

Urban Land Institute

REPOSITIONING THE SOUTHSIDE

Savannah, Georgia

ULI Savannah Technical Assistance Panel | April 14–15, 2026

About

Urban Land Institute

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: The Savannah Mall site in the city's Southside neighborhood is poised for redevelopment. (ULI)

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2001 L Street, NW | Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036-4948

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ULI Atlanta

With over 1,400 members across the state of Georgia, ULI Atlanta is one of the largest and most active ULI District Councils worldwide. We bring together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs. We share knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, electronic media, events, and programs. In September 2024, ULI expanded its statewide footprint and launched ULI Savannah, which is staffed by ULI Atlanta and supported by a local leadership team of ULI members.

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Amanda Rhein
City of Atlanta
District Council Chair, ULI Atlanta

Kyle Reis
Cooper Carry
Chair for Mission Advancement, ULI Atlanta

Arman Tolentino
Cooper Carry
TAPs Committee Co-Chair, ULI Atlanta

Ann Carpenter
Atlanta Regional Commission
TAPs Committee Co-Chair, ULI Atlanta

Daphne Bond-Godfrey
Executive Director, ULI Atlanta

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 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

Technical Assistance Panel

Panel Chair

Patrick Shay, AIA
Principal, Architect
GMSHAY

Panel Members

Eric Bishop
Landscape Architect
Kimley-Horn

Kathi Cook
Director of Community Development
City of Alpharetta

Niti Gajjar, AICP, RA
Associate and Project Architect
Cooper Carry

Kenwin Hayes, Sr.
Leader at Southern Company
Georgia Power Company

Geoff Koski
President and Owner
KB Advisory Group

Fielder Shurling
Principal – Investments
Regent Partners

Whitney Shephard
Co-Founder
Transport Studio

Grace Wooten
Vice President
Pape Dawson

Panel Project Manager

Arman Tolentino, AIA
Senior Associate and Senior Project Architect
Cooper Carry

ULI Project Staff

Lance Morsell, AICP
Strategic Initiatives Lead
ULI Atlanta

Kelly Annis
Report Writer
Branch Communications



The ULI panel and staff from the City of Savannah toured the Savannah Mall site and the surrounding areas.



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Acknowledgments

ULI Savannah would like to thank the City of Savannah, Georgia, for inviting ULI to conduct this study. In particular, ULI thanks Bridget Lidy and Jessica Baldwin for the critical role they played in providing the panel with the information and resources needed to conduct its evaluation of the site. Finally, ULI thanks the numerous stakeholders who generously shared their time and insights with the panel.

Executive Summary

The enclosed retail mall model, made popular across the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, is undergoing a seismic shift. Retail trends have changed the way consumers shop, and competition is no longer just the next mall down the road–it can be any store, anywhere across the globe. The Savannah Mall on the southside of Savannah, Georgia, provides a stark demonstration of this trend.

Built in the early 1990s, the core of the Savannah Mall sits empty today. A Dillard's department store remains open on its eastern end, a Bass Pro Shop sits along the southern edge, and a Target store is located at the western end. Nearly everything between these stores is vacant.

Sitting on approximately 70 acres, the Savannah Mall represents an exciting redevelopment opportunity. Redevelopment at this site could reshape this visible corner of the city and influence future development along the surrounding streets and commercial areas. Recognizing this potential, the City of Savannah (the City) hosted a design charrette with the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) in 2018 through the CNU 26 Legacy Project. The resulting Southside Retrofit Study delivered a number of compelling ideas, most of which were framed around creating an urban grid in the area, enhancing walkability and biking connectivity, and attracting additional, denser housing to the site and surrounding vacant parcels.

Recent funding now available in the City, including the SPLOST 8 funding, has sparked renewed interest in the Southside Retrofit Study recommendations, the potential to redevelop the Savannah Mall property, and the potential to catalyze a new development approach to this traditionally suburban Southside district.

To help the City determine its best path forward at the Savannah Mall and surrounding areas, it turned to the Urban Land Institute Atlanta District Council (ULI) and the ULI satellite in Savannah for guidance. Using its technical assistance panel (TAP) process, ULI convened a team of real estate professionals to study the site, interview stakeholders, and make recommendations for the City to consider as it seeks to catalyze new development at the site. The ULI panel's recommendations are summarized below.

Framework Plan

Building on the CNU 26 study, the panel identified the following key opportunities for the City to consider in pursuing redevelopment of the Savannah Mall.

Elevate the Southside's identity and culture. Redevelopment of such a large parcel provides a unique opportunity to connect residents and visitors to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. The cultural heritage exemplified in the corridor and alive in the city's historic church community could become a feature of the site's new identity. Redevelopment should also showcase the area's treasured natural assets, including its waterfront, marshlands, and tree canopy.

Create a civic hub. The Southside lacks a central gathering space or civic hub. Residents currently travel downtown to access key resident services that could be delivered via a Southside satellite. A new public park at the site could also add vibrancy to the area and catalyze private sector investment.

Facilitate community connections. Community landmarks, including built assets and natural areas, could be linked via an elevated gateway bridge that connects residents, students, and visitors over the busy Abercorn Street/State Road 204 corridor. Using mobility-first infrastructure can improve walking and biking, expand transit, and reduce residents' reliance on personal autos in the district. These shifts are important as the City seeks to foster more walkable, urban environments.

Establish land use and development tools. A framework for land use on the Savannah Mall property and in the surrounding area should set the stage for more diverse and denser housing in this part of town. An expanded mix of housing types and land uses can help create a vibrant urban district that potential new and existing residents may find appealing.

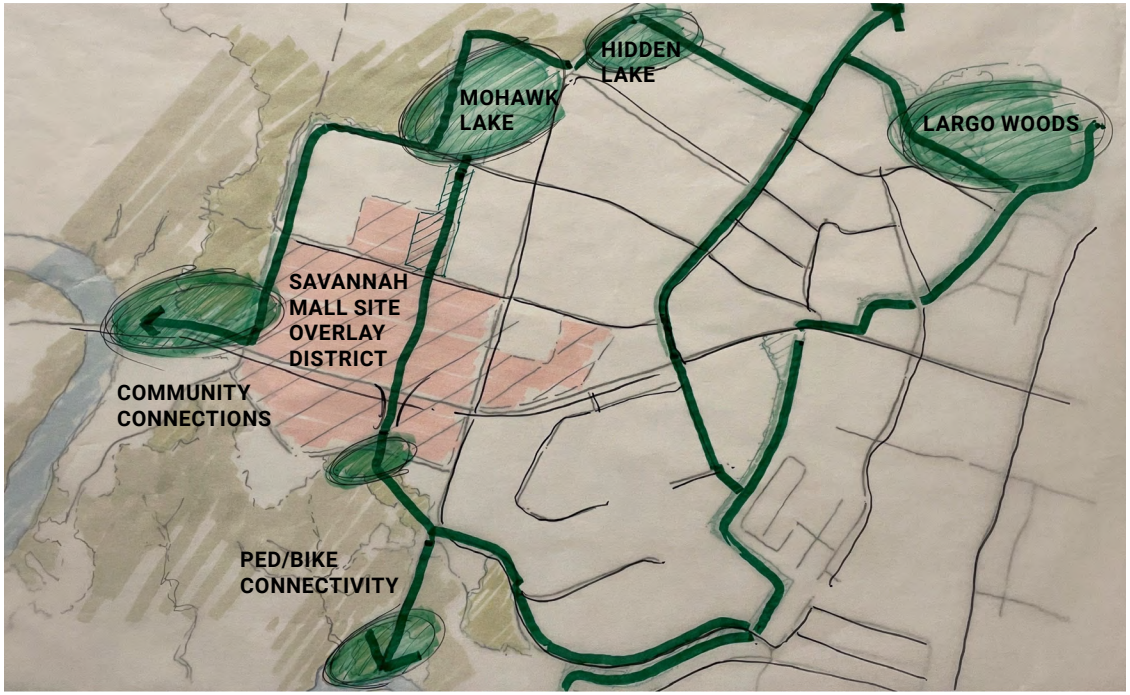
Setting the development framework. The City's role is to establish a development foundation that enables future development at and around the site while also supporting the feasibility and marketability of future development. The panel focused on greenway corridors that allow Savannahians to safely move around the area without a

car. Creating a new connection through the Savannah Mall site and safely over Abercorn Street can directly connect Mohawk Lake to Bell's Landing, amplifying the area's natural assets and better connecting people to the popular multi-modal trail system.

- **Option A: civic center and town square.** In this framework option, a new town center at the Savannah Mall site could provide key resident services and feature a connected greenway running through the center. This new town square could anchor and help activate a new civic hub for the Southside.
- **Option B: stadium and mixed use.** The site is also large enough to accommodate a smaller sports stadium, and, with it, an associated parking structure and supportive mixed-use development. The greenway could also move through the center of this framework.
- **Option C: sports complex and mixed use.** This option envisions a state-of-the-art sports complex designed to host tournaments at the site. A greenway could again feed into the site, and hotels, restaurants, and entertainment could surround the sports fields.

