

City of Roswell

Redevelopment Strategy

Approved by Mayor and City Council on January 22, 2003

Developed by the Roswell Redevelopment Task Force

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I. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Redevelopment Strategy is to examine Roswell's vacant and underutilized commercial space and surrounding residential areas in need of rehabilitation, and to present a strategy for promoting redevelopment, including incentives, to achieve an optimal mix of uses.

Having an economically sound commercial sector is important to the City for reasons including:

- 1) the quality of the goods and services that are provided to Roswell's citizens;
- 2) the contribution to Roswell's tax base from commercially valued property, business license fees, and sales tax revenues; and
- 3) the employment opportunities that are provided in commercial areas.

The strategy is the product of the Redevelopment Task Force appointed by Councilwoman Lori Henry in the spring of 2002. In addition to Ms. Henry, the Task Force consists of Bruce Dearing of the Bank of North Georgia; developer Richard Dippolito; Roswell resident Stacy Loftin; Planning Commission member Jim Mellor; and Lonnie Mimms of Mimms Enterprises. Community Development Director Kathleen Field, the Mayor's Assistant Neva Arem and Economic Development Director Melanie Chen serve as staff liaisons to the Task Force.

Redevelopment is a major issue for Roswell because much of its commercial space was developed during a major growth spurt in the 1980's and much of this space is in need of upgrading. In addition, other factors have led to a decline in some of Roswell's retail centers. Roswell is not alone however, and many communities throughout the Metro Atlanta region, as well as the nation, are facing the challenges of redevelopment. This strategy builds on and will feed into work done in cooperation with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) examining issues of suburban redevelopment. In March 2002, under the direction of Councilwoman Paula Winiski, the City of Roswell co-sponsored a Symposium on Suburban Redevelopment with the

ARC and the Urban Land Institute. Key elements and concepts from that symposium have been incorporated in this strategy and tailored to Roswell's situation. Those key elements, as presented by author Geoffrey Booth, were:

TEN PRINCIPLES FOR REINVENTING AMERICA'S SUBURBAN BUSINESS DISTRICTS

1. Understand your position in the market.
2. Build community support.
3. Develop a vision and a plan.
4. Stress results over regulation.
5. Break up the superblocks and optimize connectivity.
6. Embrace mixed use.
7. Honor the human scale by creating a pedestrian-friendly place.
8. Think transit – think density.
9. Create a public/private partnership.
10. Share and manage parking.

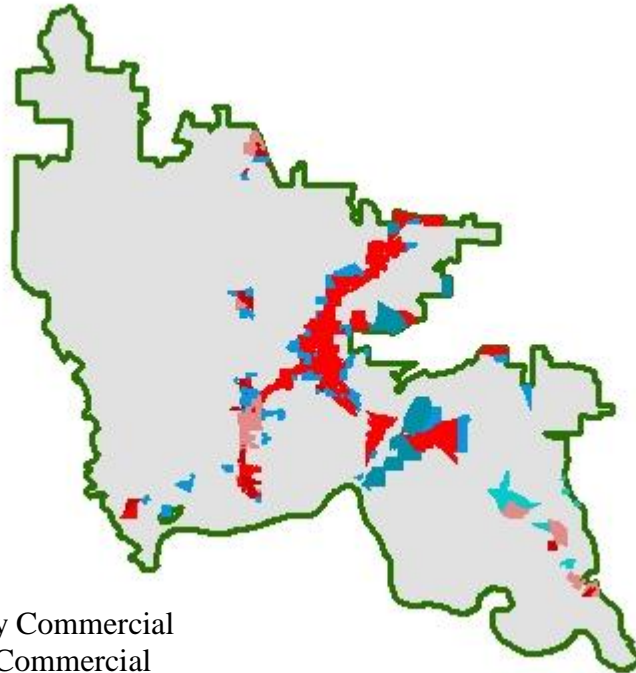
The First Principle, Understand Your Position in the Market, is addressed in Section III of this document, which examines the demographics and market trends in Roswell and surrounding areas. The creation of the Redevelopment Task Force not only addressed the need to understand Roswell's position in the market, but was also the start of the effort to Build Community Support (Principle Two), which will continue in the implementation of this strategy. Principle Three, Develop a Vision and a Plan, is accomplished in part by this document, and to a greater extent, through detailed studies such as the Midtown Roswell Redevelopment Plan. Principle Four, Stress Results over Regulation, is dealt with in Section VI of this document, which presents tools and incentives to complement regulation. Principles Five through Eight (Break up Superblocks and Optimize Connectivity; Embrace Mixed Use; Create Pedestrian Friendly Places; and Think Transit/Think Density) are discussed in Section VI, which looks at a framework for determining the optimal use of land. Principle Nine, Create a Public/Private Partnership is discussed in Section VII, the Implementation Plan, as is Principle Ten, Share and Manage Parking.

This Redevelopment Strategy was approved by the Mayor and Council of the City of Roswell on January 22, 2003, to be submitted for inclusion in the next update of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

II. Study Area

The study area consists of the main commercial corridors of the City, as depicted in the map below. Note that the Parkway Village District area has been excluded deliberately, since most of the Parkway Village District was only recently developed or has not yet been developed commercially and is not expected to be a candidate for redevelopment for many years.

