



Atlanta

CHARTING A PATH FORWARD FOR DUNWOODY VILLAGE

Dunwoody, Georgia

Technical Assistance Panel | August 20–21, 2025

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: Commercial spaces in the middle of Dunwoody Village. (ULI)

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Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Program

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 brief the panel about the topic and challenge at hand. TAP members spend two days developing an understanding of the problem and discussing the range of viable solutions. The process culminates in a presentation of the panel's findings and recommendations to the sponsoring organization.

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 ULI panel and staff from the City of Dunwoody and Dunwoody Development Authority toured the study area.



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Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Dunwoody Village is a successful suburban-style shopping area in Dunwoody, Georgia, a DeKalb County suburb in the Atlanta metropolitan area.

Developed over fifty years ago, Dunwoody Village (the Village or the district) is notable for its low-rise buildings designed to mimic a historic "Williamsburg" style. Although the design style requirements have eased over the years, the smaller scale of the buildings invites visitors to experience the Village on foot or on a bike, stroller, scooter, or other option beyond a personal vehicle. At the same time, the shopping centers comprising the Village are surrounded by surface parking lots with little pedestrian connectivity between buildings, shopping areas, or destinations. This lack of walkability is at odds with the buildings' design and the City

of Dunwoody's goals for the district.

Following a series of planning efforts for the Village, the City of Dunwoody (the City) and the Dunwoody Development Authority (the DDA) turned to the Urban Land Institute Atlanta District Council (ULI) for assistance with steps the City and DDA can take to improve the pedestrian experience, walkability, and connectivity across the Village. Using its trusted technical assistance panel (TAP) program, ULI convened a panel of real estate professionals to assist the City and DDA in realizing a vibrant commercial center defined by safe, comfortable, and inviting pedestrian connections that encourage walking, shopping, and interaction.

The ULI panel's recommendations prioritize a people-first environment that features sidewalks, streetscapes, and public spaces that support walkability, family-friendly experiences, and a strong sense of place.

(Throughout the course of its recommendations, the panel used the term "pedestrians" to encompass anyone moving around outside of a personal vehicle.)

By focusing on the pedestrian, aligning public and private interests for the district, enhancing green space opportunities, and recommending economic growth through strategic partnerships, the panel outlined a framework for the City and DDA that details immediate, mid-term, and long-term actions that can guide the creation of a connected, accessible, and thriving Village.

Connected: Pedestrian Improvements

With goals of improving the pedestrian experience and enhancing connectivity across the Village, the panel sought to integrate walkable and accessible spaces and create a solid foundation for further successful urban planning across the district.

The Village's present urban design caters to vehicles, leaving pedestrians searching for safe crossings between shopping areas, restaurants, and other Village spaces. The panel recommended the following steps for improving pedestrian connectivity:

- Create pedestrian avenues throughout the district, starting with a new east-west pedestrian connection running between the Starbucks parking lot and the Walgreens parking lot.
- Create a new passage through the center of the Village, connecting across Chamblee



The panel experienced Dunwoody Village on foot, observing the characteristics that make the environment appealing and the obstacles that create challenges for people moving around the area outside of a personal vehicle.

Dunwoody Road to the car wash, through the center at the courtyard by Bar[n], and to Dunwoody Village Parkway.

- Improve pedestrian connectivity into Dunwoody Plaza.
- Create a new eco-commons park area that could manage current and future district stormwater while also serving as a community amenity.
- Improve the pedestrian connection across Chamblee Dunwoody Road with raised crosswalks or pedestrian tables.
- Support pedestrian connections with plantings and furniture to enhance the walking experience and assist with shade.
- Position the City or DDA to act on key acquisitions and easements that could provide land on which to build these new pedestrian walkways.
- Establish gateways to Dunwoody Village along key roadways and at key intersections to clearly mark entrances to a special district.

Actionable: Immediate, Mid-term, and Long-term

Implementing the above recommendations will take both time and resources. To help the City and DDA identify steps forward that are practical and actionable, the panel outlined the following immediate, mid-term, and long-term actions:

Immediate, 6-12 Months

- Craft the narrative for Dunwoody Village

to help everyone understand where this work is leading.

- Define the City's financial role, signaling public sector commitment and helping catalyze further private investment.
- Contact all Village property owners to open lines of communication and facilitate property owner buy-in of the vision.
- Clearly brand the Village and hold all Village tenants and property owners to the new identity standards.
- Work with Asana Partners and Regency Centers to agree on realignment plans that will support the pedestrian improvements.
- Begin gaining strategic control of properties that will facilitate pedestrian improvements and support future development efforts. This could include land purchases, ground leasing, easements, and partnership agreements.
- Further activate the district and help ensure that the community has ample opportunity to enjoy Village activities.

Mid-Term, 2-5 Years

- Address crosswalks, gateways, and other public realm improvements with cohesive design across the district.
- Continue strategic acquisitions, including the Post Office building.
- Pursue a public art program to further enliven the neighborhood and assist with pedestrian realm improvements.

- Celebrate the historic house with additional programming.
- Address the access and road realignments needed near the Dunwoody Gallery.
- Determine funding mechanisms that will be needed to support the City's infrastructure work.
- Explore the potential for a community improvement district (CID) to support and fund improvements in the area.
- Develop neighborhood champions to help communicate with the community.
- Incorporate a community play space.

Long-Term, 6+ Years

- Continue efforts to gain property control.
- Facilitate tenant relocations as needed.
- Develop the eco-commons park.
- Encourage additional residential development nearby.
- Incorporate extensive green space improvements.

Strategic: Tools and Resources

To fund and facilitate the action steps outlined by the panel, the following tools and resources were identified. These resources add a layer of intentionality and long-term thinking to the recommendations and reinforce that the action plan is part of a broader, goal-driven framework.

Leverage the City's development tools.

- Acquire property strategically for new community access and use.
- Acquire access easements for sidewalks and paths.
- Use strategic and opportunistic tools to deliver additional community benefits such as green spaces, gathering areas, and other community amenities.
- Leverage regional stormwater planning tools to create opportunities for additional development.
- Create programming that supports visitorship and appeals to returning visitors.
- Use branding and placemaking to create an identity for the Village.

