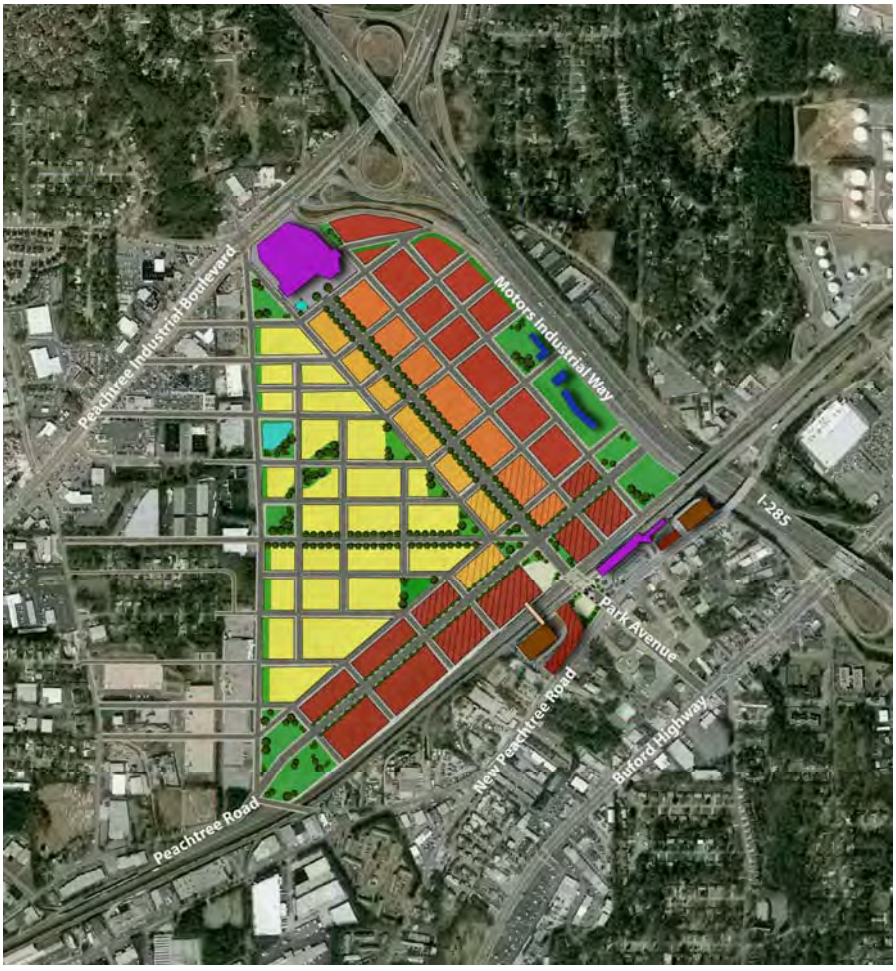
City ReAssembly: When the Auto Plant Closes

Redevelopment Opportunities for Doraville



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1. Introduction

For decades the General Motors (GM) assembly plant has been a notable fixture in the fabric of the city of Doraville. As thousands of motorists drive through Doraville on busy Interstate 285 (I-285), they invariably notice the sprawling plant to the south. At a casual glance, it appears that this plant has always been there with numerous roads and rail lines seamlessly feeding into the plant. But for anyone who has ever tried to get around Doraville, the plant is anything but seamless. When the plant was built, many roads were diverted and others were ended. The same scenario occurred when Interstate 285 was constructed, and also when the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA) extended its heavy rail service to Doraville. The result of these intrusions is a city that has been physically segregated into distinct neighborhoods with very little interaction between them.

However, all this could change when the GM plant closes in the near future. After the last cars roll off the assembly line, the City of Doraville will be left with a 150+ acre tract of land next to one of the Atlanta metro region's most strategic transportation nodes. Sensing the importance of determining the future of this site, the Georgia Tech Graduate City and Regional Planning program has conducted a master's level studio for the City of Doraville to provide recommendations for the redevelopment of the site. The studio is intended to be the capstone course in the master's degree where planning students put their knowledge to practical use. The goal of the studio is to provide the City and citizens of Doraville with ideas, strategies, and evidence for the creation of a strong and viable plan for redeveloping the GM site.

The studio process began by conducting extensive research on the existing conditions of both the GM site and the City of Doraville as a whole. Students spoke with many individuals familiar with the City and the site, as well as with individuals who had expertise on issues and opportunities associated with redeveloping the GM site. Also of use to the studio was the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) report recently conducted for Doraville and sponsored by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). This report contained many important observations and recommendations for Doraville that were

incorporated into the analysis. The results of this initial research yielded important insights into the challenges and opportunities facing Doraville, and a framework for assessing various redevelopment options for the site.

With this framework in place, the members of the studio considered multiple redevelopment options, and analyzed how well they would fit with the visions and desires of the people of Doraville. The results of this analysis are presented in the following report. This report is organized into five layers, each of which reflects an important observation from the studio research.

- Site Subdivision
- Transit Oriented Development
- Town Center
- Arena
- General Uses

The first layer will discuss the subdivision of the site and connectivity to the existing street network. The second layer will address the proximity of the MARTA line and the opportunity to create a Transit Oriented Development. The third layer discusses the creation of a Town Center and greenspace network on the site. The fourth layer discusses a proposed small public arena to address entertainment and cultural needs in Doraville and surrounding DeKalb County. The fifth and final layer analyzes the supply, demand, quantity, and fiscal impact of general development on portions of the site. Each layer is built upon the infrastructure of the previous one, strengthening the proposed development and embracing the strengths of the City.

However, before the redevelopment plan is discussed, it is first necessary to take a more detailed look at the history and current conditions of Doraville in order to set the context for the redevelopment plan.

History of the City of Doraville

Like many cities and towns around the nation, Doraville has been affected by several large infrastructural changes that it had little control over. In many ways these large

investments have created the context for the City today, and for that reason it is important to look back.

Doraville and the railroad. The City of Doraville was formally established in 1871 but one of the major artifacts that shape modern day Doraville was established a few years prior. Construction on the Charlotte and Atlanta Air-Line Railroad began in 1869, and by 1871 an excursion train from Atlanta to Duluth began operation. Even in its infancy the railroad shaped the city. The state charter for the City of Doraville stated that the corporate limits were to be one-half mile in every direction from the train depot.

Tank farms and the water supply system. Despite the railroad, the city remained relatively rural until another set of large scale developments just before the Second World War. First, Plantation Pumping built a pipeline through the city and created several petroleum storage containers. During the war, this pipeline and storage facility was used extensively. Soon after the war ended, Shell Oil Company, Standard Oil and others joined Plantation to create the tank farms that prominently occupy the city today.

The second development that came to Doraville around that time was the DeKalb County water supply system. The availability of an advanced municipal water system not only spurred population growth but also contributed to the decision by the General Motors Company to build a new assembly plant in the city.

General Motors dominates Doraville. The GM assembly plant in Doraville will be discussed in further detail later. However, it is important to note the historical impact the plant has had on the city. The GM plant caused the displacement of 50 landowners, spurred the creation of the Carver Hills neighborhood, and forced the expansion of Peachtree Industrial. In the 1947 Land Use map, GM alone held one quarter of the total city land, and the plants' 1,250 employees were almost three times the city population of 450 people. Its dominance and effect over the city is visible throughout the city today.

MARTA intensifies the divide. Despite its intent to connect the region, MARTA was one of the forces that helped divide the city of Doraville. Constructed in 1991, the Doraville MARTA rail station further reduced the number of rail crossings in the City, completely isolating the southwestern portion of the City.

An opportunity to control the future. The history of Doraville shows how much public investment can dictate the future of a community. From a $100,000 water supply system and publicly funded railroad emerged Doraville's three most impacting features, the tank farms, the GM plant, and MARTA. In addition, several roads were created or expanded, entire neighborhoods were built and population growth soared. Though many of these developments happened around the same time, no one predicted their expansive affects. The failure to plan has allowed these developments to divide up the city into disparate ends so that few can define the heart of the city. In the past, the city and community revolved around the train depot with businesses along New Peachtree Road and the City Hall just around the corner. Today, MARTA sits on that same spot, but the city is no longer connected to it.

Doraville – Today

The City of Doraville has grown tremendously since its original incorporation. The legal boundaries now extend well beyond the one and a half mile from the train depot. Figure 1.1 below outlines the city limits in blue and the GM assembly plant is shown with a red asterisk.

Figure 1.1 – Doraville City Limits and Regional Transit

The population has grown as well; from less than 500 people when the GM plant was completed to over 10,000 today. Figure 1.2 shows a brief overview of the city's make-up. A more detailed analysis of Doraville's demographics is discussed in Layer 5 – General Uses.

Figure 1.2 – Doraville 2006 Demographic Overview

City of Doraville - 2006 Overview	
Total Population	10,341
Average Household Size	3.33
Median Age	32.3
Median Household Income	$51,804.00
Largest Age Group	25-34 yrs.
Race and Ethnic Break Down*	
White Alone	44.50%
Black Alone	15.10%
American Indian Alone	0.80%
Asian Alone	15.20%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.30%
Some Other Race Alone	19.40%
Two or More Races	4.60%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	40.70%
*note: does not total 100% because Hispanic Origin can be of any race	

The Livable Centers Initiative

An additional source of information for assessing the current context in Doraville was the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) report. The LCI report is the result of a program offered by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) that encourages local jurisdictions to plan and implement strategies to create a sustainable, livable community. In 2005, the City of Doraville was awarded a grant by the ARC to produce a study that recommended strategies for making the city a more sustainable, economically vibrant and safe place to live. The study found that the vision for the Doraville community is to return the Doraville Town Center to a destination within the Atlanta metropolitan region. To support this vision, the community has developed specific goals and objectives related to community character/urban design, transportation, land use, and economic development,

described below. Although the studio process did not elicit direct citizen participation through charrettes or community meetings, the goals of the LCI were created through an extensive public outreach effort and are therefore an adequate substitution of outreach, given the time constraints of the studio. It is important to list these goals in this report because they represent the desires of the community and are the foundation on which much of the redevelopment plan is built.

Goals and Objectives – From the Doraville LCI study[1]

Establish a Community Character/Urban Design

- Promote the international character and diversity of the City of Doraville through architectural and landscape design as well as cultural festivals and programming
- Promote good urban design oriented to the public realm rather than suburban development types surrounded by large parking lots
- Create consistent gateways with buildings and/or signs at key locations to identify the City of Doraville from Buford Highway and New Peachtree Road
- Create design guidelines to address site design elements such as architectural character, landscaping, parking lots, sidewalks, bus stops, and signs to improve the look of commercial corridors

Improve Transportation Options/Operations

- Create an integrated network of safe, efficient and convenient transportation options including transit (rail and bus), auto, truck, biking, and walking
- Identify opportunities for new streets to support and provide access to development opportunities within the study area
- Improve pedestrian access throughout the study area
- Reconfigure roadways/access management to improve traffic flow and operations
- Minimize the impact of truck traffic to the extent possible

Promote Efficient Land Uses

[1] Edaw (2006). City of Doraville Livable Centers Initiative.

- Promote development densities to support mass transit options such as rail and bus character examples rapid transit

- Revise outdated zoning and land development codes to allow new land uses such as mixed use and transit oriented development

- Create an integrated network of open spaces with new/expanded urban plazas, parks and greenways

- Ensure the integrity of existing neighborhoods and the commercial core by improving land use compatibility through better regulation and buffering

Energize Economic Development

- Create momentum for economic revitalization by redesigning civic/governmental area and improve public facilities (library and swimming pool)

- Attract a diversity of employment options by integrating new job-generating activities

- Prevent displacement of existing residents by providing mixed-income housing opportunities

- Prevent displacement of existing businesses by providing a variety of light industrial/small business flex spaces

However, when the LCI was conducted, the GM site was not part of the study because the plant closing had not yet been announced. A part of the studio mission is to perform a similar study for the site, using the goals and visions outlined in the LCI report.

The General Motors Site

The GM site occupies 150+ acres in the City of Doraville. A slightly larger area of 200 acres, bounded by the MARTA rail, Peachtree Road, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, and Motors Industrial Way, is utilized as the study area in this report and is illustrated in Figure 1.3. A field analysis of the site surroundings indicates that many of the properties directly adjacent to the plant are performing ancillary functions to the plant and could possibly close along with the plant. This justifies the slightly larger study area used in this report.

Brownfield Redevelopment

Due to the existence of the plant, this site is considered a "brownfield" redevelopment. The term "brownfield site" means the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of a property which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.[2] Remediation of a brownfield site can be costly, and speculative land owners fear the liability and potentially exorbitant clean-up costs. This situation has posed a major challenge for localities seeking to revitalize distressed neighborhoods and attract new investment to sites with contamination.

[2] The Brownfields Site definition is found in Public Law 107-118 (H.R. 2869) - "Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act" signed into law January 11, 2002

Figure 1.3 – The study area of interest for this report

These barriers, while intimidating, are being gradually confronted by federal agencies, state and local governments, development organizations, and private interest groups. In spite of all the difficulties and barriers to brownfield development, the problems of reuse usually do not outweigh the benefits of returning the structures and properties to productive use again. Older structures in inner cities can provide affordable space for new and small enterprises that cannot pay for space in high-rent areas. Large, often architecturally significant, structures can become anchors for distinctive new

development efforts.[3] Also brownfields are located in strategic areas (waterfronts, urbanized areas, near rail, etc.) which further benefit any potential development and may provide that additional "spark" necessary for attracting developers and financiers. There are two chief components of brownfield redevelopment that must be understood before redeveloping the GM site because of the important interplay between the two. These components are economic development and urban design.

Economic Development and Brownfields

Brownfield development is a critical part of building strong communities by transforming blighted industrial or commercial property into productive use to be enjoyed by all. A redeveloped brownfield can help revitalize surrounding neighborhoods, create jobs and housing, and boost development in areas with existing transit, infrastructure and community facilities. If the proper economic development incentives and urban design framework are established and compliment each other, localities can greatly benefit from the increased tax base and sustainable development that will provide jobs and homes for its residents.

Specifically for Doraville, the GM assembly plant is located near the intersection of I-285 and I-85, one of the most prominent locations in metropolitan Atlanta. The EPA has recorded that the facility has reported toxic releases and air releases, as well as confirmed the plant's role in handling hazardous waste. Given the general layout of automobile assembly facilities, some possible areas of environmental concern were approximately located and documented. These areas include the paint shop facility, the finished vehicle parking area, hazardous material storage/tank farm, and a buried propane yard. A comprehensive environmental study of the site must be completed to indicate the exact location of the contamination areas on site.

Any type of economic development on the GM site will require a specialized understanding of the physical, financial, and environmental factors of a brownfield. The economic goals of a brownfield redevelopment project like this should include:

[3] Getting Started with Brownfields - Key Issues and Opportunities: What Communities Need to Know by Charles Bartsch

- Clean-up and re-use goal: Minimizing cost of meeting remediation standards. This is important because private and public resources are finite.

- Sustainability goal: Remediate hazardous material and pollutants on site.

- Fiscal and social goal: Maximize brownfield redevelopment when using limited public funds. Encourage all stakeholders to establish informal or formal partnership with each other so that each group will contribute to the redevelopment process and lead to more cooperative efforts.[4]

The redevelopment potential of a brownfield site can be maximized from public-private partnerships that maximize the benefits of each sector. A well organized brownfield development can help Doraville attain its economic development goals including:

- Promote holistic redevelopment planning for the redevelopment of the GM Factory site as a mixed use activity/employment center

- Establish a package of economic development incentives in order to encourage redevelopment

- Recruit retail businesses to serve underserved residential markets

- Recruit new office businesses to the town center area that capitalize on transportation assets and Doraville's international character

- Encourage small scale commercial spaces to promote the strength of locally-owned businesses

Additionally, there must be "economic forces" that encourage investors and developers to redevelop brownfield sites such as the GM site. As a result, federal and state governments and private companies as well have created many economic incentives for redevelopment activity of brownfields (see Section 1 of the Appendix).

Urban Design and Brownfields

The other critical component of brownfield redevelopment is urban design. When GM located in Doraville, it bought 408 acres from 50 individual land owners. By assembling

[4] Presentation by Nancey Green Leigh, PhD, AICP, Professor of City and Regional Planning Georgia Institute of Technology: Fall 2006

such a large tract of land and disrupting the street network of the existing city, the site had a negative impact on connectivity in Doraville. By consciously reestablishing an urban design framework that refers back to the street network of the city before the plant was built, a redeveloped GM site can:

- Become more accessible by connecting to streets at the site periphery
- Create an inviting public realm: open space, streets, sidewalks, plazas, etc.
- Minimize exposure to contamination remaining on site
- Easily adapt to dynamic economic activity
- Maximize fiscal/social benefits: property tax spillover, inviting for visitors

Considering both the economic development and urban design opportunities for the GM site, it is important that any redevelopment plan consider each component. A redevelopment plan that successfully incorporates these two critical elements will make great strides in repairing the physical damage the GM plant's construction caused to the City of Doraville's urban fabric.

The Layer Concept

As mentioned earlier, the redevelopment plan presented in this report is organized into layers. The layer concept is a response to the need for both economic development and urban design components in the redevelopment plan. The economic development and urban design framework for each layer acts as the foundation for subsequent layers as each layer is built around the layer that came before. This method creates a plan that is strong and consistent as each element is dependent on its counterparts. However, because of the importance of setting a strong foundation for the plan, it is necessary that the first layer be particularly sound. For reasons that will be discussed in the next section, the subdivision of the site into streets and blocks is the first layer of the redevelopment proposal for the GM site.

2. Layer One – Site Subdivision

The first layer to be analyzed for the redevelopment of the Doraville GM site focuses on the subdivision of the site. Subdivision refers to the organization of land into lots, blocks, and streets. This section discusses why subdivision is important, describes the elements of an effective subdivision, and presents the proposed street network and general subdivision framework for the site.

Why Subdivide First?

Typically when planners, developers, or city officials think about redeveloping a site, deciding future land use is the first task to come to mind. Where should the residential component go? The retail? The office? Then after that is decided, the street network is laid out to serve those uses. Unfortunately this is the opposite of what should happen. What happens in ten, twenty, or thirty years when the market changes? How will the site be able to accommodate different uses as the market changes?

The risk of serving one use. Think of the countless subdivisions that are scattered throughout our metropolitan areas with their dead end cul-de-sacs and large lots. If in thirty years this form of residential living is no longer desirable, what use could take its place? It would be difficult to imagine anything in these places other than single family homes. However, we know from history that a specific land use (residential, commercial, or industrial) is the most short-lived element of our built environment.

Enduring networks. In contrast the framework of streets, lots, and blocks can endure for generations. Savannah, for instance, still exhibits virtually the same street network set up by James Oglethorpe in the 18th Century, while the buildings and land uses occupying that framework have changed countless times. One would be hard pressed not to find an enduring framework of streets, blocks, and lots in any American city. New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Atlanta all demonstrate the longevity of the street network, and the brief existence of land uses within the network.

Local example. Atlanta provides a strong illustration of this urban lifecycle. Over the past fifty years, Atlanta has experienced rapid growth and transformation from a small regional city to a major international center. Figure 2.1 illustrates this point.

Figure 2.1 – Atlanta in 1955 (left) and Atlanta in 2004 (right)

Source: Atlanta Time Machine, http://www.atlantatimemachine.com, Accessed 12 November 2006.

These two pictures, taken from roughly the same position (at what is now the North Avenue Bridge over Interstate 75/85), show how quickly buildings and land uses can change. Notice the road. Although the number of lanes has increased dramatically, the same general curve of the road that existed in 1955 still exists now. Taking a look at one particular neighborhood in Atlanta, this point becomes even clearer. Figure 2.2 is another then-and-now picture of Peachtree Street near the intersection of Walton Street.

Figure 2.2 – Peachtree Street in 1950 (left) and 2004 (right)

Source: Atlanta Time Machine, http://www.atlantatimemachine.com, Accessed 12 November 2006.

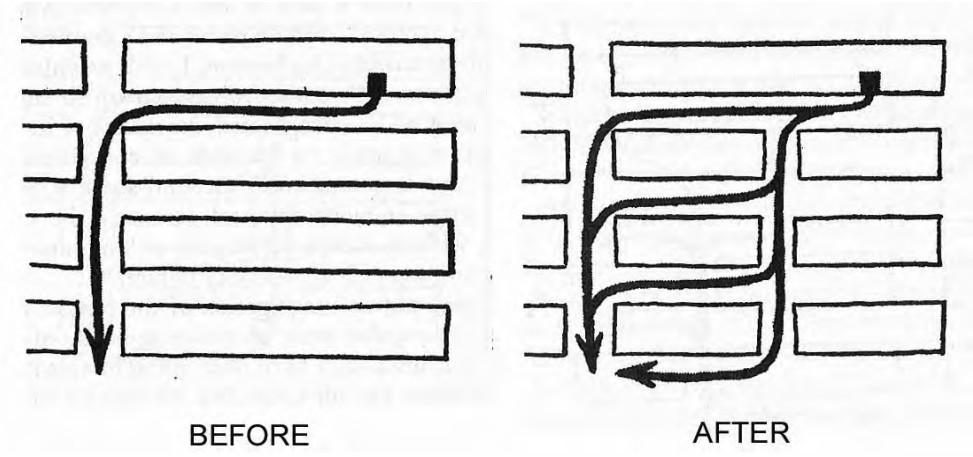
Needless to say, a lot has changed since 1950. Some buildings have endured; however all of the retail buildings on the right side of Peachtree Street have been demolished and replaced with a park. New skyscrapers have sprouted in the background. One thing that remains, however, is the alignment of Peachtree Street. While many of the buildings and uses did not survive the huge market shift that caused American downtowns to turn into places to work rather than places to live, work, and shop, the subdivision of land into streets, blocks, and lots largely remained intact. Unfortunately, the typical planning and development methods of the past several decades have downplayed the importance of subdivision in favor of the fleeting nature of land use: an observation that is apparent when looking at stereotypical residential neighborhoods and commercial strip-malls in the suburbs. It is important for Doraville, however, to recognize the long term ramifications of subdivision on the built environment and craft strong subdivision guidelines for the site before any notions of future land uses are entertained.

What Makes for an Effective Subdivision?

Recognizing that subdivision must come first when planning a site is not sufficient for creating an enduring and flexible built environment. "Subdividing first" will mean nothing if the site is not subdivided well. But what makes for an effective street network and subdivision framework?

Creating small blocks. Often, the most important element of an effective subdivision plan is that of small blocks to create a pedestrian friendly environment. Jane Jacobs, one of the most well known observers of city life and planning, dedicated an entire chapter to this topic in her classic book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. According to Jacobs, blocks must be short so that "streets and opportunities to turn corners" are frequent.[5] Figure 2.3 illustrates this point. This figure is an illustration of an example in New York City of what happens when a large block is broken up into smaller blocks. Before, an individual only had one route to get from point A to point B. This leads to

Figure 2.3 – Illustrating the need for small blocks



Source: Jacobs, J. (1961). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York: Random House.

"self-isolating streets" that are isolated both socially and economically.[6] They are socially isolated because the only places where people meet are at the intersecting north-south street, and are economically isolated because the only place retail uses can get enough foot traffic is at that same north-south street. This leads to an abundance of activity on this one street with a relative void of activity along the cross streets. By adding this extra cross street in the "after" scenario, the neighborhood opens up to the individual as he or she now has four possible routes to travel, creating a "street containing buildings where things could start up and grow at spots economically viable: places for

[5] Jacobs, J. (1961). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York: Random House.
[6] ibid.

buying, eating, seeing things, getting a drink."[7] Coupled with adequate pedestrian facilities, this creates a much more engaging and pedestrian oriented environment.

The development community has come to recognize that neighborhoods with more traditional characteristics are more financially successful. The Urban Land Institute, in a 1999 study of new pedestrian oriented communities found

> ...homebuyers were willing to pay a $20,000 premium for homes in [such communities] compared to similar houses in surrounding areas. Each of the four communities...promoted transit and pedestrian access. Design features included systems of interconnected, often narrow streets, sidewalks, a mix of residential, retail and office land uses, and features such as street trees, short front yard set-backs, front porches, and rear garages accessed by alleys.[8]

Additionally, in 1998, it was predicted that over the next twenty-five years real estate values will rise faster in smart growth communities that display traditional neighborhood characteristics such as mixed uses, pedestrian friendly environments, and a clear structure of lots, blocks, and streets that define the public and the private realm than in more typical communities.[9] Again, the importance of the proper subdivision of land into lots, blocks, and streets is apparent.