Recommendations

The actions needed to fully redevelop the Savannah Mall site will take years to plan and complete. The panel outlined a draft timeline of municipal actions that build upon the City's new vision for the site, leveraging key tools and infrastructure to attract a master developer to deliver a new anchor and catalyze additional investment in the city's Southside.



ULI PANEL

The Savannah Mall property would benefit from an overlay district and improved connectivity to surrounding open space assets.

Near Term: Gain Site Control and Set The Vision

The redevelopment of the Savannah Mall site should be a City-driven process. To that end, the City should gain control of the Savannah Mall property, including the land on which both Target and the Dillard's department store sit. Concurrently, the City is encouraged to create a vision for the entire site, outlining broad land uses and services.

Medium Term: Set the Framework and Assemble Tools

The following steps should be addressed in the next three to five years.

- **Create a development framework plan.** The City should create and adopt a development framework plan that includes public infrastructure improvements, public transit, and public space improvements.
- **Create an overlay district.** An overlay district can help guide broad uses across the Savannah Mall property. The panel recommends that the overlay prioritize density, specify the mix of potential uses,

reduce setbacks for new buildings, and reduce parking requirements.

- **Assess optionality.** In addition to the community's input and the City's vision, a market study can help shape potential uses for the site. Evaluating potential anchors and scenarios, conducting a market study, and consulting with a sports complex consultant can help the City understand the potential viability of the concepts under consideration.

Align economic development tools. The City can support future development at the site by identifying potential tools and incentives to support its redevelopment. These tools include local land-value capture tools such as taxing districts, local financial tools that can support businesses, tools for property owners, and non-financial tools such as expedited permitting or waiving City-based fees. State and federal financial tools, including block grants and tax credits, should also be explored.

Create a marketing and branding strategy. A marketing and branding strategy for the Savannah Mall site and the surrounding Southside district can help reshape perceptions of the property and help attract new activity. In addition to the marketing and branding efforts, communications, both internal to the City and external with partners and the community, should occur regularly and detail the goals, decisions, and ongoing activities at the site.

Create a master developer request for proposals (RFP). The City is encouraged to issue a master developer RFP for the entire Mall site. A one-developer approach can help ensure the required infrastructure is delivered to the City's required quality level and set the stage for a high-quality finished product. Additional developer requirements should include adopting the Framework Plan and adhering to its housing and community-oriented uses.

Create Southside district design guidelines. Once a developer has been selected, the City is encouraged to create design guidelines for the Southside district. The sequencing of this work, following the master developer selection and in coordination with the developer, will help ensure that the guidelines align with and support the developer's plans.

Long Term: Break Ground

Throughout the development process, the City should remain the steward of the public realm. Additionally, as part of its regular economic efforts and in cooperation with the developer, the City can help attract further development and business activity to the site and the surrounding area.

Conclusion

As the current owners of the Savannah Mall work to determine a path forward, the panel strongly encourages the City of Savannah to step in and lead the way. The large site has the potential to drive transformational change in the city's Southside. The transformation will likely require a public-private partnership, as the scope of work is complex and spans both public realm improvements and private-sector investments.

With control of the site in hand, the City can set a new vision for the area that better connects the community with its assets, sets a foundation for a new vibrant district, and creates a template for a more walkable and inviting Southside.

As one stakeholder suggested, it's time to "*go big or go home.*" The future of the Savannah Mall property is bright, yet complicated. With careful planning, dedication, and collaboration, this corner of the city can come alive with new activity, giving residents even more reasons to love the Southside, attracting new households to the area, and providing visitors with even more reasons to return.



The city's tree canopy is yet another natural treasure worth highlighting.

Introduction and Background

Like many cities across the United States, Savannah, Georgia, is taking a fresh look at one of its regional malls. Recognizing that the development patterns that have shaped the approximately 70-acre Savannah Mall property and its surroundings are no longer fostering a vibrant economic environment, the City of Savannah has launched a series of studies to re-envision the site.

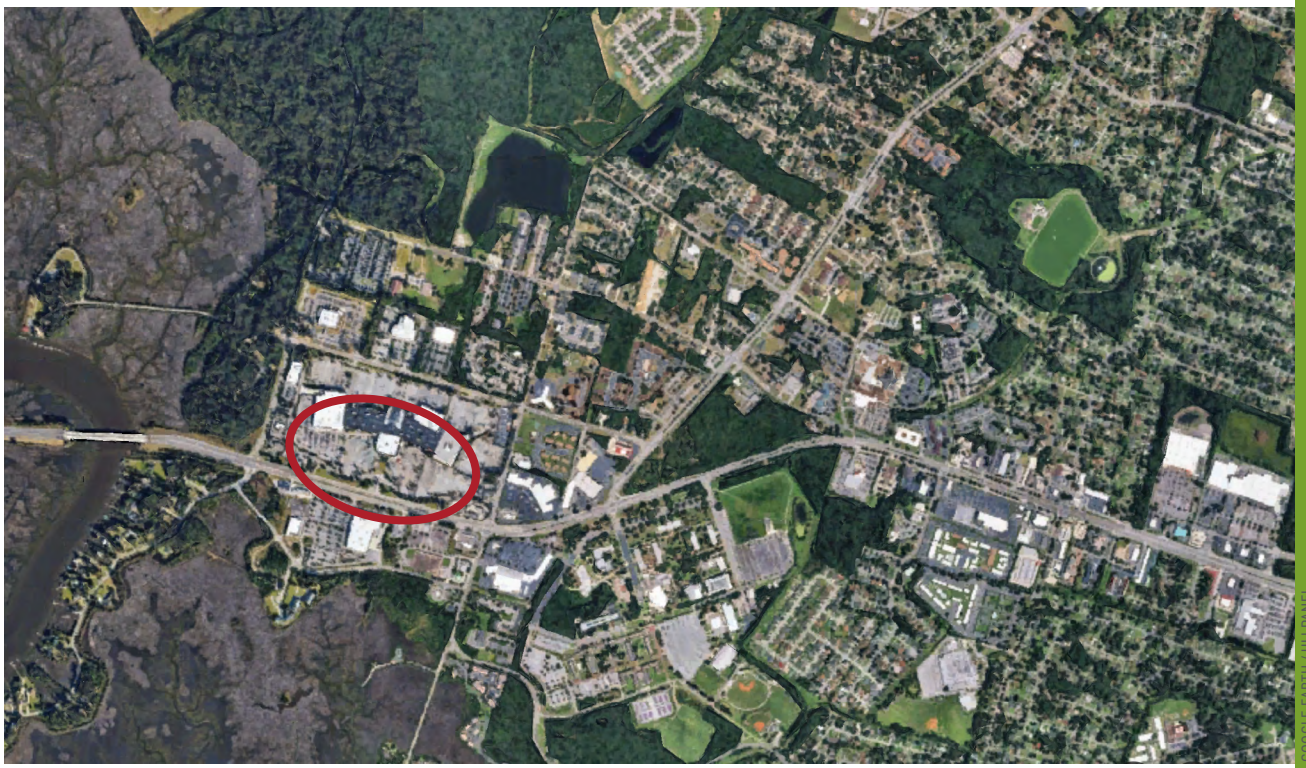
Surrounding the Savannah Mall, the Southside neighborhood is one of the city's principal suburban growth corridors as identified by the City of Savannah (the City). The Southside is home to Georgia Southern University Armstrong Campus (GSU), St. Joseph's Hospital, numerous strip shopping centers, and residential neighborhoods characterized by post-World War II single-family, ranch-style homes, with a number of low-density multifamily residential options along the edges.

The Southside is also surrounded by important regional assets. Hunter Army Airfield sits just north and west of the Savannah Mall and has an entrance close to the Savannah Mall property. Abercorn Street is an important regional commuting corridor. Marshes and streams to the south and west offer access to water-based recreation, and the city's multi-modal trail system is planned to line the site's western edge.

Even with all of these assets surrounding the site, the Savannah Mall has struggled in recent years. Retail shopping patterns have shifted toward more online and experiential shopping, and traditional malls have struggled to adapt. While some mall owners have sold properties to new entities with plans to reposition the retail offerings, others have sold to developers planning to clear the site of existing buildings and build something entirely new.

Savannah GPS

The Southside Retrofit is part of a group of small area plans gear toward the Savannah GPS Goal to "Expand Economic Access, Opportunity and Vitality for All." The goal is to grow the local economy by supporting businesses and entrepreneurs and creating policies and programs that provide fair economic opportunities and good-paying jobs. Further, the goal promote sustainable and equitable development through the use of place-based planning and land use-policies, like neighborhood and small area plans, to drive redevelopment efforts that prioritize equity, sustainability, and the preservation of historic neighborhoods. GOAL 3.3.3.



GOOGLE EARTH / ULI PANEL

The Savannah Mall site, circled in red above, sits close to the marshland and Bell's Landing to the south, the Little Ogeechee River to the west, Mohawk Lake to the north, and a number of residential neighborhoods.

