



# 2015 Downtown Suwanee

# Master Plan Update

**JULY 29, 2015**



# Planning Team

## Suwanee City Council

Jimmy Burnette, Mayor

Beth S. Hilscher, Mayor Pro Tempore

Richard I. Goodman

Daniel F. Foster

Doug Ireland

Linnea Miller

## City of Suwanee Staff

Marty Allen, City Manager

Josh Campbell, Planning Director

Denise Brinson, Economic Development Director

Matt Dickison, Planning Division Director

Adam Edge, Downtown Manager

## Consultant Team

Bill Tunnell, TSW

Woody Giles, TSW

David Laube, Noell Consulting Group

Eric Lusher, Pond

## Advisory Committee

Debra Bowens

Aaron Brown

Jimmy Burnette

Chloe Camp

James Davenport

Patty Etherton

Kathy Hedrick

Beth Hilscher

Anna Huthmaker

Travis Lanier

Shine Lee

Jeff Nalley

Tim O'Brien

Dave Patel

Elvira Rogers

Rob Rohloff

Lisa Sanderson

Liz Sawicki

Joy Smith

John Taliaferro

Michael Williamson

Aisha Yaqoob





# Table of Contents

- BACKGROUND ..... 7**
  - Introduction ..... 9
  - Previous Plans ..... 11
  - Downtown Suwanee Master Plan (2009) ..... 16
- DOWNTOWN SUWANEE TODAY ..... 27**
  - Urban Design ..... 32
  - Transportation ..... 35
  - Market Analysis ..... 38
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ..... 41**
- DOWNTOWN SUWANEE TOMORROW ..... 45**
  - Special Topics ..... 47
  - Land Use + Zoning ..... 51
  - Conceptual Plans ..... 58
  - Transportation ..... 69
  - Economic Development ..... 72
- MOVING FORWARD ..... 75**
- DETAILED MARKET ANALYSIS ..... 79**



# Background





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Suwanee Downtown Master Plan Update puts forth a number of key ideas for the future of the downtown area.

- **Focus future density adjacent to Town Center.** New dense development should be located immediately adjacent to Town Center, in order to build on the vibrancy already present. See page 56 for more details.
- **Transform the DeLay site into Suwanee's next great public space.** This key site should connect to Town Center Park and provide an urban park experience. See page 62 for more details.
- **Improve City Hall Plaza.** This key park should be improved to serve as a better gateway to the pedestrian tunnel and link Town Center with the DeLay site.
- **Convert Buford Highway into an urban boulevard.** Wide sidewalks, street trees, lighting, parallel parking, medians, and a roundabout at Russell Street will prepare this corridor for walkable redevelopment.
- **Improve street connectivity.** New publicly and privately constructed streets should bridge the gaps in the existing network, extend Town Center Avenue, and better connect Main Street to Suwanee Dam Road. See page 67 for more details.
- **Market Old Town as a destination.** Efforts in this historic area should focus on attracting destination businesses and preserving the quaint feel.

## INTRODUCTION

The City of Suwanee is proud of its vibrant, award winning downtown/Town Center, which has been created over the past dozen years in a manner consistent with the vision laid out in the 2003 New Town Center Master Plan and the updated 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan. With new development and funding opportunities, the City of Suwanee stands poised to expand and enrich its downtown area and will use this 2015 plan update as its road map.

This plan update retains the vision of the 2009 Master Plan, which is to improve and enhance walkability, livability, and identity to create a unified, economically viable downtown. This update continues the progress of the previous plan's vision by taking a more detailed look at key development sites and creating a comprehensive list of recommendations, which has been updated based on evolving conditions. The goals of the previous plan include the following:

- Circulation/ Infrastructure
  - » Develop a pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular network that is safe, attractive, and continuous.
  - » Ensure adequate water and sewer infrastructure to accommodate a range of future downtown needs.



*Integrating transportation and land use decisions is a key goal of this plan*



*New park space will continue to build on Suwanee's tradition of excellent public spaces*

- Open Space
  - » Promote multipurpose outdoor spaces in close proximity to residents for gathering, interacting, and cultural programming.
  - » Provide a variety of greenspaces that appropriately relate to the surrounding built environment.
- Land Use
  - » Identify, strengthen, and respect the unique character and historic integrity of downtown neighborhoods.
  - » Foster quality and appropriately scaled places that sustain the economic well-being of downtown and provide opportunities for live, work, and play for all ages.
  - » Promote variety in housing options for all ages.

## LCI Goals

The Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) has been nationally recognized for its success in leveraging public investment to promote quality growth and private development in towns, corridors, and population or employment centers throughout the Atlanta region. Suwanee's 2002 Old Town Master Plan was grandfathered as part of the LCI program, and this plan constitutes a 10-year update of that one. The goals of the Livable Centers Initiative are listed below.

- Encourage a diversity of medium to high-density, mixed-income neighborhoods, employment, shopping and recreation choices at the activity and town center level.
- Provide access to a range of travel modes including transit, roadways, walking and biking to enable access to all uses within the study area.
- Encourage integration of uses and land use policies/regulations with transportation investments to maximize the use of alternate modes.
- Through transportation investments, increase the desirability of redevelopment of land served by existing infrastructure at activity and town centers.
- Preserve the historic characteristics of activity and town centers and create a community identity.
- Develop a community-based transportation investment program at the activity and town center level that will identify capital projects, which can be funded in the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- Provide transportation infrastructure incentives for jurisdictions to take local actions to implement the resulting activity or town center study goals.
- Provide for the implementation of the Regional Development Plan (RDP) policies, quality growth initiatives and Best Development Practices in the study area, both through local governments and at the regional level.
- Develop a local planning outreach process that promotes the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly low income, minority and traditionally under-served populations.
- Provide planning funds for development of activity and town centers that showcase the integration of land use policy and regulation and transportation investments with urban design tools.

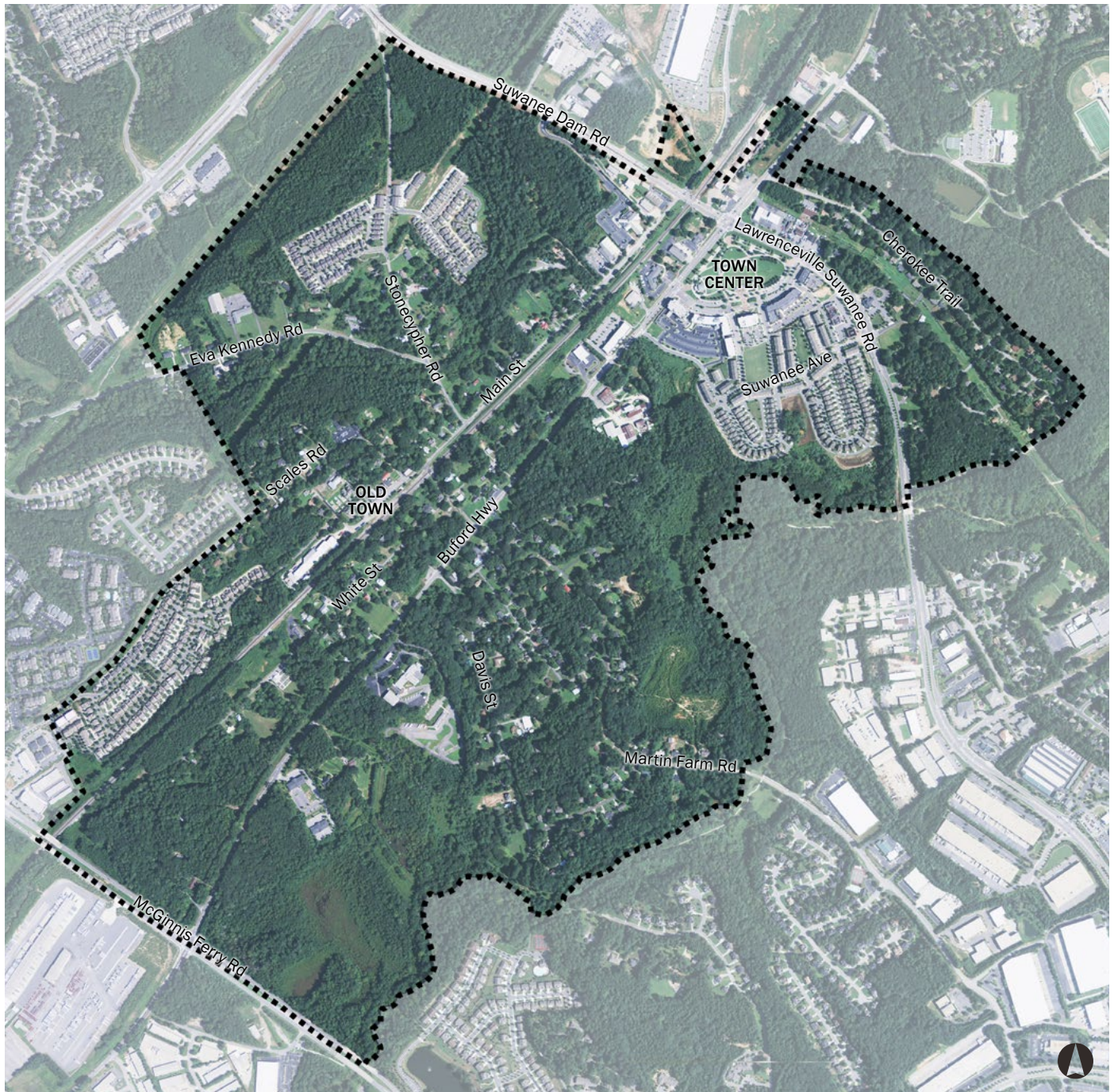
## Study Area

The study area, shown on the following page, is identical to the 2009 Master Plan study area, and is also identical to the boundary of the Downtown Development Authority. It consists of 820 acres and includes Town Center as well as the historic Old Town area. The study area is located approximately 30 miles northeast of downtown Atlanta.



*Successful planning will ensure that future growth in Suwanee is accessible by bike and on foot and connects to existing nodes (image courtesy Randall Myers)*

# STUDY AREA



## PREVIOUS PLANS

### 2020 Comprehensive Plan (2000)

This plan symbolized a paradigm shift to a more sustainable design methodology to enhance Suwanee. The planning process included seven public meetings showcasing the importance of community involvement in the City.

The philosophy of the 2020 Comprehensive plan promotes traditional planning patterns, including mixed-use and pedestrian-oriented development techniques. The plan encourages new infill development and construction to be compatible with historic structures in the area, which exhibit small lots and traditional architecture, and to be similar to existing street character. This is further supported by a collection of Design Guidelines for specific character areas within the City. Development must follow updated sustainable ordinances for protected buffers, landscaping, and trees. Additionally, the City outlined a trail system plan as well as a pedestrian and bike plan to connect residential uses to key commercial and employment destinations.

Economically, the City encouraged businesses to locate in the area near Old Town and the I-85 Gateway, reinforcing a live-work environment. This live-work environment could be additionally enhanced by a more diverse mix of housing uses and smaller lots sizes as exhibited in Old Town.

2020 COMP PLAN RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTED?
Continue efforts to annex property in close proximity to City Limits	On-going
Investigate additional funding approaches for commercial revitalization (TIF, CID, etc.)	Yes/On-going
Study long-term space requirements for all City departments	Yes
Implement Phase 2 + 3 of Path System	Yes
Extend sewer into Old Town	On-going
Implement Comprehensive Plan Design Guidelines	Yes
Investigate designating “Old Town” as a local historic district	On-going

### Old Town Master Plan (2002)

This was the first plan that took a comprehensive look at the downtown Suwanee area. It was grandfathered as part of the Livable Centers Initiative and is the basis for both the 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan and this current plan.

The Town Center envisioned in this plan has been implemented, including the new City Hall and Town Center Park. A number of other aspects of the plan, including Old Town revitalization and development along Buford Highway, are revisited in this current plan.



*Vision for Downtown Suwanee from the 2002 Old Town Master Plan*

OLD TOWN MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTED?
Town Center development	Yes
New street: Town Center Avenue	Yes
New City Hall	Yes
New Town Center Park	Yes
Pedestrian/bike tunnel	Yes
Expand sidewalk/greenway network	On-going
DeLay site land acquisition	Yes
New police station & library	Yes
New street to connect Main Street to Suwanee Dam Road	Not Yet
Create Old Town overlay district	Yes
Main/Russell Street streetscape	Not Yet

### Suwanee New Town Center Master Plan (2003)

This plan promotes a sustainable, mixed-use environment consistent with the goals of the Old Town Master Plan. The plan calls for Town Center to incorporate Smart Growth principles and these overall design goals: mixed-use development, downtown “street” character, critical mass of development, realistic development market, connectivity, civic presence, and flexibility.

This project was phased, beginning with Town Center Park, then phases two through four included the build-out of commercial and mixed-use spaces. This process concluded with construction of City Hall in 2009. The building heights of the Town Center step up to City Hall and incorporate an architectural vocabulary of existing adjacent buildings.

### 2030 Comprehensive Plan (2008)

The 2030 plan builds on strategies from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. It calls for future development in the City is to be concentrated along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road with clusters of development at I-85, Buford Highway, and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. A tax allocation districts was formed for the I-85 Gateway.

**I-85 Gateway.** A node for economic development including high density office alongside potential healthcare, hospitality, and multi-family uses. Development should project a positive image for the City.

**Town Center.** The pattern of this recently developed node will continue and expand with a mix of residential, retail, office and civic uses.

**Peachtree Industrial Boulevard at Suwanee Dam Road.** This node currently includes small- to medium-density commercial uses. Given its location and the presence of undeveloped land, it is envisioned as a denser, walkable, and regional retail center. Connections need to be improved between Town Center, Old Town, and surrounding neighborhoods.

**McGinnis Ferry Road.** Seen as a long term redevelopment corridor that could transition from industrial uses and apartments to mixed-use or TND.