Appropriate block size. To determine the block size that would be most appropriate for the GM site, it is necessary to consider the block sizes of some American cities. In New York City, the average block is 200 feet by 600 feet, and the case has been made that their blocks are too long. In Portland, Oregon, a city that is known for its good planning, the blocks are about 200 feet by 200 feet. Chicago's average block is 330 feet by 660 feet. Philadelphia has a 400 foot by 400 foot block network. Historic Savannah averages 400 feet by 150 feet. Atlanta has a 400 foot by 400 foot block size in Midtown, and a 250 foot by 250 foot size in the Fairlie Poplar district of Downtown.[10] Looking more

[7] ibid.
[8] Local Government Commission, Center for Livable Communities. *Economic Benefit of Walkable Communities*. Retrieved November 18, 2006 from http://www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/focus/walk_to_money.pdf
[9] ibid.
[10] Measured on Google Maps. Google Maps. Retrieved November 18, 2006 from http://maps.google.com

closely at the two districts in Atlanta, Midtown and Fairlie Poplar, which are shown in Figure 2.4, the benefits of small blocks become apparent.

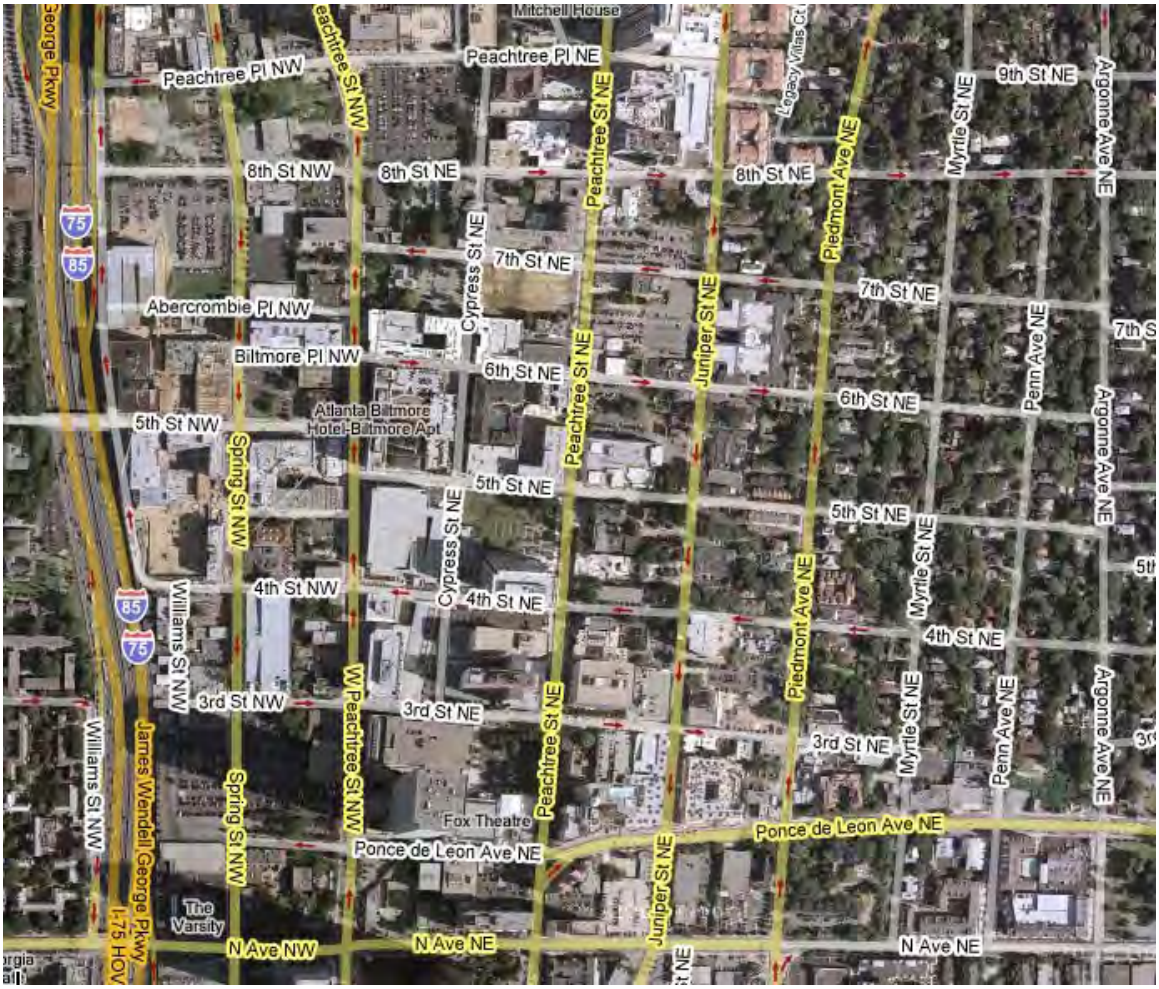
Midtown. Beginning with Midtown, one can easily see the benefit of smaller blocks in terms of supporting a variety of changing uses. Figure 2.5 shows a map of the street network and an aerial photograph of Midtown Atlanta. On this one framework, with blocks of roughly 400 feet by 400 feet throughout, there exist a variety of different uses. Along Peachtree Street, which runs north-south through the middle of the image, one can find the tallest buildings in Atlanta. One block east on Juniper Street, there are mid-rise residential and retail uses. Traveling east another block is Piedmont Avenue, which contains a mix of two and three story residential and retail buildings. Traveling one block east again is Myrtle Street, a quiet residential street with one and two story historic homes from the early 20th Century.

Figure 2.4 – Midtown and Fairlie Poplar

Source: Google Maps. http://maps.google.com. Accessed 16 November 2006.

Encompassed in the space of three blocks, are the most intense and the least intense land uses in the city. This flexibility in use is attributable in part to a street and block network that allows for an uninhibited expression of the market. The original use for most of this land was for single family homes. Had the street network been designed for just this one use, as it is in most suburban locations, Midtown would have had a difficult time adjusting to a changing Atlanta market. This is not to say that the 400 foot by 400 foot layout of Midtown should be duplicated in Doraville; indeed, this block size might be too large for the GM site. This example was used simply to illustrate the

Figure 2.5 – Midtown Atlanta



Source: Google Maps. http://maps.google.com. Accessed 18 November 2006.

flexibility of relatively small block sizes in a grid pattern in contrast to the large and irregular blocks that characterize many locations outside of the Atlanta core.

Fairlie Poplar. The Fairlie Poplar district in Downtown Atlanta is a better example of the type of block size that should be utilized at the GM site. At 250 feet by 250 feet, the blocks in Fairlie Poplar provide one of the most engaging areas of Downtown Atlanta. With most buildings averaging around four or five stories tall, Fairlie Poplar achieves a healthy and viable concentration of uses without appearing too dense. Figure 2.6 is a photo of Fairlie Poplar taken during the weekday lunch hour, where it seems that the

Figure 2.6 – Fairlie Poplar at lunchtime

Source: Courtesy of C. Wizard. http://www-us.flickr.com/photos/spellbook/168652622/in/set-1039420/. Accessed 11 November 2006.

Fairlie Poplar district achieves an urban concentration of uses while maintaining more of a small town feel. The LCI report completed for Doraville concludes that an environment such as this one appears desirable to most Doraville residents. Many residents are concerned that Doraville is lacking a cohesive and active town center such as the one achieved in Fairlie Poplar. The idea of a Town Center will be discussed in depth in Layer 4.

Desire for change. The goals listed in the LCI to create such an environment are most likely a response to the existing environment in Doraville. Doraville is characterized by very large blocks with few cross streets, isolated uses, and poor pedestrian facilities (lack of sidewalks, infrequent crosswalks, etc.). Figure 2.7 is an image of Buford Highway, one of the most heavily traveled roads in Doraville, and these three problems are clearly evident. Any subdivision plan for the GM site should try to avoid reproducing these serious problems.

The type of subdivision framework advocated in this report differs significantly from the existing framework in Doraville. The City must break away from its existing framework

to achieve the more pedestrian friendly environment that is so desperately needed. When subdividing the GM site, Doraville should strive to keep blocks to around 300 feet by 300 feet in an attempt to foster an environment like the one found in Fairlie Poplar and move

Figure 2.7 – Buford Highway

Source: LeBlanc, Jude and Gamble, Michael. *The Auto and the Pedestrian Reconsidered in Strip Development.* 2003.

away from the current environment, shown in Figure 2.7, that is so hostile to pedestrians.

The Subdivision Plan for the General Motors Site

Taking the recommendations made thus far about the subdivision of the GM site, a general layout of streets based on an average block size of 300 feet by 300 feet has been created. What is presented here is intended as a general illustration rather than the final framework that best subdivides the site, as the engineering requirements, environmental hazards, and public concerns for the site are not yet fully determined. This plan, however, does reflect general principles that should be followed when subdividing the site.

The subdivision plan. The subdivision plan is presented in Figure 2.8. Immediately one should notice the sharp contrast between the street network of the site and the surrounding street network. This contrast is a good thing, and it is done intentionally. Anyone who has ever tried to walk along Buford Highway, New Peachtree Road, or Peachtree Industrial Boulevard has experienced first hand how dangerous these roads are as pedestrian environments. As was discussed earlier, the subdivision and street network surrounding Buford Highway and other major roads in Doraville do not function well as pedestrian oriented facilities because they are geared towards the automobile. The street network and subdivision presented here attempts to create an environment that is geared towards the pedestrian, but works for the automobile as well. However, this plan does not ignore the existing street pattern of Doraville. Indeed, the GM site presents itself as an extraordinary opportunity for Doraville to unite, rather than divide the City, as has occurred with numerous development projects in Doraville's history.

Connecting the streets. This site plan attempts to connect as many existing streets as possible to the site. By doing so, the site in essence reweaves itself back into the urban fabric of the city. Figure 2.9 attempts to illustrate the way in which the existing streets and neighborhoods were considered when creating the proposed street network. This plan attempts to respect the existing street network surrounding the site by extending the streets to the west of the site (right image in Figure 2.9) as well as creating streets parallel to Motors Industrial Way, Buford Highway, and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (left image in Figure 2.9). To achieve this, the plan proposes creating two new vehicular crossings over the MARTA tracks: one extending Park Avenue across the tracks, another connecting Peachtree Road to New Peachtree Road. On the western side of the site, it is recommended that as many of the existing residential streets connect to the site as possible. It is important to note that some of these streets are crossing over existing industrial uses and some commercial uses. This plan does not advocate demolishing the buildings housing these uses. Rather, it simply recognizes the temporary nature of buildings that was discussed earlier. Should, at some future time, these properties come up for sale, it would be in the best interest of Doraville to acquire at least a portion of the

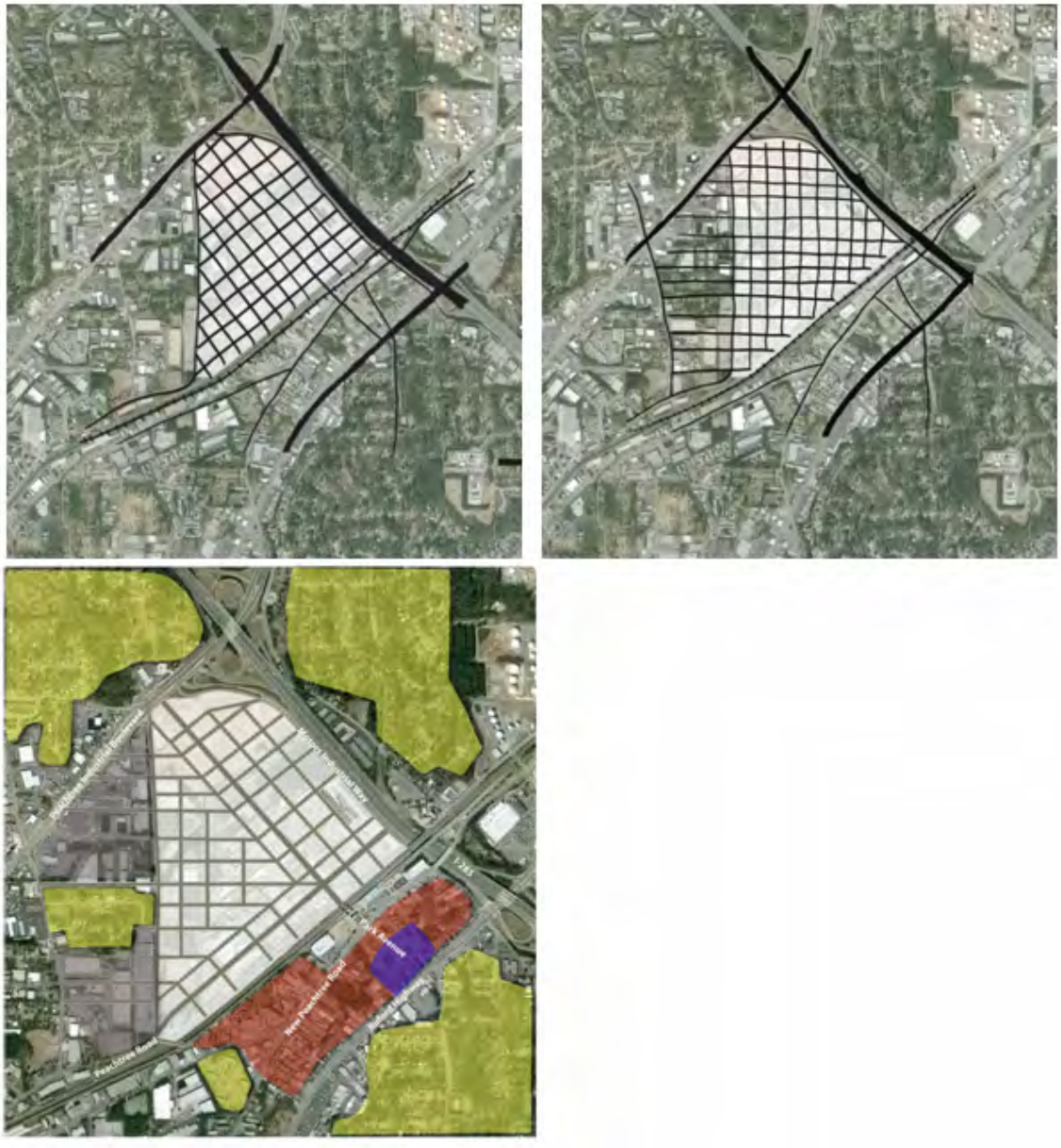
property to extend the roads. On the eastern side of the site, the street network should connect through to Motors Industrial Way. At the northern corner of the site, the network should connect to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard whenever possible. Again, this corner of the site is flanked by a "big-box" retailer. Should this property ever become available, these parcels should be redeveloped in a way that allows the street network of the site to connect to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard.

Figure 2.8 – General Subdivision Framework Plan for the GM Site

Some residents, particularly those on the west side of the site, may be concerned about increased traffic on their streets if they are connected to the site. While this is a valid concern because traffic would likely increase, it is important to recognize that the greater the number of streets that connect through to the site, the more traffic will be diffused

across those streets, thus reducing the amount of traffic on each individual road. The bottom image in Figure 2.9 shows the existing neighborhoods adjacent to the site. As it stands now, these residential (yellow), commercial (red), and civic (purple) areas are not very well connected to each other. The street network that is proposed for the site will better connect these isolated areas, creating a more cohesive city.

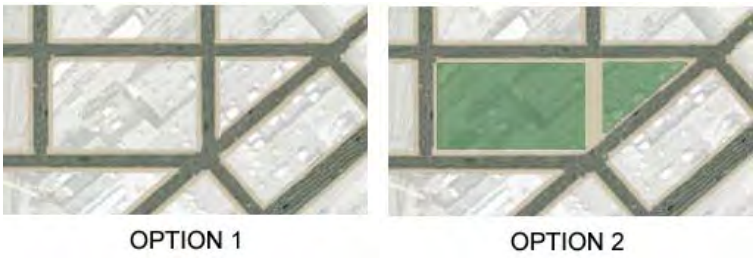
Figure 2.9 – Illustration of connections to existing city



Proposed streets. Looking within the actual site itself, the subdivision plan is relatively elementary. Most streets in the site have a right-of-way of 60 feet which allows for travel lanes, some on-street parking, and ample sidewalk space. There are two larger boulevards with a right-of-way of 80 feet: the east-west Park Avenue extension and the north-south realignment of Peachtree Road. These streets are larger because they are designed to carry additional travel lanes and wider pedestrian facilities.

Proposed blocks and greenspace. Although the block sizes vary, the average block size within the site is around 300 feet by 300 feet as recommended. Because of the geometry of the site, there are some blocks that must be triangular in shape and are a bit larger than desired. Figure 2.10 shows the plan for these slightly awkward intersections. Rather than creating an excessive number

Figure 2.10 – Options for Irregular Blocks



of five-point vehicular intersections (as Option 1 shows), one street dead-ends for vehicles before entering the irregular block (Option 2). However, pedestrian connectivity will continue along where the street would have been, preserving the benefits of a small block. One possibility with blocks such as this one is to create a park space in them. This idea is very similar to what evolved in Savannah with its quintessential squares, where vehicular traffic goes around the park, but pedestrians walk through them. Reflecting this, the subdivision plan presented in Figure 2.8 also illustrates space for parks and greenspace on the site. Per the requirements of the existing DeKalb County Subdivision Regulations, 20 percent of the site is dedicated to greenspace.

Recommendations

The previous paragraphs have discussed at length the need for and character of proper subdivision for redeveloping the GM site in Doraville. The following is a summary of the key recommendations for this section:

- Subdivide the site first. While land use and buildings are temporary, subdivision and street networks last for generations.

- Connect to and support the existing street network. This is a tremendous opportunity to reconnect the geographically separated areas of Doraville.

- Attempt to keep block sizes around 300 feet by 300 feet and most street rights of way around 60 feet. Smaller blocks are important for creating pedestrian friendly environments and the town center feeling Doraville desperately wants.

- Be creative with irregular blocks, try turning them into a park and make sure to continue pedestrian right of way even when vehicular travel is not feasible. It is recommended that 20 percent of the site be dedicated to parks and greenspace.

The plan presented here is a direct response to the desire of the citizens of Doraville, as voiced in the LCI report, to have a more engaging and pedestrian friendly environment in their city. This plan will achieve those goals by creating a subdivision framework that encourages walking, allows for a flexibility of uses, and works in conjunction with the existing street network of the city. It is critical that a proper subdivision plan for the site is created before any notions of land use or buildings are entertained. Failure to do so could result in a site that is only designed to serve one particular organization of land use. Doraville needs only to look at its own current predicament with the GM plant to realize the dangers of relying on one land use. While such a site could be successfully initially, the market is bound to change in the future, and if the subdivision does not allow for uses to adapt to the market, Doraville may very well find themselves back in the same dilemma that they now face.

Now that a subdivision framework has been presented, the next layer is introduced. The second layer of the redevelopment plan deals with the creation of a transit oriented development that occupies several blocks of the subdivision framework.

3. Layer Two - Transit Oriented Development

Introduction

Doraville is the terminating point for MARTA's northeast line and adjacent to I-85 and I-285. Given this unique location, Doraville has the opportunity to create a national model for a transit oriented community on the GM site—located west of the MARTA station—once they cease operations. The transportation infrastructure network surrounding the site provides a sound justification for a transit oriented development (TOD). Moreover, extending parts of the surrounding network into the site will help seamlessly connect a TOD with the city for pedestrians and automobiles; this must be done within an organized street framework as referenced in Layer One of this report.

Transit oriented developments are centered around mass transit to create and encourage land use patterns that support transit. Typically a transit station —bus or rail— is the focal point of the TOD as it efficiently utilizes the regional transit network of connectivity to employment centers, neighborhoods, airports, and entertainment venues. Through public-private partnerships, these developments not only transform a section of a city but also help the metropolitan area become more efficient by maximizing land use near public transit.

This layer of the report acts as an extension of the Doraville LCI by concentrating on the GM site as an opportunity to successfully market and create a transit oriented development; this will be accomplished through the explanation of urban design principles and economic development strategies. This section will discuss general fundamentals of a TOD, propose TOD urban design and land use elements for the City of Doraville and present case studies for economic development strategies and recommendations.

Transit Oriented Development Basics

Transit oriented developments are fast becoming a popular type of development as concerns over the environment, limited resources, and growth become more pressing. A TOD is more than a real estate project or development; it is a mechanism to deal with regional transportation and land use issues. Peter Calthorpe, a well-respected urban design professional, has clearly defined and described TODs in his book titled *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream.* Along with a general description of a basic standard for a TOD, he explains two types of TODs—Urban and Neighborhood. The following is a summary of Calthorpe's ideals:

General TOD description:

- These developments are found throughout metropolitan regions in urbanizing areas. They must be located on or near existing or proposed sections of a trunk transit line (light rail, heavy rail, or express bus stop) or feeder bus network. See Figure 3.1 for a conceptual diagram.
- When designing, remember that each TOD is unique to its site but a 2,000 foot radius from the transit stations should be drawn to show a 'comfortable walking distance' (equates to +/- 10 minutes) to create a pedestrian-friendly environment; thus, mixed-use development is ideal. A diagram of this principal is show in Figure 3.2.
- Radius size may vary depending on topography, road interruptions, climate and other physical features.

Figure 3.1 – Conceptual Diagram of a TOD Network

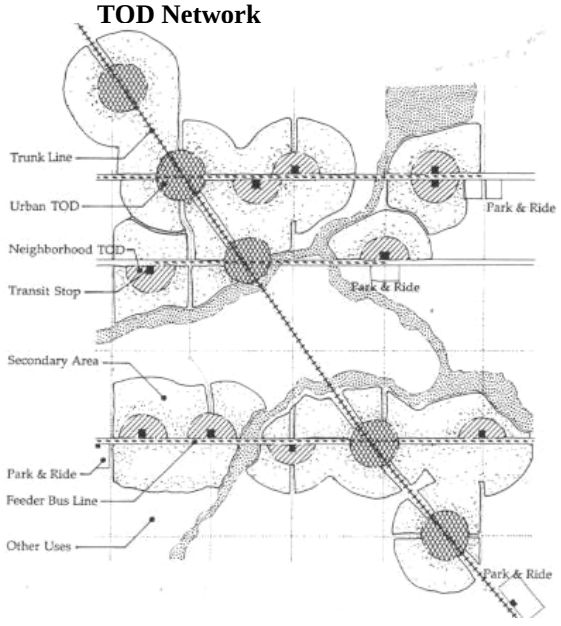
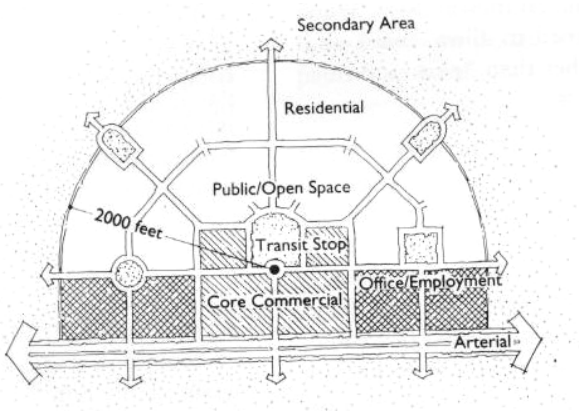


Figure 3.2 – Walking Distance Diagram

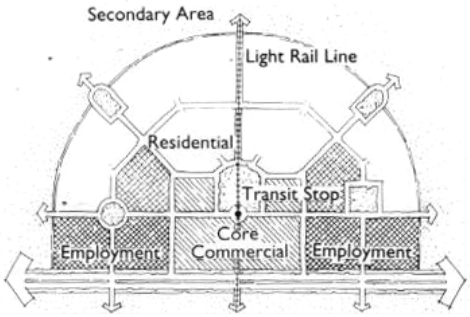


Source: Calthorpe, Peter. ***The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream.***

Urban TOD description:

- Defined by its location on a trunk link transit network; typically ½ to 1 mile apart from nearest station.
- Framework is best for high-intensity uses—offices, retail, and moderate- to high-density residential.
- Intensity of development along trunk line network (see Figure 3.3) should reflect significant investment necessary to generate the greatest number of transit bound trips.

Figure 3.3 – Urban TOD

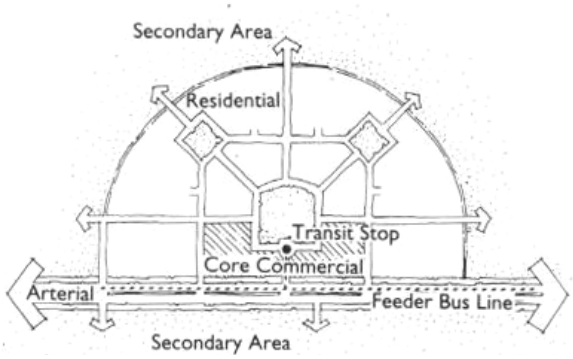


Source: Calthorpe, Peter. ***The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream.***

Neighborhood TOD description:

- Defined by its location on a local or feeder bus line within 10 minutes travel time (no greater than 3 miles) from transit stop. See Figure 3.4.
- Framework is best for moderate density residential, service, entertainment, civic, and recreational uses.

