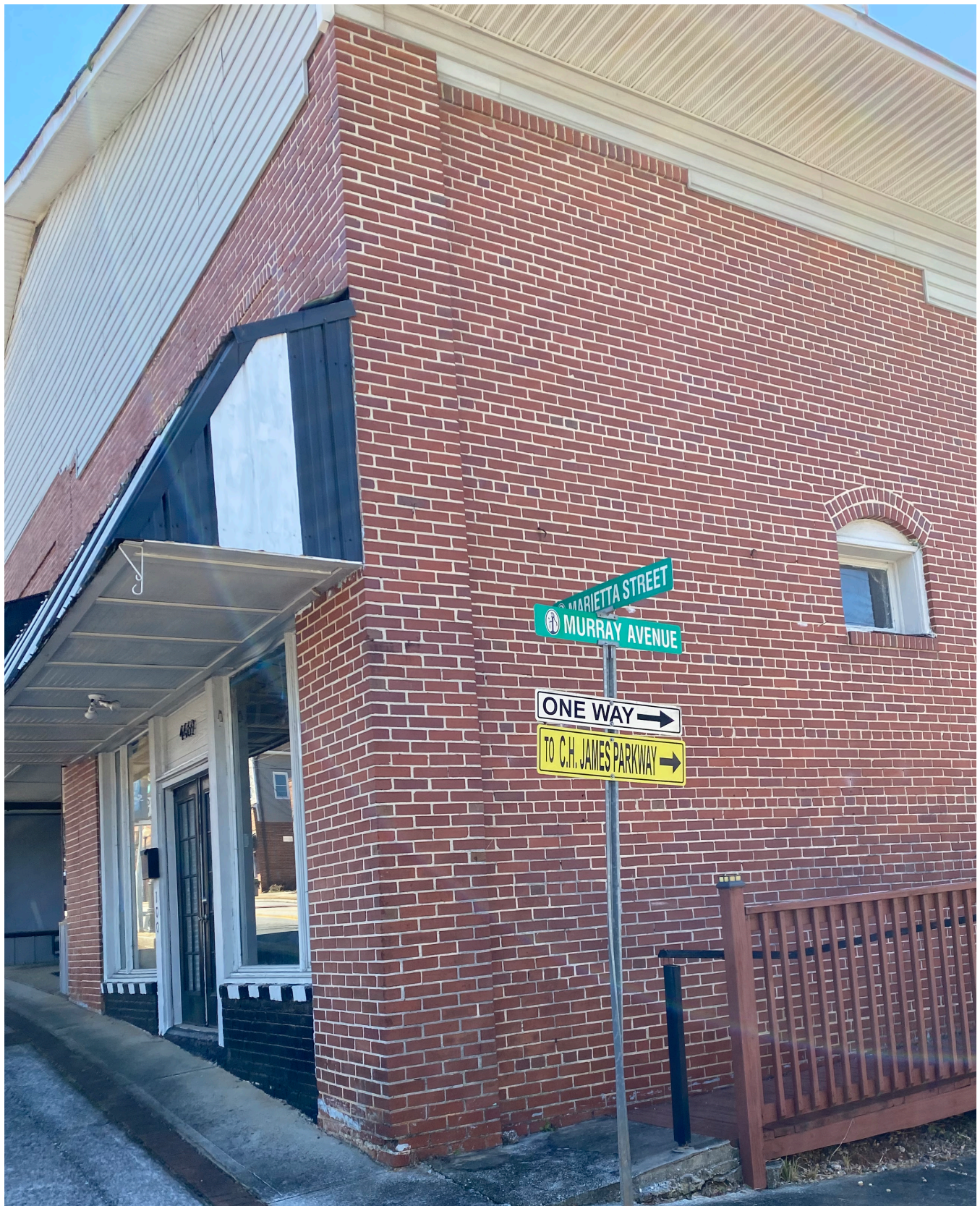


TAP PANEL

4477 Marietta sits at a key downtown intersection.

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TAP PANEL

4469 Marietta, situated near the western edge of downtown Powder Springs, is a prime location for a new commercial tenant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

America's historic downtowns are experiencing a renaissance. Compared to cities with high-speed, high-traffic corridors with national retail and restaurant chains, the smaller, human-scale historic corridors – Main Street USA – are of increasing appeal to those seeking a more unique, intimate, and walkable experience. Marked by historic buildings, locally-owned businesses, and goods often sourced nearby, the slower pace and boutique nature of downtowns like downtown Powder Springs are drawing residents and visitors back. Powder Springs city leadership and the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) recognized this movement and have been diligently working to strengthen downtown Powder Springs.

Following a successful land assembly and RFP process, the city is looking forward to the addition of the first new multifamily residential offerings in downtown in over 20 years. The recent addition of Thurman Springs Park to the downtown – a venue for entertainment, festivals, play, and performances – also brings a new level of energy and activation to downtown. Today, city leadership is considering how to reposition certain properties along Marietta Street (the downtown corridor) that have languished under previous ownership. They are also considering other acquisitions that might help further support the growth of and economic development downtown.

Turning to the Urban Land Institute Atlanta District Council (ULI Atlanta), Powder Springs leadership requested a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to study land uses appropriate for downtown, the repositioning of properties the city has under contract, and the potential for further acquisition and land assembly.

The TAP process, designed to provide professional guidance and market insights at a point in time, takes into consideration the stated goals of city professional staff and elected leadership, community stakeholder perspectives, and the professional expertise brought to the table by each TAP panelist involved in the study – ultimately arriving at a set of recommendations the city and DDA can begin to put into action today to help achieve their stated goals.

Three key themes emerged from the panel's evaluation, which should help guide the city's process going forward: vision, organization, and development.

- **Vision** relates to the need for downtown Powder Springs to have an identity and brand separate from the city's brand and to ensure that these measures align with the city's design guidelines and master plan, updating either or both as needed.
- **Organizational** matters include efforts to establish partnerships with private and nonprofit entities who can help shoulder the responsibilities and advocate for opportunities to further activate downtown.
- **Development** recommendations pinpoint efforts that will address the current state and redevelopment of the buildings the city currently has under contract, contemplates potential additional acquisitions, and outlines how a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Request for Proposals (RFP) could combine to attract the right development partner for these downtown projects.

The city's smart and proactive acquisitions of buildings, some of which have been largely ignored by previous owners, is a step in the right direction for a more active, vibrant, and economically healthy downtown.