TAP Questions

The City asked the ULI panel to identify how the redevelopment of the Savannah Mall and its immediate surroundings could better connect neighborhoods and catalyze development in the area. Specifically, the City asked the following questions:

1. How should standards for density, height, housing, mobility, and open space be structured to attract investment while delivering community benefits?
2. What type of planning and regulatory framework (overlay, mixed-use, TOD, form-based, or character districts) would best implement the CNU Southside Retrofit Legacy Project to include a variety of uses with connected neighborhoods?
3. How can the redevelopment of the area around the Savannah Mall create a mixed-use hub with strong connections to public space and mobility?
4. Which catalyst sites should be prioritized, and what strategies or policy changes are needed to make them market-ready with a phased implementation?
5. How can redevelopment strategies be coordinated with complete streets improvements and Georgia Southern University's Armstrong Campus plans?
6. Which tools (incentives, expedited review processes, design review, or special districts) should be considered for new investment?

Although the Savannah Mall is not the linchpin of the Southside neighborhood's success, it does—or can—play an important role in shifting land use in the area and catalyzing new investment. With this understanding, the City of Savannah (the City) turned to the Urban Land Institute (ULI) for insights and advice. In April 2026, ULI's Savannah satellite district council convened a technical assistance panel to study the Savannah Mall site and its surroundings, interview community stakeholders, and review previous planning materials, including the 2018 Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) Savannah Southside Retrofit Legacy Project.

Convened over two days, the ULI panel brought together real estate industry professionals with expertise in development, architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, transportation planning, and public administration.

What the Panel Heard

Following a briefing from the City's planning department and a tour of the Savannah Mall site and its surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial centers, the panel interviewed neighborhood and community stakeholders about the site's future and potential development needs in the area. The stakeholders included business owners, property owners, economic development professionals, representatives from GSU, the Savannah Mall owners, community organizations, and additional City staff with direct experience in the area.

The panel's interviews uncovered the following themes:

- The area has an identity—people know "the Southside"—but it lacks a soul.
- The Southside is a car-centric environment with very limited walkability. Entire neighborhoods were designed without sidewalks, and streets are busy and wide, making pedestrian crossings challenging.
- Abercorn Street, in particular, is a busy thoroughfare, with daily traffic counts of over 62,000 cars. It is dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- The community needs additional social services to assist lower-income residents and those struggling to remain housed.
- There are trust issues in the community, as previous municipal plans or promises have not come to fruition.
- The area's housing stock has been well-suited to first-time homebuyers, and generations of families have called the Southside "home."
- Additional housing is needed, particularly additional affordable units and a range of options to suit a wider variety of homeowner demographics.
- This area of the city is ten miles from the historic downtown and lacks a community center or core of activity.
- Some residents believe there are few amenities in the area for anyone older than age five, leaving residents to drive elsewhere for dining and entertainment.

- The broader Savannah Mall site has multiple owners, easements, and complexities, which significantly limit its redevelopment prospects. It is also a large, contiguous site that holds great potential for someone able to overcome the obstacles.
- The current owners of the core Mall building would welcome direction on a viable path forward.
- The multi-modal trail system and park connectivity could hold promise for the site.
- Georgia Southern University could be a good partner in new plans or programming at the site.
- The City's job is to shape the public realm.
- The site needs placemaking— to create a "there" there. It needs an identity and a reason for residents and others to visit.
- "Start big and start over."

Key Themes

Informed by the tour, briefing, stakeholder interviews, and SWOT analysis, the panel turned to the challenge at hand and identified the following key themes for the City's work going forward:

- **Gain site control.** The City needs to drive the redevelopment process by first gaining control of the Savannah Mall site.
- **Prep municipal tools.** There are unique municipal tools that can help facilitate the redevelopment needed to reposition a large suburban mall property, and public funding is available to support it. The City can facilitate development by putting those tools in place for the Southside. The redevelopment of this site will likely require a public-private partnership (P3), and the City is encouraged to take action with that model in mind.
- **Issue the request for proposals.** The panel recommends that the site be redeveloped by the private sector (not the City). A request for proposals (RFP) should be issued and shared broadly with the development community. An RFP approach will allow the City to select the option that best repositions the site and delivers new uses that begin to meet market demands while also providing important community benefits.

Be ready to go big or go home.

City leadership encouraged the panel to think big in its recommendations for the Southside and for the Savannah Mall site. With that request, the panel developed a framework for future development at the site, identifying near-term actions, as well as steps to be taken over the medium- and long-term to advance work at the site and catalyze additional private investment in the surrounding areas.



Mohawk Lake is north of the Savannah Mall property and could provide a welcome connection to nature.



Bell's Landing is just south of the site and provides another compelling connection to nature and the water beyond.



The marshes spread across the area to the south, providing yet another proximate connection to nature.

Study Area Tour



Mall signage points to its sparse usage.



The building is surrounded by acres of paved surface parking.



The inline store spaces sit vacant as seen in this photo of an interior mall corridor, seen through windows on locked doors.



The roadways surrounding the Savannah Mall are wide and intimidating to pedestrians.



The active Target department store is a bright spot on the Savannah Mall property.



Bass Pro Shop lines a portion of the southern side of the Savannah Mall.

SWOT Analysis. The panel's evaluation of the Savannah Mall and surrounding study site pointed to a number of assets and challenges, detailed by the panel in the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis.

STRENGTHS

The Savannah Mall is in a prime location and could be seen as a gateway to the Southside.

It is very car-accessible and well-connected by roadways.

Natural assets are within easy reach. Mohawk Lake is north of the Savannah Mall, marshland and the Little Ogeechee River are on the west, and Bell's Landing is nearby to the south.

Proximate institutional anchors, including GSU and St. Joseph's Hospital, could provide opportunities for partnership.

There are strong public resources in the area, including the public library and the Savannah Veterans Administration Outpatient Clinic.

Abercorn Street provides good connectivity across the Southside and connects to other regional arterials.

The area is a transit service district.

The Southside has a generally stable and active residential market, much of which is attainable to younger or first-time homebuyers.

WEAKNESSES

The Southside features an auto-centric design with infrequent sidewalks, and walking and biking along the roadways is unwelcoming.

Aside from the "Southside" moniker, the area lacks a unified community identity, which may be exacerbated by the lack of a central commercial area or other community gathering place.

The broader Mall site is marked by fractured land ownership.

The site has multiple layers of easements and restrictions, complicating development.

The roadways surrounding the Savannah Mall, along with existing utilities and easements, create barriers that interrupt connectivity.

Residents have a number of compelling, competing choices between activities in their neighborhood and those in the city's downtown and midtown.

The area's transit options lack reliable walkability connections (e.g., the panel noted that a bus stop lacked a connecting sidewalk).

OPPORTUNITIES

The scale of the Savannah Mall site allows for an entirely new identity.

There is an existing workforce in place, and commuters going further south and west could bring traffic by the site.

Residents would welcome a Southside gathering space.

The Southside is for the people (unlike downtown).

The existing housing types offer lifecycle housing for multiple generations, co-housing, etc.

There is good potential to link to GSU and other anchor institutions.

A new anchor, like a sports complex or other mixed-use development, would be welcome and could bring hotels, restaurants, and entertainment.

There are exciting opportunities to connect to the multi-modal trail system.

Nature should be brought into the site. The things people think about when they think of Savannah–trees and water–could enliven the site and soften its paved edges.

THREATS

There is a threat of doing nothing and maintaining the status quo.

The site's continued decline is a drag on surrounding assets.

This large property will require a long-term process to reshape its use and built form.

Non-violent crime is a challenge in the Southside.

There is a visible unhoused population with unmet needs.

There are competing community interests, community distrust of the public sector, and a perceived lack of City action in the area.

The area lacks planning infrastructure, and there are competing growth nodes across the broader city.

There is not enough corporate interest to bring a new location and its associated white-collar workers to the Southside.

Public transit access and related use are weak in the area.

Anchor institutions operate in silos, with little connectivity or interaction.

Framework Plan

The vision for the Savannah Mall site, as articulated by CNU 26, still holds value today: "to establish a vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use and walkable neighborhood center on the City's south side with opportunities for education, housing, jobs, entertainment, and access to multiple modes of transportation." How the site is reshaped to align with this vision may require modification over time, adjusting to meet market and community needs, but this core goal remains unchanged.

Building on this vision, the panel noted the following key opportunities available to the community through the redevelopment of the Savannah Mall site.

- **Elevate nature, identity, and culture.** Residents of the Southside are proud of their community, and improvements at the site could further elevate the area's cultural heritage, natural environment, and help articulate its identity.
- **Create a civic hub.** Built along long vehicular transportation corridors, the Southside would benefit from the establishment of a civic hub, a place where community members can gather, where services can be provided, and upon which new opportunities can be built.
- **Facilitate community connections.** The area has excellent car connectivity. Strengthening pedestrian, bicycling, park, trail, and cultural connectivity can be supported by improvements at the site.
- **Establish land use and development tools.** The development community will be looking to the City for guidance on potential land use at the site. The City should put the tools in place now to facilitate the type of improvements it and the community would like to see at the site.