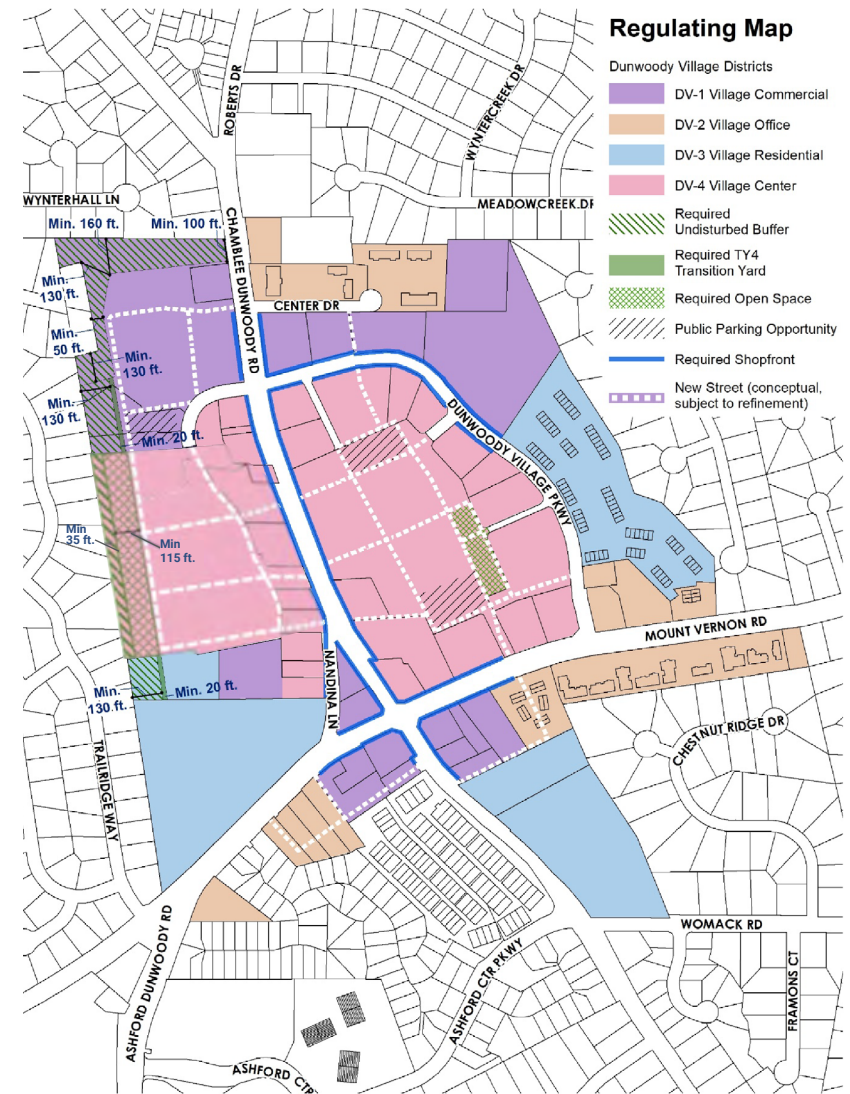
Use the DDA's tools.

- Provide cash grants for pedestrian and property improvements.
- Acquire easements for pedestrian access and green space.
- Participate in public-private partnerships (PPPs) with clear timelines and goals that support Village development.
- Consider using land banking to acquire, assemble, and/or hold property.
- Issue bonds backed by lease revenue or revenue generated from DDA activities to support development projects.

Consider working with the businesses to form a community improvement district. With consent from the property owners, a Village CID could generate tax revenue that could be reinvested in the Village's infrastructure, marketing, and programming.

Conclusion

The City and DDA have commissioned and have at hand a trove of studies that will help shape the future of Dunwoody Village. Using those recommendations and the action steps provided by the ULI panel, a new focus can be placed on the walkability of the Village, supporting its role as the heart of the city. Enhanced walkability will help ensure that visitors find their experience of shopping, dining, or visiting businesses in the district worth repeating and sharing with friends and family. For moderately dense commercial environments like the Village, walkability supports the economic vitality of the district and its businesses. When patrons are comfortable walking and exploring an area, they are more likely to visit more than just their initial destination. Enhancing the walkability and pedestrian connectivity of Dunwoody Village will improve the Dunwoody experience while also supporting the Village's function as an important economic driver for the City.



The City's Regulating Map details the land use designations across the Village.



Introduction and Background

The City of Dunwoody, Georgia, and the Dunwoody Development Authority recognize the value that the Dunwoody Village area brings to the community. The jurisdiction and the Development Authority also recognize that the area holds potential for more, in the form of more development, increased economic and community activity, and improved access and walkability. The City of Dunwoody and the DDA, with the expert assistance of outside consultants, have studied these challenges and have plans in hand that can help shape a vision for Dunwoody Village into the future.

To help determine the best path forward toward implementation and improved functionality of the Village, the City and DDA turned to the Urban Land Institute Atlanta District Council (ULI) for assistance. Using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel (TAP) program, ULI convened a panel of ULI members and real estate professionals to study the Village, interview stakeholders, and make recommendations to the City and DDA that can help direct next steps in implementing the City's vision for Dunwoody Village as a commercial center and a walkable downtown.

The Dunwoody Village TAP study area is marked by Dunwoody Village Parkway to the north and east, Dunwoody Chamblee Road to the west, and Mount Vernon Road to the south. This area features commercially zoned parcels that are home to a range of retail businesses. The townhomes along the east side of Dunwoody Village Parkway represent

the only residential parcels inside the study area, which is surrounded by neighborhoods of single-family homes. A significant proportion of the commercial parcels in the study area is held by three primary landowners.

The City and DDA posed four questions to the ULI panel that would help the panel explore the challenges facing the study area. The questions focused on the potential implementation of the studies in hand, efforts to move the area to a more human-centric and less automobile-focused environment, partnership opportunities that could facilitate redevelopment in the Village, and a phasing strategy that would assist the City and DDA in addressing the improvements and development vision over the near, medium, and long term.

The panel spent two days immersed in Dunwoody Village. Starting with a review of briefing materials provided by the City and DDA, the panel evaluated previous plans and recommendations as well as information gathered from a community survey and design charrette. The ULI panel walked the study area, experiencing the sidewalks and other pedestrian routes first-hand and observing how the existing businesses use the built and open spaces across the district. The panel also interviewed a wide range of area stakeholders, including landowners, business owners and operators, community organizations, residents, and a number of the City's elected representatives and professional staff.

TAP Questions

- How can the City of Dunwoody effectively implement the long-term development vision for Dunwoody Village, as outlined in previous studies, while balancing its unique position between the high intensity Perimeter Market and the surrounding low-density neighborhoods?
- How can we transform an area dominated by suburban design and the automobile to create a human-centric place that includes greenspace, and community gathering space as key components?
- What type of redevelopment approach (incremental, mid-scale or large-scale) can Dunwoody support that repositions the Village as the City's Downtown?
- What type of partnership structures and tools would best support this redevelopment approach?





What the Panel Heard

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

- The pedestrian experience around and across the area is lacking in that it feels unsafe with little separation from vehicles, lacks shade, and is hemmed in by narrow sidewalks along the roadways.
- Signage and wayfinding are needed to help visitors and customers find their destination and encourage further exploration.
- The Village does not appear to have a cohesive and articulated vision or brand identity.
- Traffic along Chamblee Dunwoody Road is challenging and frequently backed up during morning and evening commutes.
- Most of the restaurants have trouble filling a second round of seating on any particular night, which is straining their financial positions.
- Besides the new courtyard patio space near Bar[n] and Morty's, there is no central community gathering space in the Village.
- There is quite an expanse of hardscape, parking, and pavement in all directions, but little green space for play, limited shade, and few opportunities to soften the hardscape created by the pavement.
- The Community considers Dunwoody Village to be the city's "heart."
- The area has a strong and stable tenant base, and there are few vacancies in the commercial spaces.
- The townhome project along the eastern edge of the Village has proven to be popular with the community and is considered to be a successful residential addition.
- Landowners are interested in working with the City in realizing its plans. (Some mentioned that they were waiting on a final plan from the City following a number of recent planning efforts.)
- Dunwoody Village is a great local draw and enjoys a loyal patronage from the surrounding neighborhoods.
- There is a multigenerational appeal across the site with the variety of restaurants, preschool and daycare, patio and bars, and the grocery and pharmacy.
- The City of Dunwoody has access to a range of economic development tools that could be used to further support or incentivize further development in the area.

The Dunwoody Gallery makes creative use of a former bank building in the Village.

Equipped with the information gathered from the TAP process and processing the challenges through their respective professional lenses, the panel spent the remainder of its second work day evaluating the best path forward for Dunwoody Village.

