



REPOSITIONING THE BUFORD HIGHWAY CORRIDOR

Norcross, Georgia

Technical Assistance Panel | December 3–4, 2024

About

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Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 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 regions, with members in 84 countries.

Cover photo: Looking west from the intersection of Buford Highway and Mitchell Road. (ULI)

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors/panelists and do not necessarily reflect the views of their affiliated organizations.

About

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The TAP panel and professional staff from the City of Norcross gathered to tour the study area together.



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Executive Summary

Buford Highway in Norcross, Georgia, is lined with a variety of auto-centric businesses that have represented the historic economic activity of this commuting thoroughfare. City of Norcross (the City) leaders and the City's professional staff recognize the value these businesses bring to the community and, at the same time, wish to explore the potential for greater development along the roadway.

With an eye for potentially new mixed-use development that could deliver both residential units and additional commercial space through the addition of denser development, the City turned to the Urban Land Institute – Atlanta

District Council (ULI) for assistance in identifying the potential for additional denser development along the corridor.

To assist the City, ULI convened a panel of real estate professionals for a two-day technical assistance panel (TAP) to study the corridor, interview stakeholders, and deliver a set of recommendations the City can use going forward. The panel's recommendations focus on activating the corridor, identifying sites that may have potential for future mixed-use development, outlining policies and zoning practices that will support the City's development vision, and providing a set of near-term actions that will support the City's vision for a more vibrant corridor.

Further Activating the Corridor

Activating the Buford Highway corridor as a way to bring more vibrancy and economic activity to the area will rely heavily on improving the pedestrian experience and making the environment safer for people outside of vehicles. Creating a stronger sense of place, enhanced public amenities, and a plan for supporting new and legacy retail options will also promote activation.

Enhance walkability and pedestrian safety.

Improvements to pedestrian safety should include enhancing existing crosswalks, creating new crosswalks, and improving sidewalks along the corridor. A potential pedestrian bridge across the roadway at or near the library would also provide a safer corridor crossing and assist with new activation and programming at Lillian Webb Park.

Develop a cohesive identity. Stakeholders interviewed by the panel noted the area as having a particular "BuHi" vibe. Leveraging this perception to create a unique identity for the corridor could support community cohesion, excitement, and pride. This type of community identity should be built and fostered through robust community engagement and result in representation that is authentic to the diverse communities found across the city. The resulting identity campaign should be incorporated into streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage, and public art installations and should be factored into the built environment. Incremental improvements to properties



The TAP study area is outlined in yellow and bisected by the roadway under study, which is marked by the red line.

should also be allowed, which will bring the properties in line with the City's corridor overlay over time, support the community identity, and help create a unified and vibrant community character.

Revitalize commercial and retail areas. The City should take a two-pronged approach to retail along the corridor: preserving and supporting the area's existing cultural diversity and locally-owned businesses while, at the same time, working to attract new and complementary retail and entertainment options that add new vitality to the corridor. The panel encourages the City to consider investments along the east side of the corridor that can help connect the community and the businesses across Buford Highway and lessen the east-west economic divide. Commercial displacement can become a challenge as the area grows in public interest and private investment, and legacy businesses may need additional support from the City or through grant programs.

Focus on public amenities and community integration. More frequent programming of community-oriented public spaces and amenities can also boost activation. From parks to surface parking lots, public spaces can be used to celebrate the unique cultural heritage of Norcross. Public amenities and destinations should be balanced across both sides of Buford Highway to support all businesses and improve access for residents. Corridor branding can also support community integration when multicultural elements are thoughtfully included. These

multicultural assets can also help reinforce the city's unique identity, encourage community pride, and support the unique cultural destinations found in Norcross.

Potential for Mixed-use Development

The panel believes there is demand for both multifamily residential units and additional commercial space on the corridor, yet the potential for mixed-use dense development, given current market conditions, is low. Dense developments utilizing structured parking may not be financially feasible given market realities at the time of this study, but smaller-scale infill development may instead be feasible and would meet some of the pent-up demand.

The demand for more affordable housing units is high in Norcross and market-rate residential is also in demand. Vacancy rates for both residential and commercial space are low across the city, yet the supply of available land is also low, which will prove challenging for new, larger-scale development.

Based on these conditions, the panel recommends the City identify and prioritize a set of primary and secondary acquisition opportunities along the corridor in order to position these sites for future development. While these parcels are not currently on the market, conversations should begin today to ensure the City is aware of potential moves and is ready to act when the opportunities arise and the market fundamentals improve.

Primary development opportunities for new mixed-use might include:

- 265 Mitchell Road Northwest
- 5785 Buford Highway
- Intersection of Buford and Mitchell
- 5875 Buford Highway

Secondary development opportunities might also include:

- 5866 Buford Highway
- North Norcross Tucker and Lively Avenue
- Georgia Power parcels

Prepare now for future acquisitions.

These sites and areas represent the best opportunities for new development of scale along the corridor, and the City is encouraged to watch for acquisition opportunities either alone or working with a developer partner. Similarly, the City should watch for potential opportunities around current successful nodes as they also provide good opportunities for additional complementary mixed-use development. The City may want to consider subsidizing structured parking on prioritized sites and/or establishing a tax allocation district (TAD) or other financing incentives and mechanisms for site acquisition and development.

Prioritize housing. Housing should remain a priority for the City and smaller-scale development a block or two from Buford Highway could help meet the demand.

A near-term, medium-term, and long-term development priority list can help the City

organize its efforts and help prepare staff to be ready to act when opportunities arise.

Policy and Zoning Recommendations

Through policy guidelines, programming, and zoning updates, the City can encourage and help support an active and thriving corridor.

Pursue business inclusion. While the City works to attract new development, attention should also be paid to the businesses and residents already calling Norcross home. Filling the commercial gaps and vacancies should be done with the existing residential and business population in mind to continue to serve their needs and prevent future displacement. Community engagement using multilingual resources can help ensure that people are finding and receiving the business support and residential attention they need. The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) might be of assistance to corridor businesses and an additional corridor-focused business association, if one is not yet in place, also makes good sense. Small business grants, workshops, or other programmatic support can also help current and new business owners strengthen their operations and facilitate more active and open communications with the City.

Align City plans to ease implementation. City-level planning efforts and guidance must align in order to make clear the city's

priorities. There are currently competing and conflicting plans that have been developed over the past several years. As guidance relates to work along the corridor, the panel recommends aligning the City's comprehensive plan goals to the Buford Highway Master Plan as the guiding document. Clear policy guidelines and associated zoning regulations can help people navigate the approval process and alleviate staff time spent addressing questions. For proposed projects that meet all of the plan and overlay requirements, approvals should be conducted by City staff and thus free valuable City Council resources for matters that require variance or need community input. Finally, the Buford Highway zoning regulations should allow for incremental property improvements without triggering wholesale parcel conformity measures.