NEW TOWN CENTER MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTED?
Town Center Build-Out	Yes
Phase 1: Town Center Park + Road	Yes
Phase 2: Parkside Mixed-Use	Yes
Phase 3: Parkside Mixed-Use	Yes
Phase 4: Parkside Commercial along Lawrenceville Suwanee Road	Yes
Phase 5: Parkside Mixed-Use along Buford Highway	Yes
Phase 6: New City Hall/Civic Building	Yes



*Vision for Buford Highway from 2030 Comprehensive Plan*

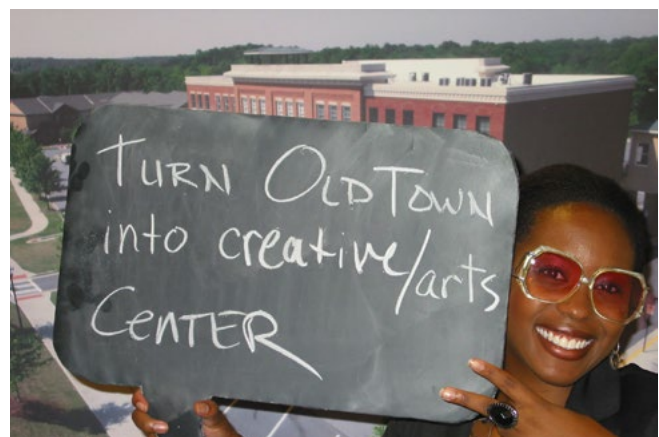
2030 COMP PLAN RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTED?
Update Old Town Master Plan	On-going
Explore Creation of a Local Historic District in Old Town	Yes
Continue to annex property in close proximity to city limits	On-going
Adopt Gateway TAD	Yes
City Hall Facility at Town Center	Yes
Old Town Gateways	No
Pedestrian underpass below railroad + related improvements at Buford Highway	Yes
Suwanee Creek Greenway rehab/extension, rehab of Trice Trail	Yes
Implement Comp Plan Design Guidelines	On-going
Promote development of planned commercial centers rather than strip development	On-going
Promote commuter rail station in Suwanee	On-going
Update Open Space/Greenway Trails Plan to incorporate new Comp Development Plan projects	Yes
Streetscapes in Old Town	No
Re-align Main Street	Not Yet
Improve Martin Farm Road	Yes
Improve White Street (Russell St. to White Ln.)	No
Improve White Ln. (White St. to Buford Hwy.)	No
Extend sewers into Old Town	Underway (Buford Hwy.)
Future Park Phases (Sims Lake, Suwanee Creek, Moore Road, DeLay Park, McGinnis/Hovendick, + Buford Hwy/Farm)	On-going
Suwanee Gateway Projects	On-going/Underway
Reconstruct Buford Highway as Main Street	On-going/Underway
Eva Kennedy Road improvements: traffic calming, sidewalks	Yes
Stonecypher Road: traffic calming	Yes
Greenway/Path: New path from library to Town Center property south of Buford Highway	Yes

## 2020 Vision Plan (2012)

In 2012 Suwanee embarked on a policy planning approach, creating the 20/20 Strategic Plan. This document helped the City address the critical programs and services that define Suwanee as a place, as a group of people, and its standards for quality of life. It will serve as a guide for City decision making in the future. The process included a steering committee representing a cross-section of the City, twenty interviews with a range of local stakeholders, public events, an online presence, round tables and focus groups. Seven driving principles were extracted from the process including the following:

- Communications + Engagement: How We Connect
- Economic Development: How We Propose
- Public Safety: What Provides Us Comfort
- Planning: How We Grow
- Community Culture: What Makes Us Interesting
- Parks + Open Space: How We Play
- Transportation: How We Move

2020 VISION PLAN	IMPLEMENTED?
Encourage youth involvement	On-going
Focus on quality of life as the core economic development strategy	On-going
Recruit + develop a diverse, high-quality commercial base	On-going
Help small businesses thrive	On-going
Transform Suwanee Gateway	On-going
Offer a wide variety of local events	Yes/On-going
Capitalize on the City's cultural assets	On-going
Prioritize existing parks	Yes/On-going
Make local physical connections	On-going



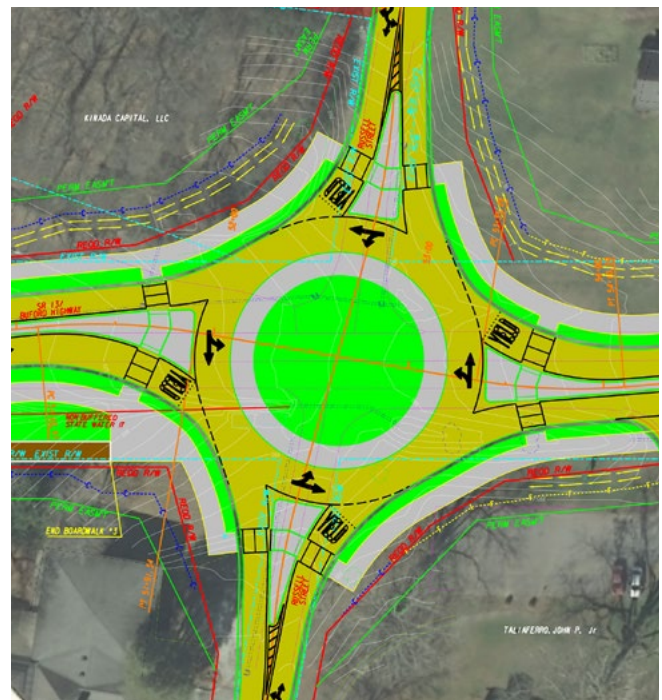
*Vision Plan community input*

## Buford Highway Transportation Study + Design (2010)

In 2010, Suwanee embarked on a transportation focused corridor study of Buford Highway from McGinnis Ferry Road to George Pierce Park. This planning effort included a review of existing traffic patterns, traffic safety, projection of future traffic demand, and recommendations for transportation improvements. Community outreach and participation was also used to engage citizens, stakeholders, and policy makers in the planning process and to vet the appropriateness of the recommendations with the overall community vision. The overall recommendation of the study was to “apply a context-sensitive design to Buford Highway” supported by a series of other initiatives.

Subsequent to the Buford Highway Transportation Study recommendations, a concept study and design was initiated along the corridor in 2014. This on-going effort currently includes retaining Buford Highway as a two-lane roadway, utilizing a “complete street” design in three sections. From McGinnis Ferry Road to Davis Street, a rural cross-section is planned to also include a multipurpose path. A “historic” section, from Davis Street to Town Center, will include space to accommodate on-street parking, a landscape zone, bicycle lanes, and sidewalks. The Town Center section will include a sidewalk on the west side of the road, bicycle lanes, and a landscaped median. Additionally, a roundabout is proposed at the intersection of Buford Highway and Russell Street, which is where the “rural” section transitions to the “historic” section.

BUFORD HWY TRANSPORTATION STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTED?
Apply a context-sensitive design to Buford Highway	Underway
Develop access to George Pierce Park from Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	No, but supported by further planning efforts
Modify location of the HAWK Signal on Buford Highway	On-going (as part of concept study and design)
Suwanee Dam Road and Main Street/Brogdon Road Intersection improvements	No
Various turn lane and signal improvements	On-going (as part of concept study and design)



Proposed Buford Highway improvements include sidewalks, trees, parallel parking, and a roundabout

## City of Suwanee Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan Update (2011)

Following an initial Alternate Modes Transportation Plan in 2006, the City of Suwanee created an update called the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan in 2011. The plan was implementation-based with a focus on improvements that will fill gaps in the existing system and provide connections from residential areas to Town Center and Old Town. A total of 43 project recommendations were separated into three tiers (Tier I – 2011 to 2015), Tier II (2016-2020), and Tier III (2020 and beyond). An additional seven projects planned by other agencies also were identified. The status of Tier I projects is shown in the table at the right.

### Other Transportation Efforts

Gwinnett County is developing a concept design for a Western Gwinnett Bikeway, which will consist of a multi-use trail along the west side of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. This path will extend from its current terminus in Duluth to McGinnis Ferry Road. Additionally, a spur will be constructed along Suwanee Creek from McGinnis Ferry Road to Suwanee Creek Park. While neither of these improvements are located within the Downtown Master Plan study area, their construction will effectively connect the Suwanee Creek Greenway to a larger regional bicycle and pedestrian network through Gwinnett County.

Gwinnett County also is updating its Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) this year. These plans, which is partially funded by Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), are often utilized as initial and local-based planning efforts in developing a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the entire Atlanta region, which documents primarily those transportation projects that are anticipated to receive some form of federal transportation funding. In turn, ARC is scheduled to adopt an updated version of the RTP in early 2016.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PLAN UPDATE RECOMMENDATIONS (TIER I)	IMPLEMENTED?
Sidewalk along Martin Farm Road from existing sidewalks to Greenway	Yes
Sidewalk along Scales Road west of multi-use trail terminus near Old Town Suwanee	Yes
Install sharrows along Scales Road from multi-use trail terminus to Main Street and along Main Street to existing pedestrian tunnel	Yes
Install sharrows along Russell Street, King Street, and Martin Farm Road from Main Street to Satellite Boulevard	Yes
Install sharrows along Eva Kennedy Road from PIB to Stonecypher Road to Main Street	Yes
Enhance crossing of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard at Suwanee Dam Road and Moore Road intersections	On-going
Install sharrows along Scales Road and Lake Point Boulevard	Yes
Sidewalk along Buford Highway from George Pierce Park to Dollar Circle and Ruby Forest subdivision	Yes
Sidewalk along Suwanee Dam Road from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to Brushy Creek Trail and from Brushy Creek Trail to library entrance	Yes
Brushy Creek Trail from Suwanee Dam Road to Stonecypher Road and Main Street	Underway
Sidewalks along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Eva Kennedy Road	Yes



## DOWNTOWN SUWANEE MASTER PLAN (2009)

Community planning is an ongoing process that builds upon itself over time. Previous reports, community involvement, and findings are evaluated and incorporated where and when appropriate into current planning efforts. With every iteration, plans are adjusted and refined. This current Downtown Master Plan Update is no different. This plan is built on the foundation of many past planning efforts that remain valid. After years of planning processes, adopting new plans, and implementing various recommendations of previous plans, it is both impossible and unwise to disentangle current planning efforts from recommendations of the past. Many of the City's broad goals of the overall downtown area have been clearly defined. This plan attempts to focus in with greater detail and precision.

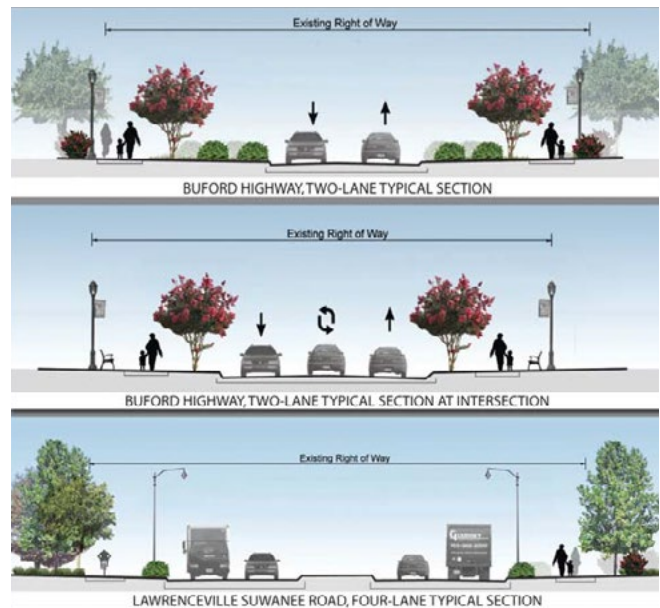
In 2000, the City of Suwanee undertook a major rewrite and re-adoption of its Comprehensive Plan, the Town Master Plan. This community plan laid out a new direction for the City and altered the trajectory of the City in many ways. Among its recommendations, the plan called for new compact development forms that allowed mixing of land uses, incorporated traditional neighborhood design techniques, and introduced the idea of Character Areas throughout the city. These Character Areas, as they were termed, were distinct parts of the City with distinguishable characteristics that could be promoted and enhanced.

Based on the city's historic downtown, the Old Town Character Area was one of these new districts. This character area encompassed roughly 600 acres emanating from Suwanee Old Town and generally extending along the Buford Highway corridor. The City recognized that Suwanee Old Town had certain historic patterns, common development characteristics, and opportunities that required a more focused planning effort. In 2001-2002, the City studied the area in greater detail through the 2002 Old Town Master Plan. This study was based on the Atlanta Regional Commissions Livable Cities Initiative approach.

The 2002 Old Town Master Plan was a comprehensive, multi-discipline community study that evaluated the area's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. Among its many findings, it recommended creating a new mixed-use Town Center that would serve as the identifiable center of Suwanee. Over the next decade, the City worked to implement the plan's recommendations:

- Building Suwanee Town Center Park
- Facilitating development of mixed-use buildings around the park
- Improving pedestrian connections around and to the Town Center

DOWNTOWN MP RECOMMENDATION	IMPLEMENTED?
Buford Hwy Corridor Study regarding streetscape	Yes
Wayfinding signs throughout Downtown Suwanee	Underway
Main Street: pedestrian improvements	Yes
Implement form-based zoning codes	No
Continue expansion of Suwanee Greenway system	On-going
Expand water + sewer infrastructure throughout Downtown Suwanee	On-going
Work to facilitate easements on environmentally sensitive lands + façade easements on cultural significant landmarks	On-going
New roads	On-going
Gateway monuments	On-going



Street section examples from the 2009 Downtown Master Plan

- Enabling events that create the “activity” in this activity center.

Additionally, the plan recommended appropriate forms for compatible new development extending away from Town Center along roads such as Main Street, Martin Farm Road, Stonecypher Road, and other locations. The core of that plan still serves as a useful community guide today.

In 2009, the Old Town Master Plan was updated and re-adopted as the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan. This plan built upon the previous effort. It validated many of the previous findings and recommended several new policies and projects, most notably the idea of reconstructing Buford Highway, where it runs through downtown, in a manner that connects to and enhances the recently constructed Town Center. The new Buford Highway would improve the connection between Suwanee’s emerging new Town Center and its historic Old Town area while promoting appropriate growth in a way that links the two areas. The City is currently working to reconstruct Buford Highway as recommended by the plan.

This latest 2015 Downtown Master Plan Update is an effort to evaluate previous ideas, findings, and recommendations of the past plans and build on them. Prior planning efforts include recommendations that require additional action and many of these ideas remain valid and should still be a part of the City’s future.

This update retains the vision of the 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, which is to improve and enhance walkability, livability, and identity to create a unified, economically viable downtown. The progress of previous plans is continued by taking a more detailed look at some key sites and making recommendations based on current conditions.

“We will be a place where inevitable growth is managed at a human scale and where new development is encouraged to integrate living, working, shopping and playing in close proximity to one another.”  
2020 Comprehensive Plan (2000)

## Development

**Pedestrian Scale and Mixed-Use.** This statement from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan summarizes several elements of Suwanee’s philosophy toward development. Development will be at a pedestrian (human) scale. This means that the built environment will make pedestrians comfortable. Unlike typical big-box development with large swaths of parking anchored by a single large building, downtown Suwanee will be defined by buildings with smaller footprints, parking that is behind buildings, high-profile pedestrian facilities, and low-speed roads and driveways. Downtown will have a mix of residences, businesses, and opportunities to play. Nowhere is this more clear than in Town Center and in historic Old Town. At different scales, these areas both have parks, homes and a mix of businesses that serve residents.

**Character Areas.** Character areas were first introduced with adoption of the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. This plan identified six character areas throughout the City. These are areas that would be developed as mixed-use communities with unique identities. One of these character areas is the Old Town character area. This area (with slight modifications to the boundary) became the focus of the Old Town Master Plan and subsequent updates. In the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan the idea of character areas was refined with character districts. These character districts are: Stonecypher, Town Center, Historic Old Town, and Suwanee Farm. Each of these character districts are composed of centers, villages, and/or districts as outlined in the plan and referenced below. The character districts and neighborhoods, villages, and centers as outlined above are still an important tool for directing growth and development.

“A key objective of this project was to assess the overall area and identify an appropriate location for a traditional, mixed-use town center.”  
Old Town Master Plan (2002)

“Foster quality and appropriately-scaled places that sustain the economic well-being of downtown and provide opportunities for live, work and play for all ages.”  
Downtown Suwanee Master Plan (2009)

## Transportation/Circulation

The 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan and other previous planning efforts all express a goal to enhance internal circulation; improve the pedestrian circulation system through provision of sidewalks, multi-use paths, improved intersections, and road crossings; and coordinate land uses.

### **Internal Circulation and Pedestrian Transportation.**

Downtowns are typically built with an interconnected grid of streets. In Suwanee, this grid pattern can be seen in historic Old Town and newer developments, such as Town Center, Stonecypher, and the development along Scales Road. While maintaining a strict grid pattern may not be realistic in Suwanee because of the local topography and existing development, the City can work to ensure that as development occurs streets are connected to one another. The 2009 Downtown Master Plan provides guidance for potential improvements to the internal street network on the Downtown Suwanee Circulation Map.

A number of sidewalk projects, trail projects and other pedestrian improvements are identified in both the Old Town Master Plan and Downtown Suwanee Master Plan. If the City seeks pedestrian scale development, then it is important to ensure that pedestrian facilities are in place to allow for pedestrian travel.

**Downtown Suwanee Circulation Map.** This map is incorporated into this update, along with the accompanying discussion of road network improvements in the various character districts. Some of these projects have been completed, while others have not. Unless specifically eliminated or modified by recommendations in this update, these projects should still be considered in the future. Some of these projects may be undertaken by private development while others may be identified as projects that belong in the City's Capital Improvement Plan. It is important to note that this update, like other planning documents, identifies potential projects that are evaluated and prioritized on an annual basis by the City.

**Coordination of Land Uses.** What is meant by coordination of uses? When uses are segregated and lot sizes increased, the distances between uses and buildings are stretched and travel time increases. As travel distances increase, pedestrian travel between uses and locations becomes less realistic for many residents. Smaller lots, multi-story buildings, and integration of uses reduce the distance between uses and allows residents to easily walk, bike or drive to nearby parks and non-residential uses. Town Center is the best example of this coordination in the City.

“Improvements to internal circulation, coordination of land uses and the addition of pedestrian amenities will increase the ability of Suwanee residents to realize their goal of creating more of [a] ‘live/work’ community.”