Dunwoody To Date

Dunwoody is a relatively new city. In 2008, residents in the area founded the city to ensure that their wishes for their community were appropriately addressed. Early decisions brought a new municipal police force into being and shaped the future of Brook Run Park. The later formation of the Dunwoody Development Authority also placed significant attention on the strategic deployment of public funds to support commercial development and other efforts that would improve the experience of living, working, and playing in Dunwoody. Although the DDA has yet to fully flex its land acquisition and development powers, it has amassed a \$1.3 million budget that could assist in future endeavors and help fund development incentives.

A nascent business association in the Village has recently formed to provide business owners and operators with a forum for discussion and collective action. This organization and the combined Dunwoody and Sandy Springs Chamber of Commerce are working hard to ensure that the businesses calling the area home have the representation and voice they need at a broader public level.

Roadways around the Village have also improved, and more upgrades are on the horizon. A recent road diet on Dunwoody Village Parkway reduced the number of vehicular lanes, slowed traffic, and made the area more pedestrian-friendly. Streetscape improvements planned for Chamblee Dunwoody Road will add new lighting, benches, and other improvements designed to enhance the pedestrian experience around the Village.

Following its information gathering stage, the panel articulated the following narrative that served to guide its recommendations to the City and DDA:

The goal of the TAP is to help realize a vibrant village center defined by safe, comfortable, and inviting pedestrian connections that encourage walking, gathering, and everyday interaction. The panel prioritized a people-first environment—sidewalks, streetscapes, and public spaces that support walkability, family-friendly experiences, and a strong sense of place. By aligning public and private interests, enhancing green space opportunities, and fostering economic growth through strategic partnerships, the panel provides a clear framework—immediate, mid-term, and long-term—to guide the creation of a connected, accessible, and thriving Village.



Pedestrians moving between shopping areas do not have designated crossing areas or other separations from moving vehicles.



Large parking lots could be reconfigured for other land uses.



The pedestrian experience near the Village's residential area is welcoming and partially shaded.

STRENGTHS

The area is full of great retail tenants

Buildings and infrastructure across the Village are sound

The City of Dunwoody has experienced professional staff

City demographics are stable and are generally affluent

Multigenerational consumers find the commercial options appealing

There are a variety of uses in the commercial spaces

The landscaping features a number of large and mature shade trees (which may be reaching the end of their life)

Landowners are intentional with tenant placement

The numerous banks in the area could provide an additional cohesive and community-focused commercial base and support

Streetscaping improvements are coming to the Chamblee Dunwoody corridor

WEAKNESSES

There is a lack of clear identity or vision (much is defined by what the residents do not want to be)

Varying leadership priorities exist at the City level

High occupancy rates and successful retail tenants may make it challenging to inspire landowners to change anything

The Village lacks a community gathering space

Restaurants are not able to fill second seatings

This auto-centric area is unsafe for pedestrians and difficult to navigate outside of a personal vehicle

There does not seem to be a strong collaborative relationship between the property owners and the City

There appears to be a misalignment between plans posed by City staff and what the City Council approves

Limited coordination across commercial property owners

OPPORTUNITIES

Regional draws include the Spruill Arts Center and the Nature Center

The Chestnut property and natural area to the south may be additive to new Village development and improvements

The City Council can champion a vision and a plan community-wide

Perimeter Mall provides good funding support for community-wide improvements

There are good City and Development Authority tools available

The Village could be used to create and elevate community culture

The City has a good track record of closing streets for events, which could include an occasional closing of Chamblee Dunwoody Road for events

There are numerous outparcels that could be assembled for future development

THREATS

Nearby redevelopment may be clouding the City's development visions for the Village

The City's voter base is difficult to engage broadly and lacks consensus

Some residents continue to express concerns around any potential change to Dunwoody Village

Winds of political will can be a threat, as they are often changing

Village landowners will not act without a clear plan from the City

A downturn in the retail market would heavily impact the tenants and vitality of the area

There is an over-reliance on retail in the area

The high traffic volume on Chamblee Dunwoody Road impacts the area's walkability



Connected: Pedestrian Design Improvements

The pedestrian experience is a critical foundation for the success of any downtown or village commercial district. Facilitating pedestrian movement, connecting across the area, and exploring at their leisure encourages pedestrians to engage in the type of follow-on commercial activity that supports broad economic vibrancy.

Within the goals for Dunwoody Village set forth by the City and DDA, the improvement of the pedestrian experience and connectivity across the study area resonated loudly with the panel following their walking tour of the site. The Village is full of buildings that have been designed at a human scale. With one and two-story structures featuring welcoming front doors and convenient proximate retail bays and buildings, the Village's businesses seem to invite walkability with their adjoining sidewalks. The challenge lies in the experience between shopping areas. Wide expanses of surface parking surround the buildings, sidewalks fail to clearly connect to other shopping areas, and space for cars is plentiful, with ample parking directly outside each and every business. The ability to easily move around the Village outside of a car is important to the economic cross-pollination of businesses within the district.

Throughout the course of its recommendations, the panel used the term "pedestrians" to encompass anyone moving around outside of a personal vehicle, including those walking, running, biking, scooting, pushing strollers, using wheelchairs or walkers, or any other manual conveyance.

There are significant streetscape improvements on the horizon for Chamblee Dunwoody Road and Mount Vernon Road, which will include pedestrian improvements. In addition to these planned improvements, the panel identified several additional opportunities to enhance the pedestrian experience across the district and improve walkability and connectivity holistically.

Through its recommendations, the panel captures the physical integration of walkable and accessible spaces, the result of which should provide a solid foundation for future successful urban planning across the Village.

Overall Pedestrian Flow

The design of the Village today caters to vehicles. Driving spaces surround the shopping areas and are flanked by large surface parking lots. Pedestrians are provided with sidewalks around the perimeter, but are left to search for safe crossings between shopping areas, restaurants, and other commercial spaces.

Improve pedestrian connectivity through the district. By creating key pedestrian connections across the Village and connecting east and west across the



New pedestrian connections and improvements to walkways along primary roadways could greatly improve the walking experience across the Village and better connect the shopping areas.

expansion, pedestrians can more readily explore Village businesses without having to return to their car between stops.

Work with private landowners to improve connectivity. As some of the connections envisioned by the panel will traverse privately owned land, public-private partnerships with those landowners may be warranted. Once complete, these types of connectivity improvements can spur additional economic activity for these partnered businesses: improved visibility to the businesses and increased pedestrian access will spark more patron visits. These types of infrastructure improvements can also provide the City with a welcome opportunity to better align key intersections serving the Village, creating clearer view sheds into shopping areas and a more recognizable urban street grid.