Near-term Actions

Economic and real estate development takes time and is most successful when there is a solid and clear foundation upon which the City, the developer, and the community can build. To support the strengthening of this foundation, there are a number of near-term actions the City can take to advance activation along the corridor and lay the groundwork for future development along Buford Highway.

- Establish programming for Lillian Webb Park.
- Ensure all City communications are multi-lingual and distributed city-wide.
- Immediately create a site priority list for near-, medium-, and long-term development.
- Set a clear vision aligning City plans and empowering staff to begin implementation.
- Incorporate provisions for Buford Highway zoning to allow incremental changes.
- Identify partners to help with the pursuit of grant programs and funding.

Conclusion

Buford Highway represents an area of small business success and new development potential. By balancing the needs and livelihoods of existing business owners with the needs of newer, dense mixed-use development, the City and community can benefit from a blend of the best of both worlds. Market fundamentals do not yet support the City's vision for dense, mixed-use development that requires structured parking, but through strategic preparation and relationship building today, the City can position itself to act when the market improves or when parcels become available.



Introduction and Background

The city of Norcross, Georgia, is a thriving, diverse, and growing municipality northeast of Atlanta. Like many cities across the United States, Norcross is also striving to balance its growth with maintaining housing affordability and retaining its unique attributes, including its small and locally-owned businesses, which draw people to visit Norcross and want to call it "home."

Having experienced the benefits of guidance gained from an Urban Land Institute (ULI) [technical assistance panel in 2010](#), the City turned again to ULI for assistance, this time with a focus on the Buford Highway corridor. The corridor is a state highway running through the city and is characterized by a wide roadway that typically features five lanes for vehicular traffic. The corridor is a commuting route for many with typical daily traffic counts surpassing 30,000 vehicles per day. This traffic volume has given rise to a number of commercial operations along the roadway, which in Norcross are marked by a large number of auto-centric uses housed in a wide variety of building and shopping center configurations.

New development can also be found along the Buford Highway corridor. Two new multifamily developments can now be found on or adjacent to the corridor and a new public library sits between the roadway and a redeveloped Lillian Webb Park, which also connects to the city's historic downtown. Although the multifamily developments did bring new housing to the area, the units are market-rate and have not assisted



The tour of the study area highlighted existing businesses that could be repositioned, intersections where redevelopment might add particular value, and public amenities that are already in place along the corridor.

TAP Questions

- How does the City effectively activate the Buford Highway corridor?
- What is the most reasonable expectation for mixed use development within the corridor with respect to the following?
 - » Mix of market rate, attainable and/or affordable housing and housing types
 - » Traditional mixed-use developments that include mixes of retail, commercial, office, and housing?
- What policy considerations should the City consider to aid redevelopment? Should the City reopen the Comprehensive Plan or Buford Highway Master Plan for updates?
- What zoning considerations should the City consider when encouraging mixed use and mixed housing projects? Should all projects come through a zoning process in the Buford Highway zoning district?

the community in addressing its need for more attainable units. Further west, at the intersection of Buford Highway and Stevens Road, the City is building a new public safety administration building, which will replace an obsolete building along the corridor and help activate the area.

Knowing that the transportation aspect of the Buford Highway corridor has an influential role to play in the commercial and civic vitality of the surrounding area, the City turned to ULI for assistance once again. With a focus on activating the corridor and identifying new viable development opportunities, the City asked ULI to convene a TAP to study the corridor from Mitchell Road to Stevens Road. ULI assembled a panel of real estate professionals with expertise in the areas of development, planning, brokerage, architecture, economic development, zoning, and placemaking to help answer the questions posed by the City. The panel spent two days onsite, touring the corridor, interviewing stakeholders, deliberating their findings, and crafting a set of recommendations the City can use as it sharpens its focus on the future of the land and uses along the Buford Highway corridor.

Robust Planning In Hand

As a function of the TAP process, the City prepared a set of briefing materials for the panel's review prior to the TAP work days. In addition to this briefing material, the panel also turned the City's existing planning documents.

The City of Norcross understands the role it can play in helping shape development across its landscape and has commissioned a number of studies and important guiding documents in recent years.

- [2045 Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [2024 Livable Center Initiative Plan](#)
- [Unified Development Ordinance](#)
- [Buford Highway Master Plan](#)
- [Downtown Parking Study](#)
- Target Industry Report
- [Urban Redevelopment Plan](#)
- [Parks, Greenspace & Trails Green Infrastructure Master Plan \(2024\)](#)
- [Norcross Sustainability Plan](#)
- [When Extended-stay Becomes Home \(2019\)](#)

These plans helped inform the panel's recommendations and also shed light on the complexities the City faces in aligning the guidance documents it already has on hand.

Finally, the panel performed a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis to further define the attributes of the corridor and expose the challenges the City and development community may face as they continue to seek development and redevelopment along this particular stretch of Buford Highway.

What the Panel Heard

Interviews with stakeholders—including municipal staff and officials, business leaders, community members, and more—uncovered the following themes.

- Development of existing businesses and commercial vitality is important
- The area has a unique community identity and character
- Community integration and development should be inclusive
- The area could benefit from additional economic development and mixed-use opportunities
- Housing affordability and diversity is a challenge in the community
- There is not a one-size-fits-all development framework for the corridor
- Infrastructure improvements are needed along the corridor
- Mixed-use development and density are expected yet the community may not be in full agreement on where and how this development takes shape
- Transportation, pedestrian safety, and connectivity are critical along the corridor
- Public spaces and community amenities are well used and more are needed east of the corridor
- Safety and community well-being realities may not match perceptions
- The community is concerned that more development will result in traffic and parking issues

STRENGTHS

Strong desire for community cohesion and identity

Support for inclusive development

Celebration of mixed-use development and legacy ownership

Cultural vibrancy and small business ecosystem

Strong cultural heritage and identity

Proximity to historic downtown

Micro-transit pilot program helps bridge connections

Safe community and low crime rates in the study area

Presence of nonprofits and other organizations ready to help preserve cultural heritage

WEAKNESSES

Lack of lower and median-income housing options

Disconnected physical layout and barriers, not walkable

Community concern over perception of development creating additional traffic

Lack of public amenities on the east side of Buford Highway

Lack of comprehensive engagement with all populations

Fractured ownership of parcels

Overwhelming focus on historic district

Broken-window effect

Non-inclusive branding

Business owners are not always the property owner

OPPORTUNITIES

Leverage partners for improved physical and cultural connectivity

Mixed-use development and economic growth

Community-oriented amenities and green spaces

Celebrate cultural diversity to enhance business opportunities

Robust array of plans on the table

THREATS

Gentrification and displacement

Housing transiency

Perceptions of traffic issues worsening with increased density

Resistance to high-density development

Absentee property ownership

Insufficient coordination and cohesive planning

Perceptions around safety



Further Activating the Corridor

The Buford Highway corridor is an active automobile thoroughfare that is an effective vehicular transportation route. The corridor also creates a barrier that separates east and west Norcross and makes pedestrian, bicycle, or other non-automotive movement across its expanse challenging. This same barrier to connectivity across the corridor also curbs pedestrian activity along its length as broader circulation is difficult.