2020 Comprehensive Plan (2000)

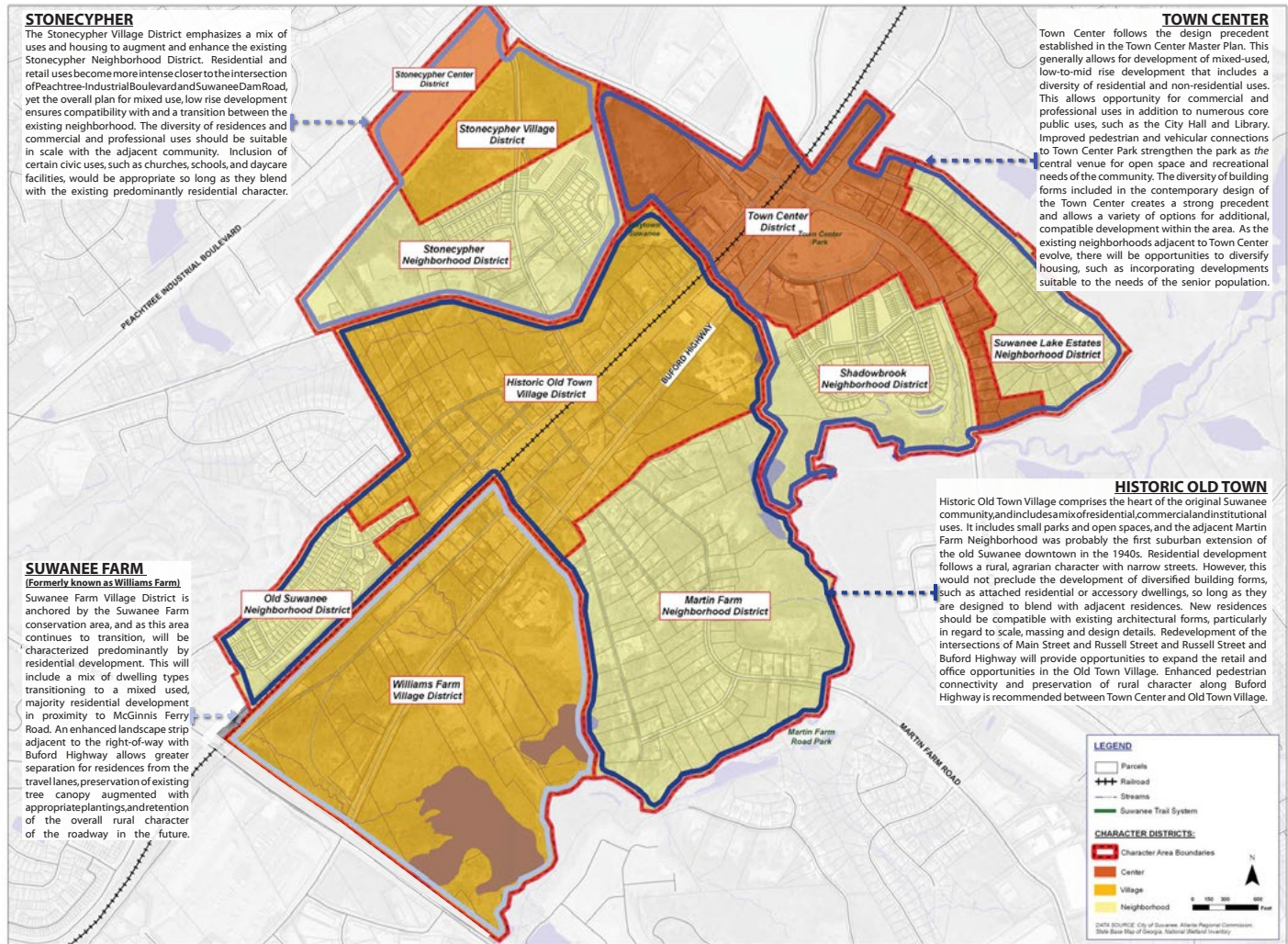
“The integration between land use planning, transportation planning, and urban design is important to developing a unified downtown area that may function as a live-work-play environment.”

Old Town Master Plan (2002)

“New roadway connections will create a network of interconnected streets, appropriate to the scale of development and supportive of creating complete streets.”

Downtown Suwanee Master Plan (2009)

# 2009 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN CHARACTER DISTRICTS

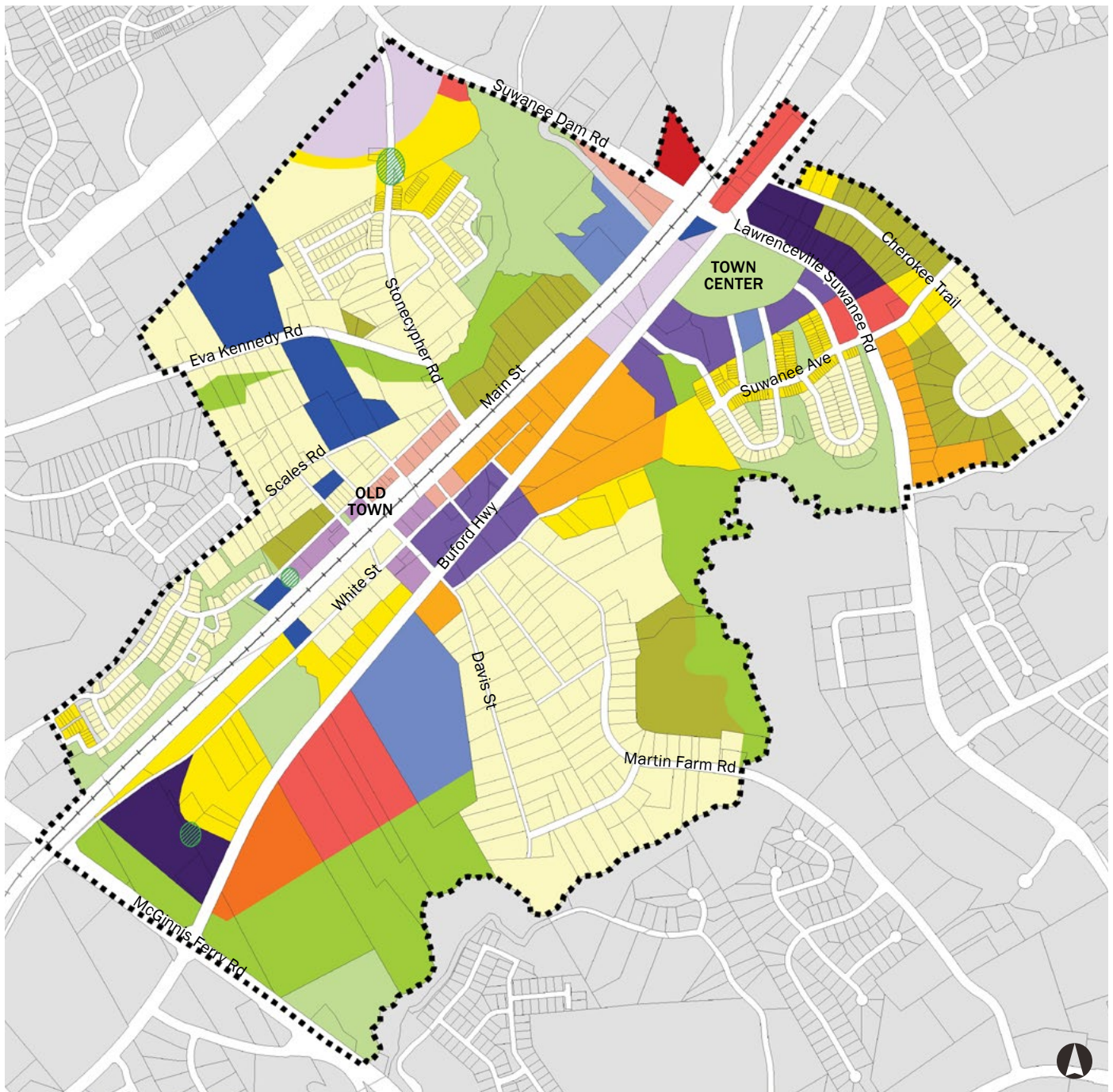


Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, figure 3-A

Downtown Suwanee is a collage of distinct places and districts that, woven together, form a diverse community with tremendous character, history, and vibrancy. The emerging vision of downtown Suwanee is that of an intentionally connected series of distinct places and character areas. The districts that form will continue to better define Downtown. They possess or are planned to develop at one of the different scales: Center, Village, or Neighborhood. Identifying each of these distinct separate types of places confirms that each has an appropriate scale, mix of elements, and unique form.

**Centers, Villages, and Neighborhoods.** The principal success story of the City of Suwanee over the last 5 years has been the planning for and construction of the new Town Center. Town Center exemplifies the importance of first defining character areas and then implementing that character area with appropriate scale and design. In this study area, several Villages and Centers either exist or should be nurtured to enhance their own unique and diverse elements. Some of these districts already exist, such as the Town Center District and Historic Old Town Village District. These areas simply need additional development to strengthen the fabric of what is already in place in those districts. Other districts, such as the Stonecypther Village District and the Suwanee Farm Village District (formerly known as Williams Farm District), are tremendous opportunities to create new character areas within Downtown. These areas should not conflict or compete with the other districts, but instead they should complement and complete these districts and the overall offerings within Downtown Suwanee.

# 2009 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #d8bfd8; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed-use majority non-residential 1-2 floors | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #f08080; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Low-rise retail/office conversion 1-2 floors           |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #c8a2c8; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed-use majority residential 1-2 floors     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Low-rise retail/office new building 1-2 floors         |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #6a5acd; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed-use majority non-residential 3-5 floors | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff0000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mid-rise retail/office 2-3 floors                      |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #483d8b; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mixed-use majority residential 3-5 floors     | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #6495ed; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic, public  |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Single family home, detached                  | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #0000cd; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Civic, private   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffff00; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Townhome, attached                            | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #90ee90; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Existing open space/park                               |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #808000; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Two-plus family residential                   | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #32cd32; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Conservation   |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffa500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Low-rise residential 1-3 floors               | <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #339933; border: 1px solid black; border-style: dashed;"></span> Proposed open space (conceptual) |
| <span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ff4500; border: 1px solid black;"></span> Mid-rise residential 4-5 floors               |  |

# 2009 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN CONCEPT PLAN



Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, figure 3-B-1

## Plan Concepts

The following Villages and Centers have been identified in the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan study boundary.

The Stonecypher Village District comprises the portion of the study area concentrated around the intersection of Peachtree Industrial Road and Suwanee Dam Road and areas south along Stonecypher Road and Eva Kennedy Road. Existing land use patterns are primarily residential, and the area includes historic structures and new construction. The concept plan for this area emphasizes a mix of uses and housing to augment and enhance the existing Stonecypher Neighborhood District. Residential and retail uses become more intense closer to the intersection of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Suwanee Dam Road. Mixed use, low rise development ensures compatibility with and a transition from the retail use along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to the existing neighborhood. New residential and nonresidential uses should respect the scale of existing neighborhoods. Inclusion of certain civic uses, such as churches, schools, and daycare facilities, would



Stonecypher Village District

be appropriate so long as they blend with and do not overwhelm the existing residential character.

The Historic Old Town Village District comprises the heart of the original Suwanee community; it includes a mix of residential, commercial and institutional uses along with small parks and open spaces. The adjacent Martin Farm Neighborhood was probably the first suburban extension of the old Suwanee downtown in the 1940s. Historic residential development follows a rural, agrarian pattern with narrow streets. However, this pattern does not preclude the development of diversified building forms, such as attached residential or accessory dwellings, so long as they are designed to blend with existing adjacent residences. New residences should be compatible with existing architectural forms, particularly in regard to scale, massing, and design details. Redevelopment of the intersections of Main Street and Russell Street and Russell Street and Buford Highway provide opportunities to expand the retail and office opportunities in the Historic Old Town Village District. Enhanced pedestrian connectivity and preservation of rural character along Buford Highway is recommended between Town Center and Old Town Village.

The Suwanee Farm Village District (formerly known as Williams Farm District) is anchored by the Suwanee Farm conservation area and in the future is planned to be characterized predominantly by residential development. This will include a mix of dwelling types transitioning to a mixed-used, majority residential development nearer to McGinnis Ferry Road. An enhanced landscape strip adjacent to the right-of-way along Buford Highway allows for greater separation between residences and the travel lanes, preservation of existing tree canopy augmented with appropriate plantings and retention of the overall rural character of the roadway in the future. The Suwanee Farm conservation area should be cultivated into a community garden. This park could set the tone for the development of this area.

The Town Center District follows the design precedent established in the Town Center Master Plan. This generally allows for development of low to mid-rise development that includes a diversity of residential and non-residential uses. Commercial and professional uses are integrated with numerous core public uses, such as the City Hall, park and amphitheater, and Library. Improved pedestrian and vehicular connections to Town Center Park strengthen the park as the central venue for the open space and recreational needs of the community. The diversity of building forms included in the contemporary design of Town Center creates a strong precedent and allows a variety of options for additional, compatible development within the area. As the existing neighborhoods adjacent to Town Center evolve, there will be opportunities to diversify housing, such as incorporating developments suitable to the needs of the senior population.



Historic Old Town Village District



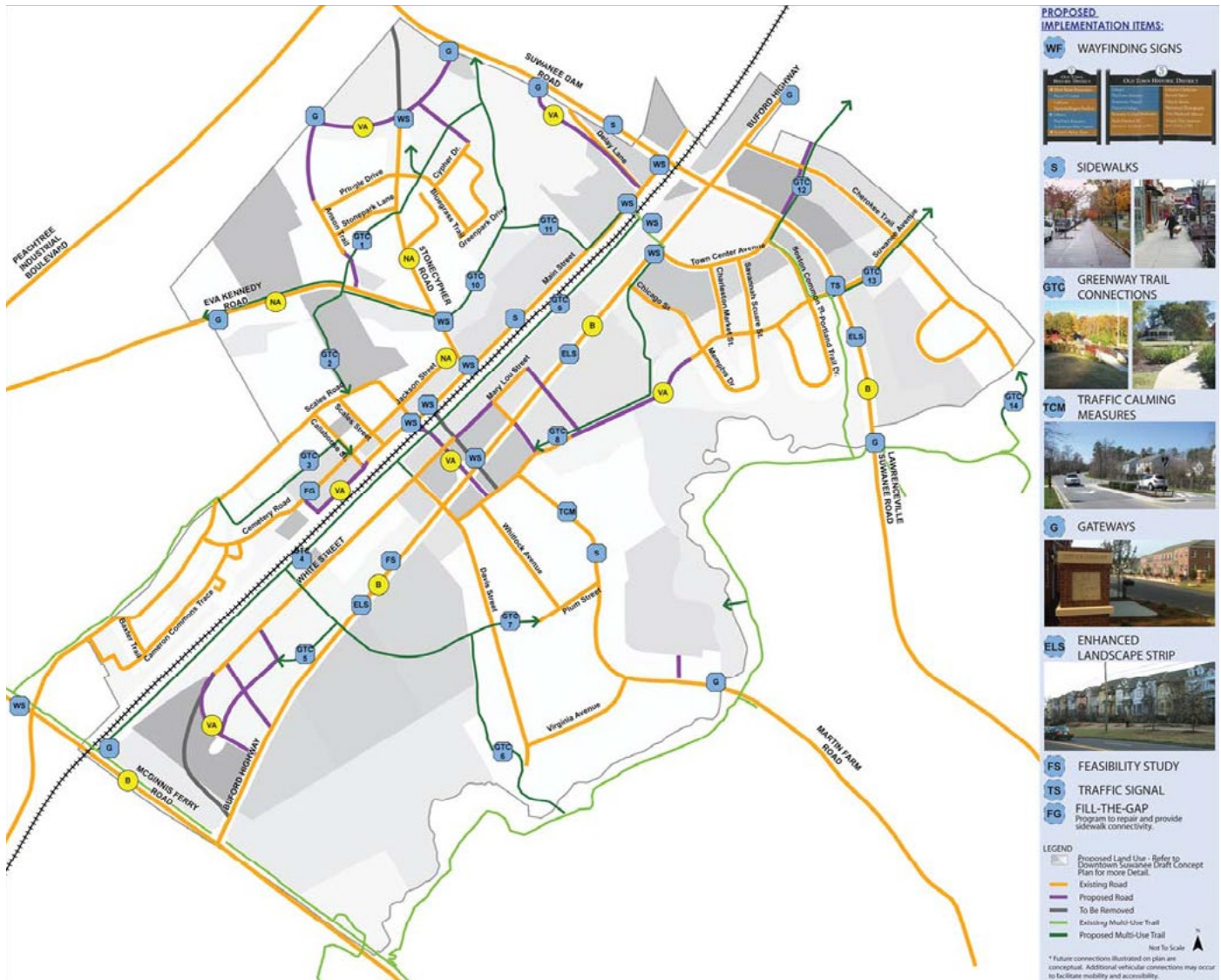
Suwanee Farm Village District



Town Center District

Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, pages 36-37

# 2009 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN CIRCULATION ELEMENTS



Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, figure 3-C

## Proposed Connectivity

**Stoneycpher Village:** A new connection is proposed to connect Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to Suwanee Dam Road, currently dubbed the Stoneycpher Connector. With this connection, the existing access of Stoneycpher Road to Suwanee Dam Road would be closed and transferred to the new roadway. The current intersection of Stoneycpher Road at Suwanee Dam Road is located near to the intersection of Suwanee Dam Road and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and only provides access from Stoneycpher to and from east-bound Suwanee Dam Road. The new connection will need to provide a full intersection with Suwanee Dam Road and align with a median break along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard. Specific traffic and design considerations will be determined after additional engineering review and assessment. Additional connections to the existing street network with the new connector are also desired.