Commercial & Office Zones Map



- Red C-3 – Highway Commercial
- Beige C-1 – Central Commercial
- Blue O-P – Office-Professional
- Blue/Green OCMS – Office-Commercial Multi-Story Mixed Use

The study area comprises approximately 2,029 acres of land zoned for commercial use, as shown in the chart below. While this represents only around 8% of the total acreage of the City, it does account for approximately 20% of the property tax base.

Zoning Category	Total Acreage
C-1	118
C-1 (FC)	142
C-2	100
C-2 (FC)	8
C-3	925
O-I (FC)	82
O-P	340
OCMS	220
OPMS	94
TOTAL	2,029

In addition, the study has examined land zoned for multifamily residential use. At present, we have approximately 9,261 units of apartments in the City of Roswell, representing close to 100% build-out for all land zoned multifamily residential. This land use category is important to redevelopment because it frequently abuts retail centers.

Within the overall study area, a number of special study areas emerge. The first is Midtown Roswell, which extends along Alpharetta Highway from Norcross Street north to Holcomb Bridge Road. This area is characterized by small strip retail with an overabundance of curb cuts, high accident rate, and an aesthetically chaotic environment. Midtown Roswell is the subject of its own Redevelopment Study, which began in June 2002 under the direction of Councilwoman Lori Henry and resulted in a Plan approved by Mayor and Council January 6, 2003. A team of consultants from the firms Glatting Jackson, Jordan Jones and Goulding, Robert Charles Lesser and International Resource Group were hired by the City to conduct the study to address traffic and pedestrian safety issues and create a long-term vision for the development of the area. The study is also being prepared with the hopes of being able to qualify for follow-on funding under the Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Communities Initiative. The work done by the consultants for the Midtown Roswell Redevelopment Study also includes recommendations for the Roswell Town Center Mall area at the intersection of Alpharetta Highway and Holcomb Bridge Road.

Another special study area which has been identified but not studied in detail here is the Holcomb Bridge Road/Old Alabama Road area, which has been plagued by high retail vacancy rates. This strategy document will propose tools that may be tailored for use in that area. Other

distinct geographic areas with redevelopment potential include Brannon Square and South Atlanta Street.

III. Characteristics of Roswell market area

Summary: Projected demographic trends for the North Fulton market are:

- ◆ growth will continue, although the growth rate may decrease
- ◆ the area will become more diverse, although only slightly
- ◆ average income will remain above the national and state averages, and will continue to climb
- ◆ the median age will remain close to the national median age of 35.3

A. Roswell demographics and trends

Roswell has seen tremendous growth for much of the past four decades, both from new development and annexation:

Year	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	5,430	23,337	47,923	79,334

According to Roswell's 2020 Comprehensive Plan, the population is expected to be around 93,591 in the year 2010, and to reach 101,787 in 2020. These projections may well be exceeded-historically, Roswell's population projections have erred on the low side.

According to the 2000 census:

The population of Roswell was 79,334 in 2000.

- ◆ the median age was 35.2 years old
- ◆ 25% of the population was under age 18
- ◆ 9% of the population was age 62 and over.

The population was 82% white, 9% black and the rest other races.

- ◆ the Hispanic population, of all races, was 11%. (Hispanic is an ethnic designation but is not a racial category.)

The total number of households was 30,207.

- ◆ family households comprised 69%
- ◆ single person households comprised 23%
- ◆ the remaining 8% were unrelated households

Owner-occupied housing makes up 67% of the total, with 33% being rentals.

- ◆ the average household size of the owner-occupied unit was 2.68
- ◆ the average household size of the renter-occupied unit was 2.46
- ◆ there were an average 1.99 vehicles per household

Roswell's median household income was \$71,726 according to the 2000 Census. This was among the highest in the state of Georgia.

According to information provided by Robert Charles Lesser Co. as part of the Midtown Roswell Redevelopment Study, the population of Roswell is expected to be made up of single person households to a greater degree in the future than it has in the recent past. A DemographicsNow Report estimates that in 2007, married households with children will represent only 29% of the household population, as opposed to 34% in 1990; married households with no children will make up 24% in 2007 as opposed to 30% in 1990; and single person households will rise to 22% in 2007 from 19% in 1990. This implies that the housing stock may trend towards smaller houses, and the retail mix may also shift towards singles.

B. Surrounding Areas

From a demand side, Roswell retailers draw from more than just the City of Roswell. Both in terms of commuters who pass through Roswell and shoppers who make a point of visiting Roswell, the City draws traffic from outside its boundaries. The west side of Roswell draws from East Cobb, Dunwoody, Sandy Springs, Alpharetta and Cherokee County. The east side of Roswell draws from all these and Gwinnett County as well. These areas share generally similar demographics with Roswell: Gwinnett County is slightly younger and more family-oriented, and Sandy Springs/Dunwoody is slightly older. All of these areas have above average incomes.

From a supply side, some of Roswell's older retail areas have been eclipsed in the past ten years by the construction of North Point Mall in Alpharetta just northeast of the City and the Avenue at East Cobb to the west of the City. Alpharetta has over 5 million square feet of retail space, with a vacancy rate of just 4%, showing the strength of this market. The East Cobb retail market, which includes the Cumberland Mall and Vinings Jubilee areas, has nearly 12 million square feet of space with a vacancy rate of 12%. The Sandy Springs area has around 5 million square feet of retail space with a vacancy rate of around 13%.