Figure 3.4 – Neighborhood TOD



Source: Calthorpe, Peter. ***The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream.***

Although TODs were first conceived for inner cities, transit oriented developments are becoming more common in suburban areas. Calthorpe suggests, "The first-ring suburbs,

with their often-vacant industrial zones and moribund retail corridors, are perhaps the ripest areas for the positive impacts of transit."[11]

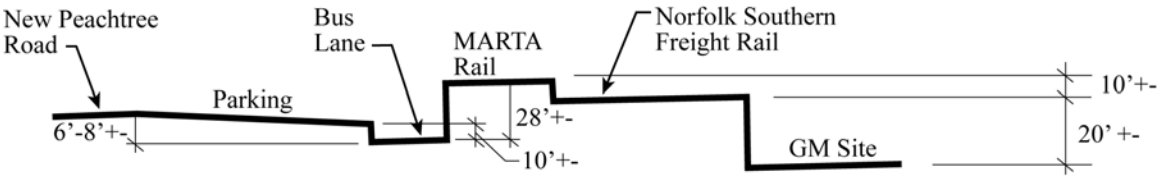
Transit Oriented Development Elements in Doraville

Overview

Before addressing any specific elements of the proposed Doraville transit oriented development, understanding the diverse infrastructure (streets, freight rail, transit rail, etc.) that interacts with the site will provide a basis for future discussions; in conjunction, it is important to understand the varying topographic changes of the area as it creates challenges for connecting areas in need of additional infrastructure (i.e., bridges or tunnels) or land grading.

New Peachtree Road, located on a ridgeline, is at a higher elevation than both Buford Highway, to the southeast, and the MARTA station, to the northwest. The MARTA rail line is elevated, as is the adjacent Norfolk Southern freight rail line. The lowest point of this area is the ground level of the GM site. Figure 3.5 below is a basic cross section taken at Park Avenue from south to north with approximate dimensions. This cross section does not take into account subtle grade changes. Figure 3.6 provides a photographic view of these land changes from New Peachtree Road to the GM site.

Figure 3.5 – Existing Cross Section at Park Avenue facing West, 1:80 scale



[11] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, xiii.

Figure 3.6 – View from New Peachtree Road to the GM plant, facing southwest

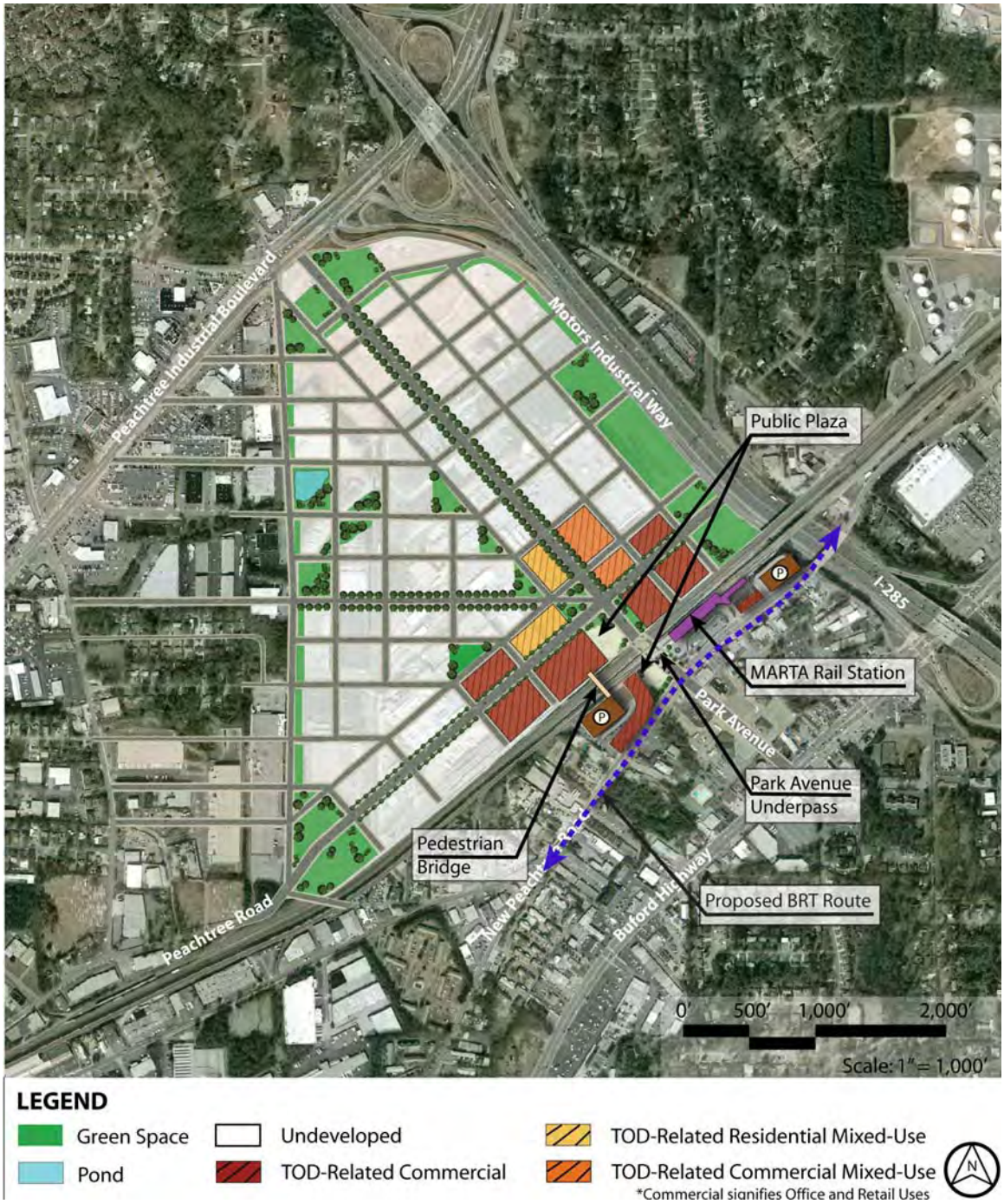
Connecting Divided Land. As mentioned earlier, the MARTA northeast line terminates at the Doraville station. The rail line is elevated approximately 28 feet above the ground, which would require a pedestrian and bicycle connection to cross underneath the MARTA rail and the existing freight rail. This would provide access from the station to land on both sides of the rail line. The connection would need to span approximately 160 feet, and still be able to support the rail lines above ground.

A vehicular connection for passenger traffic will also be created. From a visual survey, it seems feasible that a tunnel could extend under the rail line, connecting New Peachtree Road with the future development. Public bus routes would access the site from points off Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and other connector roads, while the proposed bus rapid transit (BRT) system will provide a connection at the MARTA station, making it a full-service public transit node. These individual access components are explained further in this section.

Features that could be included in a transit oriented development for Doraville include a public plaza and three types of connections: transit, BRT, and pedestrian/bicycle. These components will not only provide the city with site access, but also access to

metropolitan Atlanta. Figure 3.7 below shows the basic components and connection areas proposed.

Figure 3.7 – Transit Oriented Development Layer of Master Plan



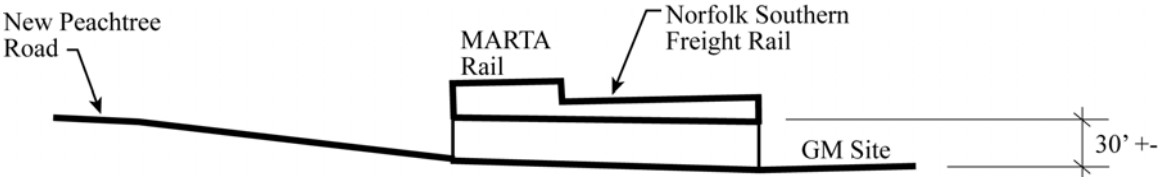
Integrated Design and Access Components

Due to the topographic challenges presented in this area, the transit node design is an exercise in connecting three planes at differing elevations. These various elevations will need to be joined to physically link the site across distances of at least 160 feet. These three planes include the ground level of the current GM site, the elevated level of the rail lines, and the ground level on which the MARTA station rests. These different levels and the proposed connection mechanisms obviously do not take into account any grading that will occur as the future development progresses.

The site currently boasts two parking decks. Since parking is a necessity and is currently being supplied, both parking decks are included in this proposal. However, most of the surface parking lots should be replaced with an urban park, a BRT connection node, and a passenger pick-up/drop-off area.

Automobile-oriented connections are vital given the Atlanta region's dependence on the automobile and the commuter clientele that this transit node currently serves. The site is easily accessed from the west but providing a link from the Buford Highway corridor is critical as well. Working with the existing topography of the area, Park Avenue could be extended under the rail lines to access the site; a diagram of this is shown in Figure 3.8 below. This strategic move would require substantial support from other public agencies. However, Park Avenue would successfully act as a primary corridor leading from Buford Highway to the 157 acres residing on the other side of the tracks. The successful revitalization of this area hinges on this bold move. Figure 3.7 highlights the vehicular access points.

Figure 3.8 - Proposed Cross Section at Park Avenue facing West



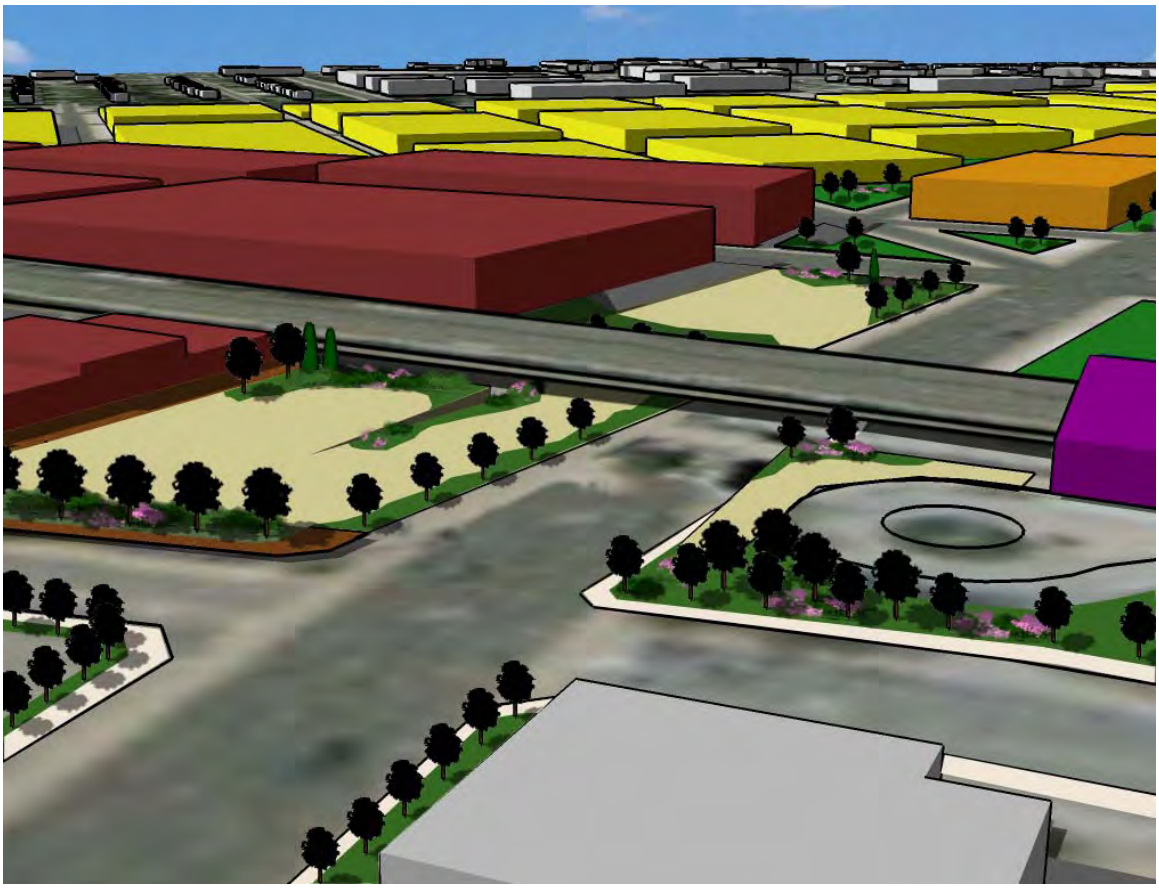
Bus Rapid Transit; Currently, MARTA is no longer investing in heavy rail; however, they are investing in bus rapid transit (BRT). Bus rapid transit is "a roadway-based rapid transit system. It offers high capacity rapid transit service on dedicated lanes or streets. By using roads, BRT does not require expensive tracks and other infrastructure, thus saving millions of dollars in capital investments."[12] The Atlanta Regional Commission has proposed a BRT route that connects at the Doraville MARTA station—this route is shown in Figure 3.7. This connection, coupled with the existing rail service, truly defines this area as a transit hub.

The proposed public plaza will be the primary link between these planes. Located at the corner of Park Avenue and New Peachtree Road, this park will provide a multi-use public space connected to the MARTA rail station. The park is approximately one-and-a-half acres and occupies both sides of the rail lines. In addition, the possibility exists for this park to link underneath the rail lines, immediately adjacent to the proposed Park Avenue underpass. This park will be an active community space as it allows people to gather and people-watch as visitors enter and exit the development. A landscaped buffer provides refuge from New Peachtree Road and the parking deck to the west, while vendors and community functions allow for activity and interest.

This park provides a pedestrian and bicycle connection to both the MARTA station as well as the GM site as a pedestrian underpass exists along Park Avenue, underneath the rail lines. This public space and the proposed connections have the potential to be hallmark architectural structures for the city. Figure 3.9 below is a conceptual rendering of the urban park and the Park Avenue underpass.

[12] Atlanta Regional Commission, BRT fact sheet, <http://www.atlantaregional.com/cps/rde/xbcr/SID-3F57FEE7-7DD8BF54/arc/brt2030_fs.pdf>, Accessed 11 December 2006.

Figure 3.9 – Conceptual Rendering of Park Avenue underpass at Public Plaza



In addition to the pedestrian and bicycle connection furnished at the public plaza, another connection will occur from the top of the MARTA parking deck located west of the MARTA station. Ideally MARTA, the authority itself, would inhabit an administration building across the rail lines from this deck, and the connection would lead from the top of the deck to the administration building on the other side.

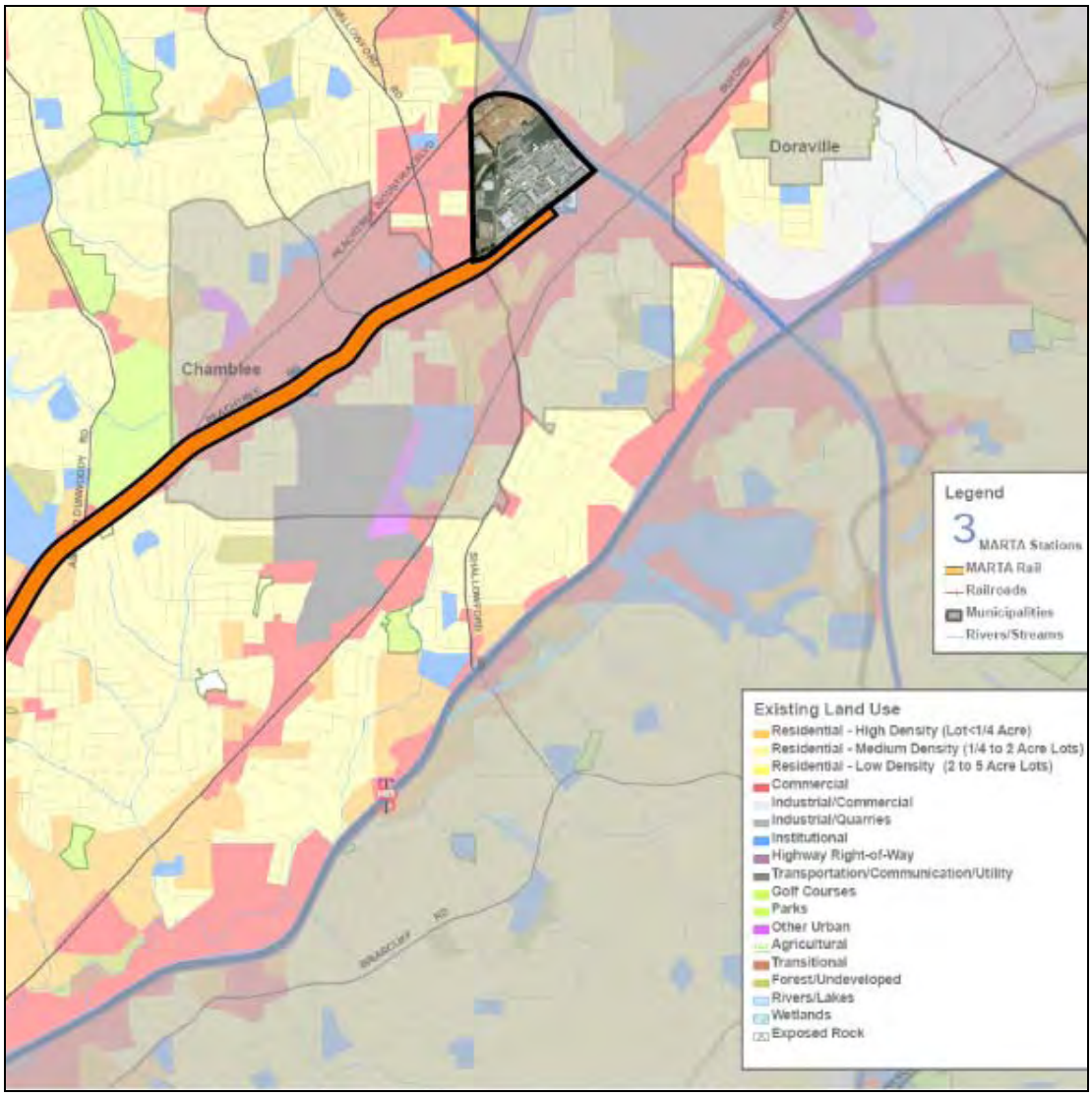
Programming Land Uses

Other programmatic land uses such as commercial, residential, and office will also have their place. Transit oriented developments typically consist of dense, mixed-use areas, but Doraville is unique and should be treated as such. Doraville's distinctive character and the land uses appropriate for it are taken into consideration throughout this analysis. The land use components inherent in a transit oriented development revolve around diverse land uses and activities and their integration within a region. These particular

issues are briefly mentioned below but will be developed further in the fifth layer of this analysis.

Looking at Figure 3.10, residential use dominates the other land uses along the MARTA rail as it leads to Doraville. From Chamblee northward, the land along the rail becomes heavily devoted to commercial uses. Approaching the Doraville station, the area is underserved in residential uses. This fact would argue the need for more housing in this area.

Figure 3.10 – DeKalb County Existing Land Uses along MARTA Rail Line



Source: DeKalb County Comprehensive Plan, Draft Community Assessment, October 2006, DeKalb County Planning and Development Department Case Study: Lindbergh City Center TOD, Atlanta, Georgia

Metro Atlanta has relatively few examples of transit oriented developments, but their value has been recognized and more are to be developed. The best example in Atlanta is the Lindbergh City Center TOD, which has a unique development story. The development was a two-phased project and is now entering its second phase—phase one opened in fall 2002. Although this project took advantage of its location in Atlanta's urban core with mixed-use developments, there have been many criticisms, which will be addressed within this section. Doraville can learn the benefits of public-private partnerships (i.e., MARTA, City of Doraville and private developers) through the Lindbergh City Center case study.

MARTA TOD History

Cause for change. Atlanta's increasing traffic congestion and long commute times played a major role in developers taking an interest in building transit oriented developments. Momentum increased in 1998 when BellSouth decided to consolidate its operations in the metro area; Lindbergh MARTA Station was selected as one of its new hubs. BellSouth had 20,000 employees in 75 suburban locations, which decreased efficiencies and increased costs. Moving the project forward, MARTA was awarded a grant by the Federal Transit Authority's (FTA) Livable Centers Initiative to study how to develop the Lindbergh site; at the same time, MARTA named a director for transit related development.

Like other cities in the late 1990s, Atlanta began to experience resurgence in urban areas. MARTA recognized that there was a market for TODs as many young professionals were a part of this new trend to live in-town; younger people may be more willing to change their commuting habits and use public transit than older people. For many years MARTA recognized this type of development was valuable for their short-, and long-term future and began leasing air-rights over several stations; however, real estate downturns and financial hard times prohibited the TOD concept from progressing.

Regulatory changes. Changes in federal policies eventually helped to further the realization of the Lindbergh TOD. Previously, the FTA's policy mandated that transit agencies should sell excess land that had been purchased for right-of-way and was not being used for transportation purposes, such as station parking lots or a new station, and reimburse the federal government for its share of the purchase price.[13] In 1997, the FTA revised their policy from transit agencies only being allowed to develop land for transportation related purposes to permitting agencies to develop land for mixed use or sell it and keep revenues for capital/operational improvements. Soon after, MARTA released a request for proposal to develop 47 acres at Lindbergh.

MARTA's policy. As previously mentioned, MARTA has had intentions to build TODs near its stations long before Lindbergh City Center was envisioned. However, as time passed, the market evolved and policies changed to facilitate this efficiency. Thus, the transit authority has updated its policy (amendment was adopted in 2002).

MARTA cannot mandate that a TOD be constructed near its station but they strongly encourage developers to construct them. MARTA uses the following methods to promote proper transit related development:

- Through sale or lease of property that is no longer required for operation or maintenance of the rapid transit system.
- Residential developers should fully explore and take advantage of financial incentives and benefits for including affordable housing units as part of their joint development projects.
- Prospective developers should conduct market research and apply expertise to propose the best mixed-use developments – within walking distance - with multifamily, residential, retail, office and other components preferred by MARTA as it creates origin and destination trips.
- When the property is not owned by MARTA, the agency will cooperate proactively with outside parties engaged in planning and executing development of such properties that are within walking distance of a station (bus or rail).

[13] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, 179.

Development Program. Although MARTA has many stations that were available for this type of development, Lindbergh station was the most unique. It serves as a connecting and transfer point for two lines (North and Northeast), which made it a logical choice for a transit oriented development. Also, its close proximity to major job and entertainment districts—Downtown, Midtown, and Buckhead—allow for maximization of rapid transit and bus service. Although it connects two rail lines, two main criticisms are the lack of connectivity to its surrounding environment and abundant parking because they limit the effectiveness to create a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood.

The vision was for high-density mixed-use development incorporating residential and commercial uses. Plans included one million square feet of office space for BellSouth, an option to build 1.2 million square feet in phase two, including 330,000 square feet of retail, 259 condominiums, and 566 apartments. Also, mixed-income housing was incorporated after many affordable housing advocates found out that the original plans excluded affordable housing.

Urban Design Critique

The development is progressing, but from an urban design standpoint, there is room for improvement. When planning a TOD, well-thought-out urban design principles and community participation are essential to avoid repeating Lindbergh's mistakes.

Design issues. This development is constructed on top of the Lindbergh MARTA station, "the second busiest in the system, situated at the junction of two MARTA lines, and [is] located immediately adjacent to the wealthy Buckhead neighborhoods seven miles north of downtown Atlanta"[14]. Planned to be forty-seven acres, the master plan initially showed a large block of a single land use adjacent to another block of a different land use, and so on, resulting in a mixed-use development, though the uses were separated.

Lindbergh was designed to be a particularly dense development with a substantial amount of additional on-site parking. While this density might be acceptable for some areas, it

[14] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, 179.

was not popular in this location. The surrounding neighborhoods were angry at the proposed density and the more than 10,000 additional parking spaces. These neighborhoods were concerned about increased traffic congestion and decreased property values, among other things.

Aside from public outcry, another design barrier to the development was the Southern Railroad Corridor. This corridor acts as a boundary separating the north and west neighborhoods from the development. With no connectivity over the railroad and with the existing roads and highways surrounding the site, the development is entirely geared towards those arriving by car or traveling through on MARTA, not those that might access the development by foot from local neighborhoods.

Figure 3.11 – Lindbergh City Center, Atlanta

Source: Carter Leasing, http://www.carterusa.com and Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart, http://www.srssa.com , Accessed on 26 November 2006.

Lessons learned. There are a few lessons to be learned from the Lindbergh City Center. One of these lessons results from the public's anger regarding this development; this issue reinforces the importance of public participation and the public process of any development. Another lesson would be to seek a diverse group of tenets and not risk the entire development on the success of one company. Diversity of uses and tenants is essential within a TOD. The last lesson involves connectivity and access, two foundations on which transit oriented developments are built. By limiting access to the development and gearing usage towards the automobile, Lindbergh reduces its ability to attract a large clientele base, in turn its reputation as an effective transit oriented development.

TOD as an Economic Development Tool

During the LCI process, a transit oriented development was identified as an issue and opportunity for the community. The Doraville station is recognized as a major asset and source of economic development since it serves as a transit hub for commuters in northern DeKalb County, Gwinnett County, and further north; as a result, that is seen as a source of economic growth. But taking the idea of a TOD from the drawing board to reality requires strategic planning.