Activating the corridor will rely heavily on improving the pedestrian experience and making the environment one in which people feel safe, invited, and welcome to visit and linger. Supporting this experience will also require a stronger focus on the identity of the corridor, a plan for strengthening and supporting new retail options, and providing additional public amenities and spaces for community gathering and integration.

Enhance Walkability and Pedestrian Safety

As a state roadway, modifications to Buford Highway may prove challenging, yet improvements to pedestrian safety will greatly enhance the walkability of the area and improve the overall corridor experience.

Enhance existing and add new crosswalks.

The physical barrier created by Buford Highway's multiple lanes can be addressed through the installation of additional crosswalks and improvements to existing facilities. Presently, within the one-mile stretch of the study area, only three crosswalks are available to pedestrians wishing to cross the

roadway. The City is encouraged to work with the Georgia Department of Transportation to enhance these crossings, whether through Hawk signalization, a pedestrian table, or other similar traffic-slowing mechanisms. A new pedestrian crossing at Britt Avenue NW would also be a welcome addition given the presence of the public library and city park at this intersection.

Improve corridor sidewalks. The sidewalks lining the corridor need improvement, including wider walkways and further separation and protection from the vehicles traveling the corridor, and sidewalk connections to the Norcross Greenway would expand recreation and walkability in the area. The sidewalk improvements on the north side of the corridor, fronting the new library and the Brunswick multifamily development, provide a much improved (more inviting and safer) pedestrian experience and should be replicated along both sides of the roadway.

Consider a pedestrian bridge at the library.

The Buford Highway Master Plan contemplates a potential pedestrian bridge spanning the corridor to assist with pedestrian connectivity. The master plan notes the potential bridge location as either Holcomb Bridge Road or at the library. Should the City wish to pursue a pedestrian bridge, locating it at the library would be preferred.

Activate Lillian Webb Park. The renovations to Lillian Webb Park are impressive. The park is open, inviting, and attractive. The park is active organically, yet actively and



The City's Buford Highway master planning process engaged the community to gather feedback on potential streetscape improvements along the corridor.



The Buford Highway Master Plan provides excellent guidance for future development along the corridor and notes the potential for a pedestrian bridge to connect across the roadway at the library.



Plans for a greenway connector—a joint project of the Georgia Department of Transportation, Gwinnett County and the City of Norcross—is a good example of non-vehicular connections and movement facilitation in other parts of the city.

intentionally programming the park with regular events, designed to appeal to diverse Norcross residents, will bring more people to the center of town and encourage more visits to the surrounding retail establishments and downtown beyond. Additionally, the panel recommends re-establishing the farmers' market in the park. In addition to helping regularly activate the area on certain days of the week, the farmers' market could help alleviate some residents' concerns regarding limited proximate grocery options and provide more convenient access to fresh produce and other goods.

Enhancing safety and focusing specifically on non-vehicular accessibility to and across the corridor will encourage additional foot traffic, support the businesses along the corridor, and create a more unified neighborhood surrounding the corridor.

Develop a Cohesive Identity

The panel heard from stakeholders that the community would benefit from a more cohesive identity. More specifically, one stakeholder noted there is a "BuHi vibe" that was distinct in Norcross and could be elevated. The Norcross BuHi identity presents

an opportunity for community cohesion, excitement, and pride. It could also serve as an important identifier, if incorporated into signage, for those visiting the area, signifying that they have arrived in Norcross.

This type of community identity, when implemented through branded signage, color palette, or other unique identifiers, could help visually and culturally tie the community together, east and west across Buford Highway. When done well, community identity campaigns can foster widespread community pride and create a more appealing and engaging experience for residents, businesses, and visitors. When rolled out through branded signage, visitors are more easily able to navigate the community, exploring everything it has to offer.

Ensure diverse community representation.

A cohesive identity envisioned by the panel is reflective of the community and its diverse population and feels authentic to the community it represents. The City is encouraged to refine Norcross's identity by engaging all citizens in the process, ensuring inclusivity and representation of the city's diverse residents. Not a solo act, this type of community identity building benefits from strong and diverse partnerships. The City is encouraged to partner with local nonprofits such as We Love BuHi and 85 CDC in the work. Community and grassroots-led organizations like these are in an excellent position to conduct culturally appropriate and inclusive outreach across the community,

which will help identify, amplify, and preserve the multi-ethnic character of the corridor. This community engagement process can also serve as the platform upon which to build additional community-informed policies and processes that can then be reflected in the City's architectural guidelines and further development decision-making activities.

Incorporate the identity into public assets.

Once developed, an identity campaign should be incorporated into streetscape improvements, wayfinding signage, and public art installations to visually connect Buford Highway with the surrounding community. Similarly, the City is encouraged to install markers and signs that define the primary entry points into Norcross, which can help reinforce its identity as a unique, multicultural destination and help visitors recognize when they have arrived in Norcross. These improvements are within the City's control and purview and can have an immediate positive impact on the corridor experience.

Incorporate the identity into the built environment. The Buford Highway Master Plan has identified the architectural features that are found across downtown Norcross and the Norcross Comprehensive Plan points to development scale and desired uses for the Town Center area. These guidance documents, combined with the City's Architectural and Site Design Standards can help create a cohesive visual identity for the built environment along the

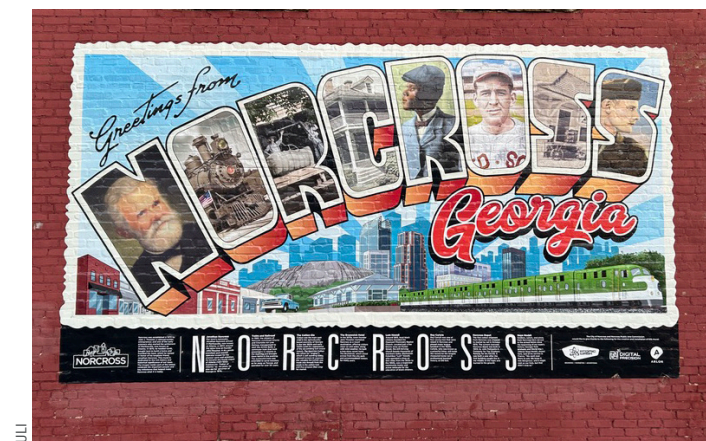
corridor that fosters a greater sense of place and encourages exploration. Taking this alignment one step further, the City should also consider implementing architectural guidelines via a Buford Highway zoning overlay to guide new construction and renovation in the area. While this may add some time to the permitting process, it will help create a unified and vibrant community character over the long term.