In comparison, Roswell's retail vacancy rate is currently around 11%, as discussed in Section IV below. Not all retail in Roswell is aging, however. Roswell's Parkway Village District along Highway 92 is seen as a "hot" commercial area, and has drawn many retailers and restaurants to locate there in the past seven years. It is anticipated that this area will continue to see growth, due to the availability of land, high household incomes and excellent access in the corridor. It also has the advantage of being far enough away from Northpoint Mall to warrant duplication of some of the same stores that are found in the Northpoint area. The Parkway Village area may be seen as direct competition to some of the older retail areas of Roswell, particularly in the Roswell Town Center mall area.

It is difficult to say precisely how much land remains to be developed commercially in Parkway Village because the overlay permits both residential and commercial uses, and because the ability to develop land in Parkway Village depends in part on parcel assembly issues. However, it is estimated that approximately 50 to 75 acres might be developed for retail purposes in the coming years, yielding perhaps 500,000 square feet of additional retail space.

C. Transportation Network

Roswell sits at the heart of the North Metro Atlanta growth area, at the confluence of two very important transportation corridors: GA 400 running north-south, and Holcomb Bridge Road running east-west. The metro Atlanta region's largest office employment concentration, the Perimeter area, is around 6 miles south of Roswell. Because of this, and because of Roswell's position just north of the Chattahoochee River (a major traffic impediment), Roswell receives a

lot of traffic from the northern suburbs channeled into one of its two river crossings, GA 400 and Highway 9. From a retailer's perspective, high traffic counts are generally very positive. Therefore the trends noted in Roswell Comprehensive Plan of ever-increasing traffic volumes on the City's street and highway system will be generally positive. However, individual sites may be hurt if congestion reaches the point that access cannot be maintained to the site. Furthermore, many of the City's aging retail areas do not have adequate interconnectivity with the parcels around them, compounding the access problems.

IV. Assessment of Problem

Finding #1: Roswell has too much retail space

According to the FirstCLS database, Roswell has 4.9 million square feet of retail space, of which approximately 11% was vacant in November 2002. While the retail vacancy rate is not unduly high, the amount of retail space per capita is. The national average of retail space per person in shopping centers is 20 square feet according to statistics published by the National Research Bureau Shopping Center Database. Roswell's average is 60 square feet, although this includes all retail space, not just the space in shopping centers. This would seem to indicate that, unless Roswell is able to attract a large number of retail customers from surrounding areas who are not adequately served in their own jurisdictions, the City has a surplus of retail space. Furthermore, as the figures in Section IIIB above indicate, the areas surrounding Roswell also have an abundance of retail space. Alpharetta, in particular, has added retail space at a rapid rate in the past 10 years.

Another way to estimate retail demand is to do an analysis of income and expenditures. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, consumers spent about 24% of their before-tax income on retail products and services. Median household income in Roswell in the year 2000 was \$71,726, which yields a total of \$539,253,282 in retail spending for the estimated 31,326 households in Roswell in 2002. This would work out to average retail sales per square foot of \$109 for the 4.94 million square feet of space in the City. Most retailers require sales of \$150 to \$250 per square foot to be sustainable. Put another way, if all of the retail space in Roswell were modernized and rents were raised accordingly, this would not be sustainable without significant inflows of expenditures from other areas. Certainly, the trade area for many Roswell retailers at

present is larger than the City boundaries. However, it is also true that many Roswell households spend retail dollars outside of the City limits, namely, at the North Point mall area.

Projected population growth in and around Roswell may lead to increased demand and increased need for retail space. However, the availability of land in the Parkway Village District, in some scattered areas throughout Roswell, and in Alpharetta means that new retail development on raw land is likely to continue for several years, which will add retail space to the market. Therefore, it seems wise to encourage the redevelopment of some of Roswell's existing retail space into other uses and discourage rezoning additional land to commercial/retail uses.

Finding #2: Roswell's average retail rent is relatively low

The rents received in Roswell's commercial areas tend to vary widely depending on both the age of the structure and its location, but in general are lower than surrounding areas. The lowest minimum rental rate was around \$8 per square foot (per year) and the highest was around \$28, with only around 33% of the properties receiving more than \$16 per square foot per year. In Sandy Springs, the rents range from \$6 to \$30, with 40% receiving at least \$16. In Alpharetta, the minimum rents range from \$8 to \$35 and over 80% of the properties receive more than \$16. Since Roswell's household income demographics are similar to those of Alpharetta and Sandy Springs, this implies that Roswell has become more of a bargain center and low-rent service destination, and that the other areas contain the more economically productive retailers. Since the growth of Alpharetta's retail sector, Roswell has gone from being a regional draw to more of a local service oriented market. Roswell needs to recapture its share of the higher-end market.

Finding #3: Roswell's retail structures are in need of updating

The retail sector is characterized by change. Space requirements and configurations are constantly evolving, just as the retail products themselves are constantly being re-invented in order to attract the attention of the consumer. The FirstCLS database lists 81 different retail properties in Roswell, and shows age data for 66 of those properties. The average Roswell retail property was built in 1985. Nine of the 81 properties are described as having been renovated. Given that the retail sector has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, many of Roswell's retail structures are currently in need of renovation, or at least some updating. In general, larger properties make more attractive redevelopment targets than smaller projects, particularly for

attracting national brand retailers. However, Roswell is fortunate to have many small business owners and developers who are attracted to smaller sites. In addition, Roswell has seen the redevelopment of some of its smaller sites for drug stores, banks, convenience stores and similar products.