It is imperative to understand the basics of attracting this type of development because it maximizes land use efficiency and value through mixed-use development (residential, commercial office/retail, and entertainment), and it enhances a city's ability to maintain economic competitiveness—by creating environments for leisure, business, and living—in the metropolitan region. However, because of a TOD's large-scale nature and dependency on all parts (i.e., retail, residential, etc.) working together, it can be a risky development. Therefore, it would be beneficial for the city to help reduce the risk and allow for a smoother process by knowing how to prepare for development, organize this type of project, attract financing, and strategize the facilitation of residential and retail development.

Preparing for Development

As noted in *The New Transit Town*, to increase the odds of attracting a TOD developer, the city must: put zoning and permitting in place; partner with experienced developers; create a broad vision and get community support; build a detailed business plan with strong market analysis; and to jump-start private investment, have public investment in predevelopment. [15]

Zoning. Within the zoning ordinance, regulations for a TOD should be included before the developer is selected. If not, experienced developers might be turned off by in the inefficient process of applying for variances or other hurdles—time is money. Research indicates that experienced TOD developers prefer to work in cities that are supportive of such projects.

Experienced TOD developers can attract more investment players due to their understanding of the details involved in a mixed-use development. Smaller, inexperienced firms are usually under-capitalized for these projects that tend to be large in scale.

Community vision. Cities such as Portland, Seattle, and Boulder, Colorado have helped streamline the process by incorporating a broad-based alliance of citizen involvement. This effort helps many citizens to have a voice in their community's future, in turn building consensus and morale. Also, adopting master development plans has aided in the implementation of transit oriented developments.

Business plan and market analysis. Preparing for a complex mixed-use development includes knowing how strong the market is for each use proposed in the development. It is ideal to find a good portion of tenants for retail or commercial space before the completion of at least the first phase of the project. Also, investors and lenders are not likely to invest when there is little potential for financial benefits.

[15] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, 86.

Necessity of public investment. Large development projects, especially those involving environmental remediation, have long lead times before the project is completed. In many cases, public sector investment in predevelopment has spurred the momentum of TOD projects. For example, Contra Costa County paid for the charrette process with the Pleasant Hill Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Station in the San Francisco area; BART also provided funds for planning projects near two transit stations.

Organizing the Deal and Phasing Development

Many transit oriented developments create or transform neighborhoods from disinvested areas to well-invested areas. For this reason, the project should be completed in phases, giving the development (or area) enough time to attract investment, patrons, and residents. In the beginning phases, the project will have a lower value than when fully leased or developed, but phasing reduces the initial financial expenses until signs of success are apparent. In other words, as long as all of the planned residential, office, or retail spaces are not built or leased, the developments value—and tax base—will not be maximized.

From a developer's perspective, phasing allows them to focus on the components that produce early returns (profits), and incorporate different uses at the appropriate time. For example, a developer could transform the area to become a destination by building office and retail space before market-rate housing or vice versa to stabilize the area.

Attracting Financing

In markets where mixed-use/TOD products are relatively new and not the status quo, lenders prefer working with the familiar. For example, vertical mixed use, as opposed to horizontal, makes the deal more complicated and increases capital costs. In metro Atlanta, horizontal mixed use has been more commonly used, but vertical is becoming more prevalent as land prices and development regulations change. Vertical mixed use can be defined as one structure with residential/office space over ground level retail/service uses; conversely, horizontal mixed-use is a single structure with retail

fronting the street in one structure and residential/office uses in a different structure (there are some examples of attached horizontal mixed-use).

As a result of lenders adverse nature to risk, developers establish blocks by use to capitalize on efficiencies in the market—this helps investors price the risk effectively, keep a secondary use below 15 percent of the project, focus on horizontal use, and segment the commercial portion of a project for conventional lending purposes. This strategy facilitates finding construction and permanent loans.

> When the TOD is in a slow-changing market, mezzanine debt financing could improve the chances of securing permanent financing at attractive rates. For example, Peak Development in Oregon has used three-phase financing arranged by Central Source Financial Services, including a construction loan and mezzanine financing between construction and a final phase of permanent financing. Having the intermediate financing provides time to achieve market-rate rents before locking in long-term rates.[16]

Provisions for Housing and Retail

TODs enhance a community's sense of place and quality of life through clustering residential and commercial/retail uses near the transit station. The following sections discuss strategies used to ensure mixed-income residential communities and retail uses are included, even when the market may not be ready. Related information can be found in Layer 5 – Redevelopment Driving Factors.

Housing. Encouraging a mixture of market-rate, and work-force housing helps foster a vibrant transit oriented community. Although there have been challenges to incorporate the more affordable housing product in some projects, several cities have found solutions. In Austin, Texas and Phoenix, Arizona, a minimum percentage of moderate-income units are required to get public support; thus, the units are funded as part of the negotiation with the city for the overall development. Portland has accepted less than the market

[16] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, 97.

value for land and provided low-interest loans to projects that include affordable housing.[17]

Retail. Retail is a very important component in TODs and mixed-use developments in general; daytime users, nighttime users, and residents will benefit by having the variety of choices that are found in many great neighborhoods. The challenge arises when the development's needs and the market's characteristics do not align to attract the necessary (or desired) retailers. Chain retailers normally require a minimum area median income, particular design standards for store sizes, and a number of dedicated parking lots.

In cases where ground floor retail was essential for the development to work, but the area was not able to attract lenders, certain subsides were made available by public agencies. The following are examples of how other cities were able to subsidize the retail component:

- City of El Cerrito, CA: the redevelopment authority became an equity partner in Del Norte Place, a multi-family development with ground floor retail; the arrangement included leasing land to the developer for $1 per year and 15% - 20% of cash flow.
- Providence, RI: the Revitalization Loan Fund provides gap financing when above retail uses (i.e., office and residential) and ground floor rents are not able to compete. Gap financing is used until the ground floor rents become more competitive.
- Oakland, CA: the city provides all up-front costs and assumes the construction risk on the retail component.

Retail can act as a magnet. Doraville has access to many national retailers in nearby communities but has not had success with attracting any within its city limits (with the exception of BrandsMart). In many cases, retailers and restaurants target the same customer base, which can help bring in the desired mix of establishments to appeal to a broader customer base. With the popularity of lifestyle/mixed-use developments,

[17] Hank Dittmar & Gloria Ohland, *The New Transit Town*, Island Press, Washington D.C., 2004, 102-103.

developers are willing to build restaurant-heavy properties; developers have noticed that restaurants in retail settings tend to do better than stand-alone concepts.

> According to *Retail Traffic Magazine*, restaurants are the second fastest growing segment of the retail sector in 2006, trailing only discount stores and accounting for 17.6 percent of openings, according to research by Colliers International… Restaurants now are viewed in some circles as mini-anchors in an era when department stores have lost their appeal. "Restaurants are, in essence, traffic generators that bring people to the project and depending on the character of a restaurant, they might have long waiting lines so people will roam the shops while they are waiting for a meal," Divaris says. "There is not much impact if you have only one or two, but if you have eight or ten, they can be as effective as an anchor."[18]

According to a retail professional with Lackey Companies, restaurants pay rents beginning in the low $20's for a standard lease, and in highly desired locations they may pay up to $50 per square foot (a restaurant-industry executive suggests that restaurants are willing to pay up to 20% more in rent than typical retail businesses). With changing trends, including the preference of casual dining concepts –Chipotle, Applebee's, and Olive Garden, to name a few—over fast food chains, newer restaurant operators that offer a variety of concepts are willing to try new ideas. Therefore, Doraville can capitalize on this trend and take advantage of the growing casual dining market.

Recommendations

Based on the above analysis and information, this layer concludes with recommendations for the implementation of a successful transit oriented development on the GM site in Doraville.

Design

Gathering input from the case studies and the analysis, the following recommendations fall into three categories. These categories include design, land use, and connectivity suggestions.

[18] Elaine Misonzhnik , "Business Casual", *Retail Traffic Magazine* (Oct. 1, 2006), http://retailtrafficmag.com/mag/retail_business_casual/, accessed December 2, 2006.

- Create a multi-use public space to link the future development with the MARTA transit station.
- Utilize design features such as landscaping and sculptural elements. These features should respond to community input.
- Adaptive reuse of any historic structures should be integrated within the design.

The design of the area should focus on creating a multi-use public space which will act as the physical link between the two halves of the city. This space will help foster community cohesion as it will provide a space that the entire community can use and enjoy. Design features such as landscaping and sculptural construction should be utilized in the design of the urban park, and these features should respond to community input, allowing the local population to have a say in their city's development. This park carries with it the opportunity for increased local awareness and unity among the differing populations. Adaptive reuse, particularly in the redesign of any historic General Motors structures, should be encouraged as in the Mockingbird Station case study. This decision provides the city with a continued legacy as an important industrial center, while establishing an authentic and place-based design strategy that enhances Doraville's uniqueness.

- Incorporate diverse land uses and activities into the TOD.

As seen in the Lindbergh City Center case study, diverse land uses and activities must be incorporated into a transit oriented development. The creation of these uses and activities will provide the City of Doraville with an opportunity to attract jobs, businesses, and general economic growth to the area.

- Conduct an engineering study to determine the feasibility of breaching the rail lines.
- Prioritize infrastructure investment.
- Create multiple points of access for both passenger vehicles and pedestrians.

Regarding connectivity, the most imperative recommendation is for an engineering study. This is needed to determine the feasibility of breaching the rail lines. This is the most significant element of this proposal as the site is currently completely inaccessible from

both the civic facilities as well as Buford Highway. Establishing this connection could have a truly profound affect on the future development of the site. Other suggestions involve prioritizing infrastructure investment and creating multiple access points for passenger vehicles and pedestrians alike. All of these efforts are essential as they mend this site back into the fabric of the city and the region. Without these connections, the site will continue to be isolated from the rest of Doraville. These recommendations work hand-in-hand with the aforementioned design recommendations, as one reinforces the strength and need for the other.

Economic Development

- Educate the public on the benefits of medium- to large-scale transit oriented/mixed-use developments (including mixed-income housing), as an economic development tool, and discuss concerns. When the citizens are more comfortable with the concepts, the development process will run smoother—saving time and money.
- Seek guidance from a local, experienced real estate professional, who has participated in the development of a TOD project, to further explain concepts identified in this section. Given the complexity of this type of development, it is important to understand the basics when dealing with the master developer, assuming one will be used. The objective should be to do what is best for the community (i.e., the vision), not just enrich the developer.
- Complete an accurate market study for Doraville. This will help focus recruiting efforts to attract the appropriate mix of commercial tenants when the opportunity arises.

In addition to the Transit Oriented Development which will occupy several blocks of the site, this report also recommends that a new Town Center be created on the GM site. The next section of this report discusses Layer Three, the Town Center layer.

4. Layer Three - Town Center and Civic Spaces

What is a Town Center?

In recent decades, our push for urban redevelopment has resulted in a number of towns and cities envisioning creative ways to utilize large urban spaces called brownfields. Often times these are created by the vacating of an ever-diminishing industrial use, a retail use that is functionally obsolete and no longer adequately serves its community, or simply a site that has potential for revitalization. Complemented with a resurgence in our preferences for living and entertainment in an urban environment, and with many towns looking to restore civic identity and a sense of community, many "town centers" have been created on these brownfield properties.

Town centers tend to be a cluster of municipal buildings for a town, city, or other type of jurisdiction. Usually this cluster includes civic uses that carry out essential services, such as a city hall, and police and/or fire station. However, the town center also serves as a congregation center for the community, and as such may include a library, park, and community center. The nostalgic definition of a downtown consists of a grid block pattern with a city hall or a civic space in the middle surrounded by local businesses such as medical services, pharmacies, and hardware stores. This configuration allowed residents of a city to take care of any government-based activity and fill a prescription in the same trip. However, this physical layout which once provided the necessary goods and services for its citizens faced competition from economic creatures such as the regional mall and transportation investment in the interstate highway system. As a result, many of the traditional, small downtowns across the nation have not received much reinvestment in the last 50 years except for transportation improvements (crosswalks, re-surfacing, etc.).

Today the role of civic spaces and downtown has morphed into something greater. Political leaders, planners, and citizens now realize that reinvestment into the older, historic areas of their respected cities is important not only for economic sustainability

but as a means to practice smart growth principals. In economic and ethnically diverse cities such as Doraville, the civic spaces and public buildings can be a welcoming, communal environment that encourages people of varying ethnicities and socioeconomic levels to mingle. These spaces should be places that residents can take ownership of and thus serve to promote a strong sense of community, which enables the nurturing of civic involvement, empowerment, and stewardship. A town center and the surrounding civic spaces should function as one of the most memorable places in a city, helping to create its identity, and contributing to the city both economically and functionally.

Town centers are often the catalyst for new development in its vicinity, but sometimes mixed use development is concurrent with the relocation of a town center. As will be illustrated in the case studies to follow, new housing, retail, and office development can be closely coordinated with construction of a town center, and developers often even subsidize proposed municipal facilities.

Existing Problems with Doraville's Town Center

During the Livable Community Initiative (LCI) process in 2005, citizens, business owners, and other stakeholders noted that the current configuration of the civic structures in Doraville does not create an urban form that is associated with traditional town squares. Currently, the city hall, municipal court, library, and police station are all located in separate buildings each with its own parking lot. Furthermore, because of the topography, there are no automobile or pedestrian connections between the various buildings.

During the LCI study in 2005, residents and business owners consistently noted the following problems with the current civic core:

- Difficult to locate…Needs more visibility
- Not attractive...needs landscaping, signs, and exterior meeting place
- Upgrade/relocate library and pool
- More greenspace around civic uses

Doraville is known in the region as the last stop on the north-east MARTA line and for its vista of the General Motors Assembly Plant from I-285. The city should use these two assets to establish the civic core of the city as a destination that attracts individuals from MARTA and off the interstate to the site. The following options elaborate on different methods to accomplish this and offer recommendations.

Town Center Case Studies

To determine the issues that would arise from this undertaking, we examined three other recently developed town centers across the nation: Wayland, Massachusetts; Ramsey, Minnesota, and perhaps the most relevant, Englewood, Colorado. While the profile of each city was different, they largely shared the same goals, which was to create a transit friendly, walkable town center that would anchor private development around it. Many of the issues they were confronted with and lessons learned were similar across the board, and as such may be highly applicable to Doraville's situation as well.

Wayland, MA

Figure 4.1- Wayland Mixed Use Project

Source: "Wayland Mixed-Use Project." Online Posting. Town of Wayland, Massachusetts. http://www.wayland.ma.us/planning/Towncenterproposal/index.htm. Accessed 27 November 2006.

Description of Town/City. Wayland is a small town in Massachusetts that is situated halfway between Boston and Worchester, the two largest cities in Massachusetts. It is defined as a mostly residential, semi-rural bedroom community, with little industrial or commercial base. The commuter rail runs a line out through Wayland, and many urban professionals who are attracted to the tranquility settle down here. The character of the project and the approach taken to select uses and design was greatly affected by the town not being seen as a destination. Recently, the neighboring towns and municipalities have struggled economically – along Route 20 - and many offices have gone vacant or accepted short term leases.

Project description and history. The site is 56.9 acres, 19 of which are wetlands. Originally owned by Raytheon in the 1950's, it was underutilized for a long period of

time. An existing 410,000 sq. ft. office facility on the site served as a branch office for Polaroid until 2003[19], where it has been vacant since.

The town center concept was an outgrowth of the 2004 Master Plan, where the community expressed a desire for a centralized community center "that was walkable". One of the plans that was generated can be seen in Figure 4.1 However, it did not specify that this particular site should be the location of the town center. Nonetheless, because of the large amount of vacant surface area on the site, it was discussed in some preliminary charettes for the Master Plan. Once the property owner indicated that he would be willing to tear the existing facility down, it catalyzed a much broader discussion of how the site could be planned and treated, and how it could serve the town.

Design and uses. Wayland's planning department proposed a mixed use overlay district for the site, even without having a specific development plan in mind. It tried to encourage different uses, with a 10:1 ratio of office to retail (where retail is on the ground floor) and residential units which would average 2 bedrooms. (effectively diversify the housing stock and helping to attract young professionals). A pedestrian/bike trail would attempt to connect the entire site, with the public greenspace being the focal point of activity. The town green would anchor the start-up of municipal buildings and community spaces around it, which would in turn spur commercial and residential development along the edges of the town center that is created. Currently, the city has identified a need to relocate the public library and town hall, but the capital budget allows the relocation of only one.

Financing. The site will be contracted out to commercial and residential developers. The commercial developer is willing to donate 40,000 square feet for a municipal building, and is providing $300,000 for a pedestrian/bike trail, as well as about $2 million for discharge of wastewater treatment plant.

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[19] Diesenhouse, Susan. "Wayland Business Center forfeited to lender by developer." Fidelity unit. The Boston Globe, 12/13/2003

Application to Doraville. The Wayland Town Center project can be best looked at in its treatment of environmental remediation, which phases the the cleanup process on a need basis to ensure a timely and solvent manner of development. It will be in Doraville's best interest to work with GM to manage the cleanup process, and find flexible solutions to mitigate the environmental hazards – capping contamination with the arena, clear only remediated land for development, etc. – without having to clean up the entire site all at once. Additionally, the linkage of site planning to its audience also is very notable in Wayland's planning process: it was many lawyers and accountants that pushed for an attractive, pedestrian friendly design throughout the site because they wanted to be its users. Wayland's decision to commit to a design framework – and having to turn away some retailers that did not "buy-in" to the plan – was not easy, but they understood the value of good design and that it would be well patronized by white collar workers who would ensure long term sustainability.

City of Ramsey, MN

Figure 4.2 - Ramsey Town Center Project

Source: "A Brief Summary of the Ramsey Town Center Project." Online Posting. City of Ramsey, Minnesota. Accessed 27 November 2006.

Description of Town/City. Ramsey is a small city that is about 30 minutes north of Minneapolis/St. Paul. It has a relatively high median household income, although the environment is semi- rural; like Wayland, the city is not perceived as a destination The city has very large residential subdivisions, which has affected the way planners and developers in the area treat issues of uses and design regarding new development.

Project Description and History. The MPO of Minneapolis (Metropolitan Council) was promoting smart growth in the late 1990's, and the City of Ramsey wanted to leverage the NorthStar Commuter Rail line that went through it (although there was no stop at the time) to do something different, perhaps a downtown. The site was currently greenfield and farmland. The Metropolitan Council gave the city a state grant to do a study which led to the Ramsey Town Center being adopted in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan as a mixed use town center on the project site (see Figure 4.2). Calthorpe and Associates were then hired to conduct charrettes with the community in October 2001, which produced 8 unique plans all oriented around a train station component. Once the referendum for the town center was approved, a Town Center Task Force and Town Center Review Board were created to ensure individual buildings and projects met the guidelines and vision espoused in the plan.

Design and Techniques. All the plans and development are oriented to a future Northstar Commuter Rail Station - which is still indefinite – although planners noted that the project's success did not depend on it. A special zoning district was established that promoted mixed-use, compact development, architectural guidelines, and activating the street level. The residential component was generally oriented to the park, and some apartments would even have retail underneath them.

Financing. The Residential Developer formed themselves into the Ramsey Town Center LLC, and is working in am amicable partnership with the City. Most of the transit costs are being borne by the MPO, county, and some by the city from state funds. The MPO provided about $6 million dollars of assessments for roads - which the city will use

towards the major road going through the site – and the 800 stall parking ramp next to city hall. Additionally, they are able to get county money because the site is run on county roads.

Application to Doraville. The Ramsey Town Center provides a template to Doraville on utilizing the strength of the community in developing a project, and how such an integrated, transparant planning process with stakeholders enables the city to acquire support and funding from a variety of agencies. What began as merely a feasibility study turned into a codified stakeholder process that served to advance a dense, urban project in an area hardly suited for it (weak economic market, large subdivisions). Despite this, the city of Ramsey was ultimately able to get the town center project they wanted, financed almost exclusively by the developer and larger public bodies. Conversely, Doraville is urban, has a strong market and is accessible. Doraville already has many avenues for public input (the Livable Centers Initiative, Doraville's Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan) and would do well to take advantage of these mediums in soliciting public input and generating excitement for a Town Center to incorporate into their future plan or capital improvements program. In this way they may also engage the interest of higher levels of government (DeKalb County, Atlanta Regional Commission, etc.), which may in turn provide funding and technical assistance for the project.

City of Englewood, CO

Figure 4.3 – Englewood's CityCenter

Source: "CityCenter Englewood." Online Posting. City of Englewood, Colorado. http://www.ci.englewood.co.us/Index.aspx?page=468. Accessed27 November 2006.

Description of Town/City. The City of Englewood is a municipality that is part of the Denver-Aurora Metropolitan Area. As of the 2000 census, there were 31,727 people, and while predominantly white, the city had a sizeable Hispanic population (13 percent). Compared to the other cities being examined, Englewood is relatively young and transient, with nearly half of its households as non-families and a median age of 36. Its economy moves in lockstep with the Denver area, and amenities are well-served by the Denver region. The Regional Transportation District offers a light rail system that runs through the site, and construction of a light rail stop occurred almost concurrently with the site's development.

Project Description and History. This project (CityCenter), began with an old and functionally obsolete shopping center that was built in 1970's, whose site took up 55 acres. When the property owner was on the verge of selling the site to a developer that wanted to make an auto oriented development, the City of Englewood stepped in and bought the site to create a more walkable, environmentally sustainable site that connected to its surroundings. In order to expedite the development – they were under contractual

requirements to have the site assessable by the time the transit station opened – and to shield themselves from liability issues, the city formed a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to advancing the development, which allowed them to circumvent some legal proceedings (public notification requirements, votes and referendums) in order to build the project in time. And because the corporation was largely staffed by members of the city, agreement was already secured for certain motions and regulations that would have otherwise been potentially antagonistic and time consuming. The City paid 50 percent of acquisition and predevelopment costs, while raising the remainder through other city-owned land sales, collaboratively raising 38 million for the site.

Design and Techniques. Because construction of a light rail stop was ensured before the construction – and actually required some assurance that the site would be developed in conjunction – the town center portion of the site bordered the transit station, while other uses such as big-box retail and housing were relegated further away. This made sure that the civic area would have the lasting image on the minds of visitors. Wearing their not-for-profit hat, city officials were able to narrow the streets within the site to provide an enhanced pedestrian experience, bringing buildings down to a human scale, and assist in traffic calming measures. A 100 foot steel truss bridge created a ceremonial gateway into the town center from the light rail station, and the town center portion also included a 2-acre community park with a fountain that accentuated the public space. Civic uses totaled 140,000 square feet, with a city hall and administrative services, municipal court, library, police branch, and even a Museum of Outdoor Arts all housed in one large building. The uses and graphical representation can be seen in Figure 4.3.

Financing. Because the city incorporated a not-for-profit corporation, they were able to pass about 9 million dollars into it to use for financing certain aspects of the project that would be negatively impacted by the public process. Other than footing some of the money themselves and using proceeds from land sales, they bonded against part of the existing shopping center to help finance the development. In the recreation of a street network within the site, Englewood was able to get some federal dollars and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds for transportation improvements. Because the

market was generally good in this area – as it is linked to Denver – housing, retail, and office uses were all on the table. While retail and office uses would generate the highest amount of sales tax to the city, and were included accordingly, housing was still important to the total land use.

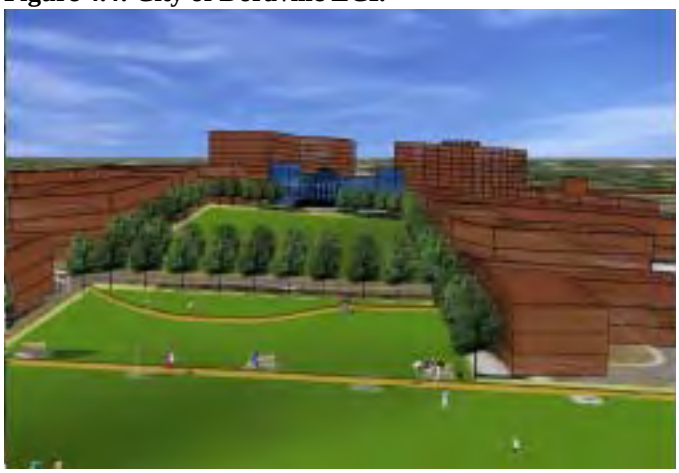
Application to Doraville. The City of Englewood is perhaps the most similar municipality to Doraville in terms of market, demographics, and even site considerations. The two most important things to take away from Englewood's experience is the prospect of creating a non-public entity to drive development, and leveraging public transit. By creating a not-for-profit, the City of Doraville could circumvent administrative obstacles that could jeopardize the viability of the project. While we are not advocating that the project be advanced without meaningful planning, foresight, and community involvement, we realize that some public processes can be abused by special interests or are merely bureaucratic in nature that they can be jettisoned in this case. Additionally, the fact that the development and approval process for this town center was fast tracked for the sole purpose of a not yet constructed transit stop underscores the importance of the MARTA station to Doraville. The linkage between a town center - which programs public activities – and public transit is especially noteworthy, because not only do they complement each other in a transportation oriented development context, but both are public amenities and further their respective missions of serving constituents in an egalitarian manner.