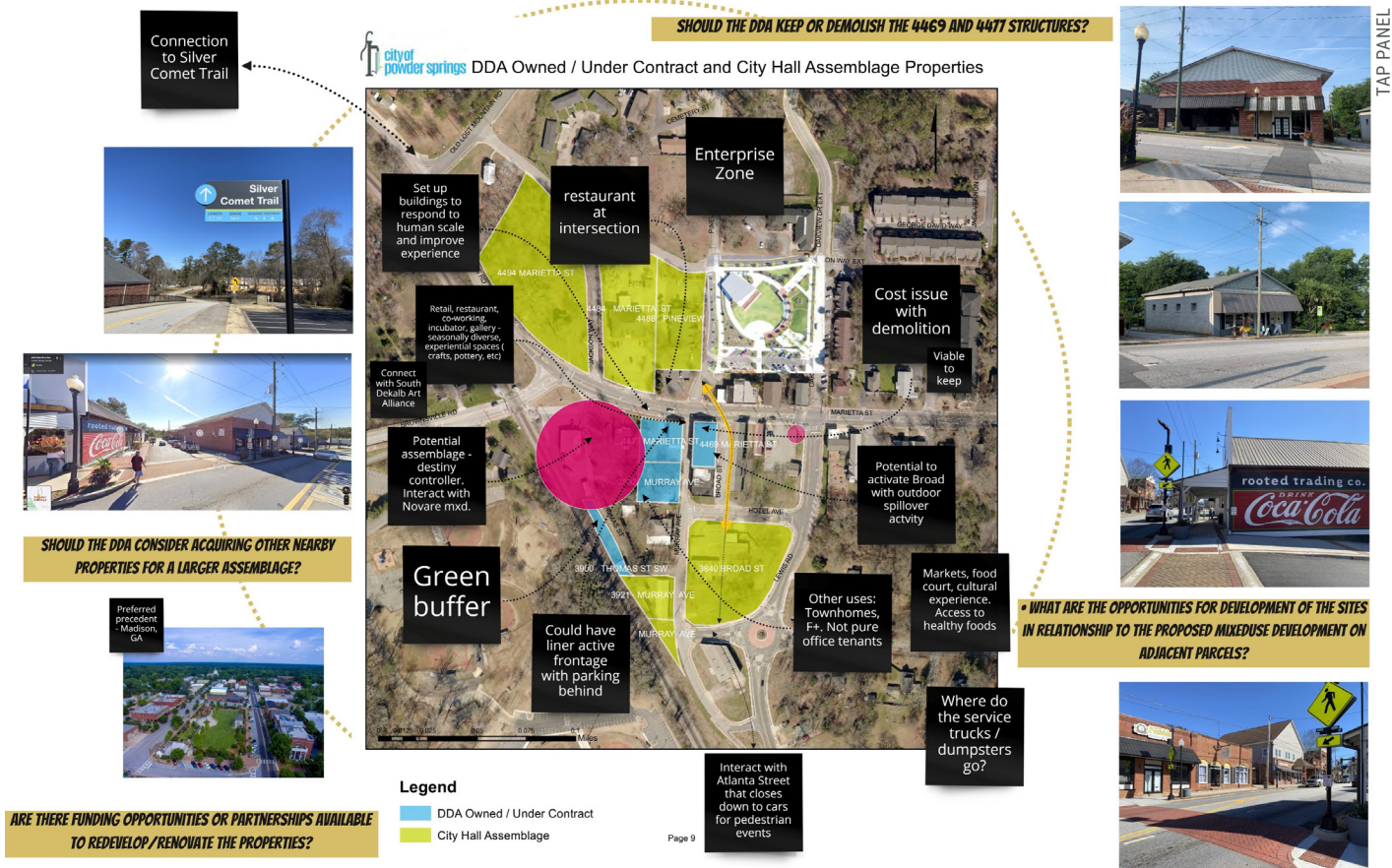
In addition to the parcels under contract by the city, two additional parcels, noted in pink above, are also on the market for sale.

The building at 4469 Marietta Street, recently purchased by DDA, is well-positioned for redevelopment, and its new tenants should benefit from the neighboring businesses – Rooted General Store to the east and a new brewery and restaurant to the south. With the right developer to manage the renovations and tenant selection, the building has good “bones” and could help activate the corridor once again.

The building at 4477 Marietta Street is on a parcel that is equally important to the downtown corridor but for different reasons. As the city and DDA work to attract new businesses and visitors to the corridor, visible and accessible surface parking will be very important in the early stages. (Once the district is a well-established shopping/dining area, patrons are more willing to access on-street or tucked-away parking options.) Given this parcel’s location at the western entrance to downtown, it makes practical sense to terminate the leases in this building and remove the structure to make way for a temporary surface parking lot.

During the course of the TAP, it came to the panelists’ attention that two additional parcels at the western edge of downtown were recently listed for sale. These two properties – 4491 Marietta Street and 3889 Brownsville Road – should also be of considerable interest to the city, as those parcels are some of the first things visitors see when entering downtown, and should help set the stage for the downtown experience. With that, and the potential \$1 million combined purchase price, the city is encouraged to table plans for a speculative retail building at the northwest corner of Pineview Drive and Marietta Street, negotiated as a part of the Novare development, and instead direct its funds toward the renovation of the building at 4469 Marietta Street.

Whether marketed individually or more likely as a group, these parcels should be of interest to the development community. By using a combined request for qualifications (RFQ) and request for proposals (RFP) process, the city has a good chance of finding a development partner who will



TAP panelists reviewed the questions from the city in light of the information and experience of the study area walking tour. Several initial opportunities and potential challenges were identified and mapped in context of the study area.

value the historic nature of downtown and be able to curate the right tenant mix for these spaces.

In addition to the considerations surrounding the future of the parcels the city has under contract, the panel also quickly recognized that there are a host of opportunities through various partnerships the city can explore and strengthen in order to bolster activity downtown. The work of activating the street, programming public spaces, and attracting visitors and more residents to downtown does not have to fall solely on the shoulders of the city's elected leadership or professional staff. Building or leveraging relationships with arts organizations, athletic clubs, and the business community, and making sure all know that the city is open to ideas and innovation around the experience of downtown Powder Springs helps raise awareness and

creates a draw for partners to drive the traffic through to their events.

The opportunities before the City of Powder Springs, heightened by the pending addition of a critical mass of new residential units in the downtown core and key parcels hitting the market, present a once-in-a-generation opportunity to assertively shape the future of downtown. With elected leadership knowledgeable about and supportive of its role in property acquisition and disposition as well as professional staff who are dedicated, knowledgeable, and ready to get to work, it is an exciting time to be contemplating the future of downtown Powder Springs.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The City of Powder Springs, Georgia, like many American towns of similar size, features a charming downtown corridor that is full of potential. Challenges created by the addition of a nearby thoroughfare, and the traffic it has drawn away from the businesses downtown, have prompted city leadership and the DDA to evaluate steps they can take to promote development in downtown Powder Springs – economic, community, and real estate development – in order to draw residents and visitors to the downtown corridor.

City and DDA leadership have taken several steps to date to facilitate downtown development. From land assemblage, to issuing a RFP for development, and the addition of a beautifully-designed city park, city leadership has demonstrated their sophisticated and proactive approach to

supporting the viability of the downtown corridor. With the city's recent purchase four smaller parcels downtown, city leadership turned to ULI Atlanta for assistance in identifying the next steps and long-term path for further progress downtown.

Questions for the Panel

1. Should the DDA keep or demolish the 4469 and 4477 structures?
2. Should the DDA consider acquiring other nearby properties for a larger assemblage?
3. Are there funding opportunities or partnerships available to redevelop/renovate the properties?
4. What are the opportunities for development of the sites in relationship to the proposed mixed-use development on adjacent parcels?