**Historic Old Town Village:** The major new connections proposed within Historic Old Town Village include realignment of Russell Street south of its current location to align with Scales Road in Old Town and an extension of Main Street south that connects with Jackson Street. The realigned Russell Street could provide the development gateway into Old Town, however, relocating Russell Street as shown on the concept plan would require ownership of all parcels on both sides of the existing and proposed Russell Street. This would only be accomplished as a part of a larger master-planned redevelopment project. The extension of Main Street to the south was proposed in the 2002 Old Town Master Plan. Currently, an active business precludes development of such an extension. Additional connections are desired from White Street to replicate the block patterns found currently in Old Town. East of Buford Highway, a new roadway connection between King Street and Suwanee Avenue is desired to more directly



# 2009 DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN PROPOSED CONNECTIVITY



Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, figure 5-A

link Old Town with Town Center, providing an alternative secondary connection to Buford Highway. These efforts will expand the existing Old Town street grid to Buford Highway.

**Suwanee Farm Village:** Within the Suwanee Farm Village, a new roadway network is proposed to provide access to the residential, multi-use node near McGinnis Ferry Road. A major element is realigning White Street to a connection with Buford Highway, north of its existing intersection. This realignment will allow a greater offset at the intersection at Buford Highway and McGinnis Ferry Road. The new roadway network within this area will hinge on development proposed for this village.

**Town Center:** The entire roadway network within Town Center is new. The only proposed connection within this node is to extend Town Center Avenue across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road to connect to Cherokee

Avenue and George Pierce Park. This new connection will link two major recreational areas, Town Center Park and George Pierce Park. It is possible that this connection could be a trail-only if a road connection is not feasible. Concerns about providing safe crossing of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road for non-motorized modes exist at both this intersection and the intersection of Suwanee Avenue. Signalization may be required at both intersections to safely accommodate non-motorized modes.

**Other Connections:** Two additional new connections are suggested outside of a center or village district, one from Martin Farm Road to provide a connection to an undeveloped future residential neighborhood, and a connection from the library driveway on Suwanee Dam Road to Main Street. The proposed connection from the library driveway to Main Street is intended to provide safer ingress and egress to Main Street from Suwanee

Dam Road. As noted in the assessment, the intersection of Suwanee Dam Road at Main Street and Brogdon Road is a safety concern for the city and county. Recently, Gwinnett County posted a left-turn restriction from Suwanee Dam Road to Main Street, but the restriction was removed due to access needs of downtown businesses. The need to provide an improved connection to Main Street from Suwanee Dam Road was also identified in the 2002 Old Town Master Plan.

Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, pages 49-50

### Land Use Recommendations

To facilitate the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan, consideration was given to how the various land use types fit with existing zoning classifications and development patterns outlined on the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan. Recommendations are made in the context of the four Character Districts outlined on the Concept Plan.

**Stonecypher Village District Zoning and Future Land Use Compatibility.** Current zoning classifications in this area include R100 and M1, with the adjacent Stonecypher Neighborhood developed under a PMUD classification. The M1 classification does not allow for the development of any residential uses. The Future Land Use Map indicates that this area is appropriate for a mixed-use village pattern of development, which emphasizes a variety of residential housing options. A zoning change from M1 will be required to facilitate the recommendations of the Plan, but a change to zoning classifications that will facilitate the proposed pattern of development should be compatible with the Future Land Use Map. The R100 zoning classification adjacent to the Stonecypher Neighborhood around the intersection with Stonecypher Road and Eva Kennedy Road is compatible with both the Future Land Use Map and proposed Concept Plan in regard to single family detached residential development. However, the R100 requirements, as currently written, would not allow for development of the 2+ concept.

**Historic Old Town Village District Zoning and Future Land Use Compatibility.** Current zoning classifications in this area include R140, R100, R75, IRD, C1, C2, C2A, OTCD, OI and M1. The diversity of zoning classifications is largely compatible with the Future Land Use Map, which indicates that this area is appropriate for development as a mixed use center and mixed use village. It is also compatible with the proposed Master Plan, which recommends inclusion of mixed use, commercial, and residential uses in proximity to one another. Incorporating the recommended diversity of residential uses including townhomes, residential 2-plus and residential low-rise development may be problematic under existing zoning, as the R100 and R140 as currently written limit development to single family detached residential

MASTER PLAN LAND USE ELEMENTS	STONECYPHER VILLAGE DISTRICT
Residential land use	Residential single family detached with complementary infill
	Residential townhomes attached
	Residential 2-plus
Mixed use land use	Mixed-use low-rise majority non-residential
Non-residential land use	Low-rise office-retail-new
Civic land use	Civic private
Open space	Open space
	Conservation

MASTER PLAN LAND USE ELEMENTS	HISTORIC OLD TOWN VILLAGE DISTRICT
Residential land use	Residential single family detached with complementary infill
	Residential townhomes attached
	Residential 2-plus
	Residential low rise
Mixed use land use	Mixed-use mid-rise majority non-residential
	Mixed-use low-rise majority residential
Non-residential land use	Low-rise office-retail-conversion
Civic land use	Civic private
Open space	Open space
	Conservation

dwellings on individual lots or as a part of large development projects.

**Suwanee Farm Village District Zoning and Future Land Use Compatibility.** Current zoning classifications in this area include R100, R75, RM6, C2, OI, and M1. The R100 zoning classification currently will only allow for the development of single family detached residences either individually or as a part of a large development. As the concept plan recommends areas of townhome and residential low-rise development in this area, rezoning to a classification that allows attached housing will be necessary to facilitate these recommendations. Additionally, the areas identified as appropriate for residential low-rise development and mixed-use majority residential development currently fall under

MASTER PLAN LAND USE ELEMENTS	SUWANEЕ FARM VILLAGE DISTRICT
Residential land use	Residential single family detached with complementary infill
	Residential townhomes attached
	Residential low rise
	Residential mid rise
Mixed use land use	Mixed-use mid-rise majority residential
Civic land use	Civic private
Open space	Open space
	Conservation

MASTER PLAN LAND USE ELEMENTS	TOWN CENTER
Residential land use	Residential single family detached with complementary infill
	Residential townhomes attached
	Residential 2-plus
Mixed use land use	Mixed-use low-rise majority non-residential
	Mixed-use mid-rise majority non-residential
	Mixed-use mid-rise majority residential
Non-residential land use	Low-rise office-retail-new
	Mid-rise office-retail
Civic land use	Civic public
Open space	Open space
	Conservation

non-residential zoning classifications and are indicated as being appropriate for a variety of office, industrial and institutional uses on the Future Land Use Map. It is recommended that any conflict with the Future Land Use Map be corrected prior to approving a zoning action to a residential classification.

**Town Center Zoning and Future Land Use Compatibility.** Current zoning classifications in this area include PMUD, OI, C1, C2, C2A, OTCD, M1 and R75. The majority of residential development in this area includes or is adjacent to the existing neighborhoods of Suwanee Lake Estates (R100) and Shadowbrook (PMUD). The PMUD zoning district requires adherence to specific design criteria established at the time the zoning change for

Shadowbrook was approved. These criteria will govern the types of housing allowed within the area, but should provide for a diversity of residential types. The R100 zoning classification currently will only allow for the development of single family detached residences either individually or as a part of a large development. The Plan proposes a diversity of residential building types in this area, including townhomes, residential 2+, residential mid-rise and mixed-use mid-rise majority residential. Rezoning to a classification that allows attached housing will be necessary to facilitate these recommendations. The Future Land Use Map indicates that a portion of this area north of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Highway is appropriate for office and mixed use center development. It is recommended that any conflict with the Future Land Use Map be corrected prior to approving a zoning action to a residential classification. The majority of current land uses falling within a non-residential zoning classification should be compatible with both the Future Land Use Map and the Downtown Concept Plan.

In general, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map should be reconciled with the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan to successfully implement the recommendations of the plan. Ideally, an amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan would specify that the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan supplant the Comprehensive Plan within the study boundary, and in the event of a conflict between the two, the Downtown Plan shall supersede.

In addition to reconciling these two plans, a thorough review of existing zoning regulations is needed. A matrix of the various allowable uses and baseline dimensional requirements for each existing zoning district in the Downtown study boundary is included in the Appendix of this document. As identified above, the land use recommendations of this plan could not be implemented without excessive variances and text amendments to many of the existing zoning districts. Four key areas relating to land use and zoning codes are explored here in detail as they relate to the proposed Master Plan:

- The existing Old Town Overlay District
- The Mixed Use concept as reflected in the Master Plan and the 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- Options for introducing a historic preservation program into downtown
- Alternatives for implementing a form-based zoning code

*Source: 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan, pages 55-57*



# Downtown Suwanee Today



## Existing Land Use

Land uses and the relationship between them impact quality of life in a community. Different land uses have varying impacts on transportation and utility systems. The arrangement of land uses in Suwanee and their proximity also support or discourage different modes of transportation, including bicycling and walking; this can directly impact the vehicular system by reducing or increasing traffic.

The study area includes a variety of land uses, as shown in the map on the following page. Most land is currently used for single-family residential housing or is simply woods or other unimproved open space. These areas present opportunities for future development and connectivity throughout the study area. Commercial, institutional, and other land uses are clustered near Town Center and scattered throughout the study area.

## Future Land Use

The 2009 Downtown Suwanee Master Plan provided a Future Land Use map, which is reproduced on page 21. The designations on this map form the foundation of this plan, but are modified by this update to reflect market realities and refined community goals. In general, the future land use map protects existing single-family areas and focuses density near Town Center and along Buford Highway in Old Town.

## Existing Zoning

Zoning is the legal framework that codifies the land use vision of a plan and regulates private development. It directly shapes the form, placement and design of new buildings and parking lots and therefore affects how a community feels and functions in the future more than any other single element.

A number of zoning districts exist within the study area. Because the difference between some of these districts are minimal, the map on page 33 shows generalized zoning by allowed uses. The majority of the study area is zoned R-100 or other districts for single-family homes. A significant portion of the study area is also zoned C-2, which allows for a wide variety of businesses, although the lack of a maximum building size allows for strip commercial centers.

Much of the study area is zoned R-100, which has a minimum home size of 1,400 square feet. This prohibits cottages and other smaller home types.

The highest amount of residential density allowed by Suwanee's zoning ordinance is 8 units per acre. This prohibits more intense residential developments.

PMUD (Planned Mixed-Use District) is a zoning district that also has been used successfully in the study area to create master-planned communities with a mix of uses



*A majority of developed land in the study area is represented by single-family residential homes*

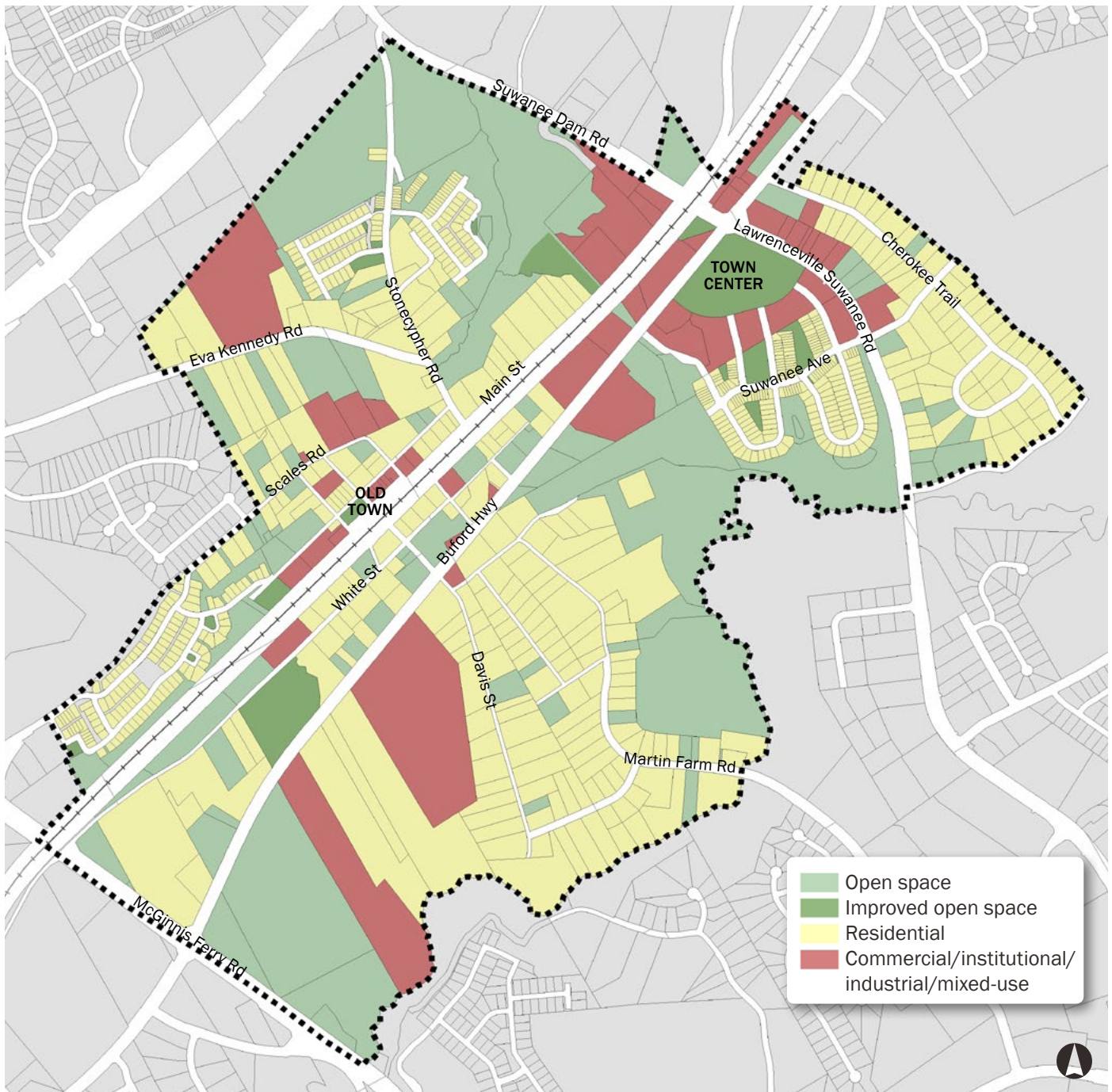


*Suwanee's PMUD zoning requires new developments to create a connected street grid*

or housing types, higher density, common greenspace, connected streets, and other features.