Overall Improvements

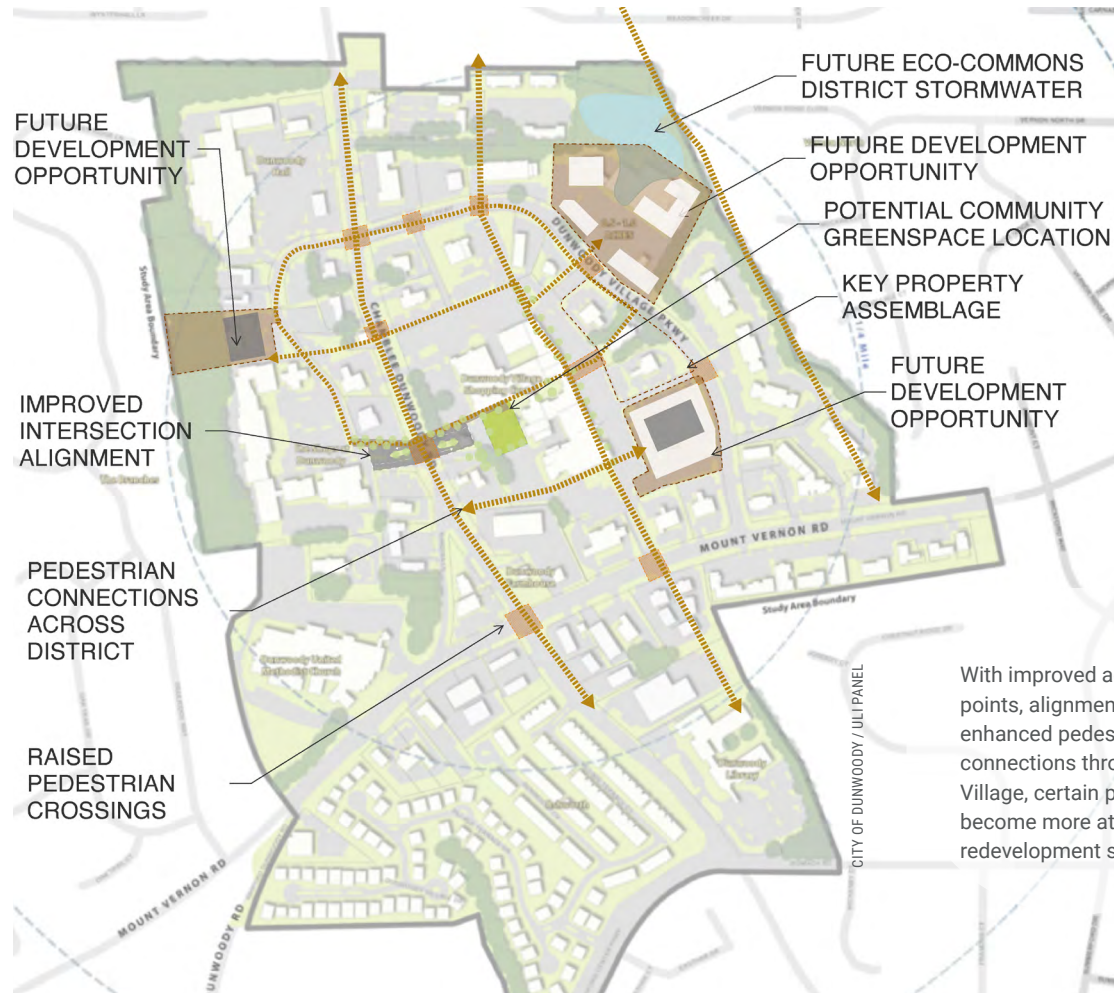
As a foundational element of a vibrant commercial experience, walkability improvements will serve the broader Village. Through the addition of sidewalks and paths, street trees and lighting, formerly disconnected commercial parcels may become more compelling from a development perspective and new uses, and new businesses may find a home in the district. Connectivity is key.

Create a new east-west pedestrian connection in the north end of the district.

Near the northern end of the Village, between the southern Starbucks parking lot and the northern edge of the Walgreens parking lot, a

new pedestrian walkway should be installed. In addition to providing a safer and more welcoming passage through this popular section of the Village, this new walkway could also connect across Chamblee Dunwoody Road to the west and align with the land currently housing the Sunshine Car Wash, enhancing the redevelopment potential of that site. Moving along this same alignment to the east, crossing Dunwoody Village Parkway, this new walkway would lead directly into Dunwoody Plaza. This site, too, presents interesting redevelopment potential,

which could include new commercial space, multifamily residential buildings, or other market-driven uses. As these parcels are privately owned, the panel discussed these development options in the abstract, recognizing that decision-making lies outside the City's control. With the City's vision for the Village and these walkability improvements in hand, the City and DDA might be better equipped to have more substantive conversations with the property owners about future plans for these sites and work to find a solution that meets everyone's goals.



With improved access points, alignments, and enhanced pedestrian connections throughout the Village, certain parcels may become more attractive as redevelopment sites.

Create a new eco-commons park to help manage Village stormwater. The panel also considered how improved stormwater management tools could enhance the Village and potentially unlock new development potential. The undeveloped area north of Dunwoody Plaza could transform into an area for stormwater management. With thoughtful design, this space could double as a new ecopark for the commercial district and the surrounding residential neighborhoods as well. By designing the retention areas with recreation in mind, this functional infrastructure element could become an asset for the district while also providing important stormwater management services for existing and potential new development.

Enhance pedestrian connectivity through the center of the Village. The southern edge of Dunwoody Plaza would benefit from an improved pedestrian connection across the Parkway into the core of the Village and beyond. A clearer east-west connection through the center of the parking lots, connecting to the recently improved plaza and courtyard, would be a welcome addition to the Village. The courtyard space at the center of the Village restaurants—including Bar[n], Morty's Meats, and Message in a Bottle—is an excellent start to this kind of broader site connectivity. Extending that pedestrian connection further east to and across Dunwoody Village Parkway and

The panel considered how new and additional plantings, street trees, and park benches could improve the experience of walking in and across the Village.

west across an improved and re-aligned intersection with Chamblee Dunwoody Road would encourage more walking throughout the district and enhance connections to the surrounding commercial establishments.

Improve the pedestrian connection across Chamblee Dunwoody Road. The intersection of Chamblee Dunwoody Road and the panel's proposed pedestrian improvements warrants stronger pedestrian infrastructure. A raised crosswalk or pedestrian table would help slow traffic through the district and better protect those walking between shopping centers.

Support the new pedestrian connections with plantings and furniture. To help define,

elevate, and make the new pedestrian paths more welcoming and comfortable to use, the City is encouraged to install additional plantings, new trees for shade, benches, and other furniture to allow people to walk further and rest along the way. Enhanced lighting will also support feelings of safety for those walking in the evening hours. These treatments will make the pedestrian experience more welcoming and increase the visibility of and connectivity to the shopping areas across the Village.

Position the City or DDA to act on key acquisitions. The panel identified several key parcels across the Village, noted by





Individual business owners and operators are working to improve the experience between Village buildings and enhance the sense of place.



This restaurant seating area is making good use of the outdoor space, helping to connect passing pedestrians with the nearby activity.

the gray rectangles on the map on page 11, that could play a role in future Village development. In some instances, the parcels could be repositioned for a new active use. In other instances, parcels could be redeveloped into structured parking facilities that could help consolidate parking in the district, thereby freeing land currently used for surface parking for more active uses. The U.S. Post Office building is a prime redevelopment site, and other spaces, such as underutilized parking areas, could be better leveraged to the benefit of the district.

Establish gateways to the Dunwoody Village district. Dunwoody Village is a charming and bustling local draw. For those traveling through the area and not familiar with the Village, it is not clear that they are missing a wonderful shopping destination. By establishing gateways along the roadways and at key intersections, visitors will know when they have entered the Village, and those new to the area may be intrigued enough to stop in to explore the district's shops and restaurants. Although the panel did not provide prescriptive detail on exactly where the gateways should be placed or what they should look like, they did stress the importance of the City and DDA adding thoughtful gateway treatments around the district to the north, south, east, and west to help make clear to visitors when they have crossed over into a different space.