Elevate Nature, Identity, and Celebrate Culture

When people think of Savannah, the historic downtown, the Savannah River, and the connections to the ocean come to mind. Diving deeper into the region's history, however, quickly reveals a number of other important elements that have also had a significant impact on the community, its culture, its heritage, and the protection of its natural assets.

Elevate cultural assets. Connecting to the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor would be an excellent start to elevating the rich cultural history of the region, particularly the Southside. The Southside's historic church community could also serve as an important resource in telling the area's unique history and story. Participating in this effort with cultural competency will be critical, ensuring that the stories are told authentically and in the best interest of the generations who have nurtured these histories over time.

Showcase and protect natural assets. The region's natural beauty and resources are on full display on Savannah's south side. The unique waterfront and marshlands are a compelling draw, and the city's tree canopy—visible in its parks, waterfront areas, and in other public spaces—is an important asset worthy of attention and protection.





The Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (top), the area's marshlands (middle), and the Historical Nicholsonboro Baptist Church (bottom) are just a few of the area's rich cultural assets that could be highlighted by redevelopment work at the Savannah Mall site.

PAUL MEACHAM

GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Honoring these cultural elements and natural resources can prove beneficial in re-shaping the study area and building new connections to and through the site. In addition to giving the area an identity, the people who know and understand these cultural touchstones and assets could lead the work, sharing their knowledge, collective history, and community stories. These could become the elements that restore and amplify the soul of the Southside.

Create a Civic Hub

The Southside has evolved over time along the district's key roadways and commercial corridors. Although schools, libraries, hospitals, and other civic assets are readily available, the Southside lacks a central gathering space, civic hub, or key point of community connectivity. Without this point of gravity, development and activity continue to sprawl along the area's roadways, with suburban-style neighborhoods looping nearby.

Establish a new civic hub. A secondary town center, or "City Hall South," in the Southside could serve as a place for gathering and connection. It could become a central hub that provides ready access to resident services, existing library services, and multigenerational programming—all without having to travel downtown. Other bedroom communities, like Suwanee and Sugar Hill, have created vibrant and active public spaces and civic hubs in areas otherwise dominated by transportation.

Use park space to create vibrancy. A public park could also create this new community hub. Housed on 5–10 acres, a park could deliver a new and significant recreational greenspace to the community and also serve as a catalyst for follow-on private-sector investment. Connected by multi-modal trail system segments and linear parks, the park could be connected to neighborhoods, commercial areas, and other open space assets across the Southside.

Facilitate Community Connections

Building on the panel's proposed greenway connectivity and using a Complete Streets approach, the Southside could benefit from a formal connected framework.

Create connections above Abercorn Street. Community landmarks could be linked via an elevated gateway bridge that connects residents, students, and visitors to the City's trails, parks, and waterways. Such a bridge could provide a new, safer mobility option for those moving around on foot, by bike, or on other non-motorized modes. It could create a greenway connection between City parks, elevate users above the dangerous Abercorn Street thoroughfare, and reduce pedestrian casualties. A bridge could also serve as a "Gateway to the Southside," providing an opportunity for signage and branding.

Use mobility-first Infrastructure. While this area of town has historically prioritized



CITY OF JOHNS CREEK

The Johns Creek Town Center features a new City Hall building with a community gathering space on the water.

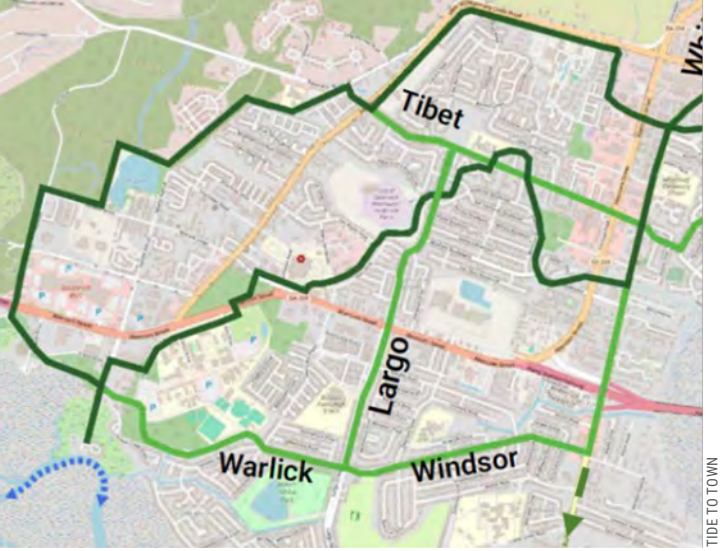


ARKAN HOMES

The Suwanee Town Center was designed with the pedestrian experience in mind while also accommodating ample parking.



Wide paths, separated from automobile traffic can encourage more walking and biking in the area.



TIDE TO TOWN

The proposed off-road path along the western edge of the Savannah Mall property could provide protected connections from the site to other destinations across Savannah.



SMALLWOOD



GOOGLE MAPS

From the Fifth Street Bridge over Interstate 85 (middle) to the pedestrian bridge that connects key shopping and residential areas in Peachtree Corners (bottom), there are creative ways to separate pedestrians from dangerous traffic conditions.

vehicular transportation, a shift toward safe walking, biking, and expanded transit would serve the community well. With safer alternatives to automobile transportation, residents can leave their cars at home on occasion and connect with other community members along the way. This could have the added benefit of reducing residents' overall transportation expenses.

Establish Land Use and Development Tools

In addition to establishing a framework for broad land use in the study area and at the Savannah Mall site, the City can set the stage for delivering more diverse and dense housing in this part of town.

Promote more and denser housing. Although population growth in the Southside has remained relatively flat, new housing options can help stimulate additional economic development. By encouraging new mixed-income, infill, and denser housing typologies within the area's activity centers, the district can begin to see more population growth and support housing affordability in the area. The area is already known for providing housing that appeals to new homebuyers and young families, and adding options for those hoping to downsize or find options with reduced maintenance burdens can help ensure that current residents have options when the single-family ranch home is no longer appealing. These additional housing units—including townhomes, cottage courts, and other missing middle housing types—positioned in active areas, can bring more households to the Southside and thus more strongly support retail in those centers. This mix of uses can help create the type of vibrant urban district that potential new residents may find appealing–and that is currently missing in the Southside.

Setting the Development Framework

While it might be tempting to create a new master plan for the Savannah Mall site, one that specifies what businesses and residential units should be placed where, the City should outline the underlying land use framework and policy foundation to enable the type of development the City would like to see. It will then be up to the market and real estate developers to determine the mix of uses that will be financially feasible and marketable.

With this understanding, the ULI panel did not offer a new master plan for the Savannah Mall site. It instead created several framework options for the City to consider and then leverage to develop a vision for what the site could be. This general direction, the associated tools and incentives the City would be willing to commit to the site, and an eventual RFP for development will signal the City's support for work at the site and encourage the development community to create a plan to begin realizing that vision.

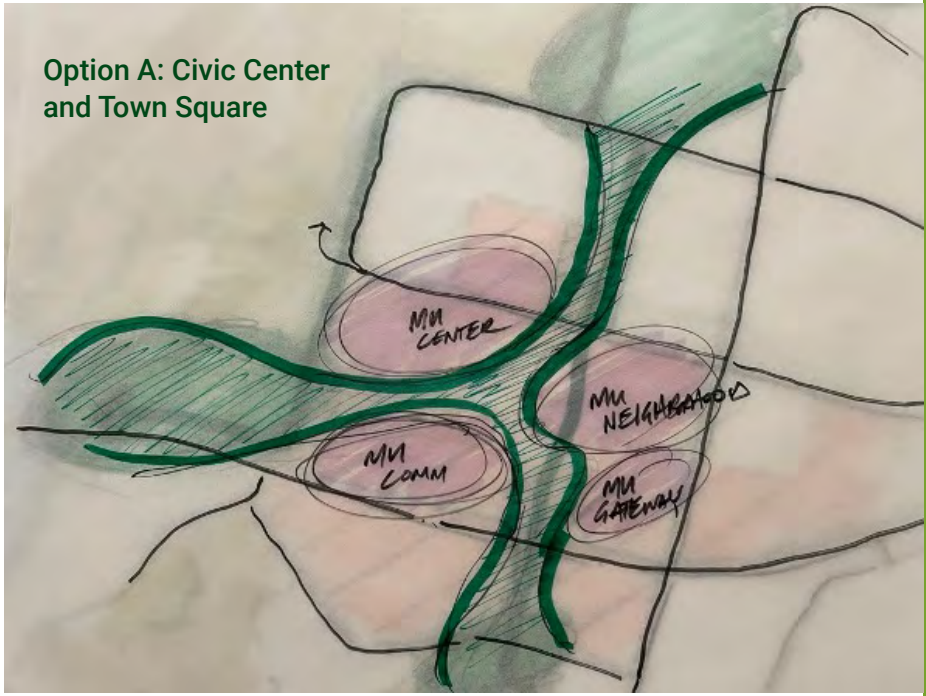
Baseline Foundation

The panel's evaluation of the Savannah Mall site and the surrounding natural, residential, and institutional assets led it to first identify where and how stronger



ULI PANEL

The study area is surrounded by a host of open space assets that could be connected by a trail network that could also run through the study site.