Application of Case Studies to Doraville's Town Center Development

While all three of these cities are different and unique to themselves, each of them includes methods that can be applied to Doraville's situation. As noted earlier, there currently does not exist a true congregation place in Doraville, one that is family friendly, attracts the affection of individuals, and serves as a de-facto symbol of its civic identity and values. The site also offers a rare opportunity to reweave the fabric of the neighborhoods by establishing connections between the site and its environment.

The LCI study did not include the Doraville GM site, but meticulously and thoroughly captured the desires and visions expressed by its stakeholders for the future development of the city as a whole. The list of public comments as noted by the LCI in Section 6.4, *Importance of Civic Buildings,* lends strong support to the development of a town center. Overall, the comments reflected a desire for the consolidation and improvement of public facilities and for the redevelopment of much of the land currently reserved for civic uses. A rudimentary representation of it is presented in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: City of Doraville LCI.



Source: http://www.doravillega.us/

Critical Issues

No standard model for size or uses of a town center. Perhaps the most important takeaway lesson from these case studies is that a Town Center model, while potentially lucrative, is mainly about creating an attractive public space that people want to spend

time in. The general corollary to this development model is that commercial and residential amenities will be created to capture the increased demand from these patrons but these need not go hand-in-hand. Therefore, Doraville's town center may be as large or as small as desired, as long as 1.) there exists a focal point for the civic activity, and 2.) uses in and between the site are well connected by roads and streets and pleasant to travel along. As the case studies with much smaller sites indicate, not all the site needs to be used to generate a town center with retail, office and housing. The excess land, or the land freed up from the relocation of government buildings, can be sold at a premium.

Be proactive. A proactive approach is paramount for the site to realize its full potential. In all three cities, a proactive approach was taken by the planning departments to gain some level of control over the site, whether it was establishing mixed use overlay districts, building architectural guidelines, and full or partial ownership of the site. In two of the case studies desires for a town center were espoused through a Master or Comprehensive Plan. While the Doraville LCI study does not technically include the GM site, it is detailed enough that the visions and desires documented in the study can be applied to the community as a whole. As noted previously, a town center was vigorously advocated. The proactive approach also needs to be applied to dealings with General Motors. Our understanding is that GM is open to discussions with the City of Doraville. This represents a prime opportunity to negotiate very reasonable concessions from them; as two of the case studies show, proactive officials can set up fairly rigid design guidelines and also get concessions for municipal buildings at no cost from the developers for sites much smaller and markets much weaker than Doraville.

Design Matters. The benefits of design are often difficult to quantify, but that does not render it unimportant. Many projects succeed or fail largely on the basis of their design, and the fact that all three of these townships held their ground on a predetermined design framework – despite some opposition from certain developers - is a testament to its importance. According to the Urban Land Institute, shoppers spend $84 an hour in urban village street side stores, compared to $57.50 in an enclosed shopping mall, and some large retailers bring in almost 20 percent more revenue per square foot in an urban village

setting.[20] Furthermore, none of these cities/towns undertook the town center project simply to agglomerate their municipal uses. They recognized the value that an attractive environment, with parks, walkable streets that connected amenities, creates for a regional population.

Leverage Transit. All three of these sites had the specter of some sort of public transit anchoring the development plan. The presence of a MARTA station right next to Doraville's site is a luxury that not even Atlantic Station had during the course of its construction, and together with the Lindbergh development, a Doraville Town Center has the potential to significantly augment MARTA's ridership for entertainment and recreational usage.

Be sensitive to community. The backbone of any successful town center in the long run, is the support it receives from its citizens. A town center represents the appropriate venue, both physically and symbolically, for residents to play a part of the values and direction of their city. Much like the idea that a secondary school is more than just a learning center, but an institution that challenges one to grow personally, the town center should strive to have the same effect, but for a collective community rather than as individuals. By engaging citizens in the comprehensive planning process and giving them public influence over aspects of the project – such as programming for community events, artist space, and other functions that allow people to grow and take responsibility for their community – the project will not only be well patronized and received by the community for years to come, but serves to nurture a vested, committed body of residents in an increasingly mobile society.

Potential Process to Doraville's Town Center Development

Our report offers a step-by-step process – based on our observations of Doraville and companion case studies - that should be considered in order to initiate the development

[20] Hart, Kim. "Remade City Centers find Mass Appeal." 13 Nov. 2006. The Washington Post. 27 Nov. 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/11/AR2006111100692.html>

and construction of a town center in Doraville. In short, one should consider the municipal uses, design framwork, building and space arrangements, and build out.

Determine which municipal functions will be represented in the town center. Generally a City Hall is used as an anchor, and the rest is determined on a need basis. Comments in the LCI seem to suggest that the current library holds a strong sentimental value for the community, and a pool, post office, and community center are also important. These are uses that could be given strong consideration, especially as a town center may solve some of the issues (parking for the court house, upgraded library and community oriented post office. Police Stations may be feasible, but require special improvements made to the ingress/egress of the site. This was done in Ramsey's town center, where the police station and city hall were integrated into one building, with special dedicated provisions for police access.

Develop a design framework. This is true not only for the overall site, but on a smaller level that addresses just the municipal uses and its public space. For example, create a park or fountain that serves as the fulcrum for municipal development, where civic buildings would surround and face the park. Other uses can be inserted into this model afterwards as seen fit – perhaps high end residential building enclosing the park, interpretive history exhibits appended on the park space- but it is important to establish the initial framework lest successive development becomes uncoordinated and difficult to manage. Despite Ramsey's rural character and rather weak market, the city chose to turn away some commercial brands because of their unwillingness to "buy into" compact development and alternative parking arrangements in order to preserve the overarching design framework.

Examine building arrangements that will serve proposed uses. Like many of the case studies show, not every municipal needs its own building, and they can potentially be consolidated into one or two buildings. This can save tremendously on building costs, will be a more realistic concession from the property owner/developer, and enables the consideration of adaptive reuse of buildings on the site. Currently, a large General Motors

structure is located on the site fronting Buford Highway, which provides exceptional visibility. While the environmental conditions and utility of the particular building for office use is unknown, it may be worth salvaging if subsequent studies show it can adequately serve many, if not all, the municipal uses desired on the site. Additionally, connecting back to the design element, the architectural façades of the municipal buildings should be such that they convey a notable, distinguished, historic character. Such buildings can give the community a sense of history and link to the past, and set models for the standards of architecture that a community aspires to. Perhaps most importantly, once public facilities and parking areas are consolidated, substantial land will be freed up for private development that can be sold to compensate for the cost of other public projects or enhancements to the town center. This cross-subsidizing effect also applies to potential lucrative uses amenable to private development – such as housing, retail, office – that can generate substantial sales and property tax to the City, compensating for the forgone property tax from the auto plant.

Determine the build-out of the project. Because the MARTA station is a tremendous asset to the site, and a logical means of transport for pedestrians who come to experience the town center, the town center should grow out from the vicinity of the transit station just like our other case studies have shown, starting from the southwest corner branching out in east and west directions as new development arises. Along with the geographical attributes of the project build-out, the scope and phasing of the project must also be addressed. Since much of the site may remain unused and sold off, it would be wise for the City of Doraville to work with the developer(s) on the stages of the project. If the city expects to extract land and building concessions from the developer, it is likely that the municipal facilities will be built or renovated concurrent with private development, in order for the developer to maintain a steady cash flow and return on investment; this will require working on a timeframe with the developer. Assuming the city will cover the costs for the town center construction, phasing could proceed as follows, as noted by the LCI but with some adjustments:

- Determine scope of total project (including developers private uses and where they are placed) along with size and location of town center

- Depending on decisions, build new town square green near Central Avenue or renovate existing GM structure for municipal use
- Construct city center parking deck
- Begin to work on transportation improvements, including pedestrian access to town center from MARTA station
- Sell surplus city owned land, phase 1
- Design and build consolidated government center. Include necessary off-site parking
- Sell city-owned surplus land, phase 2. This includes all municipal uses that are planned to relocate to new town center, with an exit timeframe.
- Relocate public facilities as needed to new town center.

Urban Design

Urban design is the art and science of designing places for people. It incorporates the design of public and private spaces including the lot, blocks, and streets that are the fundamental building blocks of the built environment. Good urban design can potentially enhance the appeal for urban areas, improve the vitality of the neighborhoods, and bring environmental and economic benefits to the respected community. Urban design is increasingly important to the reinvestment in and regeneration of towns and regional centers. The creation and reinforcement of high quality, attractive public spaces – such as "main streets," plazas, and parks supports the value and security of public and private investments in these locations.

This section will focus on key urban design recommendations focused around the town center. Good urban design guidelines can help redevelopment of the site by:

- Creating an atmosphere of safety and security
- Developing a framework for more efficient, appealing, and compatible uses
- Conserving green space and overall air emissions
- Promoting civic, cultural, and diversity with parks, plazas, and monuments

In conclusion, sustainable urban design will increase the quality of life for all the new residents, businesses, and consumers who will visit the site.

Scenario I – Historical General Motors Administrative Building

- Town Center – As previously stated, the General Motors administrative building is an asset and monument to the City of Doraville. It would be worthwhile to save the historical icon and re-locate all of the government spaces such as: city hall, municipal court, library, and post office. Currently all of these civic structures have a total building area of approximately 43000 SF and the GM building has a total area of nearly 55000 SF. The additional space can be used for future city staff or allocated to public meeting.

Figure 4.5 - Town Center at GM Administrative Building

Figure 4.6 –Size of Doraville's Civic Buildings

Current Buildings	SF
City Hall	11500
Library	11500
Munical Court	6500
Post Office	13500
Total	**43000**

Figure 4.7 - 3-D Model of Town Center at GM Administrative Building

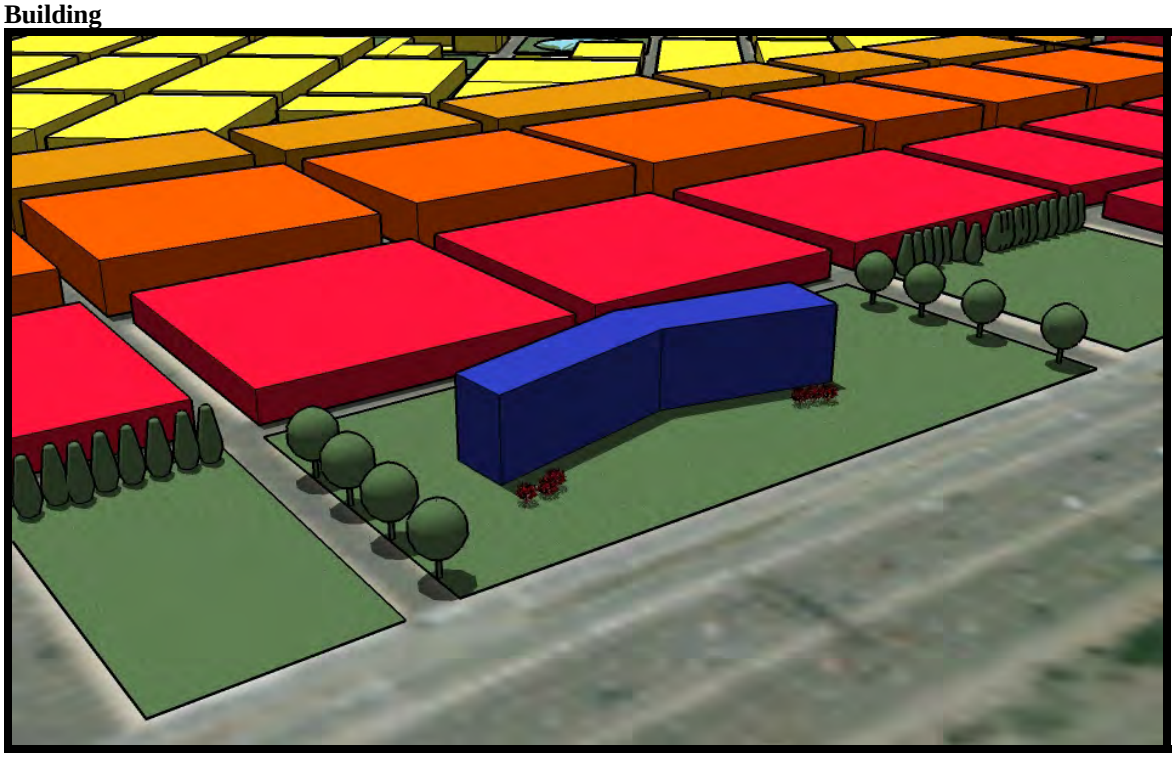


Figure 4.8 Artistic View of Town Center at GM Administrative Building

Scenario II – Park Avenue Extension @ Peachtree Road Extension

- Town Center – Build a new town center facility at the intersection of the Park Avenue Extension and Peachtree Road Extension. As the two main corridors that traverse the site, it is the ideal location for government and civic spaces. This scenario allows the government and civic spaces to be located at the most prominent intersection on the site.

Figure 4.9 - Town Center at Park Ave & Peachtree Rd

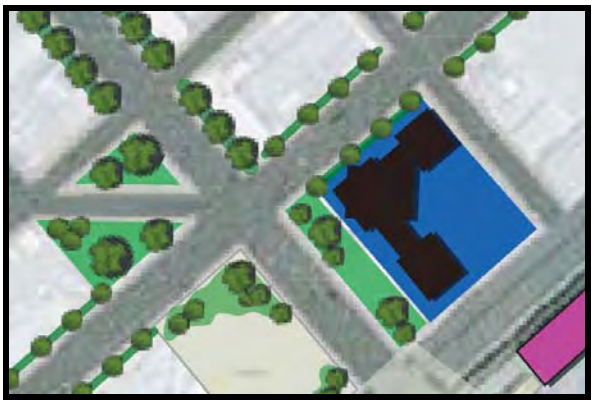
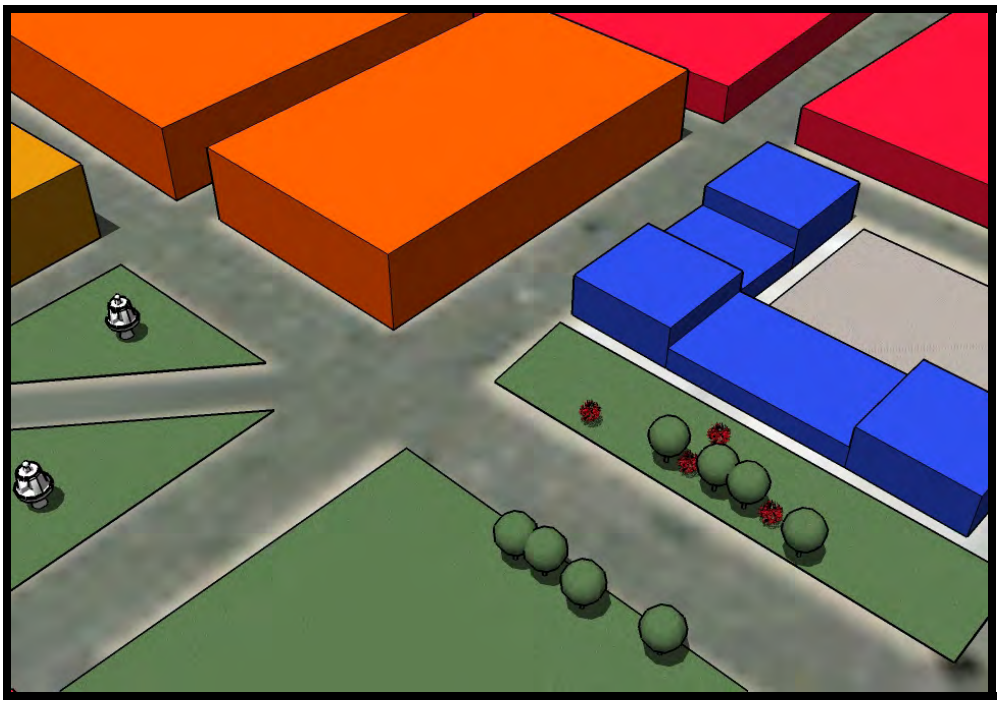


Figure 4.10 - 3-D Model of New Town Center at the Intersection of Park Avenue Extension & Peachtree Road Extension



Both Scenarios

- Pedestrian Experience – Walkable communities are celebrated. Creating an enjoyable pedestrian experience to the town center will be vital to its success. There will be multiple pedestrian connections to the town center. One of those connections will be pedestrian bridges as noted in the previous TOD section. Although the proposed pedestrian bridges may be lengthy, they can be designed in such a manner to capitalize on the view of Atlanta's skyline to the southwest.

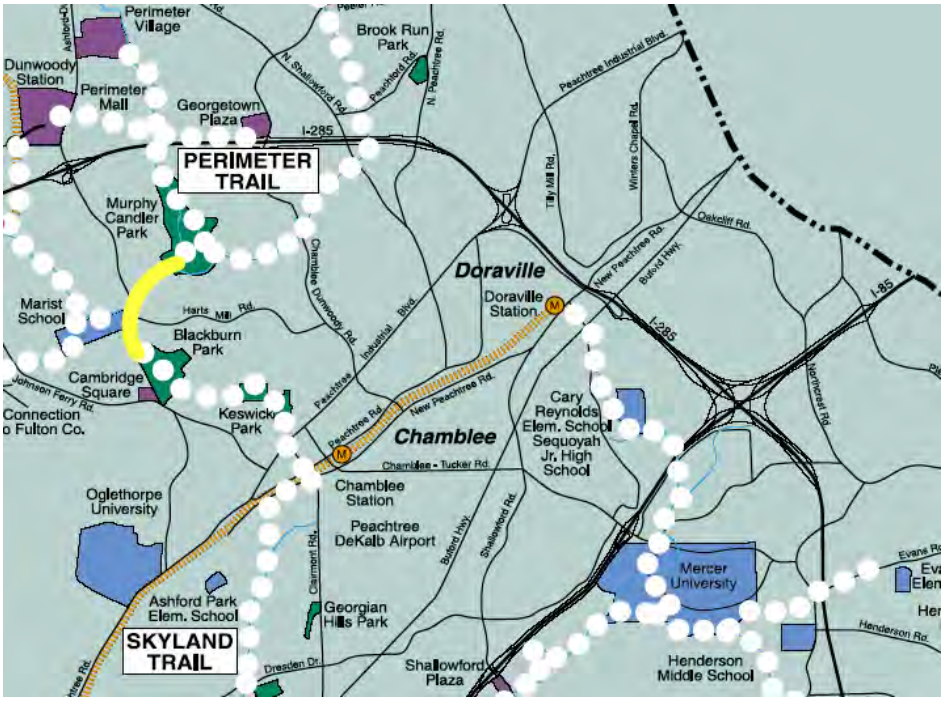
- Park Avenue extension and Peachtree Road extension should include street trees, pedestrian-scaled street lights, and landscaping patterns.

- Connectivity – Most people live within walking distance - 1/2 mile (with the majority within 1/4 mile) - of 40% of the services and products they need on daily or weekly basis. These services include small grocery, pharmacy, hardware, bank, medical services, day care, dry cleaning, post office and other essential services. The bisecting street network gives automobiles and pedestrian multiple routes to move into and within the site. The small blocks and narrower streets make automobiles reduce their speed so that the streets are safer for pedestrians and bicyclers.

- Parking & Alleys – The Park Avenue extension will have on-street parking on both sides. On street parking provides constant movement and interaction within the most fundamental public spaces: *streets and sidewalks*. On street parking also supports the businesses to the street by providing convenient access to customers. Parking lots should be located behind buildings or in the interior of the block, whenever possible. All service vehicles for commercial and retail uses will utilize a maximum 24' alley in the rear of the façade.

- Green space /Trails – The DeKalb County Parks & Recreation Department in partnership with The PATH Foundation created the *DeKalb Greenway Trail* network in 2005 which will connect the county's natural resources. Most of these proposed trails are located parallel to creeks and are connected to paths in adjacent jurisdictions. Some of the proposed trails bisect the City of Doraville at various locations. In relation to the GM site, the closest trail will begin at the Doraville MARTA station and proceed south-east along Park Avenue, cross Buford Highway (SR 13) at Chestnut Drive then along one of the headwaters to the North Fork Peachtree Creek.

Figure 4.11: Trail created by P.A.T.H. Foundation and DeKalb County



Source: www.pathfoundation.org. Accessed 13 November 2006.

- Recreation/Parks – Per our subdivision recommendations, a minimum of 20% (31 acres) of the development must be located in green space including active (athletics) and passive recreation, water features, and undeveloped land. We recommend that the allocation of the green space reflect the needs of the citizens of Doraville and consider the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Strategic Plan. In 2001, DeKalb County voters approved a bond issuance over $130 billion which goes toward land acquisition and park development.

Recommendations

Economic Development

- Work with stakeholders and different levels of government (county, state, even federal) as each can be a potential source of funding for different components of the development.

- Use the LCI and possibly the comprehensive plan to help codify the development, design, and public process, which can serve as a document for all interested parties to collaboratively move forward.

- Balance the short term benefits with the long term viability of the site accordingly. Investments in public transit and good design may trump lucrative development proposals that compromise the integrity of long term solutions.

- Consider incorporating the driver of the development – whether it is the city or a private developer – into a nonpublic entity so they more easily raise funds or skirt prohibitive public processes.

- There is rarely a highest and best use for an site; it is an appropriate mixture of uses that is key. Ensure that development surrounding the town center has residential, commercial, and open space uses that complement each other to make it maximally productive.

Urban Design

- Create a new town center at the intersection of Park Avenue extension and Peachtree Road extension or renovate the existing GM administrative facilities.

- Create a district classification and land use policies that will promote *Smart Growth* principles in a unique way that reflects the history, culture, and location of Doraville (ex. Planned Unit Development – PUD, Mixed-Use, Town Center, etc.)

- Redesign the MARTA parking lots so that the taxis services use the space in front of the north gate for passenger pick-up and the remaining space can become a pedestrian only link to the site.

- Redesign existing space for taxis services so that an additional pedestrian link can be made to the site along General Motors Parkway. It is assumed that additional HOV and BRT lanes will eventually absorb half of General Motors Parkway.

- Connect all green space and trails to larger regional plans (ex. DeKalb County, Chamblee, PATH, etc.)

- Provide a balanced mix of compatible land uses by mixing commercial uses compatible with the design and character of the surrounding communities.

- Name the streets after the model automobile assembled at the plant since it began operation in 1947. The known models include:

- Crossover
- Terraza
- Montana
- Uplander
- Relay
- Silhouettte
- Opel Sintra
- Tran Sport
- Ventura

In addition to the Transit Oriented Development and Town Center, the redevelopment plan also includes a small arena to be housed the GM site. The next section, Layer Four, discusses the benefits of an arena.

5. Layer Four - Arena

Why an Arena?

Arenas can be used as tools for spurring redevelopment as well as increasing economic development in the areas in which they are built. The idea for proposing an arena on the Doraville General Motors site is two-fold. First, an arena could spur economic growth for the area - creating jobs and revenue from arena activity and spurring further development nearby. Also, the locational advantage of the site is superior. Not only is Doraville located in close proximity to two of the metro area's major highways, I-285 and I-85, but the site itself sits along MARTA's Northeast Line – all providing access to a large number of Atlantans. Having enough land for not only an arena, but the development around it to make it a viable economic tool, is hard to come by in intown Atlanta. Thus, the idea of an arena on the General Motors site, while not your typical economic development tool, could be an important opportunity for Doraville.

The plan for the GM site would work well with or without an arena, but there are some important benefits associated with an arena that make it a viable option to consider within our plan framework. The arena is layer four of the five layer plan we have been discussing. The arena layer works well with the previous layers. Placement of an arena will not change the basic subdivision plan. Moreover, an arena would only compliment layers two and three, the TOD and Town Center, by increasing ridership of MARTA to events, and creating activity and business opportunities around the town center. Finally, an arena will promote traffic that can help retail and commercial activities that will be discussed in layer five.

This analysis will introduce the idea of placing an arena on the Doraville General Motors site, offer a comparison of nearby venues, provide an analysis of the economic benefits of locating a major venue in this area, and finally, offer design recommendations for the arena site.

Why Doraville?

While arenas, stadiums, and other venues provide far-reaching economic benefits, some of the direct revenue from entertainment expenditures can stay within the smaller region if the right

environment exists. Of the larger counties in the Atlanta metro region, Fulton, Cobb, Gwinnett, and Fayette have some sort of major publicly-known venue. DeKalb County, however, does not. DeKalb County has expressed interest in helping to develop a high-profile venue within the county limits. This venue is to seat around 9,000 patrons for a variety of shows and events, mainly concerts.[21] The Doraville General Motors site may be a perfect location for such a development because of both its size, location, and accessibility.

Size. Arenas need an expanse of acreage for both the building footprint, as well as adequate parking facilities. The site is 150+ acres and provides adequate space for the arena footprint, parking facilities, as well as other commercial and residential developments in the nearby area.