4469 Marietta Street.

BRIEFING MATERIALS



4477 Marietta Street.

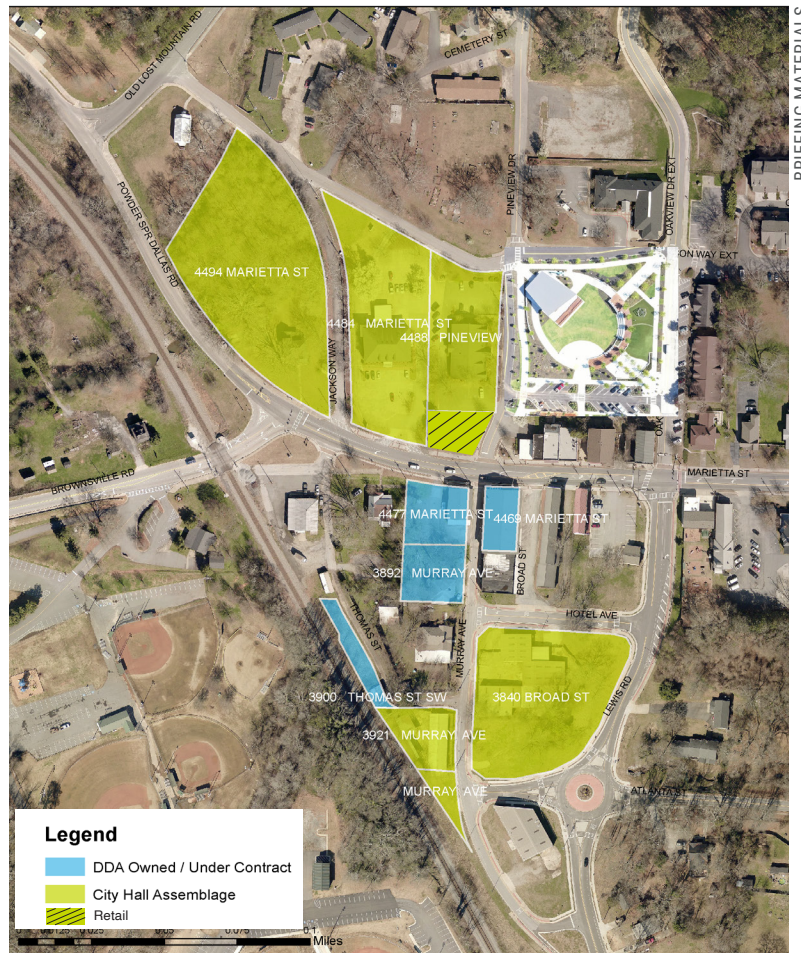
BRIEFING MATERIALS

It should be noted here that the aforementioned RFP resulted in a proposal from Novare Group to develop 221 units of multifamily housing and 5,000 square feet of retail downtown. With multifamily units to be developed on parcels both north and south of Marietta Street, which serves as the primary downtown corridor, downtown Powder Springs is set to experience an impressive boost in its residential population. The size and configuration of a small corner parcel dedicated to retail is still under consideration, but its placement at the northwest corner of Marietta Street and Pineview Drive is of note when considering current and future uses along the commercial corridor.

In order to best answer the questions posed by the city, ULI Atlanta convened TAP, gathering a panel of ULI members with professional expertise in real estate development, land use, architecture, finance, and urban planning. The panel studied the briefing materials provided by the city, toured the sites under consideration, interviewed stakeholders, and ultimately arrived at a set of recommendations that the city can pursue to achieve its goals for downtown Powder Springs.

The stakeholders interviewed represented a wide variety of Powder Springs citizens, sharing their thoughts on how the city should proceed with downtown development. From business owners to elected officials, representatives from arts organizations to real estate developers, the panel listened to the stakeholders and learned more about their goals for downtown. Notable comments from these interviews included:

- Find ways to attract [Silver Comet] trail users to downtown.
- Move downtown from pass-through to pause – make it so people want to pause, stop, eat, and shop.
- Make sure to keep the family focus, particularly when considering density.
- Improve access to healthy foods and restaurants.



This map of downtown Powder Springs denotes land that the city has previously assembled for development (light green) and land the city has under contract and under consideration for future development (blue).



(Design Precedent) Businesses along Georgia Avenue in Atlanta make use of historic downtown architecture in unique and inviting ways.

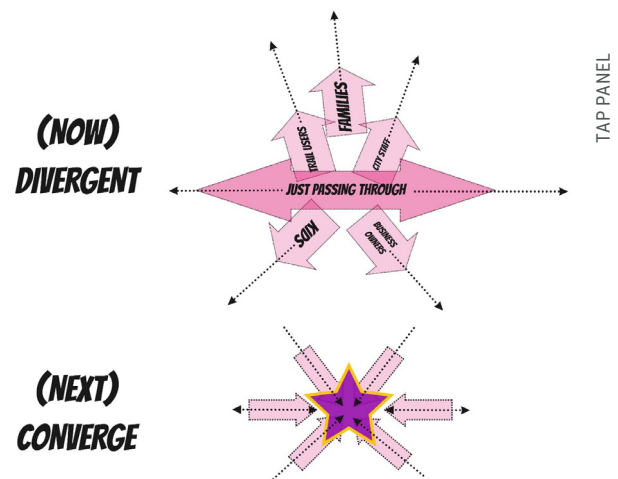
- Business is slow but hopeful.
- Shift from the perspective of a place to “age in place” to a community with “age diversity.”
- Create an experience.

It was also during the stakeholder interviews that the panel learned that two additional parcels, 4491 Marietta Street and 3889 Brownsfield Road, were now on the market. These parcels, each listed for approximately \$500,000, are west of the parcels the city currently has under contract and were not for sale at the time the city issued the RFP for the land now under development by Novare Group.

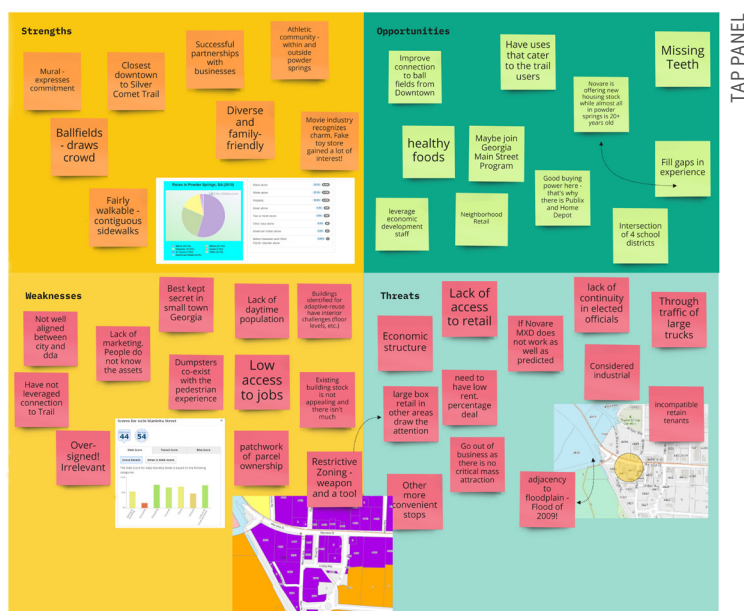
Following the stakeholder interviews, the Panel conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to better understand and identify the various internal (strengths and weaknesses) and external (opportunities and threats) forces influencing or likely to influence the success of downtown Powder Springs.