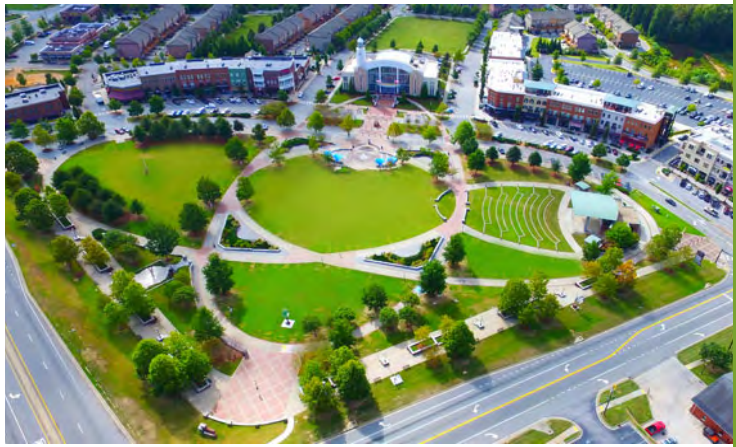
ULI PANEL

Option A envisions a broad swath of connected greenways through the site that frame a town square and other new mixed-use buildings.

connections could be made through and around the site. These improvements would leverage existing greenway and trail corridors, enabling Savannahians to safely move to and around the area without a car. Connecting to the nearby waterways–the River, Bell's Landing, and Mohawk Lake–and established parks with new pedestrian and bicycling connections can improve the quality of life for Southside residents. Creating a new connection through the Savannah Mall property and safely over Abercorn Street can directly connect Mohawk Lake to Bell's Landing, highlighting these assets and better connecting residents, students, and visitors to the surrounding trail network.

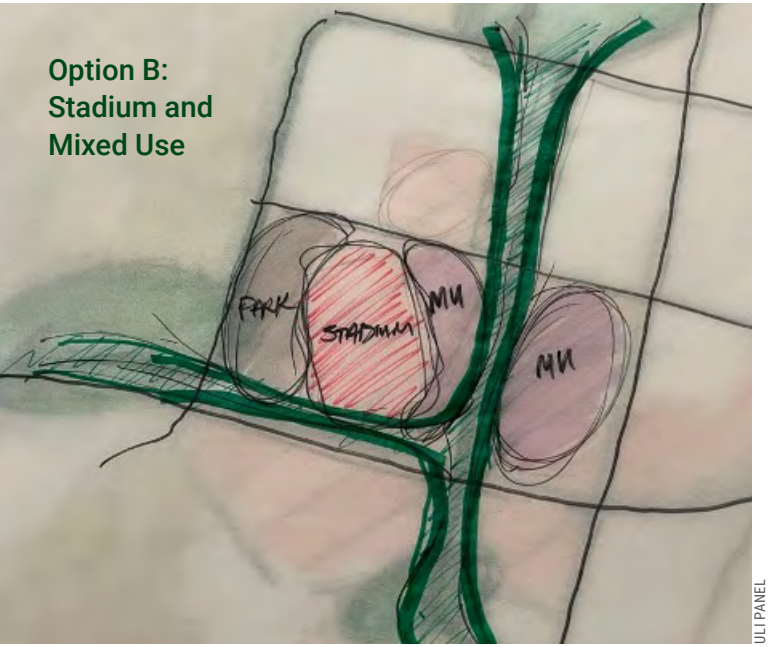
Option A: Civic Center and Town Square

In this first framework option, the panel envisioned a town center development with a connected greenway running through the center, connecting people north and south and further west to the river. This gateway-style framework could serve existing Southside residents and also provide an amenity for visitors, connecting them to significant Southside anchors and a newly activated civic hub. The Suwanee Town Center, pictured to the right, is a good example of a town center development that features green space, trees and shade, and sidewalk connectivity that enables pedestrian movement.



CITY OF SUWANEE

The Suwanee Town Center features strong pedestrian connections even as it is bordered by wide roadways on two sides.



ULI PANEL

Option B features a stadium in the center of the site, flanked by a parking structure and mixed-use buildings.

Option B: Stadium and Mixed Use

The site is also large enough to accommodate a smaller sports stadium (exact size to be determined by a consultant), an associated parking structure, and supportive mixed-use development. The panel envisioned the greenway moving through the center of this framework, creating a mobility spine that could support game-day visitation and potentially reduce parking stress. Design considerations for this framework would need to evaluate the potential for multiple uses of the stadium—hosting other outdoor events, performances, or conference-style gatherings—so that the structure does not sit idle for the rest of the year nor compete with Enmarket Arena.



ULI NASHVILLE

Erlanger Park in Chattanooga, Tennessee, provides a similar scale to the Savannah Mall site.



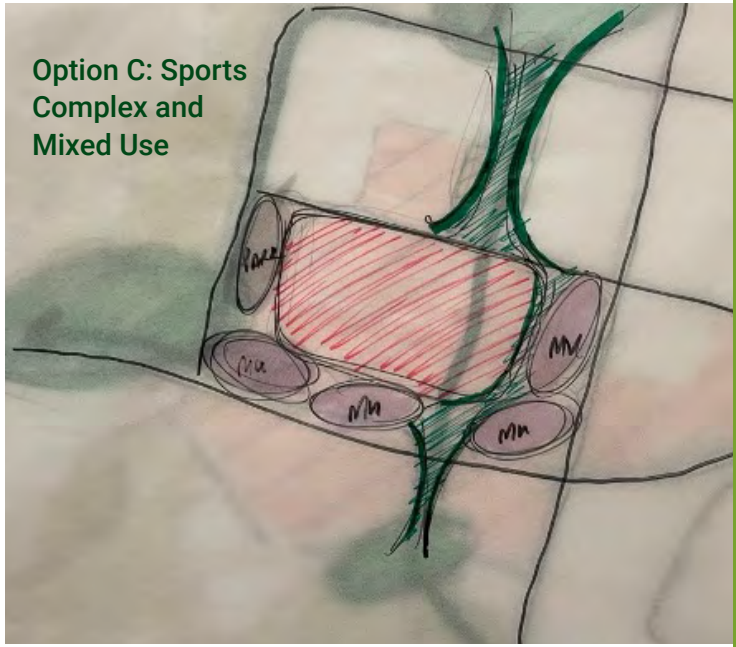
THE VILLAGE DALLAS

This softball field is located next to a number of restaurants and other entertainment options in this Dallas, Texas, development.

Parking and traffic considerations will need to be carefully evaluated, with shifts from surface to structure parking and the use of traffic management tools to reduce vehicular congestion on event or game days.

Option C: Sports Complex, Mixed Use

This third development option is also framed around sports, but this time focusing on a state-of-the-art sports complex designed to host tournaments. The greenway could again feed into the site and bridge Abercorn, but



ULI PANEL

Option C is designed around a facility for sporting tournaments. Hotels, restaurants, and a mix of uses surround the facility.

this concept also leverages the southside location and proximity to regional interstates, which could bring players and their families directly to the site. Mixed-use facilities could surround the sports complex, offering multiple options for hotels, restaurants, and entertainment for visiting teams, players, and their families. Although the tournaments are the initial draw, players and families are interested in fun and food between games and after the games wrap for the day. The success of this approach would rely on actively marketing the complex to various tournament programs throughout the year, and, while this option does not create a community hub, it could provide a revenue stream for the City.

Case Study

Downtown Westminster
Westminster, Colorado

The following information may provide City of Savannah planners and civic leaders with additional insights and inspiration for the redevelopment of the Savannah Mall site.

It is important to note a foundational distinction between this project and the recommendations for the Savannah Mall site from the ULI panel. In the Westminster example, the City of Westminster served as the master developer of the entire site, having purchased the entire site by 2011. For the Savannah Mall, the ULI panel recommended that the City of Savannah use an RFP process to identify an experienced master developer to manage the broader redevelopment process.



(above) An aerial of the site shows the emerging town center while the inset rendering (left) depicts the site fully built out.

From the Congress for the New Urbanism:
"A large number of malls are dying nationwide—but in most cases, a city or town just lets a developer or investor determine the fate of a property, if there is a market for reusing the site. That's not what city leaders in Westminster, Colorado, did when the 40-year-old Westminster Mall declined in the 2000s.

The automobile-centric suburban community glimpsed the opportunity to build a walkable urban downtown, and the city acquired 95 percent of the former mall's land. Having done that, Westminster could have planned a simple grid of streets for a town center, and that approach would have been a vast improvement over the asphalt superblock. However, the city sought an even better idea to build a special place that will form the heart of Westminster for generations to come.