Location and Accessibility. The location of arenas or other venues is important to provide visibility, access to the site itself, as well as proximity to support facilities.[22] Arenas that are visibly prominent can promote civic pride, and produce an architecturally significant reminder of the investment in the site. Good access to the arena site is essential. If visitors find it difficult to get to the site, they may choose other venues for their entertainment. Fortunately, both for visibility and access purposes, the General Motors site is ideally located. Its location along major transportation corridors like I-285, I-85, Buford Highway, and MARTA's Doraville rail line is superior to any other existing venue locations in the Atlanta area. In addition, the site's proximity to the Doraville MARTA station is especially important to the venue's proposed location. This proximity to a major line of public transportation would make it easier for traffic to flow in and out of the site without the use of roads, thus promoting the ideas of Transit Oriented Development discussed previously in this paper. Because MARTA access is accessible to the arena and the subdivision plan of the site was prepared in accordance with the idea of an arena and its traffic, surrounding neighborhoods in and around the site should be impacted minimally.

Support Facilities. Arenas also need to have access to support facilities to generate positive economic impacts. These support facilities include hotels, restaurants, retail and entertainment

[21] David Chesnut, Class Lecture, 18 Oct. 2006.
[22] Petersen, D.C. (2001). *Developing Sports, Convention, and Performing Arts Centers,* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute.

centers, as well as other attractions.[23] Venue attendees regularly spend money not just on tickets, but lodging, food, and other entertainment. Thus, an arena development can support a mix of retail offerings, with the two sets of activity reinforcing each other.

Remediation Link. Given the GM site is an auto-manufacturing plant, there is a high likelihood that redevelopment will need to remediate significant contamination. An arena and its associated parking, could strategically be placed on more contaminated land, thereby offsetting some of the clean-up costs, as was done with facilities in Atlantic Station.

A Community Space

When the word arena is spoken, many immediately imagine an enormous venue that creates too much congestion during prime use and then sits vacant during its off-peak times. All arenas are not sports related, however, and many have a community focus. The arena proposed for Doraville is relatively small, holding at most 12,000 people, but also has room for community activities and gatherings. This sort of venue is often referred to as a multipurpose arena because of the variety of functions that it serves – from concerts to sports to live shows and community events.

The arena and the LCI. During Doraville's Livable Centers Initiative process, residents expressed a desire to have a larger civic-center space, within close proximity to the MARTA station, where non-profits, community groups, and others could have meetings and gatherings.[24] The LCI study did not encompass the General Motors site because the announcement of its closure came after it was completed. However, the site is immediately accessible to the MARTA line and if properly built the arena could take on the ideas promoted in the LCI. The desires of local residents should be kept in mind when the design of the arena and associated spaces are designed and developed.

There is a strong case for locating a venue on the Doraville General Motor's site: the location and access are superior, there is an adequate amount of land, and the addition of an arena-type

[23] ibid
[24] Edaw (2006). City of Doraville Livable Centers Initiative.

venue on the site could help mitigate clean-up costs. Similarly, economic development opportunities abound, and the idea, albeit on a much smaller scale, has already been discussed by community members.

Comparison of Nearby Venues

Atlanta is a large and diverse city that has many venue options in the area. As Figure 5.1 indicates the venues are not identical, but rather serve different market sectors. The local prominent venues include: Gwinnett Arena in Duluth, the forthcoming Cobb Energy Centre at the Cobb Galleria, the Atlanta Silverback Stadium, the Frederick Brown Junior Amphitheater in Peachtree City, the forthcoming amphitheater at the International Village in Chamblee, the Philips Arena in Downtown Atlanta, and finally Chastain Park Amphitheater.

Figure 5.1 - Nearby Venues

Venue Name	*Location*	*Year Built*	*Type of Venue*	*Main Events*	*Seating*	*Additional Information*
Atlanta Silverback Stadium	Atlanta	2006	Sports Stadium	Soccer	3,000	Will seat 15,000 in final construction phase
Chastain Park Amphitheater	Chastain Park	1938	Amphitheater	Concerts	6,700	Located close to residential housing
Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre	Cobb Galleria		Performing Arts Theater	Music, Theater	2,750	Scheduled to open September 2007
Frederick Brown Jr. Amphitheater	Peachtree City	1976	Amphitheater	Concerts	2,500	
International Performing Arts Center & Amphitheater	Chamblee		Performing Arts Theater / Amphitheater	To Be Determined	N/A	Part of International Village plan - Not yet built
Philips Arena	Downtown Atlanta	1999	Arena	Concerts, Sports	21,000	Partially financed by rental car tax
The Arena at Gwinnett Center	Duluth	2002	Arena	Concerts, Arena Football	13,000	

Sources: www.gwinnttcenter.com, www.cobbenergycentre.com, www.atlantasilverbacks.com, www.philipsarena.com, www.amphitheater.org, www.internationalvillage.com, and www.chastainpark.org

Differences between local venues. Clearly there are many venues in the Atlanta area, especially since this abovementioned list is not exhaustive. It is apparent from looking at the main events that each venue offers that there is no "one stop shop" with any venue. Instead each has their own "specialty." With the exception of The Arena at Gwinnett Center, no venue is comparable to the type of venue that is proposed in Doraville. The Atlanta Silverback stadium is a soccer stadium only. Chastain Park, Frederick Brown Junior Amphitheater, and the International Village Amphitheater are all primarily outdoors and are difficult to use year-round. The

forthcoming Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre and the International Village Performing Arts Center are more theater-like, intimate venues. Finally, Philips Arena is the area's premiere indoor sports facility and is much larger than the multipurpose arena that would fit well with the community vision of Doraville.

Arena at Gwinnett. Since the Arena at Gwinnett Center is the most comparable venue to the arena we are proposing for the General Motors site, it was looked at in depth to determine its success. Gwinnett is deemed to be a very successful venue and is able to "pay back" its cost in economic revenue to the county. The Arena and Convention Center at Gwinnett Center cost approximately $90 million to build and was publicly funded.[25] In 2003, the Arena and Convention Center at Gwinnett Center had a total economic impact of just over $50 million. The Arena and Convention Center supported 466 full-time equivalent jobs and supported Gwinnett County and the State of Georgia with an additional $3.9 million in tax revenue.[26] Revenue for the arena alone was not available. In addition, from analyzing ticket sales, it was determined that over 96 percent of ticket purchasers were from in the state of Georgia.[27]

Despite the fact that there is a similar arena already built fifteen miles away, Doraville's advantages for this type of venue are apparent. Gwinnett Arena is faring well and is making headway in "paying off" its cost. At the present time, the Gwinnett Arena has a special niche in the entertainment market that a Doraville arena could share in. Because over 96 percent of the patrons are traveling to shows from in the State of Georgia, it can be assumed that many are local and would also attend events at a new Doraville arena. If a new arena at Doraville were able to offer the same quality programming that Gwinnett does, there seems to be some unique advantages that the Doraville site has over the Gwinnett site, namely the locational advantages previously discussed. This factor will only add to Doraville's appeal as a venue with out-of-town visitors. Because of its proximity to MARTA, as well as many local roads and highways, Doraville's location is more convenient to some of the cities other tourist options than the Arena at Gwinnett and other local venues. Another advantage that Doraville could capitalize on is local resident's willingness to spend money on entertainment options. The abundance of new

[25] ibid.
[26] Dorfman Consulting (2004). *The Economic Impact of Tourism on the Gwinnett County Economy*.
[27] ibid.

entertainment options planned and under construction in the metro area suggest that people are able and willing to engage and spend money on entertainment activities. However, with all these new venues on the table, Doraville needs to make sure that the market is not tapped out.

Considerations and feasibility. The idea of placing an arena on the GM site can support goals for community space stated in the LCI report, bring revenue and employment, create a greater identity for Doraville, and help make Doraville a destination rather than a place to pass through. There are a number of considerations that must be addressed before the feasibility of an arena is fully confirmed. Cost is the most principal of these considerations. New state-of-the-art arenas cost millions of dollars to build and millions more to maintain. Ticket and concession fees do not completely cover this cost and other factors need to be weighed in as well. For example, land on the site might prove to be more expensive then previously thought due to contamination. Similarly, with the new venues already being built, the market for entertainment venues could already be saturated with enough options and be tapped out. It has to be pointed out that entertainment venues are often criticized for lack of economic impact due to public financing of such projects. Gwinnett Arena and Convention Center might well not be the norm. Thus, a more in-depth look into the benefits and pitfalls of entertainment venues must be discussed in order to understand the full economic considerations and feasibility of building an arena in Doraville.

The Economic Impacts of Arenas and Other Venues

The trend toward publicly subsidized arenas began after World War II as a response to erosion of downtown economic activity due to suburbanization. Local governments began to focus on creating public gathering places to make the downtowns a place where people would want to go for their entertainment purposes.[28] Therefore public gathering facilities in terms of arenas, convention centers, and stadiums were constructed and operated by large and small government institutions in order to promote local economic development. Today the norm is for public institutions to build and operate sports and entertainment venues, while team and owner operated venues are rare.[29]

[28] Petersen, D.C. (2001). *Developing Sports, Convention, and Performing Arts Centers,* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute.
[29] ibid.

Much research has been done in terms of economic impacts of sport stadia and the cities they reside in. While the venue proposed for Doraville is not planned to house a major sports team, most of the findings of this research still apply. Many positive economic effects can be the result of a major venue located in an area. However, just as often as there is a success story of a venue that "pays off" its publicly subsidized cost, there is a venue that is a drain on the local economy. Therefore, the economic effects, both positive and negative, need to be considered: public subsides for venues, the creation of jobs, economic and social effects on the local community, as well as arena revenues.

Public Subsides for Arenas

Development Costs. The building of an arena, whether public or not, includes certain development costs. These include land acquisition, predevelopment planning (including architectural plans), financing costs, building materials, and any other associated costs. If a private owner is building an arena this process could function much like any other development, but when public subsidy is involved funding costs and sources change drastically. In most cases of publicly subsidized arenas, long-term financing is achieved through the use of bonds based on future tax revenue.[30] Bonds will be sold for the projected price of the development. If active costs exceed expected costs plans usually need to be scaled back and can hurt the final project result. However, most of the elemental features can be preserved even if costs are underestimated.[31] In privately financed venues, higher than projected costs are easier to deal with because additional funding is usually more easily obtained.

Funding sources. Funding sources for an arena or venue are ultimately determined on the needs and opportunities of a specific community. For example, casino taxes are used to offset the costs for venues in both Atlantic City and Las Vegas. Other unique funding sources utilized include venue revenue, leases and leaseback revenue, development rights on adjacent land, facility specific admission taxes, increases in certain taxes for a specific period of time, municipal

[30] Petersen, D.C. (2001). *Developing Sports, Convention, and Performing Arts Centers,* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute.
[31] ibid.

development of venue parking facilities, and paid concession rights, to name a few.[32] Some of these tools can also be used after initial construction to help pay for center maintenance costs.

Benefits of arenas. Governments would not be willing to pledge millions of dollars for an arena without receiving some sort of benefit for their output. Benefits from the public subsidy of arenas can be both monetary and non-monetary benefits. The economic benefits usually associated with the creation of an arena include spending by visitors of events (like ticket and concession costs), spending by those performing or putting on events, expenditures from spin-off businesses and developments, along with various other impacts that are tied to the flow of money.[33] These various other impacts can include, for example, a night's lodging by people attending an event from out of town. On the other hand, benefits to the community that are unquantifiable abound in the wake of venue development. Non-monetary benefits typically include social impacts that deal with community pride in attending events, or civic pride in having a first-class entertainment venue within one's community.[34]

Cost. While at this time it can not be determined exactly what the cost of an arena on the Doraville site will be, educated estimates can be discussed. Costs for the Gwinnett Arena and Convention Center topped $90 million, but included associated Convention Center development costs.[35] Philips Arena cost an estimated $213 million, but also included an additional $72.5 million in needed public improvements. Development costs for the Doraville arena will likely be lower than the cost of these two local complexes due to the size of the facility, yet many factors could change this estimate. Some factors that might be considered when projecting a proposed cost include increased construction costs within the past few years or higher than anticipated land cost due to the contaminated site.

Creation of Jobs

One of the economic benefits that people think of in terms of the building of a community venue deals with an increase in jobs created along with a new, possibly large employer for the region.

[32] ibid.
[33] Chapin, T. (2002). *Identifying the Real Costs and Benefits of Sports Facilities.*
[34] ibid.
[35] Dorfman Consulting (2004). *The Economic Impact of Tourism on the Gwinnett County Economy*.

Doraville will lose over 3,200 jobs when the General Motors plant ceases production.[36] Any increase in employment, especially that which would utilize local residents would be beneficial in terms of economic development for the area.

Types of jobs. Many jobs are created in both the construction and operation of a new arena. Construction of a venue often takes years to complete. During this period of time, skilled construction workers are employed to build the arena as well as surrounding buildings and uses, such as offices for venue officials as well as parking structures for venue attendees. After construction is complete, more permanent jobs are created. High-skilled management jobs relating to the operation of venue need to be fulfilled. Also at the venue itself, tickets takers, vendors, and ushers are integral to the smooth operation of the facility.[37] Similarly, any support services that spring up as a result of the creation of a venue can be counted in the overall job total. These types of jobs include local retail jobs like the staff of a restaurant that serves the needs of concert-goers.

While there is no doubt that the building of an arena would provide jobs for the local community both during and after construction, the majority of these jobs are usually seasonal and service-sector jobs.[38] Doraville already lags behind the rest of the Atlanta region in terms of white-collar jobs. The creation of jobs brought on by the building of the arena are unlikely to help this situation. However, many of Doraville's residents are traveling outside the city limits each day to work, so the creation of any type of job might allow more residents to work close to home, whether they are high-skilled jobs or not.

Economic and Social Effects on the Nearby Community

The building of an arena on the Doraville General Motors site would have both positive and negative effects on the local community. Again, some of these effects can be measured, while others can not. The positive effects of an arena could produce such things as spillover economic effects as well as a prestige factor in having a venue located within the city or county limits. The

[36] *Doraville Employers*, Retrieved Sept. 15, 2006, from http://www.georgiafacts.net.
[37] Chapin, T. (2002). *Identifying the Real Costs and Benefits of Sports Facilities.*
[38] ibid

negative effects, however, can sometimes outweigh the positive aspects and must be noted. Negative effects include upset neighbors, increased traffic, and economic leakage of revenue.

Positive effects of an arena in Doraville. The positive aspects of an arena in Doraville could very well make the case for building such a venue. A large and attractive venue could heighten Doraville's image and recognition.

The positive effects of a Doraville arena do not stop with giving the area a sort of prominence. Many economic effects will likely prove to be the case as well. Along with ticket and parking fees, event attendees will often eat at nearby restaurants, shop at nearby stores, and spend the night at nearby hotels. For example, a family who attends an event from outside the Atlanta region could eat dinner at a local restaurant before seeing a concert. The restaurant has to buy wages for the employees taking care of the family. In addition, the restaurant must buy supplies from local as well as non-local business. This sort of spending continues until all the money trickles out of the area.[39] Therefore all the money spent in the area as a result of the family's visit is counted as a positive economic expenditure. In much the same fashion, neighborhood businesses that do not specifically cater to arena attendees could benefit as well. Construction and then permanent employees of the arena could patronize local stores, restaurants, and gas stations outside the immediate area of the arena.[40]

Negative aspects associated with an arena. While there seem to be many positive effects for the creation of an arena in Doraville, the negative aspects can not be ignored. The first negative effect that one would think of is any sort of increase in traffic and congestion around the area. While this is in most cases true, an arena at Doraville has some unique advantages that make this less of an issue. First, the development of the Doraville site is not yet complete. Unlike building a stadium in the middle of a neighborhood, the Doraville arena can be designed and implemented as part of the larger master plan for the Doraville site. Secondly, Doraville has the locational advantage of being on a MARTA line. Likely, many arena attendees would choose to ride

[39] Dorfman Consulting (2004). *The Economic Impact of Tourism on the Gwinnett County Economy*.
[40] Noll, G. and Zimbalist, A, (Eds.) (1997). *Sports, Jobs, & Taxes: The economic impact of Sports Teams & Stadiums*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution Press.

MARTA to an event to ease congestion, avoid traffic, and save money on parking costs. Thus, these negative impacts seem to be somewhat avoidable for this unique location.

All monies spent as a result of attending a venue do not count as revenue for the city or county, thus accounting for more negative effects on local economies and communities. It has been argued that spending associated with entertainment at an arena or venue is just a substitution of money from other entertainment activities that a patron would otherwise spend the same amount of money on.[41] In addition, as previously mentioned, revenue quickly "leaks out" of the nearby economy. Especially in the case of Doraville, much revenue could very quickly disperse to business owners that reside elsewhere in the metro region or beyond, quickly taking revenue out of Doraville city limits. While this is a true and real concern for Doraville, there are certain steps that Doraville would be able to utilize to decrease these negative effects.

Arena Revenue and Ways to Keep Revenue in the Local Economy

There are many means of revenue from the operation of an arena than just ticket revenue. Similarly, there are ways to take advantage of some of these other sources of revenue to Doraville's advantage and to offset some of the negative effects previously discussed.

Arena revenue generators. Arena revenues are generated from a number of sources. The first revenue generator of an arena deals with rentals of the space. Concerts and events are charged for the use of the space. Either flat-rate fees or a fraction of gross ticket sales are used to determine the correct rental amount.[42] The arena operator is able to offer discounts in rental fees for certain events, thus if DeKalb County were to operate the arena, for example, they could lower rental fees in order to attract family shows. Similarly, an arena can increase long-term income streams by building and designing the space to include luxury boxes and suites. Many times, corporate businesses will purchase or lease these spaces, which only add to the bottom line. In addition, corporate sponsors will often purchase advertising space for the thousands of attendees that would see their ads as they attended a concert or other event. Perhaps the biggest

[41] Chapin, T. (2002). *Identifying the Real Costs and Benefits of Sports Facilities.*
[42] Petersen, D.C. (2001). *Developing Sports, Convention, and Performing Arts Centers,* Washington, D.C.: The Urban Land Institute.

of this type of advertising is buying the naming rights to a venue. Often times, a business will buy the naming rights to an arena for millions of dollars – offsetting many initial costs.

In addition to rental fees and advertising revenue, arenas also generate income through concessions, parking, and specific ticket taxes. These revenue generators, principally, are where Doraville has the most opportunity to try and keep revenue close and not have it go out into the larger county or state economy. There are certain tools utilized by other governments that have helped to decrease the economic impacts from spilling out to other areas - thus decreasing negative economic effects.

In terms of concessions, venues can decide whether to localize concessions or sell the rights to national companies. Doraville could utilize the locational advantage to many different and unique dining options along Buford Highway and offer concessions contracts to local businesses instead of national chains. Much the same approach was taken in the concessions at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and has been successful and popular among visitors. Thus, instead of having food revenue go directly to a national company's main headquarters, more money can stay within the community, while also celebrating the area's cultural diversity.

As was previously mentioned, additional revenue can be gathered from parking fees. If the county or city were to purchase the land for the arena (or if it was donated by General Motors), then exclusive parking for the arena should be designed in the plan in order to increase revenue that will hopefully go the local economy. In addition, the local government could also look into implementing a specific ticket tax. An add-on ticket tax could be added to the base ticket price to off-set additional city costs like an increased police presence at a high-profile event, for example.

Recapturing revenue. While there are options for Doraville to recapture some revenue that would otherwise quickly spread out into the larger regional economy, the majority of revenue will most likely end up spread out throughout DeKalb County, the City of Atlanta, and the State of Georgia, as is the case for other local venues.[43] Some money would stay locally, but most

[43] Dorfman Consulting (2004). *The Economic Impact of Tourism on the Gwinnett County Economy*.

would quickly leave a small city such as Doraville. Doraville, however, can maximize their position and try and increase their share of the revenue in accordance.

Recommendations

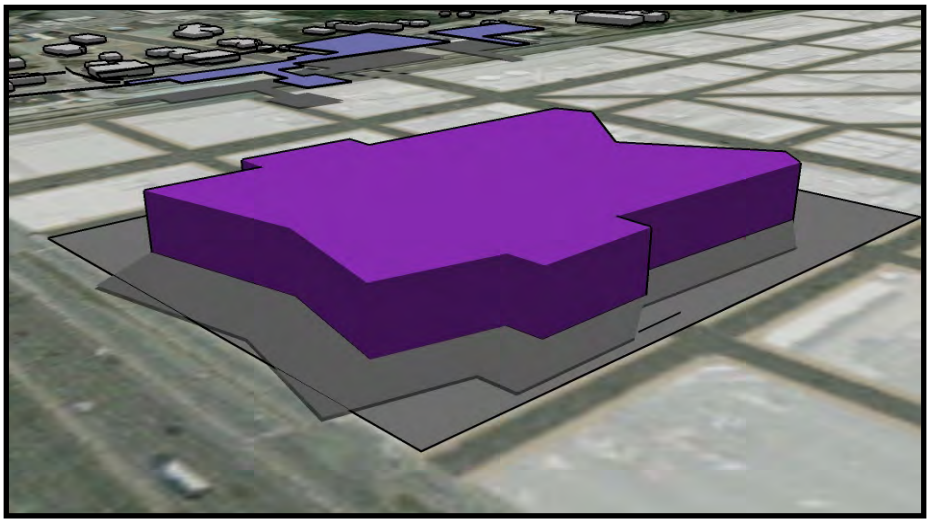
The following are two design recommendations for placement of an arena on the Doraville GM site:

Alternative 1 – General Motors Administrative Facility

Figure 5.2 – Diagram of Arena

As shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3, this alternative incorporates the existing General Motors administrative facility into the design of the arena. This existing space could be renovated and serve as the administrative offices for the arena staff. The historic facility dates back to the late 1940's when the assembly plant began production. The arena will have great interstate visibility and accessibility from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (GA-141) and Buford Highway.

Figure 5.3 – Diagram of Arena

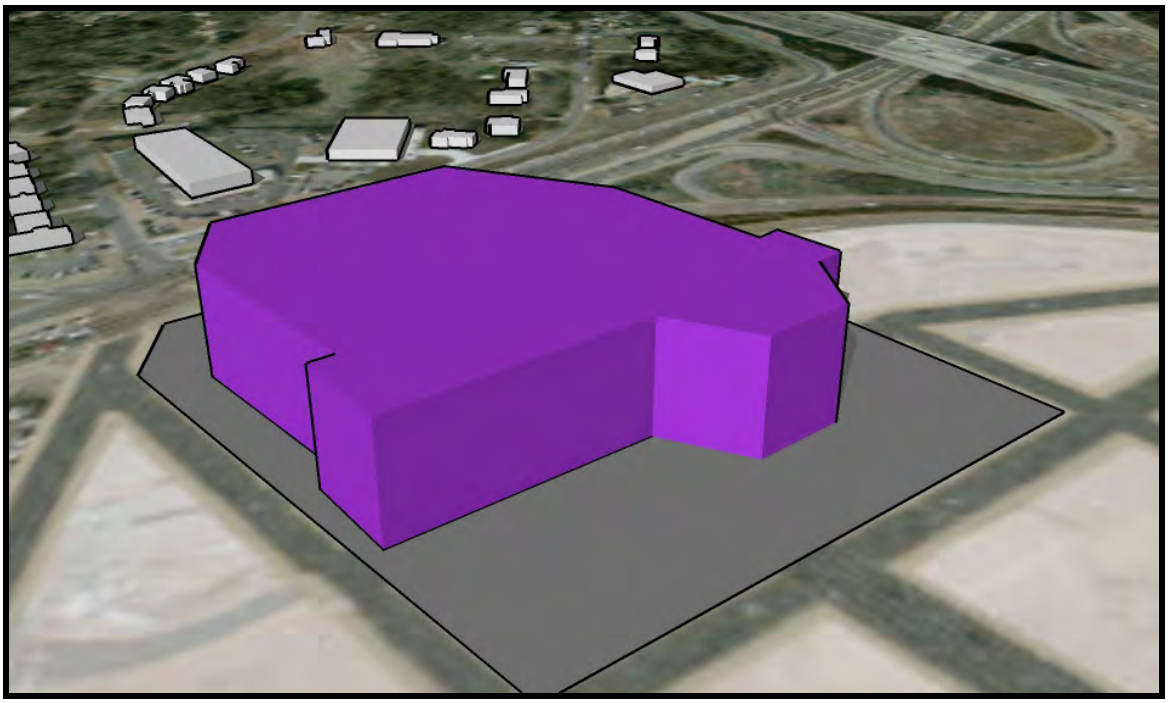


Alternative 2 – Terminating Park Avenue Extension

Figure 5.5 – Diagram of Arena

The Park Avenue extension will terminate at the proposed arena adjacent to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (Figure 5.4 and 5.5). The Park Avenue extension will be one of the two important streets on the site and the location of the arena will reinforce the land uses along it. This location will primarily be accessed from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and similar to alternative 1, will have great interstate visibility.

Figure 5.5 – Diagram of Arena



Design Recommendations

- Since the site will have direct access to the Doraville MARTA station, it should be planned as a transit oriented development (TOD). This type of compact, pedestrian designed developed can greatly reduce the amount of parking necessary on site by promoting the use of transit. By establishing a connected street network, an individual should be able to walk from any location to the MARTA station within 5 - 7 minutes.