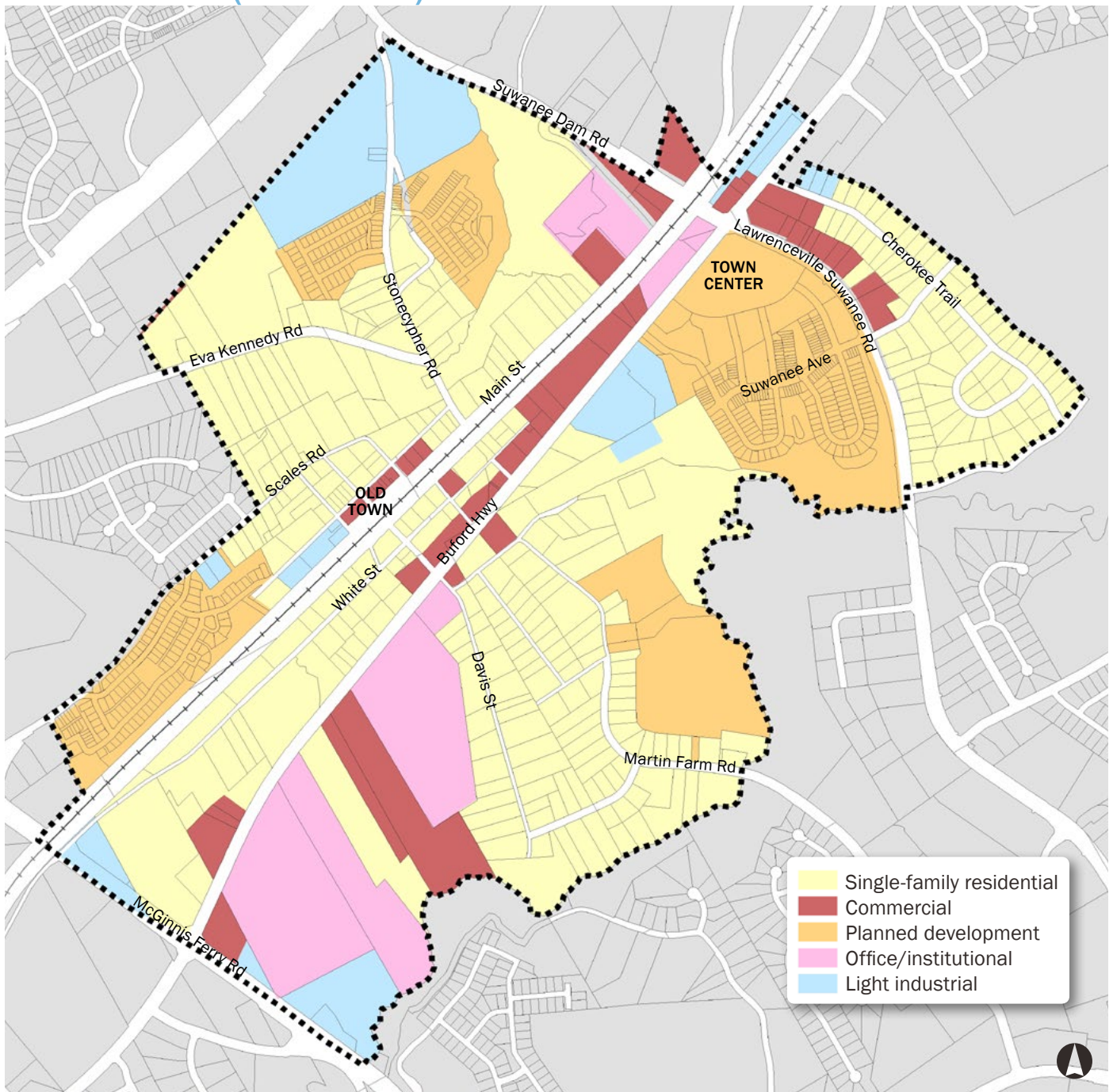
The City of Suwanee also has a set of architectural and design standards that go beyond general regulations provided in the zoning ordinance. The design standards regulate facade materials, screening, roofs, and other elements related to building design.

# EXISTING LAND USE PATTERNS





# EXISTING ZONING (GENERALIZED)



## URBAN DESIGN

The City of Suwanee was established in the early 1800s around a long standing Native American settlement. As access to transportation grew, so did the community. Suwanee was officially founded with establishment of a post office in 1838. The City began to grow with expansion of the Georgia Airline Railroad, which produced the historic depot, built in 1871. As Old Town developed, a grid of streets was laid out and commercial buildings were constructed along Main Street.

### Block + Street Patterns

Blocks and streets are the most physically defining elements of a community. While buildings and land uses often change, street patterns can remain constant for centuries.

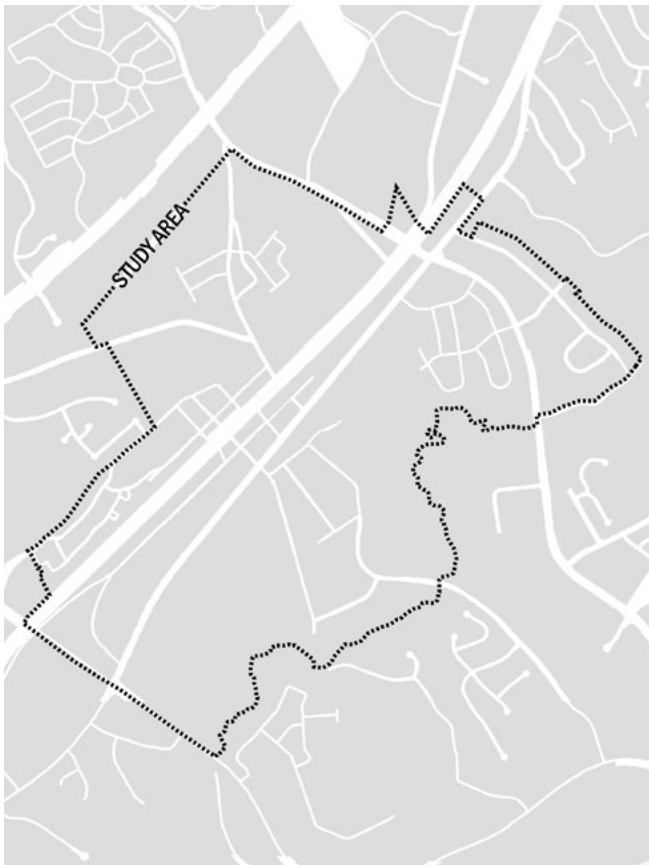
Existing street and block patterns in the study area are shown on the map below. Block sizes are generally very large, as is typical in post-WWII suburban communities. Exceptions to this are historic Old Town and newer developments, such as Town Center, Stonecypher, and the development along Scales Road, where smaller blocks help create an interconnected grid. Railroad tracks also bisect the study area and have a significant impact on connectivity, given that there is only one crossing (at Russell Street) between McGinnis Ferry Road and Suwanee Dam Road.



*The fine grained pattern of lots and open spaces in many of Suwanee's communities will remain for years to come*

### Lot Patterns

Lots are the second major element in shaping communities. Like streets and blocks, lot patterns tend to be fixed for long periods of time, regardless of their use. Historically speaking, lot sizes are in part determined by where in the community a lot was located, with smaller lots containing mixed-use buildings near the city center and the larger ones serving more rural uses such as for farming. Today, with the increasing scale of



*Existing street and block patterns within the study area*



*Building footprints within the study area*



*This historic Sanborn map shows Suwanee in 1923*

redevelopment economics and large amounts of capital necessary to finance infill projects, the traditional notion that lots at the center of community should be small is not universal. Modern financial models often demand that redevelopment projects occupy an entire block and be undertaken by large developers.

Parcel patterns in the study area vary in size and shape. Planned developments exhibit smaller, compact parcel patterns. These are separated by larger parcels that account for vacant land and open space. Larger parcels are generally seen on the edge of the study area close to the north at Suwanee Dam Road, to the southeast near McGinnis Ferry Road and to the west near the Suwanee Creek Greenway.

### Building Patterns

Placement and massing of buildings can work together to form spaces greater than the individual buildings. The appropriate amount of enclosure helps pedestrians feel safe and protected while walking. A height-to-width ratio of no more than one-to-three provides a good rule of thumb for designing enclosures. One-to-one is ideal. When a street respects these ratios it creates an environment where walking is encouraged. Enclosure also has a direct impact on driver behavior. All else being equal, buildings close to the street psychologically narrow it and result in slight decreases in vehicular speeds.

Given that the study area landscape is predominately populated by single-family homes, most building sizes are modest. The largest buildings are industrial, civic, commercial, and mixed-use structures. The Town Center development exhibits six larger structures housing ground floor retail with office and residential above.

Buildings in Town Center frame spaces throughout the development. The mixed-use buildings front Town Center Park and activate this space as well as creating a continuous streetscape and inviting pedestrians to walk along Town Center Avenue. City Hall sits on a central axis with the park, creating a vista for visitors. Townhomes behind the mixed-use component are additionally framing shared open spaces and complimenting the well-connected street network.

The Old Town area exhibits a mix of mostly small buildings including historic residential and commercial spaces. This creates a pedestrian scale that is comfortable for walking. The only significantly large building in Old Town is the industrial building at the end of Main Street along the railroad right-of-way.

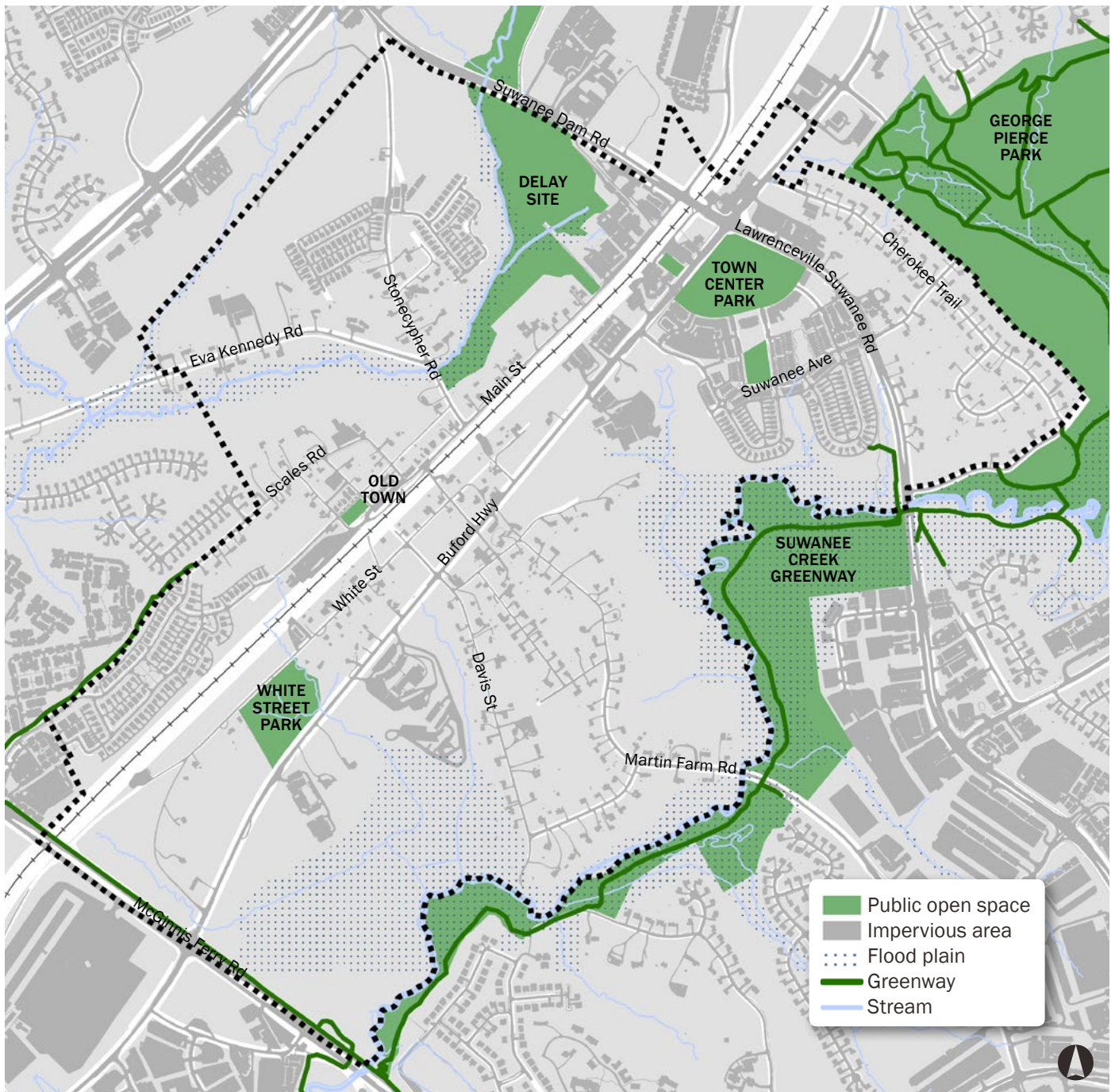


*The sense of enclosure created by buildings in Town Center is one of the reasons for its success*



*A variety of open spaces provide places for citizens of all ages to experience the outdoors*

## EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES



### Open Space

The study area is fortunate to have a number of successful public parks and open spaces. Town Center Park anchors not just Town Center, but all of Suwanee. Its lawn and amphitheater host a number of events, and its public art, interactive fountain, and other features draw visitors of all ages throughout the day. Town Center Park is one of the most successful public spaces in the Atlanta region.

A significant component of Suwanee’s open space system is the greenway network. The greenway along

Suwanee Creek has been an enormous success and attracts people of a variety of ages on foot, bicycle, roller blades, and more.

White Street Park has also been a success, with its community garden and programs for youth. PlayTown Suwanee, a public playground, is a great place for families. Main Street Park and City Hall Park are small public spaces that are not frequently used.

The DeLay site has been acquired by the City of Suwanee for use as a public park—see page 62 for conceptual park plans developed as part of this effort.

## TRANSPORTATION

The study area includes both local and regional roads, totaling about 13 miles, as well as a growing network of sidewalks and greenways. McGinnis Ferry Road and Suwanee Dam/Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road are the major east-west regional connections for vehicles. Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road connects to Interstate 85 to the east.

Buford Highway serves as the main north-south spine through the study area. This road serves as a connection to the adjacent communities of Duluth and Buford. A design has been completed that will transform Buford Highway within the study area into an urban street, with parallel parking, sidewalks, street trees, and a roundabout at Russell Street. This project is pivotal to the future of downtown Suwanee.

Just north of the study area boundary, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard serves as a major regional connection. This road connects to Interstate 285 about 20 miles south of the study area as well as communities such as Duluth and Chamblee. South of the study area, Satellite Boulevard is another regional connection.

Streets in the study area are a mix of interconnected street systems with some dead-end streets. Old Town exhibits small blocks sizes and a gridded pattern characteristic of the 1800s era in which it was developed. Other well connected areas include Suwanee Town Center and the Stonecypher neighborhood. Improved connections between these three areas could create a more cohesive street network.