The average size of the retail properties in Roswell is 60,000 square feet. The largest property is Roswell Town Center mall at 392,000 square feet, followed by King's Market at 314,000 square feet and Roswell Corners at 310,000 square feet. Roswell has 24 properties with over 90,000 square feet. Other physical characteristics of retail centers that need to be considered are: access (ability of customers to reach the general site area), ingress and egress (specific entry and exit ease), road patterns (surrounding the site area), parking, design quality, pedestrian amenities, visibility and parking. The standards for many of these attributes have changed over time. In order to remain competitive, retail centers must be modernized to reflect changed circumstances and meet customer expectations. Retailers often deal with subjective criteria, and the perception of a center's status can sometimes be linked to psychological factors that are not easily quantified. A matrix of how these attributes are manifested in different areas of Roswell is presented below:

Other physical characteristics

ATTRIBUTE AREA	<i>Access</i>	<i>Ingress and Egress</i>	<i>Road Patterns</i>	<i>Design Quality</i>	<i>Pedestrian Amenities</i>	<i>Visibility</i>	<i>Parking</i>
<i>Roswell Town Center Mall area</i>	Good	Congested	Not enough connectivity	Fair	Fair	Good	Limited
<i>Kings Market area</i>	Convolutated	Good	Congested	Fair	Fair	Limited	Good
<i>Holcomb Woods Parkway area</i>	Good	Good	Good	Needs improvement	Limited	Mixed	Good
<i>South Atlanta Street</i>	Poor	Poor	Poor	Mixed	Poor	Good	Limited
<i>Midtown Roswell</i>	Fair	Poor	Not enough connectivity	Poor	Poor	Good	Limited
<i>Hwy 9 North Strips</i>	Fair	Fair	Mixed	Mixed	Limited	Mixed	Varies
<i>Brannon Square and area</i>	Good	Fair	Good	Needs improvement	Limited	Good	Good

The Roswell Town Center Mall area is at the intersection of two of the busiest roads in North Fulton, but suffers from congestion, not enough connectivity and limited parking. The Kings

Market area has generally good ingress and egress, parking, design and pedestrian amenities, but is not readily visible from Holcomb Bridge Road and has access problems. The Holcomb Woods Parkway area has good access, ingress/egress, roads and parking, but only mixed visibility and the overall design needs upgrading. South Atlanta Street has good visibility but a host of other problems, and Midtown Roswell is nearly the same. The strip centers along Highway 9 north of the Town Center area are fairly well positioned, with some upgrading in design and road patterns required. The Brannon Square area is generally well positioned, but needs improvement in design quality and pedestrian amenities.

Finding #4: Limited Lifespan of Big Boxes adds to the problem

Given the changing nature of retail, and fierce competition, many big box retailers choose to build to very low durability standards. Inexpensive construction materials and no-frills design are the hallmark of many of the nation's top big boxes. The intent from the outset is to occupy the building for no more than 8 to 10 years, and then move on. This type of retail is not an investment in the community. Often, it leaves behind an overly large structure that cannot be easily subdivided and is difficult to lease. The vacant structure then leads to blight. The vacancy also hurts neighboring retail.

Finding #5: Deliberate vacancies hurt neighboring retail

Many national retailers, both large and small, continue to lease vacated space rather than sublease it to a potential competitor. This not only thwarts competition, it also hurts neighboring retail, particularly in the case of anchor stores which are expected to generate traffic for the rest of the center.

Other findings

- A review of police crime statistics reveals that Roswell's retail spaces do not seem to have an undue amount of crime occurring there.
- Roswell has several aging apartment complexes that would benefit greatly from renovation. This would aid the redevelopment of retail centers adjacent to these apartment complexes. The primary candidate would be the Tahoe Apartment complex just north of Holcomb Bridge Road.

V. Framework for determining optimal use of land to achieve a high quality of life and balanced tax base

The Comprehensive Plan is the document Roswell uses to determine the best use of its land in the future, and this strategy builds on that document. Key elements of the Comprehensive Plan 2020 are excerpted below, with the implied recommendations for redevelopment.

A. Quality of life

Recommendation #1: Roswell's commercial redevelopment should not only be contained and buffered but also interfaced with surrounding residential areas

The City's Mission Statement begins "Roswell will be a family-oriented, safe and attractive, pedestrian-friendly community." The general consensus vision for the City, as presented in the Comprehensive Plan, is to protect and preserve Roswell's quality of life, especially the environment and neighborhoods. Building a sense of community, and maintaining and expanding on Roswell's unique historic identity are important elements of this vision.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, some of the major issues confronting Roswell's neighborhoods are:

- ◆ increased number of rental properties within older residential neighborhoods;
- ◆ older residential areas encroached upon by non-residential uses;
- ◆ freestanding subdivisions that have no connectivity to adjacent development, by roadway or walkway;
- ◆ isolation from neighborhood services that can be conveniently accessed by walking or biking.

As applied to redevelopment, this means that commercial development should not threaten or encroach upon the viability of Roswell's neighborhoods; that adequate buffers should be maintained; and that interface between commercial and residential neighborhoods should be carefully considered.

Recommendation #2: Roswell's redevelopment should build on its sense of place

In tallying the needs of Roswell's neighborhoods, the Comprehensive plan also noted a lack of public gathering places where neighbors can meet and a lack of identity or distinctiveness in

many areas of the City. This suggests that the type of development seen in the Historic District might be considered a model to be replicated in adjacent areas such as Midtown Roswell, and throughout the City. The application of design standards to require quality construction materials will also help to prevent limited lifespan buildings. This principle is true for both redevelopment and new/greenfield construction.