- Parking requirements could be reduced because of the arenas proximity to transit. Current research suggests that TOD can reduce parking 20% - 30%. More importantly by minimizing parking around arena it allows more higher generating activities to locate near development.

- Parking garages with frontages on Central Avenue extension should provide continuous ground floor space for retail, office, cultural and/or commercial uses oriented to the street and/or park, with transparent ground floor windows.

- Residential units on the blocks adjacent to the arena should have a terrace/porch with an unobstructed view.

- The scale of the building forms and facades facing the arena should closely relate to the scale of the surrounding uses.

Economic Development Recommendations

- Talk to DeKalb County about the financing and placement of an arena on the Doraville GM site.

- Perform an in-depth feasibility study to determine if there is room in the market for another entertainment venue. In addition, a feasibility study will help determine specific costs for the proposed arena.

- Consider some of the creative revenue tools mentioned here. Think about obtaining land for city-owned parking or implementing a ticket-tax for events. In addition look into ways to for local residents to engage in arena jobs – whether it be construction jobs or jobs dealing with concessions or operation.

The idea of developing an arena on the Doraville General Motors site is probably not the first thought that comes to mind when reassembling the property, but should be considered as a viable option nonetheless. Doraville has several advantages in terms of size, location, and access that are unique in comparison to other local venues.

An arena in Doraville will likely be an expensive, yet effective economic development tool. While the true effects are not known, many things point to the fact that it is an important option to consider. Both Doraville and DeKalb County could benefit from such an arena and should look more closely at the idea.

The previous three layers have all introduced elements of the redevelopment plan that will act as anchors to the site. The Transit Oriented Development, Town Center, and Arena all encourage and support economic development around them. The final layer of the redevelopment proposal, discussed in the next section, deals with all of the "general uses" (residential, office, retail, etc.) that the previous layers will help support.

6. Layer Five - General Uses

The fate of the GM plant is not up to the City of Doraville and its closure has very little to do with the city, region or state. However, what happens to the 150+ acre site they are leaving behind is largely under the city's control. Whether General Motors sells the site on the private market or decides to redevelop the site themselves; the city can wield both political and land use powers to make sure that the sites new uses are those that best serve the community.

This section looks at the factors that will largely determine what is feasible on the site. Demographics, income, housing stock, office supply, retail characteristics, and employment are key factors that developers will use to justify the need for new development. Commute patterns, employment mismatch, housing tenure, and age distribution are factors that the city should consider when guiding the site assembly. The city must also consider the impact development will have on the budget. The following pages outline these important factors and explain the benefits of our recommended site plan.

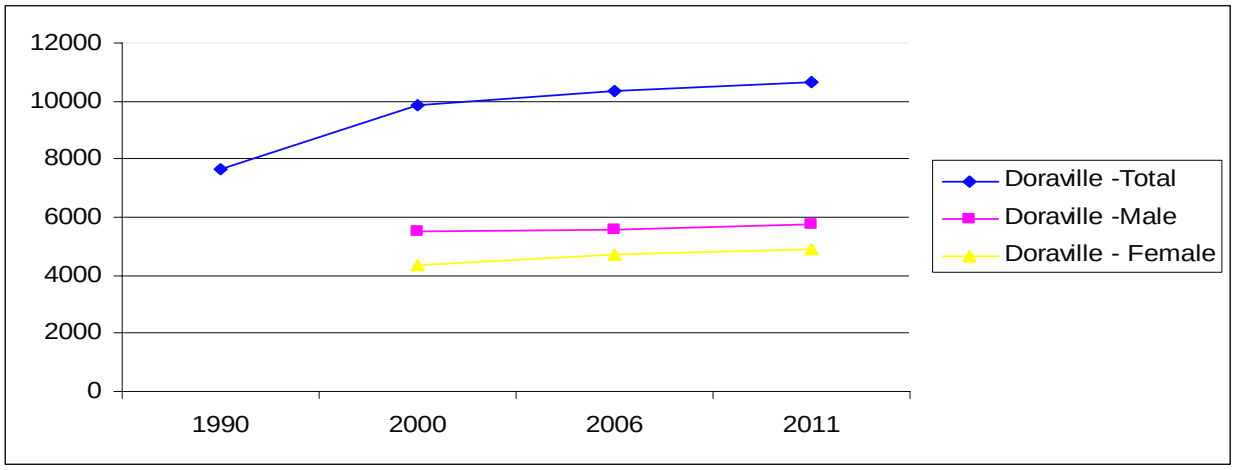
Demographic Overview – Driving Residential Growth

Population

City population growth and characteristics are important for determining what land uses are needed and feasible for the GM site. From 1990 to 2000 Doraville's growth rate was 29.3 percent. Projections through 2011 show that decreasing to 4.8 percent[44], however, even using conservative projections the city is expected to have almost 11,000 inhabitants by the end of the decade (see Figure 6.1). Regardless of what happens on the GM site; the city should expect considerable growth as area employment remains strong and the trend towards urban living continues.

[44] U.S. Decennial Census 2000, ESRI

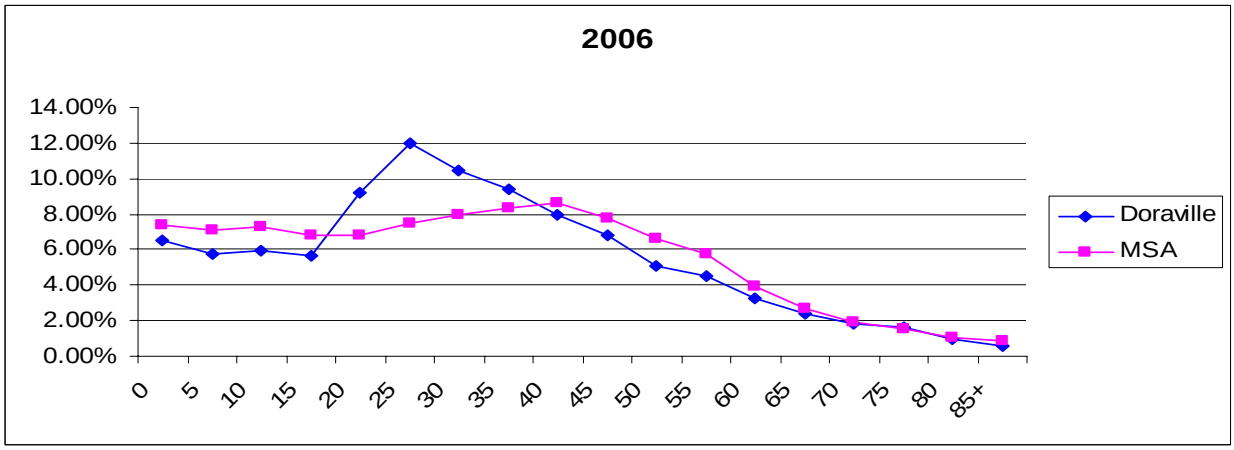
Figure 6.2 – 1990 thru 2011 Population Projections – Doraville, GA



Source: U.S. Census and ESRI

Age distribution within an area is commonly used to assess the area's particular needs and growth potential. Doraville current age distribution indicates strong population growth. The largest segment of the Doraville population is between 25 and 34 years old[45]. This is a telling sign that Doraville is attractive to young adults. It also suggests that the area is poised for residential growth because the 24 to 34 age group is in prime child bearing years. Figure 6.2 shows a comparison of Doraville's age distribution and that of the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Figure 6.3 – 2000 & 2006 Age Distribution – Doraville, GA



Source: U.S. Census and ESRI

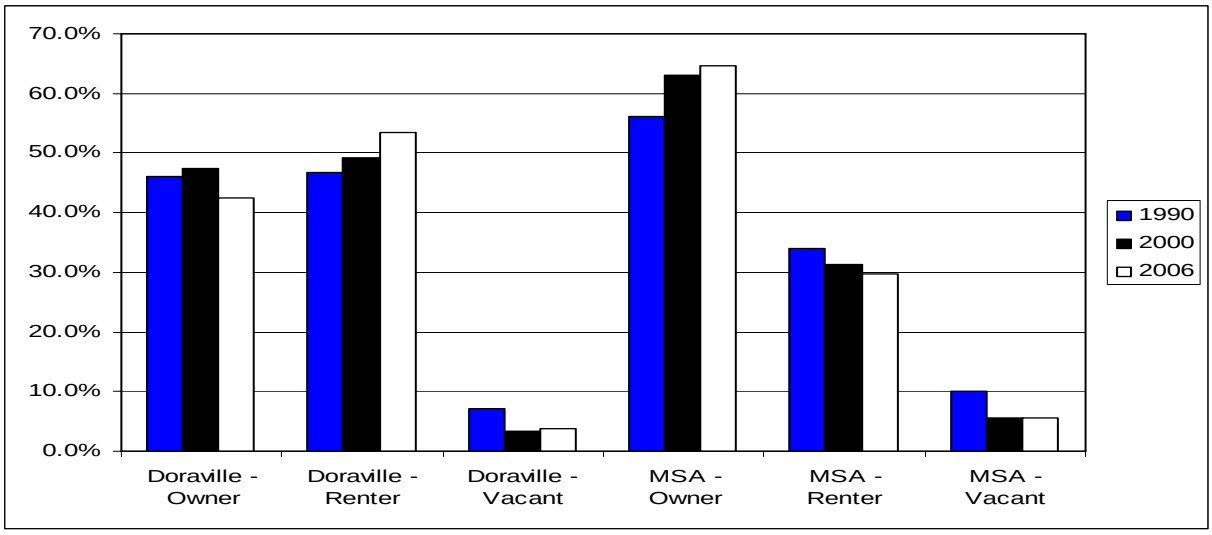
[45] ibid

As part of the metropolitan core Doraville is also destined to continue its strong population growth. With its inner-perimeter location, mass transit and freeway accessibility, and remarkable diversity, Doraville could easily attract young professional families and affluent empty nesters migrating back into the city from the suburbs. However, the current lack of pedestrian areas, cultural amenities, and high quality housing is more likely to attract a transitional population that will move on once they begin having children.

Housing

Housing tenure describes the occupants of a house and is often split into two categories; owner occupied, and renter occupied. Housing tenure is illustrative of Doraville's need for more residential diversity. Despite very little growth in multi-family units, renter housing has grown at a greater rate then owner- occupied housing and now makes up 53 percent of the total. This is reflective of the young population but could also suggest a lack of quality for-sale housing. As Figure 6.3 shows, vacancies for both rental and owner-occupied housing have remained low.

Figure 6.3 - 1990, 2000 & 2006 Housing Tenure – Doraville, GA

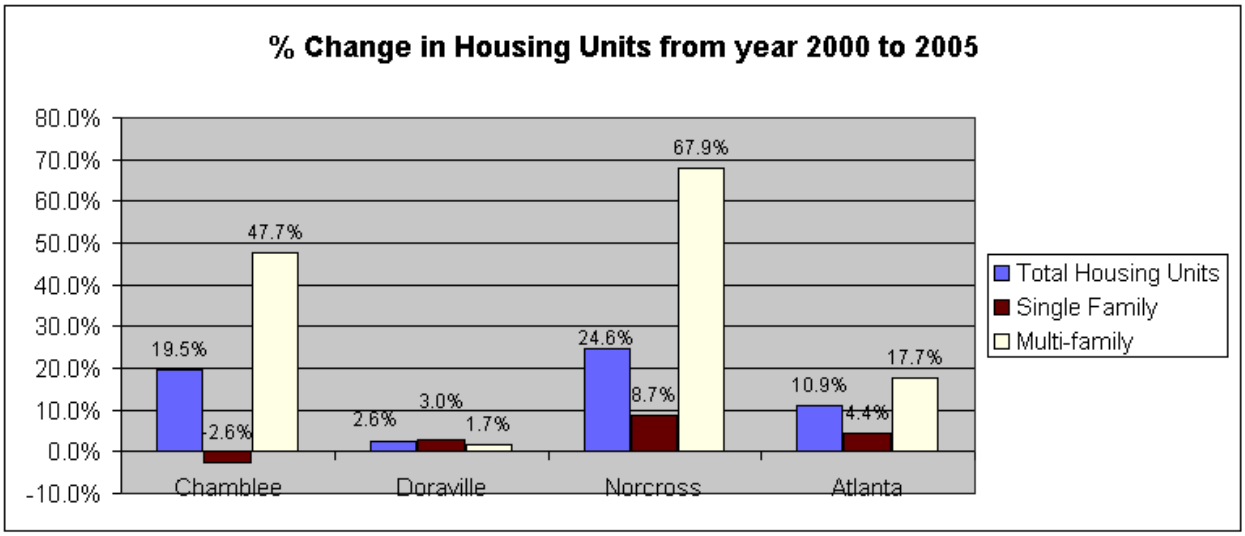


Source: U.S. Census and ESRI

Despite the low vacancies, housing construction has remained well below that of the region. While housing construction in neighboring Chamblee and Norcross has clearly kept up with the areas population growth, Doraville is primed for growth and in need of housing diversity. Figure

6.4 summarizes the increase in housing units in Atlanta, Chamblee, Doraville, and Norcross. Doraville lags behind in all categories displayed in the chart.

Figure 6.4– 2000 – 2006 Housing Unit Growth Comparison – Doraville, GA



Source: ESRI

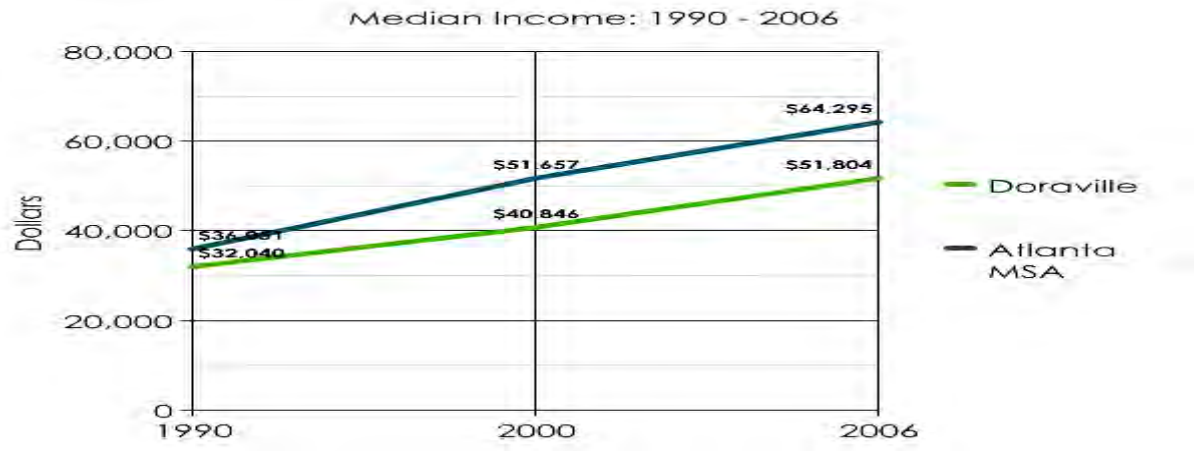
With a growing population of empty nesters and young, urban-oriented families, the need for more multi-family units is clear. Taking advantage of the GM site's proximity to MARTA and the potential to create a walkable neighborhood design could make the area ideal for town houses, condominiums and luxury apartments.

Income

Median household income is commonly used to compare a region's prosperity and potential economic growth. In Doraville, incomes have not grown at the same pace as the MSA[46] (see Figure 6.7). If the trend continues it could severely affect the city's competitiveness within the region. It is probable that the weakening income levels are reflective of the other issues outlined above. As the population has shifted towards younger individuals who rent it is not surprising that income has not kept up with the region as a whole.

[46] U.S. Decennial Census, 2000 and ESRI

Figure 6.4 – 1990 & 2006 Median Household and Per Capita Income – Doraville, GA



Source: U.S. Census and EsriBis

Keeping area incomes apace with those in the MSA is paramount to maintaining a high quality of life. Declining incomes also lower property values and make the region less attractive to national retailers. Even local businesses will begin to suffer if incomes drop too low to support them. Catching the trend early and investing to reverse it should be a priority for the city. By creating a strong mix of housing, office, retail, civic space and parks the region will likely attract the needed investment and new residents to assure that Doraville reflects the region's growing prosperity.

Retail Overview – Meeting Community Desires

Roof tops is the term that retailers often use for the number of residential units in a market area. National retailers often have standard rooftop requirements and will not open an outlet in an area that doesn't meet those requirements. For example, Applebee's restaurant requires a minimum of 30,000 residents within in their target area and Target requires at least 100,000[47]. Section two in the Appendix lists a sample of those requirements for several well known restaurants and retailers. The Doraville LCI study surveyed local residents and discovered that many see a gap in Doraville's retail market. They would like to attract the type of retailers discussed above. However, many national retailers are within three to five miles of Doraville around the Perimeter

[47] Avondale Livable Centers Initiative

and Northlake Mall areas. This makes it unlikely that additional major retailers will be established within city limits without a significant increase in area population. Section three in the Appendix is a retail context map that shows the location of shopping malls and many national retailers within a one, three, and five mile radius of the GM site.

That is not to say that Doraville lacks a vibrant retail market. The Buford Highway corridor is likely one of the busiest retail and restaurant destinations in the city. Dominated by small, locally owned businesses, many restaurants and retailers are one-of-a-kind and serve as a powerful draw for consumers from outside the city. The diversity of local small businesses has been a driving force for the area's economic vitality. Property values along Buford Highway are potentially the most valuable in the city and are rumored to be above $1 million an acre[48]. One reason for the area's success is the availability of relatively small commercial spaces. It is important to consider the success and desirability of sub-10,000 square foot retail outlets when reviewing options for redevelopment of the GM site.

Though any new retail planned on the site should reflect a local desire for national retailers, it should also incorporate the strengths of existing retailers and consider enhancing the appeal of local ethnic businesses instead of competing with them.

Office Market – Correcting the Mismatch

Northeast Atlanta, the office market that includes Doraville, consists of over 5.8 million square feet of office space. Office vacancies are a low 13.8 percent and have been declining since the 1st quarter of 2005. Despite the strength of nearby office developments, there has been very little attention given to office development in Doraville.

The dearth of office space within the city of Doraville is evident in the city's commute patterns. The average resident in Doraville has a white collar job (see Figure 6.5) and a 29 minute commute to work[49].

[48] Personal Interview Louis Merlin & Patrick Peters EDAW, November 1, 2006
[49] U.S Decennial Census, 2000

Figure 6.5 – 2006 Occupation Category – Doraville, GA

Occupation	
White Collar	49.8 %
Services	23.2 %
Blue Collar	26.9 %

Source: U.S Census

Commute patterns are an analysis of the amount of time residents spend traveling to and from work each day. Since Doraville's commute patterns suggest that much of its workforce is employed outside of the city limits, it is important to consider using the GM site for uses that match the employment needs of the existing and future population. Keeping area workers within the city limits during work hours helps generate sales tax revenue while making the city more attractive to young workers who are weary of long commutes. Figure 6.6 shows that less than 8 percent of the area workforce likely works within the city and almost a quarter are traveling over 45 minutes for work.

Figure 6.6 – 2000 Commute Times – Doraville, GA

Travel Time to Work – 2000	
< 10 minutes	7.80 percent
10 - 24 minutes	35.40 percent
25 - 44 minutes	29.90 percent
45 + minutes	23.50 percent

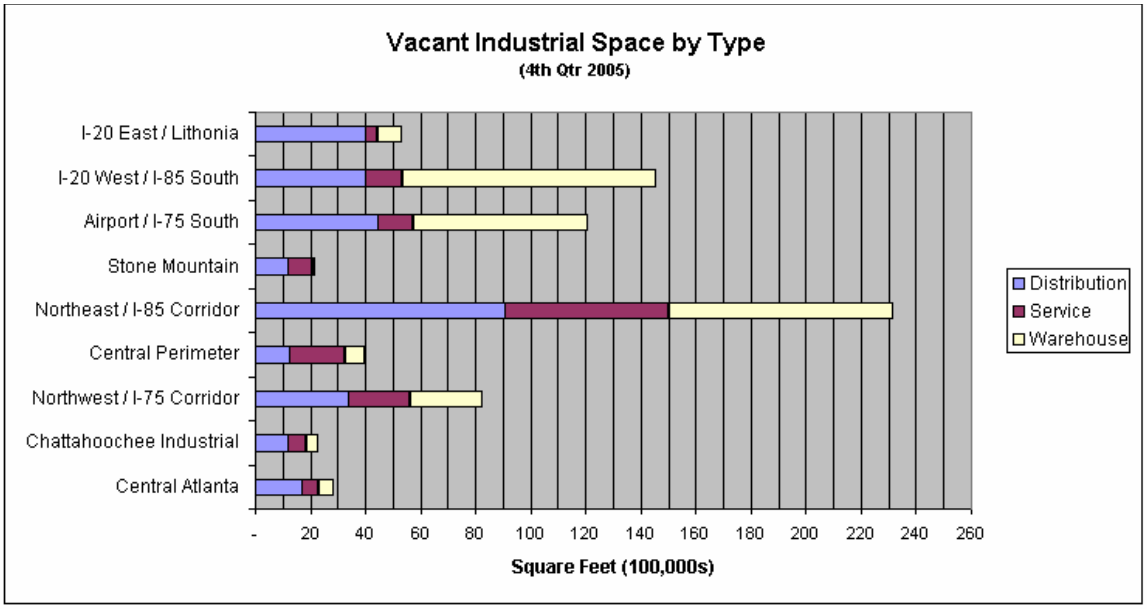
Source: U.S. Census

Maintaining the area's workforce is only part of the justification for creating more office space. Attracting the growing regional workforce into the city and replacing the current 3,000 plus GM plant workers is another. Office space helps create a vibrant daytime population to support area businesses. Additionally, it attracts residents of other cities into Doraville to spend money and help attract more national retailers.

Industrial Market – Issues with Access

The Northeast/I-85 Corridor, which includes Doraville, holds the largest amount of vacant industrial space in the region (see Figure 6.7), over 23 million square feet[50]. This is one reason that industrial uses are not recommended for the GM site. Other factors that limit the site's appeal to industrial uses are land values and truck accessibility. Though the site has access to a major freeway, area congestion makes getting in and out time consuming.

Figure 6.7 – 2005 Vacant Industrial Space – Atlanta MSA



Source: Dorey's Industrial Guide - 1st Qtr 2006

Additionally, re-committing the site to industrial uses will not help solve the other issues outlined above. The city requires additional housing, retail, office and green spaces to assure that it remains competitive in the region. All of these uses are incompatible with large-scale industrial uses. Though the often strong wages associated with large scale industrial work might make this an attractive target, it must be reiterated that very few of the existing General Motors

[50] Dorey's Industrial Guide - 1st Qtr 2006

plant workers actually reside in Doraville. That would likely be the case with any new industrial workers should the site be selected for such a use.

Fiscal Analysis – Effects of Site Build-out

Despite the clear need for new development to accommodate new citizens and provide the jobs and services desired by the existing population, there is some risk for the city if the site is not properly redeveloped. To assure long term success of the site area, there will be a large amount of infrastructure improvements needed. Connectivity across the railroads, a new internal street grid, town center, and an arena will likely require public support and City expenditures. Other expenses for Doraville after the redevelopment will come from expanding public services. A complete analysis of the Fiscal impact, performed by Robert Lann of Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute, compares the existing financial picture for Doraville and how that might change once the site is built-out with residential, retail, and office uses (See Figure 4 in the Appendix).

Methodology

The proposed development was modeled after Atlantic Station's land use patterns (with a smaller percentage for office space because of height and demand limitations). This is not a recommendation that the site be transformed into a development that resembles Atlantic Station, but rather this model was selected because of physical and historical similarities between the sites. Atlantic Station is a 138-acre development in Midtown Atlanta that was once a large industrial property. The proposed land uses break down to roughly 60 percent residential, 20 percent office, and 20 percent retail. Forecasting was done by projecting a sample of existing retail, office and residential property onto the site. Existing city revenue and per person expenditures were calculated using data from the DeKalb County Tax Assessor.

Overview

The analysis shows that the city must carefully consider the options regarding the site's redevelopment. Residential uses generate less revenue and increase the expenses by requiring additional public services. Office and retail uses on the other hand, generate more revenue and require fewer expenditures.. If the city is proactive with the site's development then it could assure that redevelopment of the site allows the city to grow without reducing services.

Fiscal Break Down

Property taxes generate about 25 percent of the city's revenue. This is determined by two variables, the assessed property value and the millage, or tax rate, determined for that property. Currently residential and office uses in Doraville have an average assessed value of just over $80.00 per square foot (see Figure 6.8). Retail has a higher average assessed value of $150.00 a square foot[51]. In 2005, property taxes generated just over $2.6 million dollars in revenue.

Figure 6.8 – Assessed Value by Land Use – Doraville, GA

Average Value per Square Foot	
Retail	$150.52
Office	$81.99
Residential	$85.85

Source:DeKalb County Tax Assessors Office

Excise and special use revenue comes from retail business activities such as selling alcohol and operating a franchise. Combined they generated almost 14 percent of the city's revenue in 2005. Unlike property taxes, Excise and Special use revenue is generated by commercial uses alone.