Revitalize Commercial and Retail Areas

Further activation along the corridor should also come in the form of revitalized commercial and retail spaces.

Pursue supplemental retail options for the corridor. By attracting supplemental retail and entertainment options, additional economic and vitality can be infused into the corridor while at the same time also preserving and supporting the area's existing cultural diversity and locally-owned businesses. As additional multifamily development occurs along the corridor, attracting a grocery store and additional restaurants becomes more achievable with the infusion of more households to support the businesses.

Balance investment on the east side of Buford Highway. The City has done a great job of upgrading Lillian Webb Park and supporting the library's redevelopment. These moves create important connections from the corridor to downtown. The panel



Pocket parks and murals are great ways to activate spaces, create welcome environments and engage the community.

encourages the City to consider investments along the east side of the corridor that can help connect the community and the businesses on the east side of the corridor as well. These investments can also help catalyze additional private investment and development to the east, providing additional resources, services, and retail options for the neighbors beyond and lessening the city's east-west economic divide.

Preserve the multi-cultural nature of the area. While economic development efforts primarily seek to attract new businesses to the corridor, the existing legacy businesses along the Buford Highway corridor should be preserved, supported, and elevated. Partnering with and supporting initiatives like "We Love BuHi," which celebrates and supports immigrant-owned businesses, helps ensure that the multi-cultural character of the corridor remains intact. The City is encouraged to provide support for façade improvements, signage upgrades, and other aesthetic improvements that will assist these legacy businesses in elevating the visual appeal of their buildings and the corridor as a whole. These investments will also assist in attracting new businesses to the area as it helps signal the City's belief that the corridor is worthy of the investment. Commercial gentrification and displacement can become a challenge as the area grows in public interest and private investment, and these legacy business supports are critical.

Encourage incorporation of the identity into the business environment. With the aforementioned cohesive identity for the community and corridor, the City should consider how it could encourage corridor businesses to also incorporate the identity elements into the visual aspects of their property. Signage elements, complimentary plantings, and architectural enhancements can help foster a more cohesive and appealing commercial environment that encourages visitors and residents alike to support local businesses and explore all that the corridor has to offer.

Focus on Public Amenities and Community Integration

Activation along the Buford Highway corridor can also be achieved through more frequent programming of community-oriented public spaces and amenities.

There are a host of opportunities for temporary events and community gatherings along the Buford Highway corridor. From parks to surface parking lots, these spaces could be used to celebrate the unique cultural heritage and multicultural identity of Norcross residents. By creating public gathering spaces that serve as vibrant anchors, both sides of the corridor can enjoy increased activation.

Create public amenities and destinations across both sides of Buford Highway. The existing public amenities and historic downtown anchor the west side of the corridor; similar attention should be placed on the east side of the corridor. By prioritizing new amenities on the east side of Buford Highway, residents to the east can enjoy more ready access to services, activities, and entertainment. Businesses on both sides of the corridor would benefit from the increased public activity, and this expanded amenity area may also encourage people to explore more of Norcross. Accessible parking facilities near these new amenities on the east side of the corridor will be needed, the addition of which will help shift the current one-directional movement across Buford Highway to a more balanced environment.

Incorporate multicultural elements in corridor branding. Art, murals, and other cultural elements that celebrate the diverse populations of Norcross, particularly on the east side of Buford Highway, can support community integration. With authentic community engagement and work that is conducted with cultural competency, the City can elevate the multicultural identity of the city and create a cohesive visual brand for the corridor. These multicultural elements will help reinforce the city's unique identity, encourage community pride, and support the unique cultural destinations that attract both local residents and visitors to Norcross.



Potential for Mixed-use Development

In recognition of the success of recent new developments along the corridor, both in Norcross and in neighboring communities, the City asked the panel to explore and identify the potential for new mixed-use development along Buford Highway. In this scenario, the question centered around new multi-story buildings that would feature retail or other commercial uses on the ground floor topped by residential units above.

Demand Analysis

The panel believes there is notable demand for additional multifamily residential units in the area as well as demand for additional commercial space.

There is demand for new housing units.

New residential opportunities include both for-rent and for-sale developments (excepting condominiums, which are not in demand presently). Recent multifamily projects in and around the area—including the Clara (which is still in the initial leasing phase), Broadstone Junction, and The Brunswick—are all well-leased with rents around \$2 per square foot.

Affordable housing is needed. Additional affordable housing, offered at a mix of affordability levels, is also needed in the community as current units are full, and extended-stay hotels are increasingly converting to more permanent spaces for families.

Small-scale development is achievable.

When considering how to meet this demand, development scale along the corridor is also

an important factor to consider. With a wide mix of property owners and building types already populating both sides of the roadway, new development will most likely take shape in smaller scale formats rather than larger-scale projects.

Amenities play a role. The city's amenities and the corridor's proximity to historic downtown Norcross will also play important roles in attracting additional new development to the area.

Supply Analysis

The panel also evaluated the potential supply of new residential and commercial development along the corridor, much of which will hinge on parcel availability.

Vacancy rates are low. The influx of several new mixed-use or multifamily projects has added to the city's supply of housing and commercial space, but few spaces are vacant and the supply of available space is low. At the time of this study, no new market-rate mixed-use or residential projects are proposed for the corridor.

Affordable housing supply is low. The City is aware of the lack of affordable housing in the area, a fact that the panel believes should be reinforced. Extended-stay hotels often serve as quasi-attainable housing, particularly for families who are keen to ensure their children can remain enrolled the local public schools. Naturally occurring affordable housing—typically modest or older small homes that are more affordable to lower-income

households—is in low supply in Norcross. These homes are also of a lower quality and may not be large enough to meet the needs of today's families.

Low supply of available land. At the same time, there is also a very limited supply of available land for the types of larger-scale developments that could begin to effectively meet the housing demands in the area. At four or more acres—similar in size to the parcel on which The Brunswick sits—the supply of developable parcels for mixed-use projects is low.