Recommendation #3: Roswell should continue to encourage neighborhood retail and the updating of outmoded centers

While too much retail can be detrimental, a lack of appropriate retail can also be a problem. Having adequate availability of goods and services to meet the needs of its residents is an important element of the quality of life in the City. When residents have to travel outside their neighborhood to buy daily necessities and essential items, this negatively impacts their quality of life. In general, Roswell's demographics ensure that retailers have a strong interest in having a sales presence in the community. However, the area on Holcomb Bridge Road east of GA 400 has seen a number of stores relocate or close due to national, rather than local, conditions. There is a strongly felt lack of retail goods and services in the King's Market area at the present time.

In addition, when commercial centers become outmoded, retailers and their customers tend to go elsewhere, leading to a downward spiral of vacancies and disinvestment. Roswell needs to encourage the updating of commercial centers by examining its regulations to determine if there are factors inhibiting redevelopment, and to provide guidance on the type of redevelopment that would be appropriate in the City. In particular, redevelopment efforts should be focused on "pulsing" retail improvements at nodes to break up continuous strip development. Design guidelines should be applied to these nodes to ensure a strong sense of place and greater likelihood of continued retail success. If necessary, the City should undertake detailed Redevelopment Plans for specific geographic areas such as King's Market to develop a comprehensive effort to encourage redevelopment.

Recommendation #4: Deliberate vacancies should be discouraged

The use of deliberate vacancies as a strategic policy by national retailers to prevent competition leads to blight and should be discouraged. The City should consider adopting an ordinance that targets this practice. Retailers who prefer not to sublease the space they have vacated should be

required to terminate their lease and pay the accompanying penalty, or donate the use of the property to a governmental or non-profit entity.

B. Tax base implications

Recommendation #5: A balanced tax base should be maintained

From the vantage point of building a balanced economy, having some commercial development is essential. Commercial property is generally valued higher than residential property, per acre, as seen in the following chart:

Roswell Taxed Property values per acre by zoning category
(includes land and structures)

ZONING CATEGORY	DOLLAR VALUE PER ACRE
C-1	500,726
C-1 (FC)	463,801
C-2	562,504
C-2 (FC)	390,801
C-3	743,602
CUP (FC)	508,157
OCMS	819,222
O-I (FC)	332,300
O-P	658,035
OPMS	571,684
R-1	281,573
R-3	320,392
R-3 (FC)	353,750
R-4	585,763
R-4 (FC)	556,144
R-4A	119,576
R-4A (FC)	465,550
R-TH	428,713

C. Employment concerns

Recommendation #6: Some retail should be converted to office

According to the Department of Labor, Roswell has a workforce of 35,463 persons living within its City limits. This is roughly equivalent to the number of jobs within the City, which is estimated to be around 40,000. However, a large number of these jobs are retail and service jobs in the City (approximately 37%) which are generally low-paying. The result is that many persons who live in the City must commute outside the City to find employment. This results in a high amount of travel time for all and is not an optimal use of land.

The City's Economic Development Action Plan, which forms a part of its Comprehensive Plan 2020, calls for an increase in the amount of office space in the City. Currently, Roswell has 3.6 million square feet of office space, with a vacancy rate of 20%. This is a small portion of the entire North Fulton office market, which has nearly 19 million square feet of office space, mainly in Alpharetta. While the short-term outlook for the Roswell office market is not good, the long-term outlook remains favorable. At the present time, there is a surplus of office space in Roswell, mirrored in North Fulton, metro Atlanta and the nation due to the national economic downturn and reduction in hiring. A rebound of the Roswell office market is not likely until sometime in 2003 or 2004, since the resumption of hiring by large corporations generally follows the upturn in the economy by about a year. However, Roswell is well positioned to capture demand once the economy does turn around. Roswell has a well educated workforce, high quality of life, good telecommunications infrastructure, central location and over 2,000 home-based businesses that might generate demand for office space as they grow.

D. Housing needs

Recommendation #7: Some retail should be converted to residential

Housing balance is important to the City. The Comprehensive Plan states that Roswell's Housing Plan supports, among other things: measures to provide housing for the upper spectrum (i.e., elderly) of the life cycle; regulatory reforms that reduce housing costs but without compromising essential public purposes of land use regulation; voluntary, incentive-based inclusionary housing and linkage programs for moderate income housing; and consideration of

additional affordable housing and community development programs. Some housing needs are hard to meet given Roswell's market conditions (high land values) and policy conditions (low-density zoning). The only practical way to meet these needs is to allow some higher density housing in the City. Since the Comprehensive Plan calls for keeping the existing mix of single to multi-family housing, it should be possible to add higher density multifamily housing (townhomes and cluster homes) to the commercial redevelopment mix, as long as this development is balanced by the equivalent proportion of units of single family housing. The Comprehensive Plan also calls for multi-family housing to be allowed to be mixed with commercial sites and uses within designated "activity centers."