With the SWOT context before them, the insights from community stakeholders, and data from the city and DDA in hand, the TAP panel began to outline and identify the various paths the city might consider regarding the redevelopment of the parcels under contract and the potential for complementing and leveraging the development that Novare Group is set to deliver.

At present, there are a host of divergent assets apparent in and around downtown Powder Springs – the trail, changing demographics, city leadership, business owners’ interests, and families with children. The key will be to identify these forces and begin to bring them together – to converge on downtown to create a compelling experience and a place where residents and visitors choose not to just pass through, but to instead pause, to play, shop, dine, or stay.



A graphic depiction of downtown transforming from a place of divergent uses and assets to a center of convergence for residents and visitors.



A graphic depiction of the SWOT analysis for downtown Powder Springs.

“When we get these thruways across the whole country, as we will and must, it will be possible to drive from New York to California without seeing a single thing.”

John Steinbeck, 1962

Strengths

Local commitment
 Successful track record with public-private partnerships
 Outside developer interest
 Park investment
 Proximity to Silver Comet Trail
 Zoning in place
 Powder Springs Park, ballfields
 Significant residential population in the area
 Popular Festivals
 Non-restaurant local retail in place
 Sidewalks
 Community diversity
 Engaged property owners
 Open container law in place
 Buying power in the market
 Overlay district in place
 Only downtown in sub-region
 Intersection of four school districts

Weaknesses

Past owners were disengaged
 Rail separation from Powder Springs Park
 Low daytime population – proximity to jobs
 Lack of citizen awareness
 Marketing downtown and trail
 Patchwork of property control
 Low walk score – car-dependent
 Lack of critical mass of retail
 Low rent rates
 Lack of young people (currently) in market – existing demographics
 Anti-growth sentiment in the community
 Lack of attractive building stock
 Many missing “teeth” (buildings) in town
 Existing building condition
 Service/trash facility in area better used for development
 Staff and council may need re-alignment

Opportunities

Connection to the ballpark – major youth sports draw
 Parking to attract visitors
 Georgia Main Street program
 Regional market draw
 Population growth
 Athletic community (trail, ATC, baseball), planned activities
 Farmer’s market – in downtown
 Changing demographics – Novare bringing younger people into the market
 Available redevelopment sites
 Through traffic
 Repurpose service/trash area for other use
 Improve signage for downtown tenants
 Conduct feasibility study on the proposed parking deck

Threats

Economic structure (low sales/sf)
 Competition with retailers on Richard D Sailors Parkway
 Take-out and online ordering at restaurants
 Reliance on success of new multifamily development
 Continuity challenge due to local election cycles
 Current rental rates do not support new construction
 Proximity to floodplain (2009 flood)
 Through traffic – trucks at speed
 Competition from other cities
 Lack branding for downtown that matches leadership vision
 Market perceptions that do not see downtown as a destination

FOUNDATION AND THEMES

With a goal of developing a plan of action to encourage uses that will facilitate the convergence of residents and visitors, the panel first identified a set of foundational attributes and themes that the city and DDA are encouraged to understand and embrace in its work to improve the downtown experience and further position the corridor for future growth.

Foundation and Focus

When reviewing the properties in hand, the plans on the table from Novare Group, and the information gathered from the community stakeholders, three key areas of opportunity and focus emerged that should help downtown transition from a place people pass through to a place where they are inspired to pause, shop, dine, and enjoy:

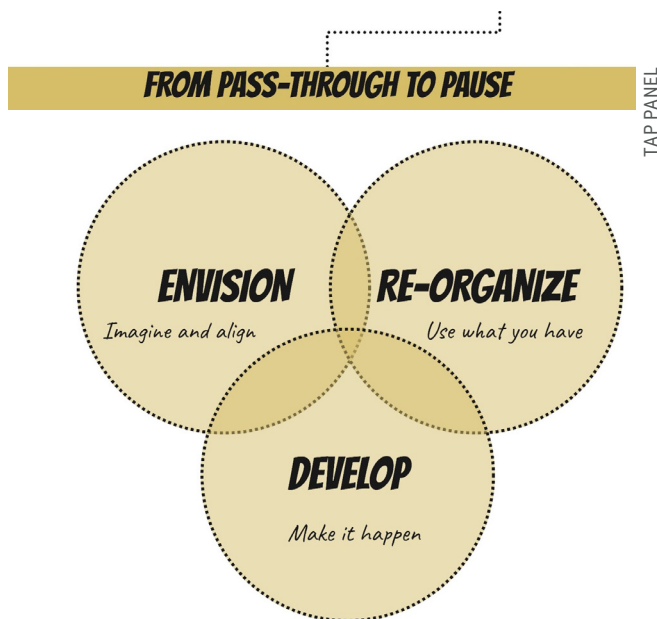
- **Envision.** Imagine the future for downtown and begin to align efforts today and plans for tomorrow to match with and support that vision.

- **Re-organize.** Given that city and DDA funding is not without limit, both are encouraged to make the most of the resources and tools on hand to prepare current sites for development and position future sites for redevelopment aligned with the city's vision.
- **Develop.** Once the path has been identified and outlined, work together to put it into action.

Key Themes – Partnerships before Parcels

Several key themes emerged when the panel considered the future of downtown. Each of these themes hinged on partnerships that the city and DDA could forge or strengthen in order to program, activate, and draw more people to the corridor. These themes will help guide the city and DDA in the collective pursuit of new users and businesses and may also be of interest to visitors and residents of Powder Springs broadly, not just those who call downtown home.

Business Owners and Operators. Downtown is home to a small but mighty population of restaurateurs and retailers. These business owners are committed to downtown and are providing the foundation for a wonderful selection of local boutique goods and services. Additional restaurateurs and retail operators would benefit from this foundation and add welcome critical retail mass for the retailers currently operating in the corridor. Similarly but more flexible, food trucks and a farmers market would also be welcome additions to downtown, providing limited goods in a manner that creates activity and activation on days the market is



Three areas of focus will assist the city and DDA today and into the future in their work on the downtown corridor.

open or during the hours that food trucks park in the area. These same food truck opportunities may also serve as testing grounds for new concepts and allow purveyors to test a market before investing more fully in a brick-and-mortar location nearby.

Activities. Powder Springs is a community that is full of life. With a significant number of families with children and the community's wish to maintain this family atmosphere, downtown could serve as an additional location for activities and services that cater to this demographic. Childcare services would be a welcome addition to downtown. Programming that caters to active families could include fitness and yoga classes in the park during the day and reading events and movies in the park in the evening. Thurman Springs Park is a beautiful addition to the downtown core and could serve as a perfect venue for many of these activities.