Present-day market conditions make

structured parking difficult. The realities of the 2024 market are also much different than the environment in 2021 when The Brunswick was built. Current interest rates and construction prices make a project similar to The Brunswick, which features structured garage parking, no longer achievable without public incentives. Most of the multifamily development underway in the region features surface parking lots instead of structured parking, which can increase the land needed for multifamily development from four acres to a minimum of ten acres. The panel believes that there will be a time in the coming years when the market and rental rates can support the costs associated with structured parking, but that is just not the case today.

Retail vacancy is also low along the corridor.

While the Buford Highway corridor does feature some vacant retail spaces available for lease, many of the spaces were recently

home to auto-centric businesses, which are not easily convertible for other uses. The high number of auto-centric businesses currently operating along the corridor leaves many residents wishing for more traditional retail and restaurant options.

Potential Opportunities

There are a few potential parcels that could provide room for the type of development scale the City is seeking for the corridor. While these parcels are currently held by entities other than the City and some maintain active uses, there may be an opportunity to step in when the use changes or the parcel is made available for sale.

Primary development opportunities for new mixed-use might include:

- A – 265 Mitchell Road Northwest. This approximately six-acre site currently houses U.S. Postal Service operations.
- B – 5785 Buford Highway. This property, held by Insignia, has already been assembled, and development there should include a mix of uses.
- C – Intersection of Buford and Mitchell. The potential for some parcel assembly around this intersection and its proximity to other amenities makes these parcels particularly interesting for development.
- D – 5875 Buford Highway. This former autobody business and its adjacent site are already on the market and ready for a new use. This site could also provide space for businesses in the above

parcels that may need a new location should ownership transfer and related parcel repositioning move them out. The City would likely need to assist with this process and there are mechanisms available to support this type of move.

Secondary development opportunities might also include:

- E – 5866 Buford Highway. This site currently houses non-retail operations for AT&T.

- F – North Norcross Tucker Road and Lively Avenue. The parcels between these roads and the corridor could assemble into something larger and more attractive for development.
- G – Georgia Power parcels. Should Georgia Power choose to divide and sell off some of its land owned along the corridor, this area, too, could be attractive for larger, mixed-use development.



The panel mapped out several potential development sites and prioritized each as either primary or secondary opportunities.

Recommendations

As the City considers future development potential along the corridor, the panel recommends the following actions.

Focus on the priority sites. The sites identified on the previous page represent the best opportunities for developments of scale along the corridor. The City should pay ongoing attention to movement at these sites and be in conversation with the land owner or tap a consultant to do so on the City's behalf.

Be opportunistic with acquisitions. The City is encouraged to watch for acquisition opportunities on its priority sites and be ready to purchase or work with a friendly developer to partner on acquisitions. The work on the priority sites should also take into account potential additional parcel assemblage where needed or when opportunities arise. The City can opportunistically seek additional development options, especially at larger sites with fewer owners, and seek to acquire or control as many key parcels as possible.

Know what is happening in the market. While today's market fundamentals will not support the structured parking needed for the type of denser development the City seeks, that will not always be the case and the City should be ready to move when the financials improve.

Leverage and expand on previous success. The City's focus should also include the areas around the corridor's current successful nodes. Sites near The Brunswick and Lillian Webb Park could provide excellent opportunities for additional complementary mixed-use development. Similarly, developing along the west side of Buford Highway first can allow development to build and grow naturally across the roadway in much the same way development in Chamblee has progressed to include both sides of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard.

Pursue attainable housing development. Housing should remain a priority for the City and smaller-scale development within a block or two Buford Highway could help meet

the housing demand. Additional attainable housing, primarily east of Buford Highway, may provide welcome opportunities for families currently calling the extended-stay units home.

Consider a range of development incentives and tools. Should parcels become available before the market shifts to more readily support structured parking, the City may wish to consider subsidizing structured parking on the prioritized sites. It may also be worth considering the formation of a tax allocation district (TAD) and using other financing incentives and mechanisms for site acquisition and development.

Prioritize the work. Finally, the City is encouraged to create a site priority list for near-term, medium-term, and long-term development. This type of further prioritization can assist with decision-making, reduce the potential for distractions, and help prepare City staff to be ready to act when opportunities arise.



The new residential developments lining the edge of Lillian Webb Park are good examples of dense residential development that would fit well along the corridor.



Policy and Zoning Recommendations

The City has tools at its disposal that can help guide development along the Buford Highway corridor. The policy guidelines, programming and support, and zoning updates outlined below should support the City's pursuit of an active and thriving corridor.

Pursue Business Inclusion

While the City works to attract new development to the corridor, it is also just as important to ensure that the businesses and residents already calling Norcross home are finding support and resources and are able to thrive.

Think small (business). The businesses lining the corridor represent a wide array of services and goods that people have come to expect along Buford Highway. Many of these businesses, a noticeable number of which are auto-centric, are finding success, paying taxes, and contributing to the economic vitality of the corridor and the city. Filling in the gaps between these establishments and attracting new businesses should be conducted with the existing population in mind so as to not cause displacement.

Investigate and invest in existing resources. In much the same way deep and authentic community engagement is foundational to creating a community identity, the same engagement practices should be employed with the business community, meeting business owners and customers where they are and working to understand their wants

and needs. Using focused multilingual engagement for those living, working, and using the corridor can help ensure that people are finding and receiving the business support and attention they need and deserve. Community engagement is not just for residential development and, when done well, can go a long way toward building additional customer support for the area's economic engine.

Promote and build relationships with supportive business organizations.

With information gathered through the engagement work noted above, the City can begin to shape a program for the corridor that supports existing businesses and attracts new ventures.

- The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) footprint extends to and includes the Buford Highway corridor. As such, businesses along the corridor are eligible to apply for the DDA's facade grant program, which can improve the appearance of individual businesses and the corridor as a whole. It would also be beneficial to include corridor business owners on the DDA board to ensure helpful representation of BuHi business owners and their unique needs.
- Additionally, if the corridor businesses do not already have an organized business association, the panel recommends the formation of one. Such a business association can provide a venue for collaboration, communication, and advocacy, and the City would benefit

from having a focused point of contact who is regularly speaking with, is trusted by, and is charged with representing corridor businesses.

- The City is also encouraged to explore other opportunities to incentivize small businesses to strengthen, expand, or otherwise improve their operations on the corridor. Small business grants, workshops, or other programmatic support can go a long way in providing information and resources to business owners and operators who may need it. These engagements also strengthen the relationships between the City and the businesses, opening lines of communication wider and creating a stronger partnership.

Align City Plans to Ease Implementation

City-level planning and policy work has resulted in an impressive array of plans and guiding documents for Norcross. The challenge remains, however, in identifying and understanding city-level priorities.