E. Natural resources, Greenspace and recreation requirements

Recommendation #8: Redevelopment needs to be green, but economically feasible

The Comprehensive Plan contains a number of environmental strategies that apply to development, including redevelopment. These include:

- ◆ limit development in environmentally sensitive areas
- ◆ identify and maintain a system of greenspaces in the City, linked to other greenways such as Alpharetta's
- ◆ apply impervious surface limitations citywide
- ◆ establish 100 foot buffers for streams and prohibit impervious surface within 150 feet of all streams and creeks
- ◆ channel development into areas that have already been disturbed

There are several implications for redevelopment. The first is that redevelopment in lieu of new development benefits the environment. This may seem obvious but it strengthens the rationale for providing certain incentives or subsidies for redevelopment as outlined in Section VI and VII below. The second is that it may be appropriate for the City to acquire land near streams or to have such land donated in order to create a greenway system. Another point to consider is that most existing development contains more impervious surface than would be allowed under current rules. Thus, it is imperative that best management practices for stormwater retention be instituted as part of the redevelopment process. This can increase the costs of redevelopment substantially, however, and act as a disincentive if not handled carefully. One possible solution

for smaller parcels is to participate in common stormwater treatment facilities (e.g., regional detention), either provided for a fee or facilitated by the City.

F. Schools and churches

Recommendation #9: Some retail should be converted to schools and churches

Schools are an important element of Roswell's quality of life and contribute to maintaining high property values. The Comprehensive Plan encourages the continued development of both public and private educational facilities. Similarly, religious institutions are an important part of the community. However, the Comprehensive Plan notes that there have been some problems associated with locating schools and churches in residential areas, as has been the practice, and recommends that the Zoning Ordinance be changed to make these conditional uses. This recommendation is being pursued in the complete rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance that is now underway. In the proposed new Zoning Ordinance, these uses are allowed to be part of the mixture that goes into C-3. Locating schools and churches in existing commercial centers would in effect replace some redundant commercial space, particularly if the schools and churches purchase properties and make substantial improvements to them.

G. Traffic and congestion

Recommendation #10: Redevelopment should be mixed-use and transit-friendly

Traffic and congestion are among the top issues concerning Roswell's residents, and the City is in the process of updating its transportation plan in order to improve the flow of traffic as much as possible. This plan is expected to include traffic calming measures for the City's neighborhoods and support for regional planning efforts to increase the effectiveness of major highways such as Georgia 400. Despite these efforts, congestion in the metro Atlanta region will continue to worsen due to the segregated nature of development in many areas including Roswell. Therefore, the Atlanta Regional Commission has developed a Regional Development Plan (RDP) with policies that strongly encourage mixed-use development and redevelopment. The RDP also encourages transit-oriented development. Many of Roswell's older commercial areas are located on bus routes but could be improved to allow transit service to be provided in a more efficient, cost-effective and customer-friendly manner.

Recommendation #11: Redevelopment requires inter-Departmental cooperation

In order to accomplish redevelopment goals, the City needs to involve its various Departments in addressing the problems identified in the Findings listed above. Traffic congestion and stormwater management are two examples of issues that transcend the Community Development Department. The effective implementation of this Redevelopment Strategy will require the collaboration of many City departments.

VI. Tools and incentives to encourage appropriate redevelopment

Market forces lead to redevelopment in many cases and Roswell has seen a great deal of redevelopment occur without intervention from the government. Recent examples include the redevelopment of the old Sam's Club on Alpharetta Highway to the Andretti Speed Lab, the redevelopment of the old Roberd's on Holcomb Woods Parkway to the Fulton County Math and Science Charter High School and the redevelopment of the former Roswell High School to the Liberty Lofts Condominium and Townhome development. All of these involved changes in use but the retention of the existing building structures. Roswell has also experienced redevelopment involving the demolition of older structures and their replacement with new structures such as the Walgreen's on the corner of Mansell Road and Highway 9.

However, the City would prefer not to passively wait for redevelopment to occur in a haphazard manner. The purpose of this strategy is to identify actions that can be taken to encourage timely and appropriate redevelopment. Presented below is a list of the various tools that can be used together with a discussion of each tool's relevance to Roswell.

- A. Infrastructure: streetscape improvements, access roads, parking decks, signalization, stormwater management, etc.

One of the most widely accepted tools used to promote economic development is the provision of infrastructure. This is an acknowledged role for government and does not discriminate against individual businesses. In the case of redevelopment, the provision of infrastructure can help to improve an area's functional and visual appeal. It can also signal that the local government is

committed to the revitalization of an area, helping to draw subsequent private investment. Well-designed infrastructure programs can pay for themselves in the rise in property values that they generate.

Tool #1: Streetscape improvement programs

Streetscape improvements can help achieve interconnectivity between commercial areas and the surrounding neighborhoods, add to the sense of place and make an area more pedestrian and transit-friendly. These generally consist of upgrading sidewalks and adding designer lighting fixtures, benches, trash receptacles and water features. A related element is burying or consolidating utilities to eliminate multiple overhead wires, but this is done at great expense.

Streetscape programs can be initiated by the City, by property owners, or a combination of both. Such programs are probably most appropriately provided by the City where parcel sizes are small and by the developer where parcel sizes are large. Where parcel sizes are large, the property owner should be encouraged to undertake streetscape improvements internal to the site to complement those on the public right of way. When streetscape programs are implemented by the City, they can be financed through general fund revenues, special taxation districts, Downtown Development Authority Bonds, or state and federal tax programs. In Roswell, this tool would be well-suited for use in Midtown Roswell, Brannon Square and South Atlanta Street and might also be used in the area on Holcomb Bridge Road east of GA 400.