## Traffic Flow + Safety

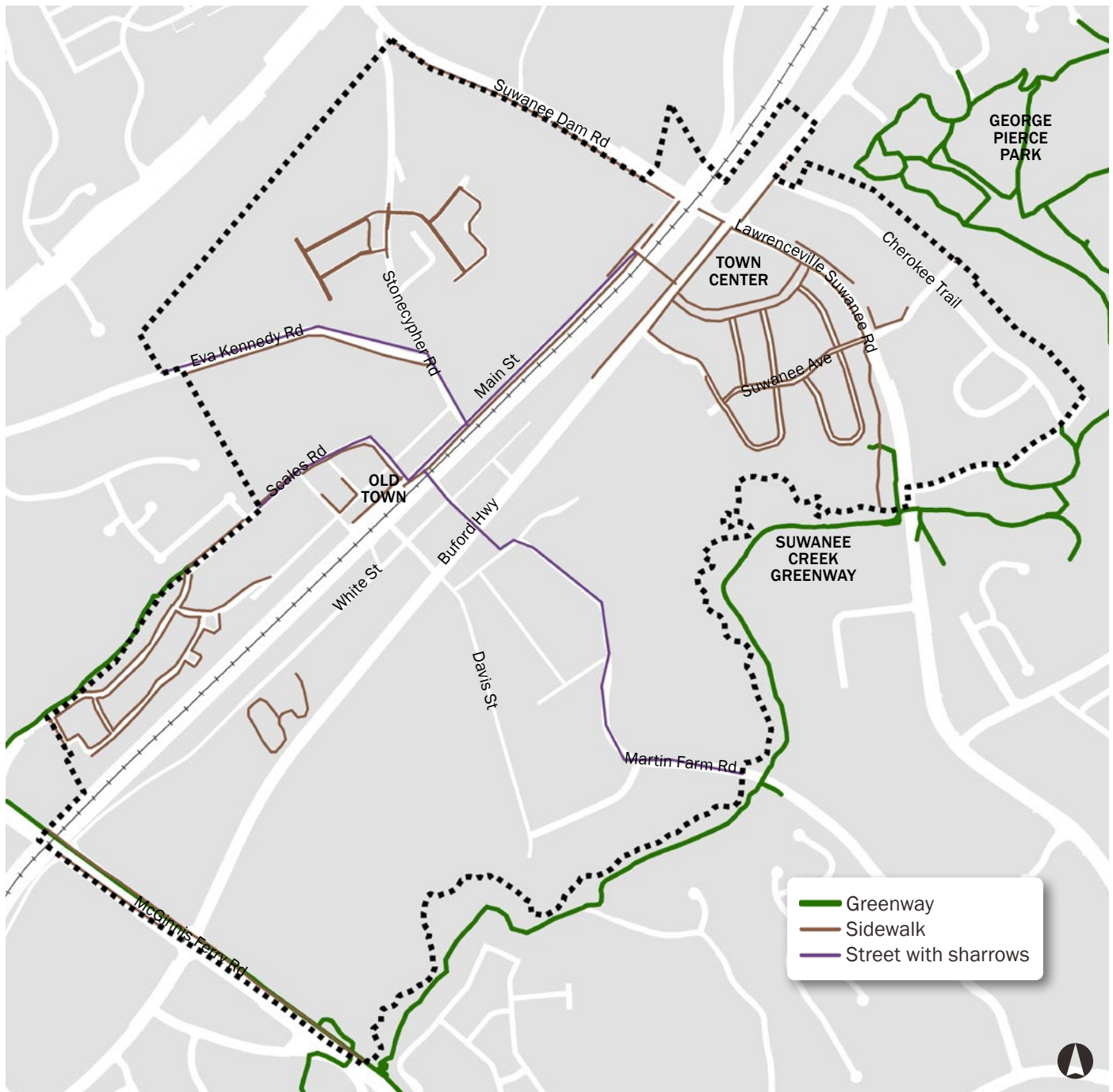
Traffic signals exist at major intersections of Buford Highway with Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road/Suwanee Dam Road and McGinnis Ferry Road. Both of these signals experience delays during rush hour (particularly in the afternoon). Delays are often made worse by train crossings at Suwanee Dam Road. A traffic signal on Suwanee Dam Road also provides access to the Gwinnett County public library and Shadowbrook Baptist Church. A pedestrian activated beacon (often referred to as a HAWK signal) is located on Buford Highway at Town Center.

While crashes do occur in the study area, data do not show patterns or trends that would suggest specific design improvements to improve safety. The table below shows major roads and their functional classification. Roads classified as local by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) are not eligible for federal transportation funds for improvements.

Level of service is a measure of traffic congestion that ranks roads on a grade scale ranging from A (no congestion) to F (constrained conditions). Level of service only indicates the general ability of a road to serve the amount of traffic demanded, not its level of safety or ability to accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. This measure also does not necessarily reflect conditions at traffic signals. The level of service shown in the table below represents rush hour conditions.

ROAD	FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION GDOT	CITY OF SUWANEE	NO. OF LANES	SPEED LIMIT (MPH)	DAILY TRAFFIC VOLUME (2013)	LEVEL OF SERVICE (2013)
Buford Highway	Urban Minor Arterial	Major Arterial	2	45	10,990	C
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	Urban Minor Arterial	Principal Arterial	4	45	29,900	C
Suwanee Dam Road	Urban Minor Arterial	Principal Arterial	4	45	23,330	B
McGinnis Ferry Road	Urban Collector	Major Arterial	4	45	24,310	B
Eva Kennedy Road	Urban Collector	Minor Collector	2	35	N/A	N/A
Stonecypher Road	Urban Collector	Minor Collector	2	25	N/A	N/A
Scales Road	Local	Minor Collector	2	25	N/A	N/A
Main Street	Local	Minor + Major Collector	2	25	400	A
Russell Street	Local	Local	2	25	N/A	N/A
Martin Farm Road	Local	Local	2	30	N/A	N/A

# EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



## Bicycle + Pedestrian Facilities

The Suwanee Creek Greenway is a multi-use trail that serves as the alternative transportation backbone for the community. The trail connects George Pierce Park at the northeastern end of the City with Suwanee Creek Park at the southwest end. The greenway also connects a number of neighborhoods along the way, including Shadowbrook and Town Center. The greenway is supplemented by a multi-use path that runs along the northern side of McGinnis Ferry Road and another that runs along the southern side of Suwanee Dam Road. The Gwinnett County Department of Transportation is currently in the process of developing a concept for the Western Gwinnett Bikeway, a multi-use trail along the Peachtree Industrial Boulevard corridor. As part of this effort, the possibility of constructing a spur along Suwanee Creek to connect to Suwanee Creek Park and the Suwanee Creek Greenway is being considered.

In addition to the greenway, a number of streets in the study area have sidewalks or bicycle sharrows, encouraging walking and bicycling. A pedestrian tunnel underneath the railroad near Town Center allows those on bike or on foot to go between Old Town, the library, Town Center, and other destinations.



*Suwanee's greenway system provides a way to get around town without a car*

## Public Transportation

Gwinnett County Transit does not currently provide bus service within the study area. Commuter bus service to Atlanta is available from Park and Ride lots in Buford (at Exit 4 on I-985) and in Duluth (at Sugarloaf Mills at Exit 108 on I-85). Previous planning efforts have concluded that conditions are not currently conducive to support transit service in downtown Suwanee. There was previously a Gwinnett County Transit bus stop in the study area, but due to low development densities, ridership was too light and the stop was eliminated. Town Center hosts large events several times a year, some of which include shuttle services from nearby parking lots.



*The railroad bisects the study area and provides a barrier to connectivity*

High-speed passenger rail between Atlanta and Charlotte is currently being studied and would utilize the Norfolk Southern railroad line, with a potential stop in Suwanee, the only proposed stop in the region outside of downtown Atlanta. The City previously analyzed commuter rail and identified in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan a suitable location for a train station south of the study area. The City owns approximately 13 acres in Suwanee Station that is being held for a future stop.

## Railroad

A rail line owned by Norfolk Southern bisects the study area and connects Atlanta to Charlotte. AMTRAK passenger rail also operates on this line (with stops in Atlanta and Gainesville). A total of 29 trains per day operate on this line according to the Federal Railroad Administration. At-grade street crossings occur only at Suwanee Dam Road and Russell Street. A grade-separated crossing is provided at McGinnis Ferry Road.

During the most recent public input process, a participant suggested an elevated crossing of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road/Suwanee Dam Road at the railroad. Such a crossing would irreparably damage the presence of Town Center Park. The park would sit below an overpass, harming the overall feel of the park.

## MARKET ANALYSIS

As a ten-year LCI update, this update includes a more detailed analysis of local demographics and market conditions than the previous master plan. This is to ensure that the plan is founded in economic realities, while still remaining visionary. This analysis was conducted by Noell Consulting Group, a real estate advisory services firm based in Atlanta that works with private and public sector clients across the U.S. to enable them to make decisions that are well-grounded in reality while taking full advantage of opportunities that exist in the market, including ones that may not be readily apparent.

### Demographics

Recent national trends indicate that conventional suburban areas are losing their appeal for many younger households. This demographic is largely choosing to rent in more convenient and walkable areas, whether in major cities or suburban locations like Town Center. Suwanee has strong appeal to households looking for affordability, quality of life, regional access, and convenience.

- Over the next 25 years, the population in the entire City of Suwanee is expected to grow by 45%, compared to a forecast of 31% growth in the Atlanta region as a whole.
- Suwanee is a highly educated city. Approximately 53% of residents within the city limits have a bachelor's degree or more, compared with the region-wide average of 35%.
- Median income in the City limits is \$60,874, higher than the \$56,605 in the region as a whole.
- Suwanee is a family-oriented community. In Suwanee, 47% of households have children living at home, compared to only 37% in the region as a whole.
- Within the past 15 years, the number of households in the City limits with individuals age 55 and older has increased at more than 2.5 times the rate of Gwinnett County as a whole.



*A significant percentage of Suwanee households include children*

### Employment

Major employment centers in Suwanee can be found along Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, Brogdon Road and off Buford Highway, south of McGinnis Ferry. It is interesting to note that, with the exception of Town Center, these employment centers are located outside the study area.

The majority of employers operate in the accommodation and food, retail trade, or wholesale trade sectors. The average worker in Suwanee is between the ages of 30 and 54 and earns between \$15,012 and \$39,996 annually. This is likely because Suwanee has fewer professional or office jobs that pay higher wages.

### Housing Market

Starting in the early 2000s and peaking in 2007, many new mortgage programs were created to allow homes to be purchased with far less than 20% down payments. This lowering of up-front investment needed for home ownership caused a surge in home purchases nationwide. The majority of these were first-time homeowners just completing college and in their 20s. This artificial increase in housing demand caused both resales and new home sales to surge 60% above historical peaks, and resulted in unprecedented home price appreciation.

Fueled, in part, by the housing bubble, the national economy went into recession from 2008-2010. Following the recession, there was a 2.5% decrease in national home ownership. This trend is expected to continue until more existing homes have regained their lost value. The decrease in home ownership is most significant in younger households, with the vast majority of Generation Y now choosing to rent. This generational shift in owning versus renting, as well as the inability to afford larger homes, have resulted in an overall slower growth in the average size of a new home.



*New homes in Suwanee demand a price premium over similar homes elsewhere in Gwinnett County*



With home prices increasing since 2012, relatively consistent and stable growth in single-family home construction is forecast over the next two years, although at a far more constrained pace than the pre-recession volumes.

Homes in Suwanee typically command a price premium of 15-20% more than comparable homes in other areas of Gwinnett County. For attached homes, the price premium is about 19%. Suwanee's high quality of life and sense of place are likely significant drivers of this price premium. The high quality of the public school system, the presence of successful public parks, and the greenway system are other contributors.

The average price for recent home sales in select communities near downtown Suwanee was \$111 per square foot for detached homes and \$108 for attached homes. The average monthly rent per square foot in select apartment communities near downtown Suwanee is \$1.13 per square foot.

### Retail Market

Downtown Suwanee has a significant amount of vacant retail space. However, Suwanee Town Center has low vacancy and commands a significant premium over other areas in terms of rent per square foot.

Town Center's greatest limiting factor is the lack of an anchor (other than the park) for driving traffic, particularly during the daytime on weekdays. Grocery demand is limited, but there may be potential to attract a Whole Foods or Trader Joe's type of grocer. YMCAs or other larger fitness centers represent the strongest opportunity, but could compete with the nearby Suwanee Sports Academy. There is limited demand for a cinema, given the Movie Tavern that is located just across I-85. There is potential for a unique anchor such as Topgolf or a restaurant/bowling concept such as Punch Bowl Social.

Retail demand in historic Old Town is extremely limited due to the lack of traffic and visibility. Destination businesses are the most likely candidates because they offer unique products or services that draw customers from a large area.



Town Center retail space has less vacancy and higher rents than conventional shopping centers



An anchor could help increase retail and office demand by drawing more people to the downtown area (image courtesy J Dimas)

LAND USE	POTENTIAL DEMAND
For-sale detached homes	60 per year
For-sale attached homes	35 per year
Apartments	200 per year
Independent/assisted living	90 beds
Local-serving office	Less than 10,000 sq. ft. per year (without an anchor)
Retail	Less than 10,000 sq. ft. per year (without an anchor)

Source: Noell Consulting Group



# Community Engagement



Community input and buy-in are an important part of Suwanee's story and the success of previous plans. For this reason, the planning team engaged the public in a number of ways throughout the Downtown Master Plan Update process. All public meetings were held at Suwanee City Hall.

### Kickoff Meeting

A public kickoff meeting was held on March 5, 2015. At this initial meeting, consultants and City representatives began with a presentation on the background of planning in downtown Suwanee, including highlights of accomplishments such as Town Center and the greenway, which were built based on previous planning efforts.

Participants at the kickoff were then invited to a "walk-through" of Buford Highway in the hallway behind Council Chambers. The proposed Buford Highway improvements, such as medians and sidewalks, were duplicated on the hallway floor with tape. Photos of the corridor were up on the walls, and participants were given dots to indicate where certain styles and forms of development were most appropriate along the corridor.

### Visioning Workshop

On April 20, 2015, a public Visioning Workshop was held to more closely explore the future of key focus areas identified by the City. Tables also discussed transportation and parks improvements in the downtown area.

Consultants provided an overview of real estate market conditions at the workshop to ensure that the planning exercises were grounded in reality. An overview of good planning principles ensured that the visioning was based on the successful strategies that have been put into place elsewhere in Suwanee.

### Draft Plan Open House

More than 70 people attended an Open House on July 9, 2015 to review and comment on draft plans. A station allowed participants to review the previous Downtown Master Plan and other existing plans, and boards around the room displayed the recommendations of the update in bullet form and with maps and photos. Dozens of comments were provided on sticky notes, most of which affirmed the recommendations and direction of the plan.

### Final Plan Presentation

On [date], the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan Update was presented to Suwanee City Council for adoption.

### Advisory Committee

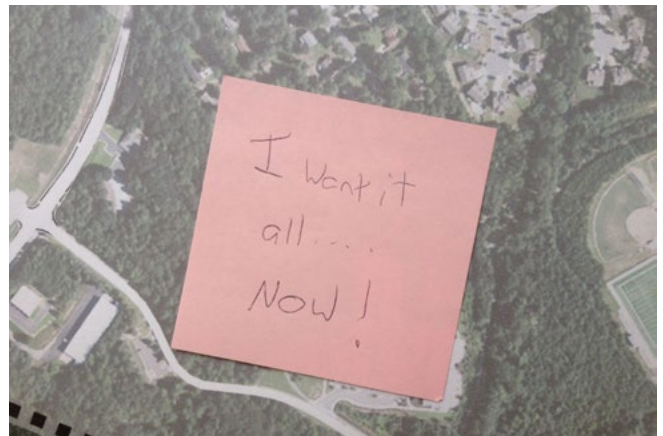
An advisory committee met prior to each public meeting to review exercises and draft plans and ensure that meetings were well structured to allow public engagement. The committee also helped invite members of



Participants at the Kickoff Meeting shared their opinions on the future of Buford Highway through this mock up



Discussion tables at the Visioning Workshop allowed for more focused planning for key areas



Sticky note comments at the Open House allowed participants to affirm or comment on draft plans

the public to meetings. A diversity of interests, from business owners and residents to youth, were intentionally represented on the committee to ensure a variety of perspectives on the future of downtown Suwanee.

## Individual Interviews + Focus Groups

About a dozen interviews and focus groups were conducted with key individuals and groups in the downtown area to be sure that the consultant team had the broadest possible knowledge before beginning the update. Co-creators included the Downtown Development Authority, Planning Commission, City Council members, and ordinary citizens.

## Communication Tools

A number of communication tools were used to make sure that all Suwanee citizens were informed about the planning process. A page on the City's website was dedicated to the Downtown Master Plan Update process and provided an overview of the process, meeting dates, and draft plans.

Email blasts were sent to key stakeholders, including those who attended public meetings, to inform them of opportunities for input and provide links to draft plans and other information.

Facebook posts on the City of Suwanee page also provided information about public meetings and the plan. All public meeting dates were posted on the City's online calendar.