The city worked with urban designers Torti Gallas + Partners on a land plan that takes advantage of the unique geography of the 105-acre site and puts the city in ongoing charge of the project as a horizontal developer. The result is an urban center under construction that addresses public needs in a way that private development, alone, would have ignored—and offers a realistic model for other communities to follow."

Quick Facts:

Location: Westminster, Colorado
Westminster is northwest of Denver, between Denver and Boulder, along Interstate 36.

Site size: 105 Acres

Developer: City of Westminster

Early investments: $100M+ invested in roads, utilities, fiber, and site amenities

Available Incentives: The City notes financial lending resources here

At full build out, the plan anticipates 550,000 SF of retail, 2300 multi-family units, and 18 acres of parks and open space. Downtown Westminster Specific Plan

Recommendations

The panel outlined a process to help the City actively pursue redevelopment of the Savannah Mall property. Spread out over seven to ten years, municipal actions can help set a vision, align key tools, address foundational infrastructure improvements, and attract a master developer to deliver a new anchor that will help catalyze additional investment and activity.

Near Term (0-2 years)

Gain Site Control and Set the Vision

The panel strongly believes that the redevelopment of the Savannah Mall site should be a City-driven process. Although the City has a host of tools it can use to influence and encourage redevelopment of the site, unless it controls the property, it will not be able to deliver the kind of improvements the City needs and the market and surrounding community want.

Gain site control. To that end, the City is encouraged to gain control of the entire Mall property, including the land on which both Target and Dillard's sit. (The Bass Pro Shop owners have already indicated an interest in moving to a more visible location, closer to one of the area interstates.)

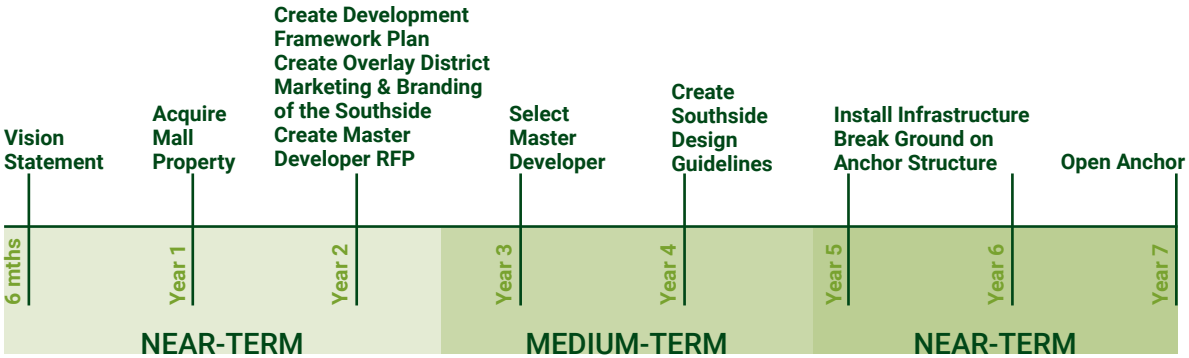
Create a vision for the site. Concurrent with the acquisition work, the City is encouraged to create a vision for the entire site. Informed by community input and with a clear understanding of the uses and services that could best serve the Southside, a vision for the Savannah Mall property can help all partners understand how the site is expected to evolve into its new use.

Medium Term (3-5 years)

Establish a Framework and Assemble Tools

There are a number of steps the City will need to take over the next three to five years to prepare the site for redevelopment. This work will establish a foundation for development and identify the broad, high-level uses the City would like to see spread across the 70+ acres.

A Proposed Development Timeline for the Savannah Mall Property



Create a Development Framework Plan

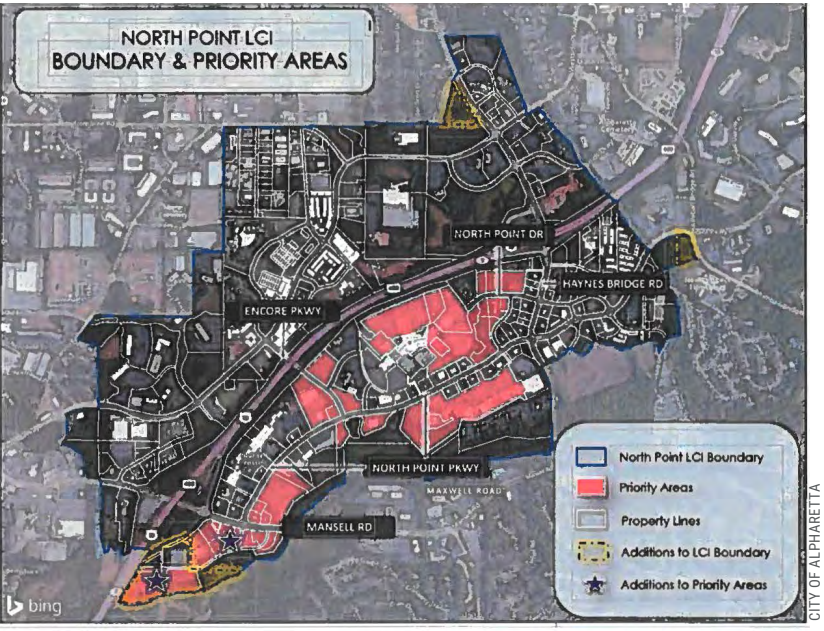
To help shape the reuse of the site, the City should create and adopt a development framework plan for this Southside district that includes the following public sector and public space elements:

- **Public infrastructure improvements.** Roadway updates, sidewalks and complete streets improvements, utilities, and more should be included.
- **Public transit.** Transit connectivity should be a visible feature of the site's redevelopment, tying to the existing transit network and creating new connections to facilitate movement untethered to a personal vehicle.
- **Public space improvements.** Connections to surrounding greenways, waterways, and parks should be included, as well as considerations for public space and community gathering.

Create an Overlay District

The City is encouraged to create an overlay district for the Savannah Mall site and the adjacent properties. Rather than being prescriptive, an overlay district can help guide broad uses across the property and address framing details that can influence and enable the type of walkable, active space the City seeks.

- **Identify areas that should prioritize density.** For the study site, the panel anticipates that 4- and 5-story buildings will be needed to support housing density at



In Alpharetta, Georgia, an overlay district helps direct development at the former North Point Mall site.



The Savannah Mall property, shown above with shading to denote separate ownership, would benefit from an overlay district.

the site. This massing will align with the surrounding building heights and allow developers to achieve a unit count that will support the development's financial feasibility.

- **Specify the mix of uses.** Without specifying uses for specific parcels across the site, the overlay district can detail the broad mix of uses the City would like to see, including, for example, residential, commercial, and hotel uses.
- **Reduced setbacks.** The panel recommends that the City reduce building setbacks in the area and include this in the overlay. This reduction in building distances from roadways can begin to shift the Southside's development pattern toward a more walkable environment and away from big buildings placed far from the street, with a sea of surface parking between the building and the street.
- **Reduced parking requirements.** Lowering the parking ratio in the area can allow for a larger building footprint, potentially increasing developer returns while shifting businesses away from auto-centricity. (Consolidated structured parking can assist with attracting tenants who require more parking.) When combined with greater pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, this reduced-ratio approach can foster a more walkable, urban environment.

Assess Optionality

The early days of site work should include due diligence on potential new uses. In addition to the community's input and the City's vision, market potential for various uses will need to be evaluated, and professionals should be consulted.

- **Consider potential anchors and scenarios.** There are a host of ideas on the table for the Savannah Mall property. In addition to the three options the panel presented, the City is encouraged to explore a broad range of ideas before traveling too far down any one path.
- **Conduct a market study.** A City-led market study can help the City understand the area's market potential and pique the development community's interest in participating in the RFP process.
- **Consider partnering with a sports complex consultant.** If the City is interested in pursuing—or at least seriously exploring—the idea of a stadium or sports/tournament complex, it may want to invest early funds to engage an expert to assess the idea's potential viability.

Align Economic Development Tools

A large tract of land like the Savannah Mall parcel is a rarity in Chatham County today. Envisioning a new use for the site will be easy, but putting the vision in action and redeveloping the site will be challenging. The

City can assist by exploring potential tools and incentives, determining which would be most useful for the site's redevelopment, and teeing up those tools for a developer's use. The more pre-development assistance the City can provide in the early days, the less risk the eventual developer must assume, making the site's redevelopment prospects more attractive and attainable, with the ultimate goal of delivering new uses, affordable housing, and additional community amenities to the Southside.

Local land value-capture tools. The following tools can be used by the City to help fund improvements on the Southside and are generally funded through taxing mechanisms or fees associated with new development within a defined geography.