Trails. The highly-popular Silver Comet Trail runs through Powder Springs and is directly north of downtown, with a trailhead just 0.5 miles away. The city and DDA have already begun to leverage this asset by hosting 3k and 5k runs a few times a year. Taking this idea further, partnerships with the Atlanta Track Club and local trainers or a gym could encourage further use of the trail from downtown and create more visible and active connections between downtown, Thurman Springs Park, and the Silver Comet Trail. By marking additional walking and running trails in and around downtown and making the connection to those from the Silver Comet Trail obvious and welcoming, Powder Springs could become an interesting detour for those spending the day on the trail. These connections into downtown would also provide trail users with ready access to restaurants and retail for those seeking a break from the activity or a welcome starting or ending point for those using the Powder Springs trailhead.

Arts. Downtown is already home to a healthy art scene. From art pieces available for sale at Rooted to the large colorful murals on the sides of several downtown buildings, there is an artist vibe in Powder Springs that could be leveraged further. For buildings with excess or flexible space, seasonal or rotating galleries could be set up to showcase



ATLANTA REGIONAL COUNCIL

(Design Precedent) Downtown Suwanee, Georgia, hosts an annual open-air arts festival each fall in Town Center Park.

the work of local artists. Similarly, it might be possible to pair artists with retailers in an effort to further enliven shop windows with art for sale, which may help draw passersby into the store to spend money in a number of ways. It may also be interesting to consider space for an “open studio” day during which residents and visitors could explore their own artistic talents, creating a memorable experience and encouraging people to linger downtown. Live/work space for artists is also often in demand and could simultaneously create business activity and bring more residents to downtown all hours of the day.

In each case, these economic development activities will require a certain degree of sequencing, management, and coordination, which puts an even finer point on the panel's recommendation that the city and DDA pursue new and strengthen existing partnerships. By leveraging the collective and individual genius of the residents and business owners who love and support downtown, city leadership and staff



The Main Street America program provides technical assistance and support for communities seeking to develop a stronger sense of place and greater community and economic development.

will be able to expand their reach and deepen their impact. Consider how retailers could leverage visitor traffic on race days. Find partners who may want to program downtown's spaces to leverage the traffic generated by summer youth tournaments in Powder Springs Park.

From A Street to Main Street

Today Marietta Street is a charming street that forms the backbone of downtown Powder Springs. It is, however, just a street that happens to be at the geographic center of downtown. Through additional intentional efforts, Marietta Street could transform into MAIN Street for Powder Springs. This doesn't happen overnight and it will not happen without concentrated effort and intention. Main Street America, a program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is a network of more than 1,200 neighborhoods and communities, rural and urban, who share both a commitment to place and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. The

Main Streets approach assists communities in four key areas – economic vitality, design, promotion, and organization.

- Economic vitality focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.
- Design supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.
- Promotion positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.
- Organization involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

Rebuild

Through recent acquisitions and by placing other properties under contract, it is clear that the city and DDA understand that the public sector has a role to play in the land use and building/rebuilding activities downtown. While the eventual tenant mix will be shaped by private developers and market forces, a 2003 ULI publication, *Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail*, can assist the public and private sectors in taking actions today that will support the growth and development of neighborhood retail.

Successful streets often have a mix of locally-owned and operated vendors and anchors. Boutique offerings might include specialty food stores that feature locally-sourced goods – baked goods, ethnic foods, coffee, and wine – as well as ethnic restaurants, art shops, and antique stores. In addition to boutique offerings, staples such as pharmacies, hardware stores, and service providers (laundry, video, garden) bring value and traffic to an area. Anchors, which are typically larger-footprint stores, can also add value to a commercial corridor, helping the smaller, independent tenants succeed by drawing customers to the area.

Ten Principles for Rebuilding Neighborhood Retail

1. Great Streets Need Great Champions
2. It Takes a Vision – Create an identity for the street that is inventive and reflects the neighborhood.
3. Think Residential
4. Honor the Pedestrian – Encourage multiple entrances to shops so they are accessible from the front sidewalk as well as from off-street parking areas.
5. Parking Is Power
6. Merchandise and Lease Proactively
7. Make It Happen
8. Be Clean, Safe, and Friendly
9. Extend Day into Night
10. Manage for Change

http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/TP_NeighborhoodRetail.ashx_.pdf



(Design Precedent) Festoon light strings add life and light to a commercial intersection in Senoia, Georgia.



(Design Precedent) Interesting building lighting helps activate a commercial corridor in College Park, Georgia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With property under contract and Novare Group on the cusp of breaking ground on a significant multifamily development, the City of Powder Springs and DDA are positioned to chart a course for the future of downtown that is more vibrant, active, and populated than the one that exists today. Careful steps taken now can begin to shape future land uses that will support further development and encourage economic activity. To achieve this goal, the panel set forth the following recommendations, outlined within three primary areas of activity: visioning, organization, and development.

Visioning

By embarking on this study, city leadership – professional staff and elected leaders – have demonstrated their interest in and dedication to envisioning a newly activated and economically energized downtown corridor. Taking that commitment a step or two further, the panel identified three important components of a visioning process for downtown that the city and DDA are encouraged to address.

Branding. While the City of Powder Springs has clear, consistent, and visible branding across town and on digital platforms, downtown does not yet have an identity. By establishing an identity and branding for the downtown district, perhaps using colors or imagery that complements the city's branding, visitors and residents will be better able to identify the downtown core and recognize its wide variety of assets. Done well, the brand and identity will remain with visitors long after they leave. This branding is pivotal to convey the vision for downtown and inspire

investment from developers, augment engagement from business owners and residents and promote activities.

Design. A further function of the visioning work yet before the city and DDA relates to the design of the streetscape and experience moving through downtown. By engaging with design professionals to proactively shape the look and feel of the downtown corridor, the street furniture, building façades, and other public spaces can begin to add to the downtown main street experience and create the feeling of a district. Funding to assist with these efforts may be available through the Atlanta Regional Council, and the panel encourages the city to apply for this form of assistance.

Alignment. As the city and DDA complete the parcel acquisitions currently at hand and consider additional acquisitions, they are strongly encouraged to ensure that the downtown design guidelines are supportive of and align with the city's refreshed vision for downtown. Similarly, the city's master plan should be reviewed in light of these acquisitions and revised vision to ensure that the planning goals and strategies are supportive of the direction the city wishes to take for downtown. Are the guidelines specific enough –or too specific? Do the tools called out in the master plan support the city's desired actions?

Organization

The “partnerships before parcels” theme noted earlier is the foundation for the early-stage visioning for downtown and also provides guidance as it relates to a host of



A quick sketch demonstrates how the city's branding could be leveraged for a downtown identity.

organizational matters that the TAP panel identified to help the city and DDA advance their goals for downtown.

Partnerships to Activate. There is much to do and much activity to stimulate downtown, yet it does not need to all land on the city or DDA's task list.