The panel envisioned four primary gateway areas into the Village. It is near or at these spaces where the City and DDA should consider adding signage and other visual cues that people are entering Dunwoody Village.

Actionable:
Immediate, Mid-term and
Long-term Action Steps

Considering the pedestrian connectivity recommendations and the recommendations posed by previous Dunwoody Village studies, the panel outlined the following implementation action steps for the City and DDA. The goal of this categorization was to help the City and DDA prioritize the actions, opportunities, and investments at hand and make the related work more approachable and actionable.

Immediate, 6-12 Months

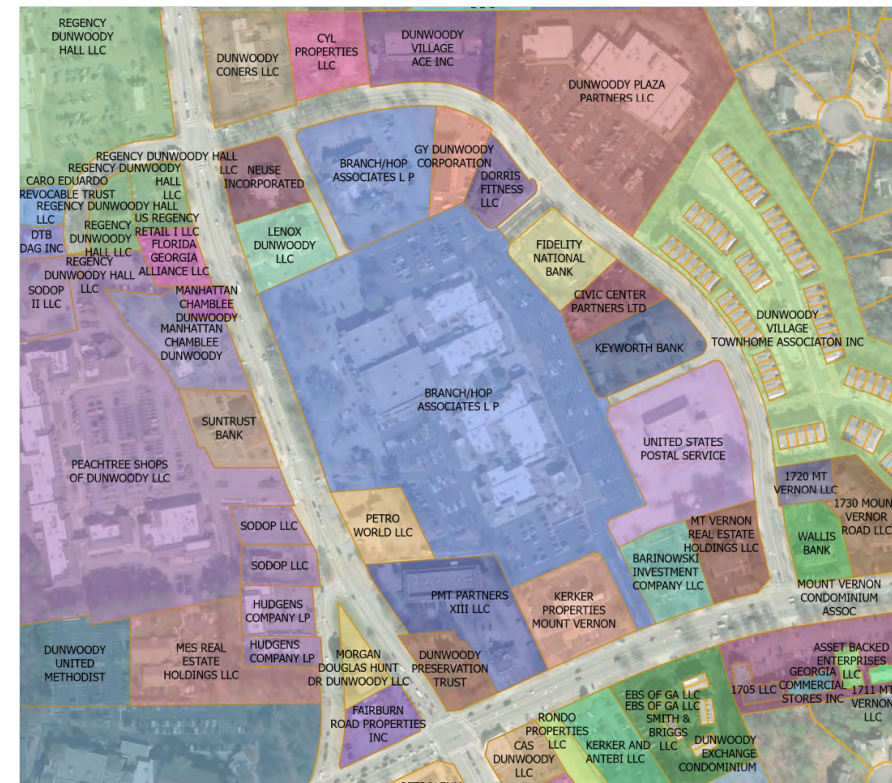
The following early steps are critical for setting the stage for longer-term investments that will serve the Village into the future.

- Craft the narrative for Dunwoody Village.** The City and DDA need to work with the community—business operators, landowners, residents, and visitors—to craft the vision for Dunwoody Village. By setting the stage, aligning with this shared vision, and outlining what will happen and why, the City is more likely to gain buy-in from constituents and foster support for the improvements.
- Define the City's financial role.** The work ahead will require investments from both the private and public sectors. The City may need to be an early mover, making investments that will signal its intention and support for current and future work in the district. These early investments, where the City has taken a position and owned it, can reassure the private sector that municipal support is strong and that additional private investment can make good financial sense.

- List and contact all property owners in the Village.** Although a majority of the land in the district sits in the hands of a few property owners, it is imperative that the City and DDA include and communicate clearly, consistently, and deeply with all Village property owners. Everyone—from the banks, attorneys' offices, daycare, restaurants, retailers, and service providers—should feel included in the new district vision and understand their role in the area's success.
- Clearly brand the Village.** Each shopping area within Dunwoody Village has its own brand identity today. Some brands are more fully developed than others, and all compete for visitors' attention. By branding the entire Village as a singular district with distinct yet complementary offerings, the visibility and identity of the district can be elevated beyond the current local market area. This will help support the marketing efforts of individual businesses while also elevating the district to a regional destination.
- Work with Asana Partners and Regency Centers to agree on realignment plans.** The east-west connectivity through the site will hinge on the participation of these private landowners. Asana

Partners and Regency Centers have been good partners with the City and DDA to date and may find the realignment proposal and related enhanced visibility intriguing. The City is encouraged to work with these pivotal partners to develop an investment and construction scenario that will serve everyone, including landowners, pedestrians, and shoppers alike.

- Hold all Village tenants and property owners to the new identity standards.** Once created, the new Village identity will be most impactful and effective if everyone operating within the Village



This map depicts the various entities that own the land that makes up Dunwoody Village.

maintains the same branding and quality standards. The City and DDA can play important supportive roles in this work, helping every business owner understand the important role they play, connecting them to resources to help with signage and other production, and perhaps offering incentives to support businesses' alignment with and adherence to the standards.

- **Gain strategic control of certain district property.** Real estate development is often called a marathon. Although it may be years before acquisition opportunities arise, the City and DDA are encouraged to work today to identify potential acquisition targets and begin conversations with related property owners. Through these early and ongoing conversations, the City and DDA can share their vision for the district and help the related landowners understand the role they can play if and when they contemplate a sale, lease, or other property modification.
- **Activate the district further.** The community is already enjoying some fun programs and events in the Village. Keeping these efforts going, whether by providing new space for the Farmers' Market or piloting the closure of Chamblee Dunwoody Road for a community event like Streets Alive, can help ensure that the community keeps returning to the Village for events, activities, shopping, and more.

Mid-Term, 2-5 Years

Over the course of the next two to five years, the City and DDA are encouraged to take the following steps to further support the walkability and development of the district.

- **Install crosswalks, gateways, and other public realm improvements.** The planning, alignment conversations, and construction of the proposed pedestrian infrastructure will take time. Conversations with property owners and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) should begin immediately, knowing that the implementation of these improvements will likely span years.
- **Pursue a public art program.** Dunwoody Village is already home to some great arts resources. From the art for sale at the Dunwoody Gallery to the murals on display at the courtyard plaza, the arts are already alive in the neighborhood and could be elevated and enlivened further
- **Celebrate the historic house with programming.** The historic Cheek-Spruill House at the northeast corner of the intersection of Chamblee Dunwoody and Mt. Vernon roads is a highly visible location for community programming. By partnering with the Dunwoody Preservation Trust, the area's history can come alive with regular programming that spills out into the district.
- **Continue to pursue strategic acquisitions.** Starting with the Post Office building or any other opportunity that connects with the agreed-upon vision and development plans, the City and DDA can begin the work of reshaping

to benefit the shops and the district. The arts could also play into the development of the district's new crosswalks, bringing them to life beyond what GDOT typically provides. The Spruill Center for the Arts could be an important resource and partner in this work.



This inventive sign creates space for play, with swings comprising the "O" letters, while also creating a sense of place.