A web page allowed the public to access information about meetings and draft plans

# Downtown Suwanee Tomorrow





## LAND USE + ZONING

Recommendations on the following pages are based on input received during the community engagement process as well as input from City staff and the professional input of the consulting team. The goal is to improve and enhance walkability, livability and identity to create a unified, economically viable Downtown Suwanee.

Recommendations are divided into policies and projects. Projects are specific tasks with a defined cost and timeframe. Numbers in parentheses after each project refer to estimated cost and timeframe details in the Action Matrix on page x. Policies are general guidelines that provide direction for implementation of the plan's vision. They often support recommended projects and should serve as the basis for future actions on the part of decision-makers.

### Land Use + Zoning Policies

Suwanee's downtown has already become a model in the Atlanta region for walkability, diversity of uses, and a mix of historic and new urbanism. The goal of the following recommendations is to preserve and enhance this special sense of place that is so important to Suwanee's citizens.

**Identify, strengthen, and respect the unique character and historic integrity of downtown neighborhoods.** Existing single-family homes and the character of all neighborhoods should be preserved, even as development creates new neighborhoods.

**Foster quality and appropriately scaled places that sustain the economic well-being of downtown and provide opportunities for live, work and play for all ages.**

**Promote compact infill residential development.** Increasing the residential population will make retail more viable and parks, Town Center, and Old Town more vibrant.

**Ensure appropriate transitions between single-family areas and new development.** As infill development occurs, existing height restrictions and setbacks should be enforced and care should be taken in design to respect existing residences, especially in historic areas.

**Encourage flexible ground floor uses to create sidewalk activity where retail is not yet viable.** Retail demand in the short term may not be sufficient, so ground floor residences, offices, live/work units, and other active uses should be allowed in the interim to help generate activity where vacant space might otherwise exist.

**Ensure that all new public and private parks have active edges.** Streets that border parks and buildings that face into parks help define public spaces and make them vibrant and safe.



*Ensuring compact, high-quality development will help make a more vibrant downtown*

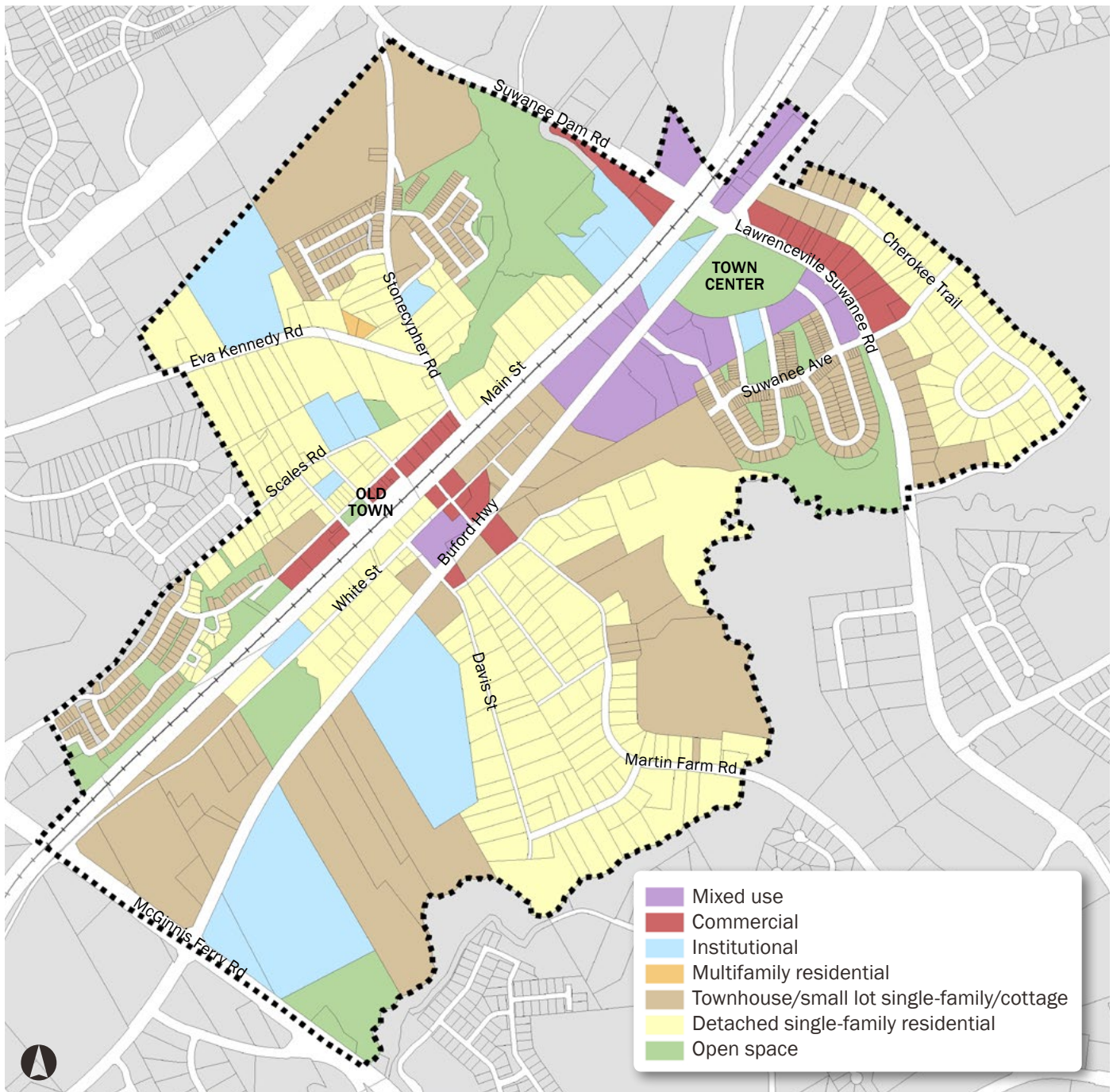


*Transitions are important between single-family residences and new development*



*Storefront space can be designed as flexible space in areas where retail is not yet viable*

# PROPOSED FRAMEWORK PLAN



Land use categories shown here and described on the following page are intended to be general groupings to guide the character of redevelopment. Photos are shown for illustrative purposes only and present only two alternatives for what may be appropriate in each category.

### Mixed Use

Higher-density buildings located near major nodes include residential, retail, office, hotel, and other uses compatible with an urban setting. Buildings should be multiple stories.



### Commercial

One- or two-story retail or office uses in new or historic buildings, including historic homes.



### Institutional

Civic buildings and churches that are compatible with residential character.



### Multifamily Residential

Multiple story buildings that contain high-quality rental apartments, condos, senior housing, or other similar uses.



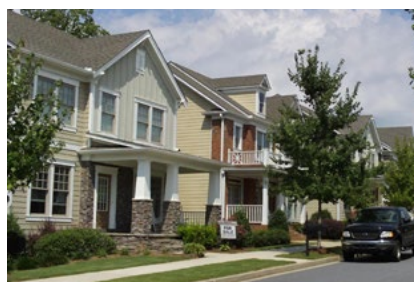
### Townhouse/Small Lot Single-Family/Cottage

Townhomes that front streets and sidewalks mix with fourplexes, small-lot detached cottages, and other similar housing types. Height should not exceed three stories.

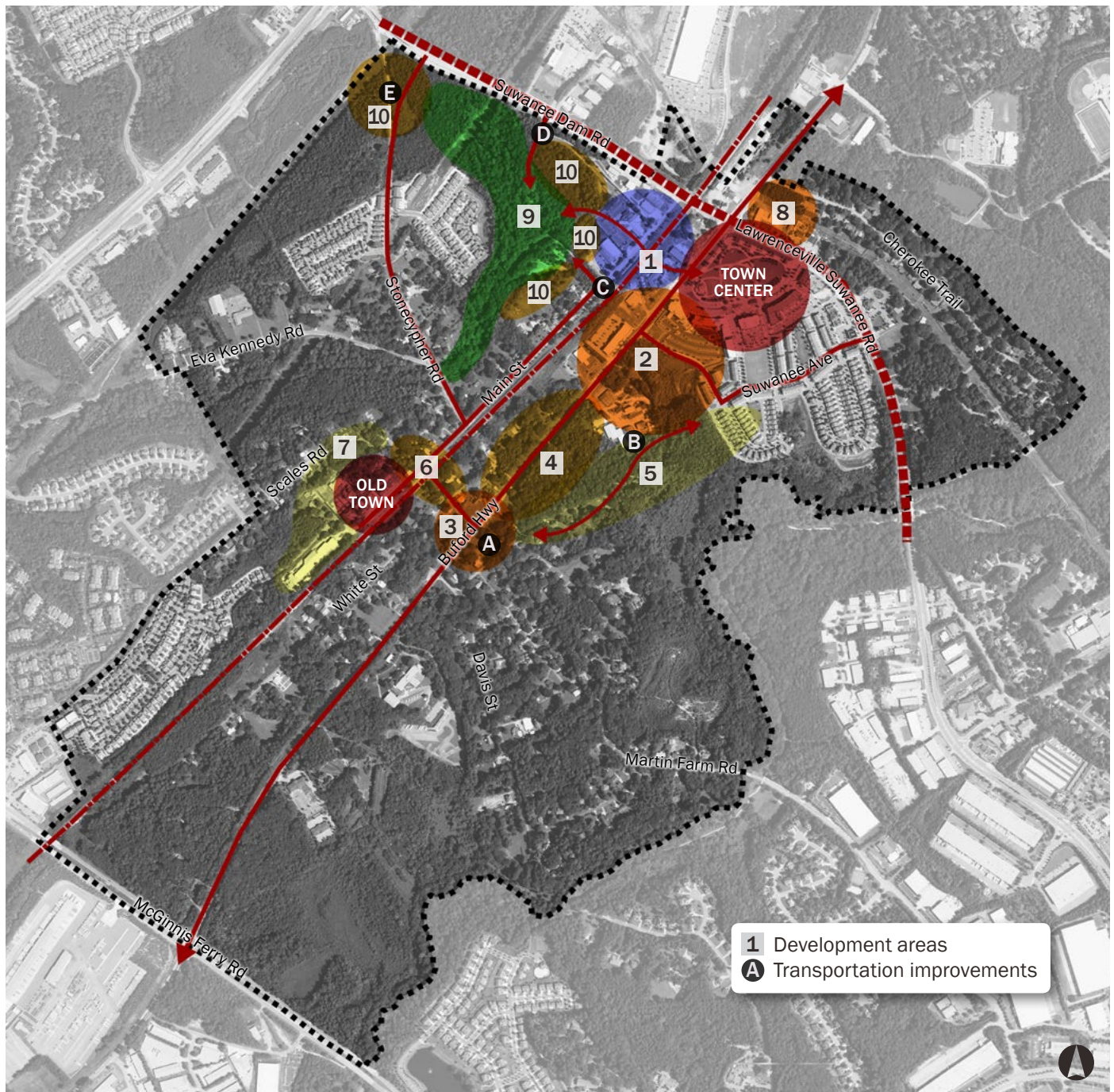


### Detached Single-Family Residential

Conventional homes on medium sized lots.



# CATALYTIC AREAS



## CATALYTIC AREAS

### Development Areas (in no particular order)

1. Strengthen existing “civic campus” with addition of new parkside event pavilion or civic building and adaptive re-use of existing fire station as a civic building (potential arts center location).
2. Infill of City’s vacant land and adjacent lumber company site (and possibly sites on the west side of Buford Highway) with high-density mixed-use development walkable to Town Center.
3. Infill of four corners at Russell Street roundabout with retail and/or medium-density residential use.
4. Infill of vacant and underutilized land along Buford Highway with medium-density residential uses.
5. Infill of vacant and underutilized land along Suwanee Avenue extension with low- to medium-density residential uses.
6. Infill of vacant land along Russell Street with low-to medium-density residential or commercial uses to strengthen connection to Old Town.
7. Infill of vacant land in Old Town with low- to medium-density residential uses.
8. Redevelopment of gas station site with commercial/retail use and infill/redevelopment of adjacent

residential land with medium-density residential uses.

9. Development of DeLay Site as an urban park (see page 62 for additional detail).
10. Parkside medium-density residential development on vacant land.

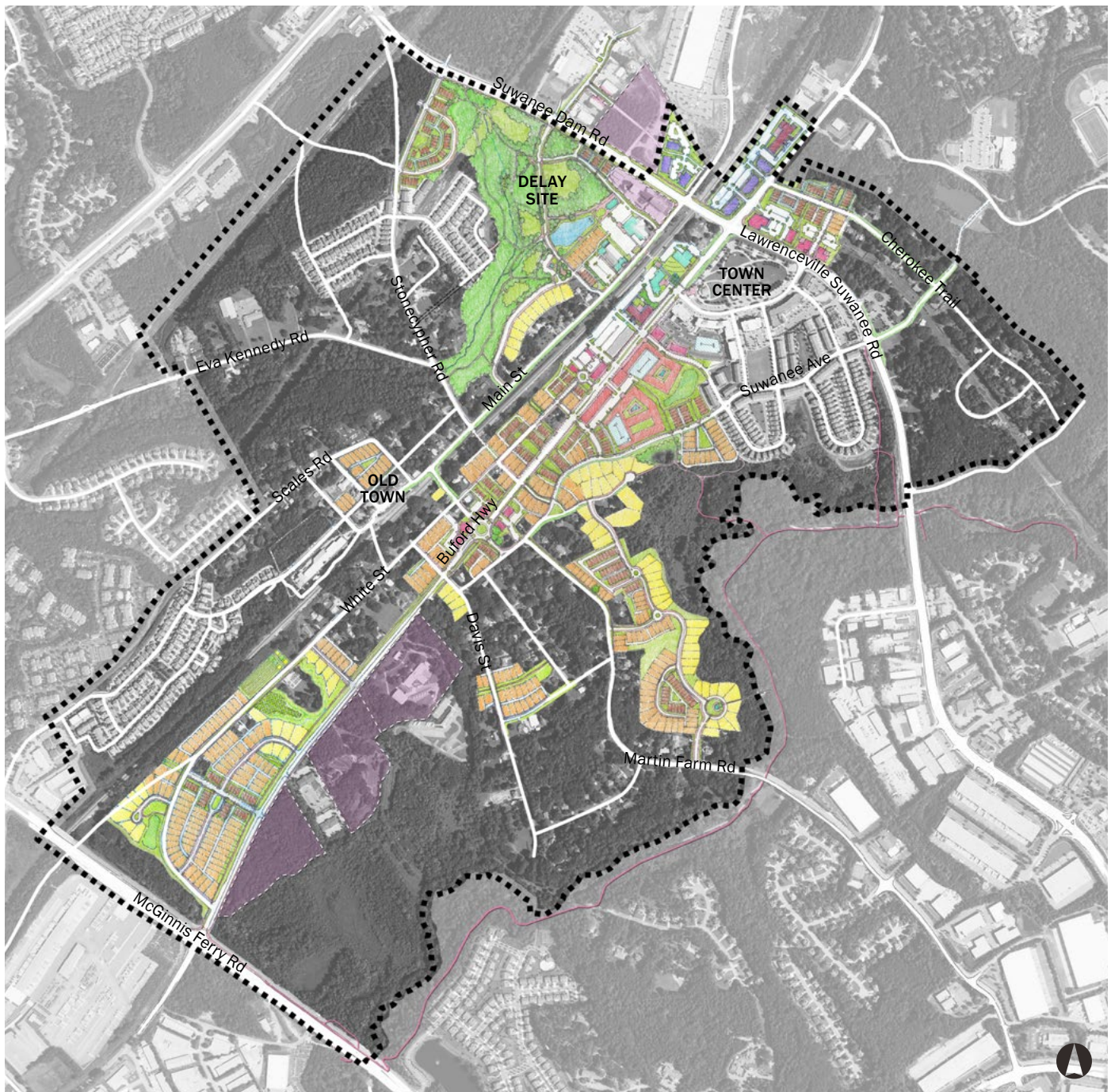
### Transportation Improvements

- A. Street improvements along one half mile of Buford Highway, including roundabout at Russell Street intersection.
- B. Extension of Suwanee Avenue as local collector street to support infill development.
- C. New street at existing entrance to PlayTown Suwanee as access to DeLay park site and to support parkside infill development.
- D. Realignment of existing DeLay Lane and parallel driveway to better utilize signalized intersection with Suwanee Dam Road, access DeLay park site, and support parkside infill development.
- E. Realignment of Stonecypher Road to tie into existing median break at Suwanee Dam Road, eliminate existing problematic intersection, and support parkside infill development.