- **Trail.** As noted, the proximity of the Silver Comet Trail presents a wide range of programming opportunities that can leverage the active nature of the trail and the community. By establishing partnerships with running clubs such as the Atlanta Track Club and cycling clubs, downtown can become a fantastic launch point for races or a wonderful place to end a race with the addition of celebratory programming in the park.
- **Powder Springs Park.** The proximity of Powder Springs Park and its plethora of sporting fields makes downtown a natural food and beverage amenity for the youth sports tournaments (baseball, softball, football) that regularly cycle through this park. That said, there is a need to establish better physical connections to downtown from the park, increase signage to draw visitors from the park to downtown, and perhaps consider ways to encourage business owners to cater further to these visitors (discounts, incentives, etc.).
- **Festivals.** Thurman Springs Park is an incredible addition to downtown and is the perfect location for community festivals, live entertainment, and additional sporting or programming catering to active families (boot camp, yoga, etc.). Partnerships with local organizations seeking festival space or athletic trainers seeking more flexible outdoor space should be pursued to further activate the park and draw people downtown.

Trail Connection. In addition to creating partnerships that draw additional people to the Silver Comet Trail via programming, the city and DDA are encouraged to make clear the path from downtown to the trail and vice versa. With the trailhead tucked back in a neighborhood, a couple of blocks from Marietta (Main) Street, finding the trail is not intuitive. Likewise, trail users passing through and noting the trailhead may not be aware of just how close



The popular Silver Comet Trail runs along the northern edge of downtown Powder Springs.

the vibrant, appealing, and active downtown are from the trail. The city and DDA are encouraged to coordinate improvements to the trail connections with Cobb County (the entity managing the Silver Comet Trail).

Georgia Main Street. America's Main Street program, and locally the Georgia Main Street Program, can provide main street districts and corridors with technical assistance and support in pursuit of economic initiatives that will benefit downtown and help the district grow and thrive. The program is robust and thorough and most often succeeds best when the program is managed by a staffer whose sole focus is the Main Street initiative and the associated partnerships and processes. This person's day-to-day responsibilities center around the promotion and management of the area, thereby allowing existing city and DDA staff and related organizations to continue to focus on their existing areas of responsibility (instead of having the Main Street program added to their already full plates). Technical assistance from economic and community development professionals is available through the Main Street Community via Georgia DCA, and project coaching is likewise available. Additionally, communities can receive

assistance with marketing activities and storytelling initiatives to broaden the reach of the main street businesses and strengthen the interest in and impact of the corridor in the broader market.

Cash Management. The city and DDA have embarked upon an assertive real estate path that should help position downtown for further growth and development.

- With two properties under contract and profits realized or soon to be realized from the recent land sale to Novare Group, this is an excellent time for the city to carefully analyze its current cash position. With an eye toward maximizing its potential tax revenue, the city is encouraged to align and prioritize potential projects to the budget.
- This alignment may assist in the decision-making around the potential purchase of the two lots west along Marietta Street (4491 Marietta and 3889 Brownsfield Road). Given the stated purchase price of each at approximately \$500,000, the city would be contemplating an additional \$1 million in acquisitions.
- At the same time, the city is considering the development of the retail space carved out by Novare at the northwest corner of Pinelawn and Marietta. After a back-of-the-envelope analysis of the development costs associated with this new building, the panel arrived at a potential cost of \$875,000 to \$1 million to deliver white box space on spec (i.e., without a potential tenant in the mix).
- With this in mind, the panel encourages the city to delay the construction of this speculative retail space and instead direct those funds toward the renovation of the building at 4469 Marietta Street.
- It is also important to consider the downtown district's future parking strategy. The city is contemplating the construction of a parking deck, which based on rough estimates could cost \$3.2 million. If an alternative parking strategy were pursued, one which did not involve expensive garage structures, a portion of the funds for this deck could be invested elsewhere. Creating temporary surface parking could be a

barometer for how much parking a future deck should deliver. In the meantime, parking needs to be quick and easy until downtown is more firmly established.

- Finally, as it relates to the city's investment in the buildings currently under contract, the development potential for the 4469 Marietta building is compelling and should be of interest to a developer with an interest in adaptive reuse in a downtown setting. If the city were able to pursue a strategic partnership with a developer on this building, it could more quickly put the building back into constructive use, generating taxes and attracting more visitors to the area and providing residents with another downtown amenity.

Development

While the city may not have intended to become a developer, they are thinking like one and have positioned downtown in a manner that should, with some careful planning and sequencing, support the economic growth of the area.

4469 Marietta Street. The city's thoughtful acquisition of the 4469 Marietta building, taking over a key parcel from an unengaged owner, puts the city and DDA in the driver seat, directing how the building might be put back into productive use. Following the tour of the building, and contingent on review by a structural engineer, the panel viewed the redevelopment of this building as worthy of the city's immediate attention. The location of the building in the center of downtown and its apparent condition might make for a compelling restaurant space and complement the brewery and chicken restaurant under development in the adjoining building to the south. With some relatively easy modifications (removing the awning and pitched roof) and opening some additional walls along Broad Street, the building could easily become a focal point along Marietta.

Short-term Improvements. With 4469 and 4477 Marietta in hand, the panel encourages the city to undertake a handful of small improvements that should positively impact the experience of walking or driving through downtown.

- The awnings on the buildings' north-facing storefronts create a more enclosed feeling when walking along the sidewalk and make the space feel smaller. By

4469 Marietta, Potential Improvements



Existing Condition

The current building configuration features a small sidewalk along a monolithic wall facing Broad Street. The parking spaces along Broad are positioned for easy access by drivers but interrupt the pedestrian experience and dominate space that could be converted into outdoor seating.



Suggested Improvements

The bones of the building are good, yet the awnings along Marietta Street and the pitched roof detract from the charming architecture and do not improve the visitor or pedestrian experience. By opening the eastern wall with a garage-sized door, the business inside can expand out onto a new outdoor seating or patio area, thereby increasing the business's seating capacity on nice days and helping to activate the Marietta streetscape. New lighting on the Broad Street side of the building would also be a welcome addition and low-cost improvement.



Improved Space

Through the improvements noted above, new side patio seating could be accessed via new openings in the building wall. The new indoor-outdoor space helps activate Broad and Marietta with people and is a charming blend of old and new.



Placemaking

Simple improvements to lighting, including festoon or festival lighting, can help create a welcoming sense of place in what was once just a parking lot. Broad Street can continue to serve vehicles but it can also adapt to include outdoor seating when the weather allows.

removing the awnings and the superfluous materials leftover from previous tenants, the storefronts and visible spaces within become more visible, open, and welcoming.

- For those storefronts that are currently vacant, the city could begin to activate the empty (yet visible) interior spaces with art, giving passersby something interesting to observe as they walk or drive by. It might be possible to partner with an arts organization like the South Cobb Arts Alliance to provide limited storefront space for displays by emerging artists.

4477 Marietta Street. Although there are presently tenants in the 4477 Marietta building, the future of the building might prove rather limited. Its location at the western end of downtown and the rather nondescript nature of its architecture led the panel to recommend that the city terminate the leases and demolish the building in order to make way for temporary parking. People entering a retail district are more likely to stop and shop if parking is easily identifiable and readily available. To that end, parking at the western entrance to downtown would be

a welcome addition and would support the businesses currently operating downtown as well as new retailers on the horizon.