Tool #2: Access roads

As noted in the matrix on page nine, access issues are among the most prominent concerns that arise when centers become outmoded. In some cases, the City may wish to budget for the provision of road infrastructure as an incentive to promote the revitalization of an area. While the City may not be able to directly provide access roads to remedy all situations, it may find it possible to undertake public/private partnerships to provide access roads in other cases. The City can also use its zoning authority to encourage property owners to plan for inter-parcel access. In Roswell, this tool would be well suited for use in Midtown Roswell, South Atlanta Street and the area on Holcomb Bridge Road east of GA 400.

Tool #3: Parking Decks

Parking decks are frequently used to promote growth in areas where there is relatively high density or where densification is occurring with little or no room for additional surface parking. Parking decks can be built and operated by municipal parking authorities or by downtown development authorities as well as by private individuals. When municipalities build parking decks, there would likely be partial cost-recovery but some subsidy might be required. In Roswell, this tool might be appropriate for South Atlanta Street and Midtown Roswell.

Tool #4: Signalization and Traffic Management

Intersection improvements are usually a part of every local jurisdiction's budget and making wise use of the funds budgeted for signalization can help spur redevelopment. Coordination of signal timing and other traffic management tools should also be deployed to ensure that redevelopment goals are being met. In Roswell, this tool would be suited for use in the Town Center Mall area, the area on Holcomb Bridge Road east of GA 400, the area around Brannon Square, South Atlanta Street and Midtown Roswell.

Tool #5 Stormwater management

Many of Roswell's older retail areas do not meet the requirements of the new water resources protection ordinance. Bringing these areas up to compliance can be relatively costly and difficult to do efficiently. There is a need to consider an expanded City role in providing stormwater treatment and management facilities. It may even be appropriate for the City to subsidize such service in areas targeted for redevelopment. This tool would be most useful in the South Atlanta Street area and Midtown Roswell.

B. Expedited processing

One of the primary attractions many already-developed sites have over raw land is the perception that the tenant can occupy the space quickly. In Roswell, such a perception is not always valid and can lead to unrealistic expectations and frustration on the part of the developer and prospective tenant. The solution is to allow expedited processing for redevelopment projects that meet the conditions specified as recommendations in item V. above.

Tool #6: Streamlined approval procedures

Projects that meet specified criteria could be officially designated Redevelopment Priority Projects by the Community Development Committee. The first step in assuring a speedy review process would be the assignment of a Redevelopment Priority Project case manager. The case manager would be responsible for preparing an outline of the necessary review and approval process, and communicating this to the applicant. The case manager would work with the applicant to apply to the relevant bodies for expedited approval, as appropriate. Whenever possible and as appropriate, concurrent reviews would be authorized. The case manager would be responsible for shepherding the project through the review and approval process, and providing periodic status updates on the project to the Community Development Committee. This tool could be used throughout the City.

Tool #7: Pre-packaged site design approvals

An even more direct approach to expedited processing would be to offer pre-packaged site design approvals for sites that had been part of a detailed Redevelopment Plan, such as the Midtown Roswell Redevelopment Plan. The City could create small Special Area Development Packages to offer to prospective developers, which would not only shorten the redevelopment timeframe but also greatly reduce the risk.

These Special Area Development Packages could be prepared by the City or a Redevelopment Authority for sites where the property owner had agreed to participate, and would include: 1) a development pro forma with suggested mix of uses, development intensity and the identification of issues such as land assemblage; and 2) a detailed site and development plan that illustrates building placement and massing, parking and access. The City would assign a project manager who would be responsible for securing the necessary staff and Board approvals for the project.

This tool would be most appropriate for areas with a detailed Redevelopment Plan, but could conceivably be used for other key sites throughout the City, such as the old Funeral Home site on the Square.

C. Zoning and regulatory incentives

Tool #8: Mixed use zoning

The City needs to encourage mixed-use development as stated in Recommendation #9 above. This is true in all commercial areas of the City, not just in those targeted for redevelopment. The zoning to permit mixed-use development is already present to a certain degree in two of the City's most vibrant districts, the Historic District and the Parkway Village District. However, the City needs to extend this ability to mix uses to existing commercial centers. This would involve:

- creation of a new redevelopment zoning category that will encourage a mixture of uses in areas currently zoned strictly commercial
- allowing flexibility in design to accommodate multiple uses over time
- taking care not to tailor zoning requirements such as parking so narrowly that mixing uses, or evolving uses over time, is made difficult

Tool #9: Density bonus

Given the high cost of land along many commercial corridors, for some parcels it is unlikely that redevelopment will occur unless additional density is allowed. This density can be in the form of commercial and/or residential space, depending on the parcel. While the goal is to reduce the amount of retail space overall, it might make sense for some parcels to convert portions of existing retail space to office or institutional uses and then develop additional retail space on the outparcels close to the street. All in all, the net result is a reduction in retail space. This would require a zoning change to permit: a) a mixture of uses as outlined above and b) more intense development where the infrastructure existed to support additional density. It is conceivable that densities of up to 8 residential units per acre might be warranted in key redevelopment projects that meet the City's design criteria. Another tool would be to allow for an increase in height of up to 65 feet for office projects on redevelopment sites. This could be patterned after the existing language in the Parkway Village Overlay District ordinance, which provides for a 65 foot height bonus for projects that meet certain criteria.