Establish a clear, predictable, and easy-to-use set of policy guidelines. A small business owner wanting to improve or even redevelop their property may have trouble finding a clear path forward or understanding what is allowed. Establishing a clear set of policy guidelines that are easy to use and that are realized through associated zoning regulations can help people navigate

Case Study

Over-the-Rhine Neighborhood

Cincinnati, Ohio



Corporate funding and public and private leadership helped small developers and business owners transform the buildings and streetscapes across the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood.

In Over-the-Rhine, a neighborhood adjoining downtown Cincinnati, private corporations committed both funds and leadership to the formation of a new community development corporation—3CDC—to guide redevelopment and investment in the area. Led by 3CDC, a comprehensive, action-oriented strategy was devised to recognize the importance of the cultural amenities of the area and guide actions that helped restore Fountain Square, a Cincinnati landmark, and bring the neighborhood alive with new housing and new jobs. By investing across the neighborhood—from homeless shelters to historic cultural amenities, as well as new housing, hotels, and offices—Over-the-Rhine became a national model of public/private leadership.



3CDC's founding corporations invested in the Cincinnati New Markets Fund, a revolving loan fund, which offered patient loans as seed capital to begin and continue the revitalization of the area through individual business and property improvements and investments.

As development took place, the perceptions of the area began to change. With 3CDC responsible for management, regular and frequent programming was offered, including music, food, and festivals. Over-the-Rhine and the central business district have become the places to go in the Cincinnati region for interesting dining, retail, and entertainment.

For more information, [Over-the-Rhine Neighborhood Case Study](#).

the process easier and faster and also alleviate staff time spent providing personal assistance to those with questions and needing guidance. Clarity is key.

Use the Buford Highway Master Plan as a foundation. Throughout the stakeholder interviews, the Buford Highway Master Plan was frequently referenced as a foundational document. This document should be prioritized as the guiding document to set the goals and vision for the corridor.

Align the comprehensive plan goals to the Buford Highway Master Plan. Aligning the City's comprehensive plan goals with the Buford Highway Master Plan should be a priority and one that will require early buy-in from everyone, particularly the City Council. This comp plan alignment, which should support the City Council's vision, will then serve as the primary guiding document for development along the corridor. The details of the comp plan and the new architectural guidelines can be enacted through zoning regulations.

When plan goals are met, shift project approvals to City staff. For projects that meet the requirements of the aligned plans and zoning regulations, project approvals should shift from discretionary review by the City Council to staff approval. This shift, using design guidelines that staff administers, creates a review process that is clear and predictable for developers and business owners wishing to bring projects, improvements, and investments to Norcross.

This type of process improvement will be of interest to large developers working on projects with very tight margins as well as smaller entities lacking the knowledge or additional resources needed to navigate a discretionary approval process. The implementation of the plans and project reviews will be facilitated by the Buford Highway zoning that is already in place and the architectural overlay. Once in place, should changes to regulations be required, they can be made through text amendments and not require a code rewrite.

Update Buford Highway zoning to allow for incremental changes. The City's current all-or-nothing non-conformity regulations may be limiting improvements to the corridor properties and should be loosened.

- Current non-conformity zoning regulations trigger full-scale building and site improvements when any non-conformity, regardless of size or scale, is cured. In practice, this may prove limiting to the broader enhancement of the corridor as business owners may defer any updates knowing that this one improvement will trigger a call for cure of all non-conformities. Language should be added to the zoning ordinance to allow thresholds for smaller scale work which does not trigger full compliance. This update can provide businesses, particularly the small, locally-owned operators, with flexibility to improve their property over time and as they have funding. For the City, this means



COUNCIL OF KOREAN AMERICANS ON INSTAGRAM

The addition of this mural along one side of this building might otherwise trigger a host of other updates to the structure and grounds, which may have led the business owner to reconsider this singular improvement.


that improvements can be made more regularly over time instead of having properties sit unimproved until funding is secured for comprehensive updates, which may never come.

- These same non-conformity regulations may also be limiting beneficial temporary improvements that can help further activate the corridor. Improvements to a building facade, using a mural or other artistic activation, can make a significant difference in the experience of moving along the corridor, yet requiring improvements to all building

sides and grounds when installing a mural can become onerous and discouraging. Instead, by reaching into the artist and film industry, seeking participation for quick activation of facades, improvements along the corridor can take place incrementally and deliver a far more visually engaging corridor experience. Eventual complete conformity should still be the goal, yet providing ample time to achieve that conformity and providing opportunities for temporary activations in the interim should be allowed.



Next Steps



Economic and real estate development takes time and is most successful when there is a solid and clear foundation upon which the City, the developer, and the community can build. To support the strengthening of this foundation, there are a number of near-term actions the City can take to advance activation along the corridor and lay the groundwork for future development along the Buford Highway corridor.

Near-term Actions

Establish programming for Lillian Webb Park. The festivals that are held in Lillian Webb Park are a good first step toward more robust use of the beautiful public asset. With additional focus and funding for staffing, regular programming should be planned for the park as a way to bring the community together on a regular basis and stimulate activity along the corridor, attracting residents from neighborhoods to the east and west as well as visitors to Norcross. Re-introducing the Farmers' Market would be a great place to start.

Ensure all City communications are multi-lingual and distributed city-wide. The diverse nature of the Norcross population is a strength. It also requires careful attention. Communications from the City should be multi-lingual and be delivered through a variety of tools. Reaching people where they are and speaking their language is foundational to authentic and effective community engagement across both residential and business populations.

Immediately create a site priority list for near, medium, and long-term development.

Using the panel's recommendations for parcel acquisitions or a separate list developed by the City, the City should identify the parcels it views as key to future development and lay the foundation for future acquisitions. Whether managed by the City directly or in partnership with a trusted developer, strategic communications should begin with the parcel owners to ensure that the City is made aware and able to act should the parcel be readied for sale. Site control is key to ensuring that the type of development the City would like to see is eventually realized.

Set a clear vision aligning city plans and empowering staff to begin implementation.

As it relates to the corridor, the panel recommends the City's comprehensive plan align with the Buford Highway Master Plan. This alignment and an associated overlay district will ensure that the City's vision for the corridor will be carried out and reduce the need for City Council review. Administrative staff should be empowered to review and approve plans that align with the Master Plan and meet zoning requirements. In addition to supporting the City's vision for the corridor, it will also signal to the development community that the City knows what it wants and has clear guidance for achieving it. Clarity and certainty are key to development success; consistent rules, clear processes, and by-right approvals for aligned projects will serve developers well and, more importantly, support the community's goals.