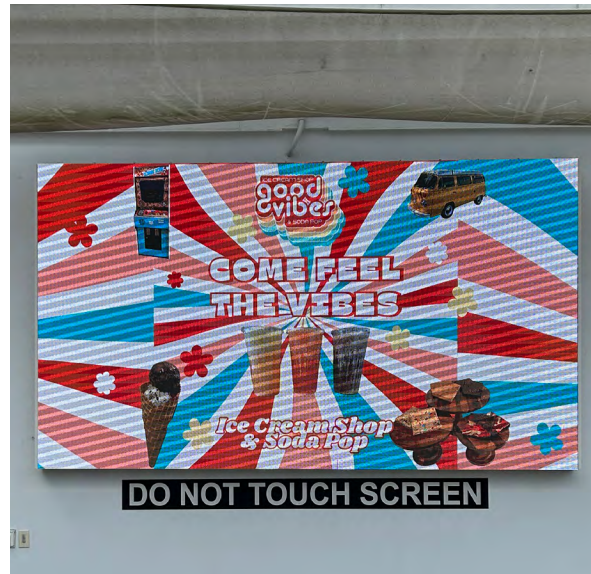
the Village into the walkable downtown it hopes it will become. The City and DDA are encouraged to remain strategic, keeping clear acquisitions in sight, and also flexible, ready to consider more opportunistic acquisitions when the possibilities arise.

- **Re-align the entrance at the center of the Village.** The wide and generous entrance to the Shops at Dunwoody on the west side of Chamblee Dunwoody Road does not align well with the more narrow entrance to the Dunwoody Village Shopping Center on the east. By shifting or even relocating the Dunwoody Gallery elsewhere on the site, the entrances might be better aligned, providing drivers with clarity of direction and access, and could provide new opportunities for improved pedestrian access, safety, and circulation between shopping centers.

- **Determine potential funding mechanisms.** The infrastructure work posed by the panel will require financial investment by the City or DDA. Exploring all potential funding mechanisms will take time and should start in the near term, understanding that the identification of those final funding sources could then be complete by the time that the planning and alignment work is complete and design and construction would commence.
- **Explore the potential for a community improvement district.** A community improvement district (CID) is a special taxing district, approved by a majority of businesses in a defined geography, wherein the collected tax revenues are directed back to the geography to fund public area improvements, facade improvements, and programming and

marketing activities. Although there is a CID nearby, the Village is not currently within an existing taxing district and could vote to create a new one to benefit the businesses in the area.

- **Develop neighborhood champions.** With such a wide range of business stakeholders, landowners, and residents invested in the success of the Village, engaging and empowering neighborhood champions to help spread the word about plans on the table can help ensure that everyone feels heard and is informed. This deeper level of engagement takes time but can help reduce oppositional delays to improvements in the future.
- **Incorporate a community play space.** The Village is surrounded by neighborhoods that are full of growing families who walk to the Village for lunch or dinner. Creating



The courtyard situated in the center of the Village features a number of murals that invite visitors to take photos in front of them.

a green space or play area in the district would give children space to run and play and perhaps extend the shopping or dining time enjoyed by parents. A green space would also help soften and interrupt the sea of pavement that currently blankets much of the Village.

Long-Term, 6+ Years

Looking ahead, there are several actions that the City and DDA are encouraged to pursue to further support the transformation of the Village into a walkable district.

- **Continue efforts to gain strategic property control.** Through control of certain parcels, the City can direct use and redevelopment at those sites. Whether through direct acquisition, ground lease, easements, or partnerships, there are a number of paths the City can pursue to gain parcel control to support its walkability pursuits in this largely privately-owned district.
- **Facilitate tenant relocations.** The redevelopment of certain buildings may

require the relocation of existing tenants. Given the success of the shopping centers, this work must be managed carefully, relocating tenants only when no other option is available. The City and DDA may be able to assist with financial or other incentives that could help ease the potential relocation pains anticipated by some tenants.

- **Develop the eco-commons park.** Designing a potential stormwater management area to the north and designing it with an eye toward recreation and a park-like environment will take time. It is also possible that through the acquisitions and easements posed by the panel, the City can construct additional pervious trails across the Village, thereby increasing its ability to absorb and infiltrate water in times of heavy rain. The value of supporting the stormwater management needs of the Village and expanding the potential for additional development and smaller redevelopment projects through a robust stormwater management system makes the effort worthy of pursuit.

- **Consider additional residential developments.** The townhomes along the eastern edge of Dunwoody Village Parkway have proven successful, and additional townhome developments or other similar for-sale options could be welcome in the district and in the surrounding areas. Although this is a market-driven, private sector development decision, the City has a role to play in structuring land uses in infill spaces or on underutilized land to allow for or even encourage residential development and is encouraged to evaluate the district and surrounding areas through this potential development lens.
- **Incorporate extensive green space improvements.** In addition to the play space or green space development mentioned previously, a district-wide landscaping and green space plan is encouraged. The area's urban heat island effect is exacerbated by the extensive paving and could be cooled, made more comfortable, and more visually appealing through additional greening efforts.



MARY MADDEN



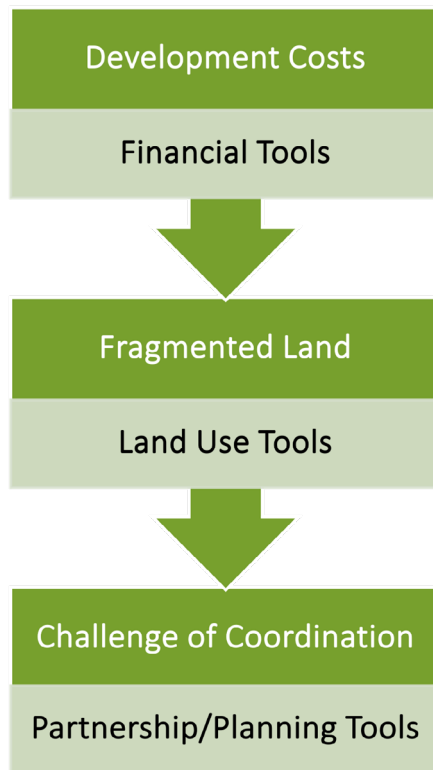
MARY MADDEN

Centennial Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma, features a large stormwater management basin that is attractively designed and serves as recreation space for the community.



Strategic: Tools and Resources

The City of Dunwoody and the DDA have a range of available tools and resources to help facilitate the evolution of Dunwoody Village. The area is facing high development costs, which can be addressed by applying certain financial tools and incentives for developers. Land in the Village is held by private owners, but there are land use tools that can help overcome the challenge of fragmentation. Finally, the challenge of coordinating all of the potential partners and players in development can be addressed through thoughtful planning and public-private partnerships.



The City's Tools

Acquire property strategically for new community access and amenities. Although the City can influence development to a degree through land use regulations, the private landowners maintain most of the control of property in the Village. To fully pursue the recommendations posed by the panel and found in previous Dunwoody studies, additional land use control will prove helpful. Through key acquisitions and new easements, the City can reconfigure space to create greater pedestrian access and circulation across the Village to everyone's benefit.

Acquire access easements. The City is uniquely positioned to provide easements for sidewalks and paths for the community and should not wait for the private market to deliver these types of community resources. Leveraging this tool for the expansion of pedestrian access and circulation can benefit the broader Village and help better connect neighbors to all that the Village has to offer.

Use strategic and opportunistic tools to deliver additional community benefits. Property control—whether through direct land acquisition, land swaps, or ground leases—can help the City develop the types of civic spaces, community amenities, and recreational opportunities that the residents and visitors to the Village will find appealing and worth revisiting. The Village's sea of parking lots may also pose another valuable opportunity. By working with landowners and tenants to better understand parking

utilization, landowners may be willing to release (sell or lease) some underutilized lots for new and more active uses that can serve as additional draws and economic drivers for the area.