D. Tax tools and financial incentives

Tool #10: Waive impact fees or development fees

Developers always appreciate a reduction in their costs. Waiving impact fees is possible for extraordinary economic development. Impact fees for some redevelopment projects can be significant but are usually relatively minor so the ultimate benefit to the developer may not be that great. Furthermore, when impact fees are waived, the City must find another revenue source to replace them. Another way to reduce developers' costs would be to add to the City Code a provision to waive development (i.e., processing) fees for selected redevelopment projects. These tools are best applied to redevelopment projects that will generate spillover benefits such as tourism, an increase in high-paying jobs or dramatic improvements to a large area.

Tool #11: Allow property owners to co-finance infrastructure and other improvements through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Community Improvement Districts (CIDs).

Property owners who wish to provide improvements in their areas can form Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) or Community Improvement Districts (CIDs). BIDs are used primarily in downtown development efforts that provide management and promotional services. CIDs are used to provide more intense infrastructure in commercial areas or to help plan for such. Both of these tools require a set of property owners who are willing to pay additional taxes to receive additional benefits.

Tool #12: Tax Allocation Bonds

A Tax Allocation District may be established based on an approved Redevelopment Plan if it meets the criteria set forth in Georgia's enabling legislation. The property taxes received directly by various government entities in the TAD are frozen although the property taxes paid by the property owners are not. As property values rise, the difference in the amount received directly by the government and the amount paid by the property owners is collected and used to pay for infrastructure improvements which have been financed by a bond issue. Since the taxes collected by Roswell are not as significant as those collected by the County and Board of Education, this tool is unlikely to yield much revenue unless the County and the Board of Education can be persuaded to participate. Fulton County and the Board of Education have

approved a TAD in South Fulton. The justification for the Board of Education to approve the TAD in South Fulton was the vast increase in the amount of sales tax revenues generated (the school system receives 1% under the current SPLOST) which offset the property taxes foregone. Sandy Spring is currently attempting to get approval for a TAD but does not yet have County approval. This tool might be appropriate for Midtown Roswell.

Tool #13: Policy Driven Budget, including the Leasing of City Facilities

A broad goal for the City is to ensure that its budget reflects its policy priorities. The promotion of redevelopment can occur through the location of pocket parks at strategic points in the City, or through the leasing of City facilities in areas needing rejuvenation. It can also occur through putting infrastructure investments in areas targeted for redevelopment.

E. Land assembly and direct public/quasi-public involvement

Tool #14: Downtown Development Authority

The City should reconstitute its Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to take a direct role in land assembly, parking and other functions. A DDA has corporate powers, development and redevelopment powers and can act as a redevelopment agency. It also has eminent domain powers, the power to issue revenue bonds and the power to operate a project. With so many powers at its disposal, it is certain to be an asset in promoting redevelopment throughout the City.

Tool #15: Promote redevelopment through siting of public facilities.

Even without a DDA, the City can purchase or lease properties for public purpose. Given the growth of the City, it has need for the expansion of its facilities. The siting of such facilities should not just be determined by immediate availability but also by the long-term impact of those facilities on the development of an area. On February 4, 2002, at the initiation of City Councilwoman Lori Henry, the City adopted a policy giving preference for location of public facilities in existing office, commercial and light industrial space. In addition, the City can give a boost to individual redevelopment projects by guaranteeing to be part of a development. For example, the City's new Court Services project could be sited to promote development in Midtown Roswell.

VII. Implementation Plan

The actions needed to implement this strategy are delineated in the chart that follows.

In sum, these actions are:

1. Pursue policy based budgeting to accomplish redevelopment goals
 - ◆ Establish that redevelopment is a funding priority for the City, including the provision of infrastructure, parks and stormwater management facilities in target areas
 - ◆ Consider locating City Facilities in redevelopment target areas
2. Approve and implement Midtown Roswell Redevelopment Plan
 - ◆ Apply for LCI Grandfathering
 - ◆ Reconstitute Downtown Development Authority
 - ◆ Secure letters of commitment from property owners
 - ◆ Apply for LCI Funding
 - ◆ Prepare small/target area development packages
 - ◆ Examine parking needs
 - ◆ Adopt Midtown Zoning Overlay and design guidelines
3. Consider detailed Redevelopment Plans for other areas of the City such as Holcomb Bridge Road east of GA 400 and Alpharetta Highway north of Holcomb Bridge Road.
4. Adopt ordinance to dissuade deliberate vacancies
5. Adopt mixed use redevelopment zoning category to be included in second phase of New Zoning Ordinance
 - ◆ Establish density bonus
 - ◆ Encourage mixed use redevelopment
6. Adopt new zoning ordinance, which allows
 - ◆ waiver of development fees for redevelopment projects
 - ◆ streamlined approval procedures for targeted projects
7. Encourage updating of outmoded retail centers

- ◆ Assist where possible in improving access, ingress and egress and surrounding road networks
 - ◆ Establish incentives for improving design quality and pedestrian amenities
 - ◆ Consider public parking interventions in key redevelopment areas
8. As an interim measure to full redevelopment, promote conversion of vacant retail space for non-retail uses such as office and institutional, including churches, schools and non-profits
 9. Continue to promote existing retail space to attract quality retailers
 10. Develop a Redevelopment Marketing Plan
 11. Discourage new retail development and require that new retail development be constructed in a manner that will make a long-term contribution to the community
 12. Promote and disseminate information regarding BIDs and CIDs among property owners as a tool and provide support for their creation where this would be well received.