Additional Acquisitions and Assembly. In much the same way the city proactively assembled land for the Novare development, the panel encourages the city to prioritize the purchase and assembly of additional properties as they become available. The recent listing of 4491 Marietta Street and 3889 Brownsfield Road are prime examples of parcels that the city is encouraged to purchase today in order to continue to direct development and growth of downtown into the future. Similarly, the city is encouraged to purchase additional parcels along Murray as they may become available. Depending upon the timing of these additional acquisitions, the city could then issue another RFP for development, this time for 4469 and the assembled properties or just 4469 if the acquisition of the other parcels will be delayed.

Suggested Approach to Developer Selection. The city has found a good partner in Novare Group and experienced success in the RFP process used to secure



The newly listed 3889 and 4491 parcels, noted in pink above, are particularly compelling given their location at the westernmost entrance to downtown.

that partnership. In this latest development pursuit, the panel had the following suggestions to help guide the process for selecting a developer for these latest parcels.

- **RFP/RFQ.** Using a two-step process, leading first with a request for qualifications and then following with a request for proposals, the city can begin to gauge interest in the unique development opportunity it is presenting via the RFQ and then drill down to more specific details through the RFP process.
- **Support City's Goals.** The RFQ/RFP process can be used to support the city's goals relating to the selection of potential partners, including gaining insights into the market's views on creative solutions to the parcels and potential uses at hand, ensuring that the selected entity can support the city's comprehensive retail development approach for downtown – or help create one if one does not yet exist – and ultimately allow the city to evaluate options and finally select the developer they view as the best potential partner.
- **Stated Development Objectives.** It will also be important to stress in the RFP the city's development objectives and note which may be required versus those objectives that are desired. In a small downtown like Powder Springs, the quality of the tenants and buildings should take precedence over density concerns or goals. Boutique or specialty tenants will help downtown Powder Springs differentiate from other commercial corridors in the area and draw shoppers seeking unique items. The historic character of downtown is something to be celebrated and leveraged and finding new development partners who appreciate this historic nature will be important.

A plan for parking should also be incorporated into or asked of potential RFP respondents given the nature of the current parking environment downtown. Finally, a healthy retail district features a diverse mix of tenants – the selected developer should understand this power in diversity and should also be encouraged to employ a diverse team of professionals in the design and buildout.

- **Selling Powder Springs (RFQ); Selecting a Partner (RFP).** The RFQ process allows the city to spread the word about the development opportunities at hand. In so doing, the city will share project background information, including information about Powder Springs and the surrounding region, specific information about downtown Powder Springs and how/why it presents a compelling development opportunity, and finally information about the particular parcels under consideration. Through the responses to the RFQ, the city will learn more about the range of potential partners interested in the site(s). RFQ responses should provide information about the company, its history and development experience, and information about its financial capacity to initiate and complete developments of similar or greater size. Following the more general RFQ process, the city can issue an RFP for the development site(s), which will seek to collect more specific information related to the parcels and potential development at hand. The RFP response typically includes information about how the developer would structure a potential deal, provide recommendations relating to the design/layout of the site and the buildings, and should also include information about the potential tenant mix that will eventually fill the spaces developed.

CONCLUSION

As people begin to rediscover the joys of a historic downtown street full of shops and unique, local restaurants, Powder Springs will be there to capitalize on that momentum. The city and DDA have taken a number of smart steps in the right direction, assembling land for development, creating welcoming outdoor venues, and seeking all manner of ways to become even more inviting to current and future residents and visitors to the area. Building on this work and with an eye toward future economic and community development, the city is encouraged to set its vision, organize around that vision, and set forth a development path that will support the city's goals of improving and expanding its charming downtown.

Creating a vision for downtown Powder Springs will help set the stage for ensuing development activity and help ensure everyone knows where they are going and when they have arrived, both literally and physically around downtown, but also figuratively as it relates to the economic growth along

the corridor. Establishing an identity for downtown that is separate from but complements the city's branding will be helpful. Engaging with design professionals who can help identify streetscape improvements and ensuring that design guidelines align with the direction the city wishes to



TAP PANEL



TAP PANEL

Existing businesses along Marietta Street draw visitors and residents alike – and would benefit from increased foot traffic downtown.

take downtown will be key to supporting the look and feel of downtown. Similarly, it is important to ensure that these plans align with the city's master plan or that the master plan can be refreshed if needed.

Knowing that there is a lot of work to do and a host of partners who can assist, the city should focus on establishing or strengthening partnerships before focusing on individual properties or parcels. These partnerships can leverage the proximity of the Silver Comet Trail, strengthen the connection to the trail, and further enliven downtown with more activity – people attract people. More broadly, a partnership with the Georgia Main Street program could provide the technical assistance to strengthen economic activity downtown, assist with design improvements to the streetscape or building façades, and help promote downtown Powder Springs beyond the city's limits.

The development opportunities the city is contemplating are exciting, may prove transformational, and the

sequencing should be prioritized. Knowing that the city is considering investing nearly \$1 million to build a spec retail building downtown, it is encouraged to instead turn its attention – and funds – to the potential acquisition of two additional parcels at the western entrance to downtown. With these two additional parcels in hand, it could then issue a RFQ and then RFP for development, seeking a partner with retail experience and an eye for downtown development. Early initial actions, such as removing old awnings, cleaning out vacant spaces, and activating the empty storefronts can go a long way toward enlivening the downtown experience and making downtown attractive.

With careful planning today, focusing on partnerships, further parcel acquisition, design/branding, and some initial property clean-up and repositioning, downtown Powder Springs can become a regional draw, pulling in new residents and visitors to see, play, and experience all that this stretch of Powder Springs has to offer.



Downtown's charm – a blend of historic buildings and contemporary structures – creates a walkable experience that should be celebrated and built upon.





The TAP panel and city professional staff at the amphitheater in Thurman Springs Park.

ABOUT THE PANEL



Sarah Butler
Panel Chair
Associate Principal
Praxis3 Architecture

Sarah Butler is a registered architect and registered interior designer with Praxis3 Architecture, where

she supervises a project team for multi-family, adaptive reuse, higher education, and retail projects. Sarah's interest in shaping communities through contextual, responsible, and beautiful design is the reason she has lived and worked in the heart of Atlanta for the past 20 years. Having moved to Atlanta from Columbus, Ohio, in 2003, with a masters degree in architecture from The Ohio State University, Sarah was excited to join in the opportunities unique to Atlanta's growth. Her favorite projects are those that re-purpose the remaining historic fabric of the city into a space that functions with contemporary lifestyles in a sustainable way. Sarah currently serves as Co-Chair of the Urban Land Institute's Technical Assistance Panel Committee, as well as on the ULI Advisory Board. She is a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and has presented at American Institute of Architects (AIA) conferences and on local tours.



Marvin Chapman
Associate
Marcus & Millichap

As an advisor, Marvin has helped clients maximize the value of their commercial real estate investments.