Leverage regional stormwater planning to facilitate development. The tools that the City must employ to deliver basic public services, including stormwater management, can be leveraged in a manner that provides a greater public good. By providing a central, managed stormwater management facility, the City can enable private landowners to better maximize their developable land, delivering more active spaces and greater opportunities for revenue generation.

Create programming that supports visitorship. Special events in the district, whether a monthly Farmers' Market or an annual street festival, can draw people in, encouraging new and returning visitors to explore the Village, spend their money, and enliven the district. Other, more passive endeavors, such as the murals in the plaza courtyard, can create a space that is interesting, compelling, and worth exploring on one's own. The Village already has a solid arts foundation, with the Spruill Arts Center and the Dunwoody Gallery, and could partner with these entities to expand the district's visitor appeal.

Use branding and placemaking to create a sense of identity. People love to visit spaces that feel unique and places where they feel they are welcomed. Branding efforts deployed Village-wide can help visitors

recognize when they have arrived in the Village, and placemaking can make that visit memorable. These efforts are most effective when they are developed with authenticity and use messages that tie back to a place, time, or vibe that is singular to that space.

Dunwoody Development Authority Tools

The Dunwoody Development Authority was established to provide the City with the type of agile development tools that municipalities are not typically able to access. Operating more nimbly than a municipality, development authorities are able to step in and purchase properties more quickly than a city agency and can play a part in directly funding development pursuits that serve or support the City's goals. For Dunwoody, the DDA has the ability to take the following actions in support of the recommendations outlined by the panel.

Provide cash grants for pedestrian and property improvements. In areas where the City is not able to acquire the space needed to create pedestrian connections or access, the DDA could incentivize the work of private landowners through cash grants to help fund the improvements.

Hold easements for pedestrian access and green space. The DDA can also serve as the landowner in instances where the City is not able to or interested in being the landholder. These spaces, such as sidewalk access

points or park areas in the Village, would provide a community benefit and would be held publicly by the DDA.

Provide a vehicle for the City to acquire property. The more agile nature of the DDA's operations means that it may be able to respond to a potential acquisition more quickly than the City. This can facilitate the property acquisition before the land is listed publicly, allowing the DDA to purchase at a lower price, saving the landowner the expense of marketing the parcel, and supporting the municipal and community goals. A sale-leaseback scenario is another option worth exploring with property owners. If a business were interested in eventually downsizing or moving to another location, the DDA could purchase the land and building and lease it back to the business, allowing the business to exit its ownership stake while maintaining its physical presence. Although the DDA would be responsible for the purchase price, the revenue generated through the lease of the facility could be used to offset some of the debt until the new use for the land and building was determined.

Participate in Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) with clear timelines and goals. Again, operating more nimbly than a municipality, the DDA can be an active participant in a potential PPP that supports the vision and development of the Village.

Use land banking to acquire, assemble, and/or hold property. Land banks work well when

there are multiple parcels at play, and while development opportunities in the Village may appear to be limited to one-off transactions, establishing a land bank early may provide the future structure that the DDA could leverage in its real estate activities. It is worth exploring in greater detail with counsel.

Issue bonds backed by a revenue stream. Using lease revenue or revenue generated from DDA activities or fees, the DDA can serve as the entity that issues debt or bonds to further support a development project.

Village Community Improvement District

A community improvement district can be a powerful and helpful tool for an area like Dunwoody Village. If the property owners agree to a CID formation, the potential revenue generation from a district full of retail establishments like those found across the Village is significant. This private funding stream can be put to work to the benefit of the district's businesses as well as the surrounding community and can include the planning work and infrastructure construction recommended by the panel. The CID can also serve as a consistent convener of district property owners, helping facilitate future district decision-making and creating a strong and clear line of communication between the district and the City.

Summary

A connected, actionable, and strategic plan for Dunwoody Village is within reach and can help the City and DDA support the evolution of Dunwoody Village into its next generation as a vibrant commercial, pedestrian-oriented destination.

Connected

The panel's focus on connections across the Village is key. Shifting both public and privately-owned spaces toward a pedestrian scale will help support walkability throughout the Village. Creating additional pedestrian connections and improving pedestrian safety will encourage more visitors to leave their cars behind and walk among the buildings and between Village destinations. Adding more green spaces, both places for play and spaces for relaxation, will enhance the overall experience of visiting the Village and encourage longer and more frequent visits.

Actionable

With an eye toward action, following diligent City planning, the panel outlined a series of immediate, mid-term, and longer-range steps the City and DDA can take to support walkability in the Village and the district's evolution into a more human-centric place that shapes experiences, not just purchases.

From early and ongoing conversations with landowners and business operators to more substantive repositioning of spaces and tenants, there are a host of actions the City and DDA are encouraged to take to better position uses across the Village and open

areas to new development. These actions will also support pedestrian access and connectivity and enhance the visibility of district businesses. The longer-term steps the panel outlined will take time, yet those, too, come with early-stage planning, research, and conversations that will help pave the way for the longer-term, substantial moves that will help reshape the district.

Strategic

Throughout all of this work, the City and DDA should remain focused on the articulated and agreed-upon vision, keeping in sight the processes and actions required to advance the City's goals for the Village. While this work requires everyone to align with the

vision, it is equally important to be nimble and ready to act when opportunities arise. A vision for the Village can help everyone involved find balance in times of change, understand how opportunities that arise may align, and inspire cooperation when the unexpected occurs.

Dunwoody Village is in an excellent position as a beloved shopping district full of vibrant uses. The Village is a local favorite and a destination for many living nearby. With some strategic investments and thoughtful reshaping of the physical landscape of the Village, the area can become an even more welcoming, active, and walkable destination, not just for residents of Dunwoody but for the greater region beyond.



About the Panel

FUNWOODY
FUNWOODY



Sara Patenaude

Panel Chair

Director of Policy Solutions for the Southeast Region, Reinvestment Fund HouseATL



Dr. Sara Patenaude joined the Reinvestment Fund Policy Solutions team as Director for the Southeast Region. This team conducts rigorous research and builds analytic tools that help stakeholders implement effective interventions to achieve equitable outcomes in housing, early childhood education, and fresh food access. In this role, she is the chief designer of strategies to increase Reinvestment Fund's reach and impact across the region.

Sara has spent over a decade as an affordable housing researcher, developer, and advocate. Her previous experience includes developing and preserving affordable housing and permanent supportive housing, creating comprehensive city and county housing strategies, and providing input into affordable housing needs for communities across the southeast. Sara has a PhD in Urban History and a Certificate in Planning and Economic Development from Georgia State University, where she studied affordable housing policy. She is a graduate of ULI Atlanta's Center for Leadership class of 2022.

Sara volunteers her time as Co-Chair of the HouseATL Rental Housing Preservation Working Group, Vice President of Communication for the Atlanta Women's Affordable Housing Network, Board Member of the Trans Housing Coalition, and Clerk of the Board of Trustees for the Friends School

of Atlanta. She also serves as an advisor for community groups advocating for affordable housing and supporting unhoused neighbors. Sara lives in the City of Atlanta with her wife and son.

Samir Abdullahi

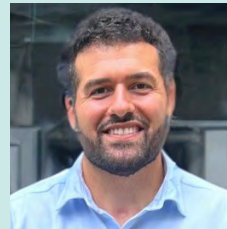
Director of Economic & Workforce Development Fulton County ("Select Fulton")



Samir Abdullahi serves as the Director of Economic Development for Fulton County's Select Fulton initiative. In this pivotal role—appointed in June 2022—he oversees both business recruitment and workforce development efforts across the county's 15 cities in strategic alignment with the state of Georgia's economic goals.