Licenses and permits are revenues largely generated by businesses which are required to pay an occupation tax for their place of business. It also includes fees from alcohol beverage licenses and building permits. Licenses and permits make up about 14 percent of the city's revenue.

Fines and forfeitures are by far the largest source of revenue for the city, making up almost 40 percent of the total. Municipal Court fines make up the bulk of this revenue source that totaled over $4 million in 2005. Unfortunately, these are directly related to the public safety and health costs that combine for over 63 percent of the city's total annual expenditures.

Charges for services and other revenue are diverse revenue sources that generate only about 7 percent of total. Figure 6.9 shows a breakdown of 2005 revenue and expenditures for the city of Doraville.

[51] Based on sample data taken from the Dekalb County Tax Assessor at https://dklbweb.dekalbga.org/TaxAssessor/default.asp. Accessed on 10/15/06

Figure 6.9 – 2005 Revenue & Expenditure Break-Down – Doraville, GA

Doraville Revenue Break-Down 2005			
Property Taxes	$	2,641,579.00	25.6%
Excise and Special Use	$	1,429,622.00	13.8%
License and Permits	$	1,451,433.00	14.0%
Charges for Services	$	47,809.00	0.5%
Fines and Forfeitures	$	4,096,863.00	39.7%
Other Revenue	$	664,146.00	6.4%
Total Revenue	$	10,331,452.00	100%

Doraville Expenditure Break-Down 2005			
General Admin	$	1,335,889.00	15.1%
Parks & Rec	$	747,096.00	8.4%
Courts	$	400,040.00	4.5%
Public Safety	$	5,198,320.00	58.6%
Health	$	67,656.00	0.8%
Social Welfare	$	-	0.0%
Public Works	$	1,123,614.00	12.7%
Other Expenses	$	-	0.0%
Debt Service	$	-	0.0%
Total Expenditures	$	8,872,615.00	100.0%

Source: 2005 Doraville Land Use Model

Recommended Site Build-Out

As mentioned throughout this report, the closure of the Doraville GM plant will create an opportunity to reassemble over 150 acres of land (possibly more) within the city limits. This is a tremendous opportunity for the local leadership to look at the data and create an environment that is both fiscally sustainable and beneficial to the local population.

Our analysis creates a fiscally sustainable land use model that can be further maximized by creating even greater allocations for office and retail uses. The current model (see Section 4 in the Appendix) is based on 6 million square feet of residential space, 2 million square feet of office and 2 million square feet of retail. Figure 6.10 below illustrates the data used to create a fiscal projection of the effects of our suggested build-out.

Figure 6.10 GM Doraville Site Build-out Details

GM Site ReAssembly		
	Acres	Sq. Ft.
Total Buildable Acres	100.3	6,136,883

Office	45.9	2,000,000
Retail	45.9	2,000,000
Residential	137.7	6,000,000

What is important to note from this fiscal analysis is that it contains a very high percentage of residential land uses and is conservative with office and retail land usage. Considering the location of the site, large area white- collar workforce, low office vacancies and potential transit oriented development, it is likely that the region could accommodate even more than the suggested 2 million square feet of office space. The suggested 6 million square feet of residential property would likely be reduced. The current estimates roughly equal 4,000 new housing units and nearly 13,000 new residents. This is not something the population projections took into account so it can safely be assumed that the area's total population would double. That would require even more services and retailers than the area currently supports and potentially more than the 2 million additional square feet of retail that this analysis is suggesting. A more specific retail and office analysis must be performed to establish the exact land use break down that the area can support. However, we must keep in mind that office and services are both dependent on people, and people are more and more inclined to live near where they work and shop. This suggests that for redevelopment of the site to be successful, it must accommodate a variety of land uses.

Recommendations

- Consider supporting more affordable homes to keep young families in the area.
- Increase residential density to attract national and regional chains that many locals feel are missing in the area.
- Consider supporting more office space which could help reduce local commute times. This will also help keep area incomes apace with the regional average.
- Control what happens on the GM site. Use zoning powers to assure that the site has a strong variety of land uses. Examples are an overlay district, mixed use, and traditional neighborhood development.
- Perform a full market analysis study to determine the perfect land use mix to assure a sustainable future for area residents. Over-reliance on a single use is likely to burden the city budget and reduce local quality of life.

These layers provide the backbone of the redevelopment plan for Doraville. The following section summarizes the suggestions of these redevelopment layers and provides the City with a package of recommendations with which to achieve a successful plan for the GM site.

7. Final Recommendations

This report has recommended five layers of development for the GM site in Doraville. Each layer, as the name would suggest, is built upon the infrastructure of the previous one, strengthening the proposed development and embracing the strengths of the city. Great care has been taken to envision the site as an opportunity to improve the quality of life for everyone in Doraville. The City has long suffered the division created by the railroad, freeways and massive industrial sites. With the redevelopment possibilities of the GM site, the local leadership has a unique opportunity to reconnect a large part of the City and recreate the strong neighborhood design that was once there.

The current land use segregation that pervades Doraville not only creates service delivery inefficiencies but also reduces land values and hampers pedestrian activity. As mentioned earlier in this report, housing located in pedestrian, mixed-use environments sells at a premium over those in traditional single family housing neighborhoods. Mixing office, retail and residential land uses will not only add to the city's regional appeal but will also generate more revenue than simply dedicating the site to low density residential uses. If done properly, it will also enhance the quality of life for everyone in Doraville. Based on this analysis, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats represented by the site are outlined below. It is up to the local leadership to consider each one and determine what is best for the City of Doraville.

Strengths

- *Regional connectivity*; Doraville has strong regional connectivity because of proximity to I-285, I-85 and MARTA.
- *The site is large enough to develop in phases*; this will make development more feasible and reduce the negative impact construction will have on the community.
- *In-town trend*; there is a growing trend for people to move back into they city. In the Atlanta area, this is driving population and employment growth inside the I-285 perimeter.
- *Recent slow growth*; has created local and regional demand for office, retail and residential properties. Doraville is poised for the construction boom that nearby Chamblee and Norcross have already experienced.

Weakness

- *Divided city*; rail lines, roads and freeways connect the city to the region but divide the city from itself.
- *Congestion*; growing area population has made congestion an issue along major access routes.
- *Speculation*; the publicity of the GM closing has created a lot of interest in the site. Speculative developers could inflate land values, forcing disjointed development, reducing the amount of public space, and diminishing long term sustainability.
- *Expensive Infrastructure*; there will be considerable infrastructure investment needed for any type of development. Reconnecting the site to the city is paramount for any redevelopment but will force developers and local authorities to seek out creative financing options to make it feasible.

Opportunities

- *Experience*; The recent LCI study, this analysis and the wealth of information regarding brownfield redevelopment can help guide development.
- *Reconnecting the city*; infrastructure improvements might be expensive, but they will mend the city's fabric and help create a regional destination.
- *Sustainable growth*; creating a pedestrian friendly environment that is transit oriented with efficient land use will reduce service delivery costs and auto-dependency.
- *Planned growth*; this is a rare occasion where local leadership has the opportunity to grow the city in a controlled, sustainable, and fiscally sound way that will benefit the community as a whole.
- *Regional appeal*; the existing and growing diversity in the city destination already make it a unique destination. Embracing the diversity when encouraging development will help add to the regional appeal.
- *Concessions;* there is a good possibility that GM will donate or discount land to the city if local leadership can present them with a clear, feasible plan for redevelopment before private interests do.

Threats

- *Regional saturation; t*he surrounding areas (Perimeter, Norcross, Chamblee) continue to mature and evolve with office, retail and housing options. It is possible that their growth will saturate the regional market.
- *Greed;* the strong location and size of the GM site make it a very rare, very attractive parcel for eager land developers. There is a strong risk that a developer will purchase the property before city has a chance to put development controls in place and secure the land needed for a town center and arena.

Appendix

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1. Redevelopment Financial Options and Incentives

Clearly, the vacating of the auto assembly plant leaves a huge void in the City of Doraville and DeKalb County, both physically as well as financially. However, redevelopment of this site represents an unprecedented opportunity for Doraville to think big, and the resulting development can fundamentally change Doraville's identity and regional position for years to come. With grand opportunities come large costs, but there are many creative ways to help finance such developments that can offer mutually beneficial arrangements between the private and public markets. A plethora of state and county administered economic incentives are available to fit a variety of development initiatives. The following are a listing of some of these options, as well as how they can assist in the development of the site and in stimulating economic development.

DeKalb County Incentives:

Tax Allocation Districts (TAD). Otherwise known as tax increment financing in other states, the Tax Allocation District has gained recent popularity across the nation as a responsible financing mechanism. Widely employed in the Atlanta area to spur new development, the City initially floats bonds designed to finance the targeted development. These bonds are ultimately paid off by freezing a designated area's current property tax level for a predetermined number of years, while new, more lucrative development is constructed in its place. Any increase in assessed taxes generated by the new development does not go towards the city, but rather is directed towards retiring the debt on the bonds. Tax Allocation Districts are prevalent in the Atlanta Metro Area – particularly in recent years - eleven have been established between 1998 and 2003. They are potent tools used in financing two of Atlanta's highest profile projects, Atlantic Station and the Beltline. One of its main advantages is that it contains little to no limitations on what can be financed – so long as it is stated on the bond – while the primary thing to be cautious of is whether the project will provide the "returns needed to

cover at least the initial investment and the increase in public service demands from the project."[1]

In November 2002, DeKalb Voters approved a referendum authorizing the county to exercise redevelopment powers under the State Redevelopment Powers Law, which include the creation of TAD's and use of eminent domain to assemble parcels of land for development. While DeKalb County has historically been somewhat resistant to the use of Tax Allocation Districts – as its implementation is admittedly new – it is beginning to gain widespread acceptance as of late, as the first two TAD's in DeKalb were passed by the County Board of Commissioners in January of 2006.[2] These two TAD's are the Kensington-Memorial Drive TAD, and the Avondale Mall/Columbia Drive TAD. Both were created largely to provide for additional controls over urban design issues. While the implementation of the TAD is contingent on approval by the DeKalb School Board – as school tax revenues cannot be used without their approval – the board is currently considering it, and the apparent success from other TAD's should provide a positive track record for them to base their decisions on. Progress on the school board decision for DeKalb's two proposed TAD's should be closely monitored to determine the feasibility of a TAD for the GM site.

Bonding. Established in 1974, the development authority in DeKalb County has had a long and substantial history of floating bonds in the interest of economic development. It issues both taxable and tax-exempt bonds, based on the type and size of business being approved. The prospect of bonding may seem daunting, as it needs to be vetted through public referendum. However, many of DeKalb County's General Obligation Bonds have enjoyed success, by packaging issues that concern various special interests across the county into one vote. While bonding mainly deals with the relations between the county and the private business at hand, the City of Doraville should be cognizant of how it may be used in order to encourage businesses to push for them, and that DeKalb County itself

[1] 11/21/2006. http://www.communityreview.net/gbase/Expedite/Content?oid=oid%3A1511
[2] Id

has bonded about $225 million for various General Motors needs and expenditures since 1985.

Federal Incentives:

Historic Rehab Tax Credits. The historic rehab tax credit is a federally administered program that aids in revitalization of communities and rehabilitation of historic buildings. Credits are sold to individuals and corporations to offset taxable income. These credits can be crucial to financing the rehabilitation and reuse of the existing GM building for municipal services, if desired. As much as 20 percent of the eligible hard and soft costs for rehab development (construction, architecture, developer's fee, etc.) can be acquired towards the project. However, the property must first gain historic designation, and must be income producing, which is feasible if excess space in the building is leased out for office use. The state of Georgia also offers its own version of historic tax credits of up to $5,000.

New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC). Established in 2000, this program provides a 39-percent tax credit to lenders for 7 years that can be used for loans to any commercial development in low income communities that meet set requirements (20% poverty rate or 80% area median income). NMTC may be a boon to financing retail establishments in either the TOD or Town Center scenarios. However, funds derived from NMTC's cannot be utilized in projects that are already subsidized by other federal tax subsidies, with certain exceptions. In the case of mixed-use developments, subsidization may be split between uses, allowing NMTC financing for parts of the project.

Additional Federal Incentives.

- Brownfield Assessment, Revolving loan, and Clean-Up Grants
- Brownfields Job Training Grants
- Brownfields Training, Research, and Technical Assistance Grants & Cooperative Agreements

- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) or Superfund[3]
- EPA, HUD CDBG, SBA, and USDA Loans
- HUD/USDA Empowerment Zones

State Incentives:

Most state incentives available to the City of Doraville are administered directly between the private sector and state. The State offers tax credits and tax shields to companies that generate a certain amount of jobs, offer child care, undertake work in research and development, relocate their corporate headquarters, etc. One particular important piece of legislation at the state level is the passage of the "Hazardous Site Reuse and Redevelopment Act", where buyers of brownfield properties are offered a limitation of liability for certain preexisting conditions during redevelopment.[4] The GM site would be a very suitable candidate for brownfield designation. Although involvement would be indirect, a city or municipality could play a strong intermediary role in providing information of these policies to interested businesses and facilitating in their acquisition. Having a stake in the discussions with a potential business client is also important in shaping the development in a way that serves both the interests of the business and the public community.

Additional State Incentives:

- Georgia's Hazardous Site Reuse and Redevelopment Act (Brownfields Tax Incentive)
- Hazardous Site Reuse and Redevelopment Act

Other Incentives:

[3] www.epa.gov assessed on December 1, 2006

[4] http://www.atlantada.com/buildDev/taxCreditIncentives.jsp#gaEnvProtect_1. Accessed 28 November 2006.

New LCI. The prospect of overlaying a new LCI into the former GM plant is also an option worth considering. The Livable Communities Initiative is a program open to non-profit organizations and public municipalities with the aim of creating innovative plans to improve their town centers, activity centers, and corridors. Among the goals of LCI program, as described by the Atlanta Regional Commission, are: 1.) Plans and concepts that foster a diversity of mixed-income residential neighborhoods, employment, shopping and recreation choices at the activity center and town center level and induce a greater balance between jobs and housing, 2.) Provision of access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking and biking – simultaneously reducing vehicle miles traveled and improving air quality - to enable access to uses within the study area. The characteristics of the development options being presented in this report match up perfectly with the objectives delineated in the LCI program. The compact, walkable nature of a TOD driven town center or alternative development touches on all the objectives espoused by the LCI. The LCI can assist greatly in infrastructural and transportation improvements needed for site preparation in order to accommodate new development, and if qualified, funding is ensured as long as overall progress is being made via the attainment of reasonable targets agreed upon between the applicant and the ARC.

Fannie Mae. The effort to provide consistently affordable housing for Americans is a daunting task, but requires a concerted effort by communities in order to ensure livability and economic competitiveness. Fannie Mae has instituted a community-lending program called American Dream Commitment, which is a program that focuses on subsidized housing. Through partnerships with lenders, developers, and public entities, capital investments are pooled together to invest in housing developments to revitalize communities. Debt or equity financing are provided for acquisition, development, and construction of new homes. For more information, visit their website at http://www.fanniemae.com/initiatives/adc/index.jhtml?p=Initiatives.

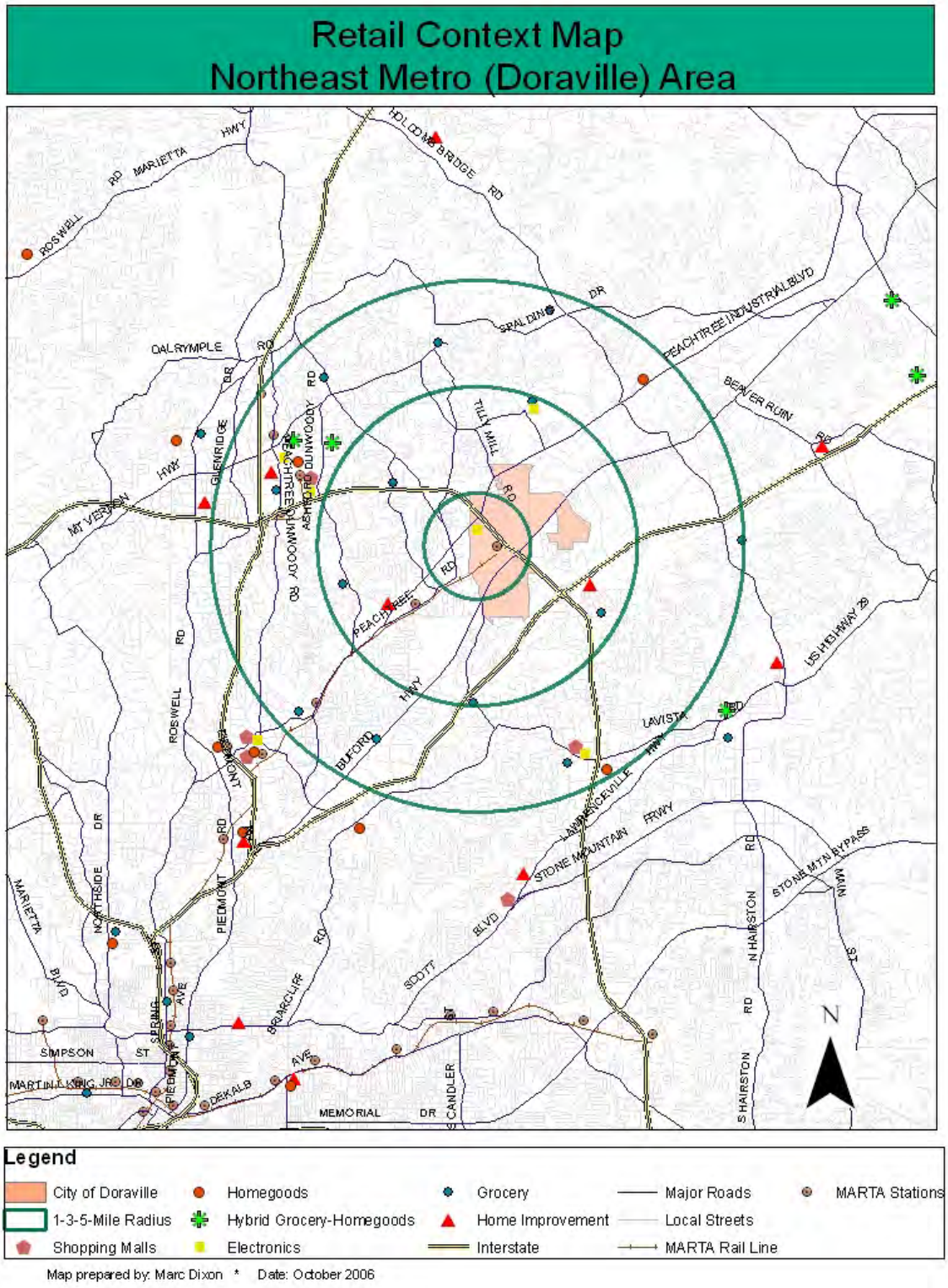
2. Retail Market Area Requirements

Specialty Foods				
Basking Robbins	250 - 1100	35000	n/a	n/a
Einstein Bagels	1500 - 2500	40000	30000 in 3 miles	$30K - $50K
Fast Food				
Chick-Fil-A	3500 - 4500	25000	60000 in 5 miles	$30K - $50K
Quizno's Subs	1200 - 1800	30000	45000 within 3 miles	$30K - $50K
Schlotzky's Deli	2700 - 3200	30000	10000 within 1 mile	$40K - $50K
Quality Restaurants				
Bennigan's	14,000 - 15,000	25000	30000 within 5 miles	n/a
Chili's/ Macaroni Grill	5000 - 7000	n/a	30000 within 5 miles	$30K - $50K
T.G.I Friday's	2000 - 7000	n/a	150000 within 3 miles	$40K - $50K
Applebee's*	2000 - 7000	25000	30000 within trade area	$40K - $50K
Department Stores				
Target Stores	n/a	n/a	100000 within trade area	$30K - $50K
Marshall's	30000 - 32000	30000	100000 within trade area	$30K - $50K
TJ Maxx	28000 - 30000	30000	50000 within 3 miles	$30K - $50K
Health Clubs				
Bally Total Fitness	10000 - 45000	n/a	70000 within 5 miles	$30K - $50K
Gold's Gym	4000 - 25000	20000	n/a	$20K - $40K
Powerhouse Gyms	10000 - 25000	n/a	50000 in trade area	$30K - $50K
Grocers				
Whole Foods	25000 - 40000	20000	100000 in 3 miles	$40K - $60K

source: Gibbs Planning Group Inc, ***Avondale LCI 2002, &*** **Randall Gross,** ***Sidney Retail Market and Recruitment Strategy***

*** requires day time population of at least 30,000**

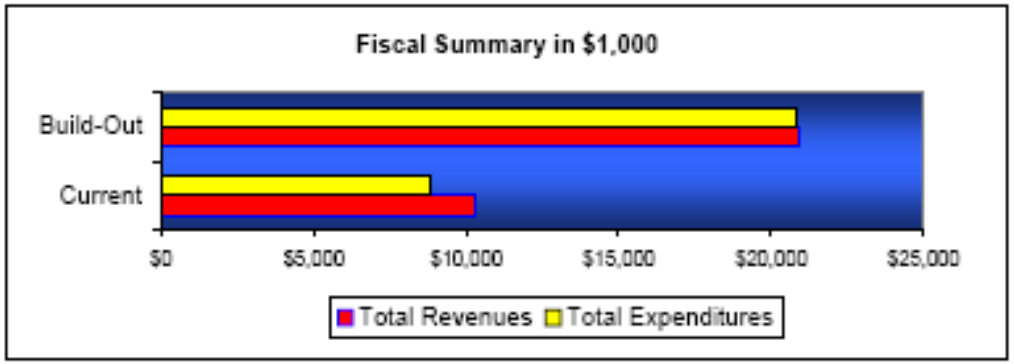
3. Retail Context Map – City of Doraville, GA



Map shows one, three and five mile radius rings around the City of Doraville (highlighted in pink)

4. Land Use Analysis Model – City of Doraville, GA

Fiscal Summary	Current	Build-Out	Percentage Change
Total Revenues	$10,331,450	$20,950,835	102.79%
Total Expenditures	$8,872,614	$20,798,711	134.41%
Difference (Rev - Exp)	$1,458,836	$152,124	
Revenues per Household	$3,226	$2,909	-9.83%
Expenditures per Household	$2,770	$2,888	4.24%



Revenue Categories	Current	Build-Out	Percentage Change
Property Taxes	$2,641,579	$4,583,345	73.51%
Sales Taxes (L.O.S.T.)	$0	$0	0.00%
Excise and Special Use	$1,429,622	$3,258,292	127.91%
Alcoholic beverage taxes	$169,669	$355,882	109.75%
Insurance premium	$441,358	$1,059,587	140.07%
Franchise payments	$818,596	$1,842,822	125.12%
Licenses and Permits	$1,451,433	$3,355,889	131.21%
Business Occupation Tax	$1,221,643	$2,803,869	129.52%
Alcoholic beverage licenses	$100,530	$229,428	128.22%
Building permits	$129,261	$322,592	149.57%
Charges for Services	$47,809	$126,704	165.02%
Fines & Forfeitures	$4,096,863	$7,830,733	91.14%
Other Revenue	$664,146	$1,795,872	170.40%
Total Revenue	**$10,331,450**	**$20,950,835**	**102.79%**

Expenditure Categories	Current	Build-Out	Percentage Change
General Administrative	$1,335,889	$3,089,997	131.31%
Recreation and Parks	$747,096	$1,878,506	151.44%
Courts	$400,040	$1,010,432	152.58%
Public Safety	$5,198,320	$12,533,113	141.10%
Health	$67,656	$148,232	119.10%
Social Welfare	$0	$0	0.00%
Public Works	$1,123,614	$2,138,430	90.32%
Other Expenditures	$0	$0	0.00%
Debt Service	$0	$0	0.00%
Total Expenditures	**$8,872,614**	**$20,798,711**	**134.41%**

Land Use Model Methodology

The model used in this analysis is a variant of the web-based software tool called WebFIT™ which provides fiscal impact analyses of future land use plans and large new or redevelopment projects. WebFIT™ is a county-based model and therefore has to be applied to a whole county before it can be used for a city-level analysis. To apply the WebFIT™ methodology to the redevelopment projects in Doraville and in Hapeville, a spreadsheet version was constructed based on a previous application in Alpharetta, Georgia.

The model requires current data on (1) a city's revenues and expenditures by major category, (2) estimates of current residential, commercial, and industrial value of improvements from its tax digest, and (3) population and housing unit estimates. From the proposed redevelopment projects, the model needs estimates of the value of residential and commercial improvements, and the number of housing units to be added. From the current ratio of population to housing units and the number of housing units to be added in the project, a projection of incremental population is made.

All of the incremental residential and commercial value of improvements and the population increase are used as inputs to the independent variables of a set of regression equations that forecast changes in revenues and expenditure categories. This results in a forecast of the fiscal impact on the city's budget from the proposed redevelopment project.