- Tax Allocation District **(TAD).** TADs are a mechanism for revitalizing blighted or underutilized areas, including declining commercial areas and corridors. Within a designated district geography, the future tax increment above the established tax base floor is used to fund infrastructure, buildings, or other needed improvements.
- Special Service Districts **(SSDs).** SSDs are small governmental units established by City ordinance for a special purpose or service, which could include redevelopment, and are funded by a dedicated tax on property owners within a defined geography.
- Community/Business Improvement Districts **(CIDs/BIDs).** BIDs or CIDs cover a defined area in which businesses and commercial properties are required to pay an additional tax that is used to fund projects or services within the district. (BIDs and CIDs provide generally the same functionality but have slightly different legal requirements.)
- Impact Fees**.** The City of Savannah has the power to charge impact fees on new developments to help fund infrastructure improvements and specific facilities needed to serve the new Savannah Mall development. The fees can only be imposed on new development and are used to fund a proportional share of the system improvements.

Local financial tools. The following grants and loans can support individual business and property owners by helping fund improvements to buildings and enterprises.

- **Facade improvement grants.** Often funded by a city, a facade improvement grant can provide money, often in the form of a funding match, to help business owners address exterior renovations and repairs to commercial buildings.
- **Entrepreneurship and small business grants.** The City's Small Business Assistance Corporation could be leveraged to support business ventures at and around the Savannah Mall site.
- **Revolving loan funds.** Often used to support businesses that have difficulty accessing traditional financing sources, a revolving loan fund could use an initial pool of capital to fund projects at the site, with the understanding that the interest and principal repayments then fund similar future loans in the area.

Local property ownership tools. There are additional tools that can help with early financing, by reducing tax burdens through tax abatement, while others could assist the City in establishing uses or protecting parcels through long-term land holdings, such as land banking or using land trusts. Although the panel anticipates that the site will be developable without the use of these tools, they are also worth early consideration.

Local non-financial tools. For developers, time is money, and it translates into carrying costs on projects. Opportunities to reduce the development timeline—thereby increasing the likelihood of successful project delivery—should always be a factor.

- **Expedited permitting.** The speed of the City's permitting process can directly affect a project's viability. Reducing the time projects spend in municipal review can reduce the carrying costs and debt service on a project.
- **Reduced or waived fees.** The municipal fees associated with development are entirely within the City's control. Offers of fee reductions or waivers can help reduce development costs and risks, and speed the delivery of a viable project.
- **Density bonuses.** If the City wishes to encourage certain development outcomes, such as the inclusion of

affordable housing units, it can allow greater densities than what is specified in the site's zoning. Used as an incentive, density bonuses can increase a project's unit count, often translating into higher developer returns.

State and federal financial tools. There are a number of state and federal programs that can support the redevelopment of the Savannah Mall property.

- Community Development Block Grants **(CDBGs).** The State of Georgia administers federal funds to support work that benefits low- to moderate-income people by providing resources for livable neighborhoods, economic empowerment, and decent housing.
- New Market Tax Credits **(NMTC).** NMTCs support community development and economic growth by attracting private investment. Those investors receive tax credits against their federal income tax obligation in exchange for making equity investments in specialized financial intermediaries.
- Enterprise Zones**.** Georgia's Enterprise Zone program is designed to improve areas experiencing economic decline. Incentives encourage private investment in those areas and generally include property tax exemptions, tax abatement, or other fee reductions.
- Federal Opportunity Zones**.** This federal tool allows people to invest in distressed areas, thereby spurring economic growth and job creation while providing tax benefits to investors. Subject areas must fall within a qualified zone, and investments are made through a Qualified Opportunity Fund.
- Job Tax Credits / State Opportunity Zones**.** Georgia's Opportunity Zone incentive is available for new or existing businesses that create two or more jobs. The Job Tax Credit, which can be taken against the business's Georgia income tax liability and payroll withholding tax, is available for areas designated as a "State Opportunity Zone."
- Defense Community Infrastructure Program. This federal program from the US Department of War, Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation provides grants to help communities address deficiencies in infrastructure that may impact a military installation's readiness.
- **Sales and use tax exemptions.** These local taxes, charged by a city, can be adjusted or abated for a period of time as needed to support a project.

Create a Marketing and Branding Strategy

The Savannah Mall site is well-known across the community. While many may have fond memories of shopping at the Savannah Mall, the site will benefit from a new public perception. A marketing and branding strategy can begin to reshape the public's opinion of the site and begin to point to a new community amenity and destination, one that is green, connected, and community-focused.

Create community branding. A marketing and branding strategy should connect with and elevate the broader Southside identity, highlighting what makes the area unique and beloved. Community branding provides the City with the opportunity to establish an authentic narrative about the Southside and the progress underway. It can elevate the authenticity of community elements, connect the area to nature, and deepen ties with its rich cultural heritage. Community branding can also point to the promise of benefits to come, such as new employment and recreational opportunities.

Communicate broadly and frequently. The Savannah Mall site has a high profile, and its redevelopment will generate interest across the region. The City is encouraged to communicate early and often with partners about goals, decisions, and activities concerning the redevelopment. A communication strategy should address both internal communications with City staff and external communication with partners, institutional neighbors, and the surrounding residents.

From the ULI publication, ***Ten Principles for Public/Private Partnerships***, "a transparent process, achieved through open communication, information-sharing, and participation in the decision process, increases the potential for broad support for public/private partnership projects, particularly from non-stakeholders."

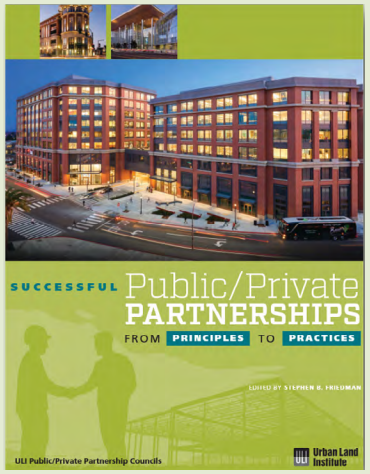
Create a Master Developer RFP

The 70+ acres of the Savannah Mall would benefit from the cohesive approach that a single master developer can bring to the work. A master developer approach incentivizes a single party to maximize the quality of the infrastructure and community amenities, paving the way for private developers to follow. The selected master developer adopts the Framework Plan and is typically responsible for delivering the infrastructure and the community-oriented uses. Although there may be risks associated with the under-performance of the selected developer, the City benefits from a streamlined process and delivery, reducing coordination risk and potential delays.

Create Southside District Design Guidelines

Once a master developer is selected, the City is encouraged to create design guidelines for the Southside district. The sequencing of this work, following the master developer selection and in coordination with that developer, will help ensure that the guidelines align with and support the developer's plans.

Public-Private Partnerships



From the ULI publication, Successful Public/Private Partnerships From Principles to Practices, development project deals are typically negotiated and "the public entity bears a unique responsibility to fully define what is being sought and to seek proposals that fully address complex public issues."

The Savannah Mall site can then be used as an example of how the design guidelines can be put into practice elsewhere in the Southside.

Long Term (5+ years)

Break Ground

In addition to executing its vision for the site and implementing the framework plan, the City should continue to serve as the steward of the public realm. It will be responsible for the reconfiguration and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, and public spaces.

While the physical development of the anchor business and structures will be managed by private development, the City still has a role to play through typical municipal efforts. The City can help attract further development to the site and surrounding area. As a function of its regular economic efforts and in cooperation with the developer, the City should continue to champion private investment in the Southside and the Savannah Mall property, working to attract new businesses and development to the area.

The City should also explore opportunities to partner with neighboring public facilities and institutions, such as the public library, VA clinic, and GSU. Ultimately, the long-term success of the site will depend on strong community support and meaningful partnerships with surrounding organizations and institutions.

Summary

The future of the Savannah Mall site is up in the air. The retailers that once filled inline spaces are gone, and only a couple of anchors remain. As the Savannah Mall's ownership group works to figure out its best path forward, the City of Savannah has an opportunity to lead the way.

The 70+ acres that comprise the site could create a transformational development opportunity and location for an exciting new use or mix of uses. Getting to that point, however, will take vision, time, and dedication. It will also require a public-private partnership, as it is a complex redevelopment prospect that involves both public realm improvements and significant private investment. The City is very good at addressing physical infrastructure, planning frameworks, programming and regulatory functions and is encouraged to lead the way with these measures. This work then clears the path for the private sector to then master plan the site, determine specific uses, and attract the kind of global capital this site can bring. Financing the work, which will likely be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, will likely require some combination of public financing, private equity, and all of the tools in the economic development toolkit.

It can be done–and the City should drive the process.

With control over the Savannah Mall property, the City can set a new, broad vision for the site that can begin to deliver the type of community benefits and vibrancy this Southside district craves. Improvements can leverage the assets already in place while connecting the community and creating a template for a more walkable and inviting Southside.

Once site control is in place, the City can establish a development framework, create an overlay district, and issue an RFP for a master developer. With the developer in place, the City and the master developer can work together to connect the site to the community, celebrate its culture, and breathe new life into this large and exciting Southside district.

Go big or go home.