His responsibilities include client

development, identifying client needs, market analysis, investment analysis, underwriting, marketing assets for sale, and managing the contract process, and due diligence. Additionally, he provides resolution for finance and re-finance needs. Leveraging the Marcus & Millichap platform has allowed Marvin to close more than \$100 million in retail sales and market more than \$30 million

in development properties. Marvin's brokerage areas include properties to be developed and/or re-positioned driven by urban density around metro Atlanta, warehouse properties driven by supply chain and last mile connectivity, and retail. In addition to the important training received at Marcus & Millichap, Marvin's other valuable life experiences include attending Morehouse College, and Harvard Law School, previously practicing law, and being an active member of the Urban Land Institute and the Real Estate Group of Atlanta.



Chris Faussemagne
Partner
Third & Urban

A native Atlantan and graduate of the Westminster Schools, Chris graduated in 1994 from Hampden-Sydney College in Virginia. He

began his real estate career in 1998 with The Winter Group of Companies and then joined Weaver & Woodbery Company in 2000. In 2005, he formed White Provision Development Co. to acquire and develop the historic buildings at 14th Street and Howell Mill Road in West Midtown Atlanta into a 335,000 square foot mixed-use development that soon became a catalyst for new development in the area. Working with neighboring properties, Westside Provisions District was created to provide one of the Southeast's top restaurant and retail destinations. Chris joined Third & Urban in 2018 from Westbridge Realty Partners, which was formed in 2010 by the development partners of the White Provision Development Co. to continue focusing on adaptive re-use and urban infill projects as well as consulting on larger regional projects for institutional clients. In the fall of 2017, the company delivered a new historic adaptive re-use project in West Midtown called Stockyards, which has provided much needed office and entertainment space for the area. Chris has won Development of Excellence awards from the Urban Land Institute, Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Urban Design Commission, and the Georgia

Trust for Historic Preservation. He is on the board of Upper Westside Improvement District, ULI Atlanta, and serves on various land use committees. Chris lives in the Buckhead neighborhood with his wife Katie and their two boys.



Alex Hegner
Attorney
Morris, Manning, & Martin

Alex Hegner is an associate at the law firm Morris, Manning & Martin. He focuses his practice on the representation of owners, investors

and lenders in the financing of commercial real estate assets. He also has experience creating and reviewing leases, amendments, and franchise agreements. Alex earned an undergraduate degree in Political Science and JD and MBA degrees simultaneously from Georgia State University where he also played baseball. He is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and serves on ULI Atlanta's Technical Assistance Programs (TAPs) Committee.



Jared Lombard
Senior Principal Planner
Atlanta Regional Commission

Jared Lombard is a senior principal planner with the Atlanta Regional Commission where he manages the Livable Centers Initiative

(LCI) program, a program that awards planning grants on a competitive basis to local governments and nonprofit organizations to prepare and implement plans for the enhancement of existing centers and corridors consistent with regional development policies. Jared holds a master degree in city and regional planning from Georgia Tech and is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and serves on ULI Atlanta's Technical Assistance Programs (TAPs) committee.



Sheba Ross
Principal
HKS

Sheba Ross is a principal and global practice director – cities and communities at HKS where she creates culturally-defined and environmentally-

driven projects, which reflect her commitment to buildings and the spaces between them. In the past two decades, Sheba's focus has been master planning the built environment by leveraging the design of the community story and the details. She actively engages public participation in projects that revitalize their communities by linking health with the urban realm. She played a pivotal role in transformative projects like the Healthcare Action Plan for the country of Qatar, the Brookhaven Buford Highway Corridor Vision, Station Soccer at MARTA stations, downtown Fayetteville LCI, and has authored articles that connect the power of research and the pragmatics of urban planning. Sheba is highly engaged in ULI and has served as the mTAP chair for the 2020 class. She now chairs the Center for Leadership Class of 2022 and was accepted into ULI Atlanta's inaugural cohort of The Leaders 2020 – an initiative aimed at elevating women of influence in real estate and land use industries.



David Scott
Senior Principal & Partner
DaVinci Development

David Scott, a senior principal and partner at DaVinci Development Collaborative, LLC, brings more than 35 years of experience in development

management and development advisory experience. With his technical knowledge, communication skills, and diplomatic style, David has earned a reputation with colleagues, industry leaders, and decision-makers for managing high quality projects, containing costs, and producing results. Throughout his career, David has led the work of development teams on regionally significant initiatives, institutional programs, and real estate development projects from acquisition and planning to design and construction management. David is an active member of the Urban Land Institute and has served in various leadership roles including recently co-chairing the ULI Atlanta's Programs Committee and being named the incoming chair of the Technical Assistance Programs Committee.



Nate Seymour
Vice President &
Relationship Manager
Truist

Nate Seymour is a vice president and relationship manager for Truist Commercial Real Estate Team

(formerly SunTrust). In this role, Nate is responsible for sourcing new relationships as well as portfolio management for a diverse portfolio of privately owned commercial real estate firms. In this practice, Nate provides a mix of construction and acquisition debt for multi-family, retail, office, and hospitality projects, located within the continental United States. Nate has been with SunTrust/Truist Commercial Real Estate for five years. Prior to joining SunTrust, Nate served as an analyst for Collateral Evaluation Services where he was responsible for the valuation of commercial real estate assets including residential, office, retail, multifamily, hospitality, and industrial product types located throughout the United States. Nate is an active member of the Urban Land Institute (ULI) where he currently serves as a member of the ULI Atlanta Advisory Board. He is also a member of the United Way of Greater Atlanta's Cole Society Advisory Committee. Nate is a graduate of Georgia State University with a bachelor of business administration degree in real estate and finance. Nate resides in Decatur, Georgia, with his wife and two daughters.



Jay Silverman
Managing Principal
Dwell Design Studio

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

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

use and urban-infill development. Jay has a strong legacy of service to the community and the architectural profession. He is a former president of the Atlanta Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a recipient of the prestigious Ivan Allen Award for service to the profession, and currently serves as treasurer of the Architecture Foundation of Georgia. He is also active in the Urban Land Institute and, as a 2009 graduate of the ULI Center for Regional Leadership, has served two terms as chair of the ULI Technical Assistance Program Committee and as a member of the ULI Atlanta District Advisory Council. He also serves on the Advisory Council for the Sandy Springs Conservancy. Jay holds licenses to practice architecture in Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. He lives in Dunwoody with his wife and two sons. In his spare time, he enjoys running and coaching his sons' sports teams.



Anne Michael Sustman
Senior Associate
Cooper Carry

As senior associate at Cooper Carry, Anne Michael helps manage the MXU studio concurrently with managing projects for mixed-use, residential,

and creative office environments. Her past experience has given her a keen eye for innovative solutions for historic preservation and adaptive reuse. She thrives on the challenges of a complex project and is known for consistently guiding clients through difficult terrain to successful outcomes. Her leadership style focuses on collaboration, bringing all members of a project team together to form consensus and surface the best solutions for her clients. Anne Michael is an enthusiastic contributor to Atlanta's increasingly design-conscious urban landscape, directly through projects as well as through mentorship and leadership. She serves on the Urban Land Institute's Creative Development Council as a member of its executive committee. She is also in her second year as a graduate student mentor through AIA Atlanta and will participate in Leadership CREW in 2022.



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