Update Buford Highway zoning language to allow for incremental changes. Business owners wishing to make small improvements should be allowed to do so without triggering comprehensive conformity regulations. By updating the zoning along the corridor to include thresholds for smaller-scale work, the City should begin to see a greater uptick in incremental, yet not insignificant, updates that will support the overall improved look and feel of the corridor.

Identify partners to help with grant programs. Grant writing can be an art and it is often a task that is delayed in order to address more pressing matters. By working with partners or hiring a consultant to help with grant pursuits, the City can begin to pursue and potentially access new funding sources for some of the work recommended by the panel.

The Buford Highway corridor is an economic engine for Norcross and one that the City recognizes could be even stronger. Encouraging new development, particularly denser multifamily and mixed-use development along the roadway will need to be balanced with current market realities. Balance must also be struck between the pursuit of new economic development wins with support and programs for legacy businesses along Buford Highway. Development takes time, but the recommendations outlined by the panel and the City's actions in the near term can strengthen the foundation for future development in Norcross.



Appendix

Case Studies: Administrative Review

Case Studies

The following jurisdictions are improving their process reviews in manners that may be of interest to the City of Norcross as it considers shifting to from discretionary to administrative reviews of projects that meet all stated requirements.d

- **Chicago's Zoning Approval Modifications.** In December 2023, [Chicago amended its zoning code](#) to eliminate redundant application processes, thereby expediting development reviews. This subtle yet significant modification has the potential to dramatically accelerate development approvals, facilitating economic growth.
- **Montgomery County's Development Review Enhancements.** [Montgomery County, Maryland](#), has undertaken initiatives to streamline its development approval processes. These efforts include cross-agency collaborations and the adoption of self-certification programs, which allow qualified professionals to certify compliance with certain regulations, thereby reducing the burden on county review staff and accelerating project timelines.
- **Vallejo's Development Review Streamlining.** The [City of Vallejo, California](#), has prioritized streamlining its development review processes. Efforts have been made to make the customer experience more streamlined and user-

friendly, with additional improvements planned to further expedite development approvals.

- **Charlotte County's Streamlined Platting Process.** Charlotte County, Florida has recently launched a [new webpage](#) dedicated to streamlining the platting process for subdivisions. This eliminates the need for public hearings, which were

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A streamlined or expedited development review process reduces procedural steps, eliminates redundant requirements, or sets firm deadlines for municipal decisions. It supports housing production by reducing delays, lowering costs, and increasing certainty thereby creating predictable review timelines and outcomes that encourage investment in housing projects.

—Deborah L. Myerson, AICP
Senior Research and Policy Fellow,
Terwilliger Center for Housing,
Urban Land Institute

previously required. This change aligns with Senate Bill 812, signed into law in May 2024, which mandates expedited issuance of building permits for residential subdivisions.

- **Miami's Administrative Site Plan Review.** The City of Miami has [proposed an ordinance](#) to streamline the permitting process for "by right" projects. This process allows developers to seek approval for their site plans before submitting a building permit application, providing more certainty and reducing the risk of costly redesigns.
- **St. Johns County's One-Stop Permitting.** St. Johns County allows for [quick and efficient approval of construction plans](#) that have received only minor comments on their first submission. This helps to expedite the permitting process and reduce delays. St. Johns County also uses a [Development Review Tracker](#), which is a map that shows permitting activity and project status. This transparency helps developers and the public stay informed about the progress of various projects.



About the Panel



Jetha Wagner
Panel Chair
Vice President
Avila Real Estate

As Vice President of Avila Development, LLC, Jetha oversees daily development activities and establishes risk management policy and procedure. She is also responsible for managing lender and partner relations and reporting, monitoring development and construction budgets, cost management and procurement. Jetha has 25+ years in the real estate industry, with an emphasis on the multifamily market. She began her career with Avila as a paralegal and from there, moved into the development and management side of the business. During her tenure with Avila, Jetha has been intimately involved in the construction and development of numerous Atlanta area multifamily communities and retail centers. She coordinates all refinancing, operations and disposition of assets, both commercial and residential, as well as the acquisition and repositioning of single asset purchases. Moreover, Jetha has overseen legal affairs for Avila since 1996. Jetha graduated from the National Center for Paralegal Training in Atlanta, Georgia and holds both the Certified Apartment Manager and Certified Apartment Property Supervisor designations. Other professional associations include the Atlanta Beltline SSD Steering Committee; ULI Member and ULI Taps Committee; board member of the Stonecrest Business Alliance, Inc. and Stonecrest Industrial Council, LLC; and member of the Stonecrest Overlay Task Force.



Sarah Butler
Principal
PRAXIS3

Sarah Butler is a registered architect and registered interior designer with 25 years of experience in multifamily, affordable housing, 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 21 years. Having moved to Atlanta from Columbus, Ohio, in 2003, with a masters degree in architecture from The Ohio State University, Sarah has led projects at every scale. Her favorite projects are those that repurpose the remaining historic fabric of the city into a space that functions with contemporary lifestyles in a sustainable way. Sarah currently serves on the Beltline Affordable Housing Advisory Board and is a member of ULI's Center for Leadership Advisory Council. She is a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, is a member and recurring tour guide for the Atlanta Preservation Center, and has presented at American Institute of Architects conferences and on local tours.



Scott Cullen
OnPace Partners

Scott recently joined On Pace Partners. Prior to his time with OnPace, Scott was a Managing Director at JLL in Atlanta, responsible for growing the practice in the southeastern United States. Scott's team advised corporate and investor clients on land and development transactions, conducted market research, performed financial and development analysis, valued land and underutilized assets, and conducted site searches. He has experience with acquisition, disposition, and advisory projects for clients such as Georgia Power, AT&T, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, General Motors, Bank of America, Comcast, Georgia-Pacific, and Whirlpool Corporation. In addition, Scott has marketed and consulted on development and redevelopment projects in Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, Texas, New Jersey, and Bermuda. Before joining JLL, Scott was a project manager for the St. Joe Company, managing the development of residential resort communities. He also served as the development manager for a golf and beach resort owner, overseeing all aspects of development. He previously practiced real estate law with the firm of Dwyer & Cambre in New Orleans where he advised real estate developers on various opportunities and transactions and litigated real estate-related disputes. Scott earned an MBA from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, with concentrations in real estate and finance. He earned a JD and a BS in Accounting from Louisiana State University.