About the Panel



Patrick Shay

Panel Chair
Principal, Architect
GMSHAY



Is an educator, an artist, an entrepreneur, and has served as an elected public servant, but first and foremost he is an architect. For the past 45 years he has studied cities, landscape and architecture and applied his education to the making of places for people to enjoy and excel. Most of his work has been focused on Savannah, designing more large scale, significant buildings in its historic district than any other architect. He has used this experience to create transformational architecture in other coastal communities and campuses. Equally important, these creations are environmentally and economically sustainable. A LEED Platinum historic adaptive reuse building for Georgia Power and a Net Zero private residence in an emergent historic neighborhood demonstrate how buildings can create more energy than they consume, or how they can produce optimal revenue with limited resources.

As Senior Principal of GMShay Architects, Patrick has built a professional practice that fully employs both the most sophisticated design technology and a diverse team of top-notch creative talent. Together they allow GMShay to successfully compete against larger corporate firms for the best clients. With projects ranging in size from small renovations to some over $50 million in cost, they bring the same energy and enthusiasm to all. Each project receives the personal attention of Patrick Shay, and his relentless pursuit of excellent results.

Eric Bishop

Landscape Architect
Kimley-Horn



Eric is a development and infrastructure professional with Kimley-Horn, where he contributes to projects focused on land development, transportation, and community growth. With experience in project coordination, site development, and client engagement, Eric supports the delivery of complex projects from early planning through implementation. He is known for his analytical approach and ability to collaborate across disciplines to achieve practical, high-quality outcomes for clients and communities.

Kathi Cook

Director of Community Development
City of Alpharetta



Kathi Cook serves as the Director of Community Development for the City of Alpharetta, where she leads planning, zoning, economic development, and building inspections/permitting.

Since joining the City in 1991, she has held multiple roles—including Land Disturbance/Construction Inspector and Environmental Programs Manager—giving her a deep understanding of Alpharetta's growth, infrastructure, and long-term vision.

Kathi has played a central role in shaping many of Alpharetta's most transformative projects. She oversaw planning, zoning, and permitting for Avalon, an award-winning 86-acre mixed-use development. She also oversaw permitting for the 25-acre City Center project, which contributed significantly to the revitalization of Downtown Alpharetta.

Kathi led the North Point Livable Centers Initiative, establishing a forward-looking vision for connected trails, new parks, and redevelopment standards that reduce pavement and expand green space. Kathi also partnered with KB Advisory Group on the North Point Redevelopment Plan to support the revitalization of the 1.5-million-square-foot North Point Mall.

Kathi is a frequent speaker on topics including suburban mixed-use development, placemaking, and trail connectivity. She collaborated with the CDC's Physical Activity and Health Branch and the Georgia Tech Health Design Studio to create a trail system designed to support social interaction and outdoor activity.

Niti Gajjar



Associate and Project Architect
Cooper Carry

Is an Associate and Project Architect at Cooper Carry, with nearly 20 years of experience in planning, urban design, and architecture. Her diverse work spans various scales—from small-scale site planning and neighborhood revitalization to university campus plans and comprehensive city-level strategies. With a multidisciplinary academic background in architecture and community planning, Niti approaches each project holistically, providing design solutions that consider both stakeholder input and community impact.

In recent years, she has focused on mixed-use, multifamily, and affordable housing developments, leveraging her expertise in contextual analysis, space programming, and construction documentation to achieve successful project outcomes. Niti is deeply committed to neighborhood revitalization, affordable housing, and the adaptive reuse of community assets.

Niti earned her Master of Community Planning from the University of Cincinnati and holds a Diploma in Architecture from CEPT University in Ahmedabad, India. She is a Registered Architect in Georgia and is recognized by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). Niti is a member of the APA, the Georgia Planning Association, the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and ULI, where she recently completed the Center for Leadership program. Niti she contributes to her local community as a Planning Commissioner and serves on the Zoning Board of Appeals for the City of Duluth, GA.

Kenwin Hayes, Sr.



Leader at Southern Company
Georgia Power Company

Kenwin Hayes, Sr., AICP, is a planning and real estate professional at Southern Company, where he works at the intersection of infrastructure, community development, and utility strategy. With a background in urban planning and expertise as a certified member of the American Institute of Certified Planners, Kenwin brings a strong foundation in land use, stakeholder engagement, and long-range planning. His work focuses on aligning energy investments with community needs, supporting resilient growth, and advancing innovative solutions across Georgia.

Geoff Koski



President and Owner
KB Advisory Group

Geoff Koski is President and Owner of KB Advisory Group, an Atlanta-based real estate and economic development consulting firm focused on market analysis, redevelopment strategy, and public-private partnerships.

He has a deep interest in how cities grow and evolve, with an emphasis on delivering technically grounded insights that support decision-making by both public and private sector leaders.

Over the course of his career, Geoff has advised counties, municipalities, improvement districts, development authorities, and private clients on complex redevelopment initiatives. His work includes extensive experience with Tax Allocation Districts and other economic development tools that help align market feasibility with community goals.

Geoff has advised on over $1 billion in TAD-supported redevelopment projects, bringing a practical understanding of how public investment can be structured to unlock private development while maintaining fiscal responsibility. His work spans downtown and corridor revitalization, mixed-use development strategy, housing and affordability analysis, and economic and fiscal impact modeling across multiple jurisdictions.

He is an active member of ULI and currently serves as Chair of ULI Atlanta's Livable Communities Council and the Redevelopment and Reuse National Product Council.

Fielder Shurling

Principal, Investments
Regent Partners



Fielder Shurling is Principal for Investments and partial owner for Regent Partners where he focuses on the acquisition, development and capitalization of projects primarily in the office, hotel and residential sectors. In addition to those responsibilities, Fielder has been active in both asset management and disposition capacities. Significant acquisitions include Concourse Office Park and Northcreek Office Park. Significant developments include 3344 Peachtree/Sovereign, Charleston Hyatt Place/ Hyatt House, Eastern Wharf - Riverworks Multifamily, Pilot and Park Multifamily and Thompson hotels.

Prior to joining Regent Partners, Fielder worked for GE Capital for five years structuring and executing highly leveraged financial transactions for a variety of purposes including leveraged buy-outs, management buy-outs, recapitalizations and mergers. Prior to GE Capital, Fielder worked in Ernst & Young's Corporate Finance Group where he was involved in all aspects of valuation engagements including sales, due diligence, financial analysis and client presentation.

Fielder obtained a B.A. in History from Southern Methodist University and an M.B.A. from Emory University. Fielder is a Chartered Financial Analyst and member of ULI's Small Scale Development Council, the ULI Atlanta Advisory Board, and the Atlanta Capital Markets Council.

Whitney Shephard

Co-Founder
Transport Studio



Whitney Shephard is an entrepreneur and community leader with experience in policy, planning, and design. She co-founded Transport Studio in 2013 with a mission to promote healthy communities for the common good.

Whitney manages diverse projects and serves as technical lead for geographic information systems, traffic engineering, transportation planning, and public policy. Her passion for the built and natural environments extends to the Green Truck Neighborhood Pub, a Savannah restaurant she founded and owns that features local and organic farmers and craft brewers. Her team supports the local food movement and a variety of community organizations.

In 2024, Whitney was appointed to the APA's federal Legislative and Policy Committee. She also serves as Policy Chair and Past President of the Georgia Planning Association. Whitney served as Secretary of Deep Center, an organization that fuels community change through youth writing, art, and culture programs and advocacy. She served as Area Governor to Rotary International and is Past President of Metro Savannah Rotary. She was a charter member of the Coastal Empire Society of Women Engineers and the Savannah Chapter of Womens Transportation Seminar.

Whitney is a Registered Professional Engineer and holds bachelor's degrees in architecture and civil engineering, and a Master of Science in Civil Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Arman Tolentino

Senior Associate
& Senior Project Architect
Cooper Carry



Arman Tolentino rejoined Cooper Carry in 2024 after spending 12 years at Smallwood. He brings experience across a wide range of project types, with a focus on large-scale, mixed-use developments in urban environments. His work spans hospitality, multifamily, office, retail, convention centers, and performing arts.

As a Senior Project Architect in Cooper Carry's Hospitality Studio, Arman leads the development and execution of projects from concept through construction. As Hospitality Studio Manager, he oversees staffing needs, supports studio leadership by tracking current and future projects, and organizes monthly studio meetings and project tours.

Arman is committed to building strong partnerships and understanding each client's goals, with a focus on turning ideas into thoughtful, well-executed projects that serve both users and the broader community.

He holds a Master of Architecture and a Master of City & Regional Planning from the Georgia Institute of Technology, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Arman is a registered architect, a member of the American Institute of Architects and the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, and an active participant in ULI, where he graduated from its Center for Leadership, Chairs its TAPs Committee, and serves on its Advisory Board. Outside of work, Arman enjoys backyard play with his two sons and is a dedicated Miami sports fan, proudly hailing from South Florida.

Grace Wooten

Vice President
Pape Dawson



Grace Wooten is a development professional with Pape-Dawson Engineers, where she supports a range of projects focused on land development, infrastructure, and community growth. She brings experience in site analysis, entitlement processes, and stakeholder coordination, and is known for her attention to detail and collaborative approach. Grace helps guide projects from concept through implementation while aligning client goals with community needs.