Anthony Giacobelli

Owner/Principal Immerso



With over 14 years of experience, Anthony designs immersive landscapes that foster connection and engagement. His work spans playgrounds, resorts, themed entertainment, water parks, and residential communities. Known for his collaborative approach, he's contributed to iconic destinations like Walt Disney World and Universal Studios, always focusing on experience-driven design.

Chris Hall

Managing Partner Haddow & Company



For over two decades, Chris Hall has played a pivotal role in positioning Haddow & Company as a trusted advisor in real estate strategy. With deep expertise spanning feasibility studies, market analytics, and strategic dispositions—and a strong commitment to both academic and professional community engagement—Chris embodies the firm's reputation for insightful, data-driven, and objective real estate counsel.

Patricia Luna

Senior Director, Southeast-Lending Reinvestment Fund



Patricia Luna serves as the Senior Director for Southeast Lending & Investments at Reinvestment Fund, where she drives strategic capital deployment to support equitable development across the region. Recognized as a member of the 2024 ULI Atlanta Women's Leadership Initiative ChangeMakers Cohort, Patricia is celebrated for her significant influence in affordable housing and community financing in Atlanta and beyond.

With deep expertise in community development finance, Patricia leads lending and investment efforts tailored to catalyze inclusive growth—championing projects that uplift underserved neighborhoods and foster economic opportunity.

Juan Mejia
Commercial Real
Estate Broker
JCM Ventures



Juan Mejia immigrated from Colombia and grew up in Metro-Atlanta. He founded JCM Ventures to aid entrepreneurship and scale organizations through strategy, community development, and site selection. The firm is proud to specialize in serving those that serve our community by representing various nonprofits and government entities. He works closely with community leaders in order to connect, develop, and empower individuals through opportunities. He has participated in various leadership programs such as: LEAD Atlanta, ARC's Regional Leadership Institute, among others. Juan has been recognized as a 50 Most Influential Latino in Georgia and 40 Under 40 honoree for his community leadership.

Rick Porter
Professor of Practice,
Georgia Tech
Owner and Founder,
Richport Properties



Rick began his real estate development company directly out of college. Over the past 40 years Richport has create dozens of communities throughout Metro Atlanta serving urban, suburban, and exurban areas. Through subsidiary companies Rick also has many years of experience in land development and real estate brokerage. In

2006 Rick expanded his industry involvement by accepting a professor position in the College of Design at Georgia Tech, and became a Professor of Practice in 2016 as well as the initial Director of the Master of Real Estate Development program in the College of Design.

Rick's career has been punctuated with industry leadership and environmental stewardship. He represented the development industry in negotiating side by side with representatives of the environmental community, public utilities, and the State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division to develop the first successful General Permit for Stormwater Discharge under the EPA's NPDES program in Georgia. He has developed several conservation communities that resulted in several hundred acres being placed in permanent conservation easements in favor of local and state land trusts. In 1994, Rick was recognized by the national Keep America Beautiful program for an on-site construction waste recycling program that included a recycled construction material component for the new buildings. Of the limited number of Development of Excellence awards presented by the Atlanta Regional Commission for projects throughout the Atlanta region, Rick's communities have received two—one in 2001 for his Old Suwanee traditional neighborhood community that spurred the redevelopment of Historic Old Town Suwanee, and one in 2008 for Davis Oaks urban conservation community that displayed sustainability in an urban infill setting. Rick co-chaired in 2005 the Dekalb County Infill Task Force that resulted in innovative regulatory guidelines for streetscape massing in existing neighborhoods.

Jennie Lynn Rudder
Urban Designer and
Landscape Architect
Gresham Smith



Jennie Lynn Rudder is a Project Executive with Gresham Smith's landscape architecture and civil engineering practice. A fifth-generation Atlantan, senior landscape architect and urban designer, she leads the Georgia Land Planning Market from the Midtown Atlanta office.

With over two decades of experience in landscape architecture, planning and urban design, Jennie Lynn brings a unique and inherently multidisciplinary perspective to her role at Gresham Smith where she drives the growth of the firm's portfolio both in Atlanta and nationwide, leading business development strategies and advancing project design solutions. She helms projects throughout the US including multi-block high-density urban infill, university campuses, urban landscapes, riparian corridors, resilience strategies, stormwater parks, streetscapes, and robust community engagement.

Jennie Lynn holds a master's degree in urban design from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from the University of Georgia, where she serves on the Dean's Advisory Council and formerly served as the President of the College of Environment + Design Alumni Association. In addition to her involvement with the Urban Land Institute, she is also an active member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and a volunteer with Park Pride.

Anne Michael Sustman

Associate Principal and Director, Commercial Mixed Use/ Adaptive Reuse Page-Stantec



Anne Michael Sustman is a dynamic leader in Atlanta's architectural community, specializing in complex commercial and adaptive reuse projects. At Page, Anne Michael collaborates closely with her clients and leads them & her multidisciplinary teams through challenging terrain to develop tailored solutions that align with both business objectives and community aspirations. Her approach integrates thoughtful design with strategic planning to revitalize spaces, enhance urban experiences, and contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of neighborhoods.

Beyond her project leadership, Anne Michael is deeply committed to mentorship and equity within the profession. She is a supporter of AIA Atlanta's Emerging Professionals Student Mentorship Program and AIA Georgia's Equity in Architecture group, which she helped co-found in 2016. Her involvement extends to CREW's Mentors & Proteges program and internal initiatives at Page, where she fosters the growth of emerging talent. A graduate of the Leadership CREW program, her passion for mentorship is further demonstrated through her ongoing participation on the PACE committee, and she often connects experienced professionals with emerging talent. Her dedication to leadership development extends to her continued support of the ULI Center for Leadership

program, which she completed in 2016, where she volunteers her time to the next generation of industry leaders. She was recently recognized in the 2025 cohort of ULI Atlanta's ChangeMakers.

Anne Michael also plays a pivotal role in broader real estate and development dialogues. She has participated as a panelist and moderator at various Bisnow events, podcasts, and contributed to industry articles. Anne Michael is an active member of ULI's National Reuse and Redevelopment Council, co-chairs ULI Atlanta's Creative Development Council, and participates as a TAP panelist, where she shares insights that shape the future of urban development.

With a keen understanding of the evolving needs of clients and communities, she leads teams that contribute to vibrant, functional neighborhood environments that foster connection and engagement. Anne Michael Sustman continues to shape Atlanta's urban landscape, creating spaces that are not only meaningful but also reflective of the diverse communities they serve.

Jewel Williams

Program Officer, Small Business Development LISC Atlanta



Jewel D. Williams is a seasoned professional with a diverse background in both entrepreneurial ventures, corporate and education environments. After successfully launching and scaling businesses in real estate finance and business consulting, Jewel has transitioned

to LISC (Local Initiatives Financial Corp) Atlanta, where she serves as Business Development Program Officer. In addition, Jewel holds a teaching role with the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta. The transition into this role reflects her passion for blending educational processes with entrepreneurial innovation to aid in creating thriving, sustainable organizations who understand the methodology needed to scale a business.

Jewel is passionate about her volunteer role as Director of New Birth Disaster Relief Team that educates and serves underserved Georgia communities in preparedness and recovery in and for disaster events. As global-warming and weather patterns become more extreme, this shift affects the environment and the lives of those who are already experiencing socio-economic disparities. These low-income communities find themselves further behind after a disaster or catastrophe.