Christy Dodson

Associate Principal Code Studio

Christy Dodson is an Associate Principal at Code Studio where she leads the firm's Atlanta office. Her work focuses on creative zoning strategies that foster more equitable development outcomes. Christy relies on her experience managing adaptive reuse and urban infill projects to bring together high-level policy goals with practical implementation. She has authored codes adopted by communities across the country that are innovative, user-friendly, and responsive to the unique needs of each place. Christy holds master's degrees in City and Regional Planning and Architecture from Georgia Institute of Technology.



AnnMarie Hasty

Business Recruitment Associate Georgia Power

AnnMarie Hasty serves on the Statewide Economic Development team as a Business Recruitment Associate. She brings considerable experience in economic development, research, project management, and client relations to her new role.

Most recently serving as a Senior Consultant with Ernst & Young, AnnMarie engaged with local, regional, and statewide economic development organizations across the country. She provided leadership, management, and research for strategic planning initiatives in workforce, community, and economic development.

Prior to joining EY in 2021, AnnMarie worked in various roles at Partnership Gwinnett, including Project Coordinator, Research Analyst, and Research Manager. In addition to leading Partnership Gwinnett's research department, she also served as the lead for their 5-year strategic plan and capital campaign.

AnnMarie is a graduate of Georgia Southern University where she earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree with a concentration in Economics. She has been a member of various professional organizations, including the Georgia Economic Developers Association, C2ER, the International Economic Development Council, and the Council of Development Finance Agencies.

On the weekend, you can usually find AnnMarie at her local brewery with her husband and dog.



Taana Kow-Mayes

Director of Marketing and Placemaking Selig Enterprises

Taana Kow-Mayes is Director of Marketing and Placemaking and oversees the Marketing Department at Selig Enterprises, one of the largest family-owned commercial real estate companies in the southeast. She leads the team responsible for driving brand awareness for the company's retail, office, and industrial assets and focuses on creative strategy, branding, signage, art, and activations. Since 2018, Taana has been a major contributor to the development of The Works on Atlanta's upper westside, building a community-driven sense of place through art and events, and works with tenants and local stakeholders to create unique experiences. Through her efforts in the development and execution of events and programming, The Works now hosts more than 400 activations per year. Prior to working at Selig Enterprises, Taana began her career at Smith Real Estate Services working in land acquisitions. Taana is a Pathbuilders Achieva Class of 2024 member, and a member of ICSC. She holds a dual degree from Georgia State University in Real Estate and Marketing.



Lejla Prljaca
Executive Director,
Lawrenceville Housing
Authority
CEO, Gwinnett Housing
Corporation



Lejla Prljaca serves jointly as the executive director of the Lawrenceville Housing Authority and CEO of the Gwinnett Housing Corporation where she plans, organizes, and directs the operations of the largest nonprofit affordable housing agency in Gwinnett. Lejla has navigated the complex landscape of funding for affordable housing to create programs that fulfill basic human needs and serve as multipliers for local economic activity. She has worked to educate elected officials and others about the value of mixed income communities, particularly as an engine for upward socioeconomic mobility. Since 2007, Lejla's resources have produced \$90 million in local economic development activity. Lejla's creative and innovative leadership style utilizes evidence-based programming to merge traditional affordable housing models with a community-based development focus, establishing such best practices as creating homeownership and wealth building opportunities for homeless and transitional housing residents. Lejla has worked with multiple private and public entities to support and provide the full spectrum of housing programs, including the creation of Gwinnett's first homeownership center to preserve and increase ownership rates and a series of housing resources expos to connect residents with more than 20 community partners and organizations that provide information and resources on homeownership, rental, and home improvement opportunities.

Nicolia Robinson, AICP
Leadership, Principal,
and Director of the
Urban Planning &
Design Studio
Cooper Carry



As Principal of the Urban Design & Planning Studio, Nicolía leverages more than 20 years of expertise to guide the direction of the studio, collaborating across the firm to advance Cooper Carry's mission of connecting people to place. She oversees transit, mixed-use, downtown, and neighborhood master planning projects for public and private sector clients. In addition, she organizes and leads public outreach meetings, charettes, public presentations, community work sessions, and stakeholder interviews. With a background in architecture and urban planning, her approach for master planning involves more than erecting a building or completing a project—it relies on an honest, thorough, and mutual process that evokes the truest sensibilities of the community. As an advocate within the larger urban planning community, Nicolía is an active member of the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Certified Planners, the Georgia Planning Association and has been a member of ULI for more than ten years, presenting on panels about her work in urban design. She regularly writes and speaks about creating inclusive "third places," understanding that a mix of uses activates spaces through meaningful programming, multimodal and accessible options, and arts and music that draw people in.

David Scott
Senior Principal
DaVinci Development
Collaborative, LLC



David Scott 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.

Since joining DaVinci Development in 2017, David's work has included the Seventh & Tryon redevelopment, a complex Public/Private partnership involving the revitalization of a catalytic multi-block parcel in Uptown Charlotte and DaVinci Development's work with Central Atlanta Progress's project, The Stitch, a proposed highway cap project over a portion of the Downtown Connector. David is currently leading the planning and design for the Church at Wieuca in Buckhead to re-imagine their campus into a live, work, pray environment and is on the development management team implementing the first phase of Rowen, the innovation district development in Gwinnett County. He is also working with the development management teams for the expansion and renovation of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the Friendship Baptist Church mixed use development.

Prior to joining DaVinci Development, David served as Senior Vice President, Director of Planning & Development, at Integral-Gude Program Management where he led the execution of key projects in the Southeast and downtown Atlanta. During his tenure with Integral-Gude, David served on the team for the design and construction of the original National Center for Civil and Human Rights building and the College Football Hall of Fame in Atlanta. He also directed efforts for the repositioning of the GM Assembly Plant in Doraville and managed large public capital projects including the Glynn County Public Schools' multi-year SPLOST capital improvements program and the Georgia Department of Transportation Multi-Modal Passenger Terminal Study for the Georgia DOT.

David was raised in Atlanta, is active with the Urban Land Institute and has served on a variety of boards in the community including the SUMMECH Community Development Corporation.

Rainey Shane

Founder SEAM



With over 15 years of commercial real estate management experience and concurrent work in social justice and human rights nonprofits, Rainey Shane is the founder of SEAM, Inc., a purpose-driven US-based nonprofit organization. SEAM, which stands for social equity assessment method, is a unique and innovative standard for addressing issues relating to a commercial real estate project's impacted parties, much like LEED certification tackles climate change. SEAM is dedicated to embedding social equity in the built environment to create sustainable outcomes. Before launching SEAM, Rainey established and grew the Adaptive Reuse division in the Southeast Central region and established the Social Sustainability Services North American practice at the real estate services firm JLL. Rainey continues to work as a Rescue Team Operator for child trafficking and forced labor rescue missions in developing nations.