## ARTIST RENDERING OF BUFORD HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS + REDEVELOPMENT



# STUDY AREA CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Note: This conceptual plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and public improvements and is for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur with willing property owners and developers working in concert with the City of Suwanee.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Open Space (37 acres)  |  Retail (85,000 sq. ft.)                       |
|  Single-Family Residential (80 units)   |  Office (50,000 sq. ft.)                       |
|  Cottage (282 units)  |  Hotel or Assisted Living (200 units)          |
|  Townhouse (286 units)  |  Civic (17,000 sq. ft.)                        |
|  Multifamily (375 units)  |  Parking garage                                |
|  Mixed-Use with Street-Level Commercial (50,000 sq. ft. street-level commercial, 125 upper floor residential units or 150,000 sq. ft. upper floor commercial) |  Special Condition (use unspecified, 40 acres) |

## Land Use + Zoning Projects

Create a high density residential community immediately adjacent to Town Center (O-1). See conceptual plan on page 56 for more detail.

Redevelop the Buford Highway corridor between Town Center and Russell Street with sidewalk-oriented buildings (O-2). See conceptual plan on page 58 for more detail.

Redevelop the site at the northeast corner of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Buford Highway (O-3). See conceptual plan on page 60 for more detail.

Transform the DeLay site into a park with urban amenities (O-4). See conceptual plan on page 62 for more detail.

Expand the orchard at White Street Park (O-5). Phase II will expand the existing orchard.

Create a public plaza between the police station and fire station at the entrance to the pedestrian tunnel (O-6). The pedestrian and bicycle tunnel should be more visible and have a more prominent approach in order to better link Old Town and Town Center. Incorporate existing donated pavers into the new plaza.

Evaluate amending the Suwanee zoning ordinance to allow homes smaller than 1,400 square feet (O-7). This would allow cottages and other housing types that permit more compact development and appeal to seniors, young families, and others.

Evaluate amending the Suwanee zoning ordinance to allow carriage houses (O-8). This would help increase residential density and provide an additional source of income for homeowners.

Improve City Hall Lawn (O-9). Provide benches and trash cans around the perimeter of the lawn.

## Downtown Suwanee Walking Distance



## Mall of Georgia Walking Distance



*Town Center and Old Town may seem far apart, but it is only a 10 minute walk between the two—roughly the same distance as the length of the Mall of Georgia*

# TOWN CENTER AREA CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Note: This conceptual plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and public improvements and is for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur with willing property owners and developers working in concert with the City of Suwanee.



## TOWN CENTER AREA CONCEPTUAL PLAN

Developed over the past decade, Suwanee Town Center was the City's first true mixed-use development. It serves the entire City and provides a place for citizens and visitors to live, shop, and socialize in an ever-changing and exciting environment that is different in form and intensity than much of the rest of Suwanee. Other parts of the City are developed with more traditional suburban housing and commercial forms. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan, and later the 2030 Comprehensive Plan, promote expansion of Town Center as the city grows. Both plans envision more housing, more shopping, and more activity over time in a manner that is consistent and compatible with the precedent set by Suwanee Town Center.

Town Center is not only the focal point of the community, but a walkable urban center where shops, residences, and greenspace combine to create a true sense of place. Over the past decade, previous plans have proposed extending this feel south along Buford Highway. The plan shown on the previous page represents a refinement of previous visions.

Multifamily housing should be an important part of the development mix on this site, given the market demand for this type of housing from millennials and empty nesters, and given the need to create a critical mass to support sidewalk retail in Town Center and along Buford Highway. Two likely sites, each with the potential for 200-300 units with structured parking, are located immediately south of Town Center along Buford Highway. The first, a 3-acre, vacant city-owned property at the corner of Chicago Street and Buford Highway, is well suited to this building type and available for immediate development.

Because the site falls off abruptly from its street frontages, there is an opportunity to put parking spaces in a deck that is partly below grade. This parking would be wrapped with a four- to five-story building to shield it from view. Sidewalk-oriented shops would front Buford Highway.

The second site, currently occupied by Suwanee Lumber Company, is proposed to be redeveloped in a similar manner, except that the grade change from front (at Buford Highway) to back (at Suwanee Avenue extension) is more extreme. Accordingly, it is envisioned as two separate buildings. The first building would front Buford Highway with street-level commercial use and residential or office use above, with parking under the building one level below the street and accessed from the rear. The second (rear) building would be purely residential, likely four to five stories in height. Stormwater management requirements for these two blocks of intensive development would be centralized



*Mixed-use buildings will extend the sidewalk retail experience of Town Center as well as provide a large number of residents to make the area more vibrant*

in an expanded shared detention pond to replace the two existing ponds seen from Chicago Street.

This plan also shows the potential for infill development in an existing Town Center parking lot, with two sidewalk-oriented commercial buildings fronting Chicago Street. This arrangement urbanizes both sides of the street and helps to create a walkable connection back to Town Center Park. This infill could include a stand-alone parking structure to support the new development and satisfy future downtown parking demand.

Across Buford Highway, on the site of the existing auto repair business, the plan shows the potential for redevelopment as either a senior living facility or a hotel of approximately 100 rooms, with parking at the rear (partially within the railroad right of way) that could extend southward behind the existing commercial buildings. This parking would have to be benched into the existing slope. The credit union site is shown to be infilled with two additional commercial buildings that frame a new internal roundabout intersection with an extension of White Street from the south. Along White Street, the plan envisions residential infill transitioning in intensity from townhomes (adjacent to commercial uses) to small detached cottage lots. This infill development pattern includes the addition of several new side streets and, wherever possible, rear lanes to accommodate off-street parking.

In some cases, where parcel depths permit, and particularly along Buford Highway, cottages and townhomes are turned so their front doors, rather than facing the street, front onto a shared pocket park or "mews" which provides a greenspace amenity for residents and the community at large. A series of greenway connections is envisioned to link these new infill areas to the existing Suwanee Creek Greenway to the south.

## ROUNDBOUT AREA CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Note: This conceptual plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and public improvements and is for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur with willing property owners and developers working in concert with the City of Suwanee.

## ROUNDBOUT AREA CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The four corners of the proposed Buford Highway/Russell Street roundabout are envisioned to be a neighborhood-scale activity node where local-serving retail, restaurants, offices, and possibly smaller scale mixed-use development could thrive and be compatible with surrounding residential uses. As the gateway to Old Town, this location is only a half mile (a 10-minute walk) from Town Center and a 5-minute walk from the center of Old Town, thereby providing an important component in the realization of a larger walkable downtown.

The southeastern quadrant, currently occupied by a large single-family home, is a logical redevelopment site suitable for medium-density residential or mixed use. Similarly, the northwest quadrant, which presently contains a collection of small buildings, is a likely redevelopment site that might support a corner commercial use with the balance of the property devoted to medium-density residential.

The vacant land on the southwest corner seems ideally positioned for commercial uses, with the balance of the block suitable for cottages fronting on Davis and White Streets.

The eastern corner, presently occupied by a State Farm Insurance office in an attractive converted house, contains a number of visually important specimen trees, which should be preserved where possible. The plan shows the potential for infilling this corner with additional small, sidewalk-oriented commercial buildings and mid-block parking.

In order to knit the “four corners” activity node into the surrounding single-family neighborhoods, cottage-scale infill is recommended as a housing type that forms an appropriate transition.



*Appropriately scaled commercial buildings could help anchor the roundabout and draw people to Old Town*



*Cottages could help form a transition between commercial buildings and existing homes*

## CORNER SITE CONCEPTUAL PLAN



*Note: This conceptual plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and public improvements and is for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur with willing property owners and developers working in concert with the City of Suwanee.*

## CORNER SITE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The northeast corner of Buford Highway and Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road is currently occupied by a gas station and some under-performing commercial properties. These properties abut a 100-foot-wide power line easement at their rear. This block is bounded on the north by Cherokee Trail, a residential street of modest homes on large lots with a failed commercial building (converted to church use) abutting the power line easement on its opposite side.

Because of its proximity to Town Center and its highly visible location, there is broad community support for redevelopment in this area. Recognizing that acquisition costs for existing commercial properties might be prohibitive, the City has considered undertaking some costs in order to utilize land within the power line easement for needed overflow event parking.

Accordingly, the conceptual plan shows conversion of the Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road frontage to more intensive commercial use, with buildings pulled forward to the sidewalk and parking in the rear. A new street is proposed, opposite Town Center Avenue; two other major existing driveway connections would remain. The new street would be flanked by two commercial (likely restaurant) sites. Within the proposed redevelopment area shown, the plan illustrates the replacement of seven existing homes with 44 townhomes and cottages. This redevelopment would include a mid-block "pedestrian street" or paseo.

On the underutilized land on the opposite side of Buford Highway, the plan proposes one- to two-story offices at the corner, with a possible hotel or senior living facility to the north. In both cases, the buildings would be located at the front of the site, with parking to the rear along the railroad.



*Retail buildings could replace the gas station at the corner and help create a pedestrian feel*



*Townhouses could face pocket parks and form an appropriate transition to existing homes*

# DELAY PARK SITE CONCEPTUAL PLAN



Note: This conceptual plan represents one possibility for redevelopment and public improvements and is for illustrative purposes only. This plan assumes that any future development will occur with willing property owners and developers working in concert with the City of Suwanee. Areas A-E on the plan could serve as open free play lawns (see page 66).

## DELAY PARK SITE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

This property, totaling some 27 acres, was acquired by the City to be a park. Conceptual plans have already been prepared for the Brushy Creek Greenway, which would traverse the site along the existing creek.

An important conclusion from the community engagement process was that this land should be developed as an “urban” park, to complement and not duplicate the impressive array of other greenspaces in the downtown area. These existing greenspaces include the formal and highly programmed Town Center Park, the forested setting of the Suwanee Creek Greenway, and the sports facilities of George Pierce Park. PlayTown Suwanee, an existing playground facility, is contained within the DeLay site and should remain as a part of the envisioned urban park.

The term “urban park” implies a structured green space, framed where possible by perimeter streets to provide a publicly accessible park boundary and limit private development to areas outside of that perimeter. The conceptual plan illustrates the potential for such a park, with new streets providing a structure where new perimeter “parksides” development can occur. Since the western boundary of the DeLay site is the creek, it is not feasible to locate a perimeter street along this edge. However, there is a significant amount of additional undeveloped greenspace—roughly six acres of forested slope—on the west side of the creek, which has been put into a conservation easement by the adjacent Stonecypher development. This land is effectively an extension of the park and is illustrated as such.

Due to its proximity to Town Center Park, the proposed park should be easily accessible by foot. The site is located across Buford Highway from Town Center and connects through the existing pedestrian tunnel. Should the DeLay site be developed, it is critical that this connection is prominent and comfortable (inviting). Special design efforts should be undertaken to ensure this linkage is robust. With proper treatments, the area between the existing police station and fire station may be re-envisioned for this purpose.

A principal proposed “spine” street would cross the park from the site’s frontage on Main Street to the existing signalized intersection at Suwanee Dam Road. The existing driveway at that intersection would be realigned, as shown, to eliminate the current “hairpin” curve, and tie into a realigned DeLay Lane, providing sufficient separation from Suwanee Dam Road to accommodate nine parkside townhomes. In addition to providing access to the park, this new street would provide much-needed connectivity serving local traffic.

An additional proposed new street would define the park’s southern boundary, and pass along the rear of



*Areas A-E on the plan could serve as open free play lawns*



*A promenade or other urban feature could form the spine of the park and create an informal gathering place*



*A skatepark or other elements could be a part of the park design (image courtesy HotlantaV)*

historic homes that front Main Street. Their lots are of sufficient depth that a new block of parkside lots (shown in yellow) could be added along that street. It would tee into the spine street at PlayTown Suwanee, across from a row of townhouses lining the entry from Main Street.

Along the portion of Stonecypher Road proposed for realignment, at the park's northwestern corner, there is ample room for additional parkside development, illustrated here as cottage lots similar to those next door at Stonecypher. This privately owned land is separated from the park by a cleared 100 foot wide power line easement that effectively defines the park boundary at that location. During the community workshop, alternatives regarding how to treat this park edge were explored.

If any significant portion of the site is to be privately developed, the City should work to acquire a comparable amount of land of comparable value for park land. If an acceptable land exchange cannot be accomplished, then another alternative would be to use the site exclusively as a park without allowing private development.

The rear of the Evergreen Presbyterian Church property, on Main Street, is currently used as a stormwater detention pond. There are other detention ponds along this edge of the DeLay site that serve other adjacent



*This conceptual plan, shown at the workshop, shows a moderate amount of density surrounding the park, as refined in the plan on page 62*



*This conceptual plan, shown at the workshop, envisions expanding the park to the northwest, and developing more neighborhood frontage on the east*



*This conceptual plan shows a low amount of density to create a more open feel in the park*



developments. The conceptual plan proposes consolidating these individual ponds into a larger shared lake at the low point of the site, to be impounded by a dam at the new spine street. This lake, some 400 feet in length, would be designed to serve as a picturesque park amenity, with a pedestrian promenade around its perimeter. The promenade on the southeast side of the lake could be developed as a row of parkside cottage homes, served by a rear lane for parking access and replacing the existing detention pond. This plan would accommodate potential future church expansion, shown in green. Behind the library, at the edge of the existing parking lot, a new civic building or event pavilion is proposed, with a small formal oval event lawn and dock at the lake edge.

The conceptual plan could accommodate a variety of activities yet to be programmed. Areas A-E are locations where the park's sloping topography could be made level enough to support uses such as free play lawns,

community gardens, sports courts, a skatepark, etc. Wooded areas, especially along the creek, would provide a pleasant setting for picnic and cookout facilities.

Accomplishing the goals of this concept could involve varying degrees of impact. While preservation of significant trees is desirable, it is possible that all of the land outside of buffers and floodplain will be impacted. Several possibilities are illustrated here, but additional study will be necessary to refine the vision for this important property.

## ARTIST RENDERING OF CONNECTION TO DELAY SITE



## TRANSPORTATION

The recommended transportation improvements are based on the pre-existing transportation plans described above and public input received during the planning process. They include some new and modified recommendations that complement the updated recommendations of this plan.

### Transportation Policies

**Ensure that new streets are designed as complete streets.** Complete streets address the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists as well as those of drivers. Concepts range from buffered bike lanes or cycle tracks to wider, bikeable lanes or sharrows on low-volume streets. Appropriate treatments will vary based on traffic volumes, the number of pedestrians and cyclists, adjacent land uses, and other factors.

**Continue to promote biking and walking as viable alternatives to driving.** Key tools include educational campaigns, community events, safety initiatives, and increasing the availability and visibility of biking and walking maps.

**Fill gaps in the existing street, sidewalk, and greenway networks.** Private developers can assist by constructing these with new projects.

**Promote shared parking in new and existing mixed-use areas.** Parking spaces should be shared. This allows uses with varying parking needs at different times of the day and week to use the same spaces and prevents vacant or underused parking lots or decks.

**Encourage on-street parking with redevelopment, especially near Town Center and Old Town.** New on-street parking provides convenient spaces for shoppers and visitors, helps calm traffic, and reduces the need for large, off-street parking lots.

**Require new commercial developments to install bike racks and/or bike lockers.** This will provide adequate and secure storage for bicycles.

### Transportation Projects

**Complete Buford Highway streetscape improvements (T-1).** This transformative project will help link Old Town with Town Center and encourage development along Buford Highway.

**Construct new sidewalks where shown on the map on the following page (T-2).** These projects will fill gaps in the existing sidewalk network and make it easier to walk between homes and destinations such as Town Center. See the Implementation Matrix on page x for details on individual projects.



*Proposed extensions of the greenway system will allow Suwanee residents to walk and bike more (image courtesy NHTSA)*



*Complete streets are designed for those on foot as well as vehicles*

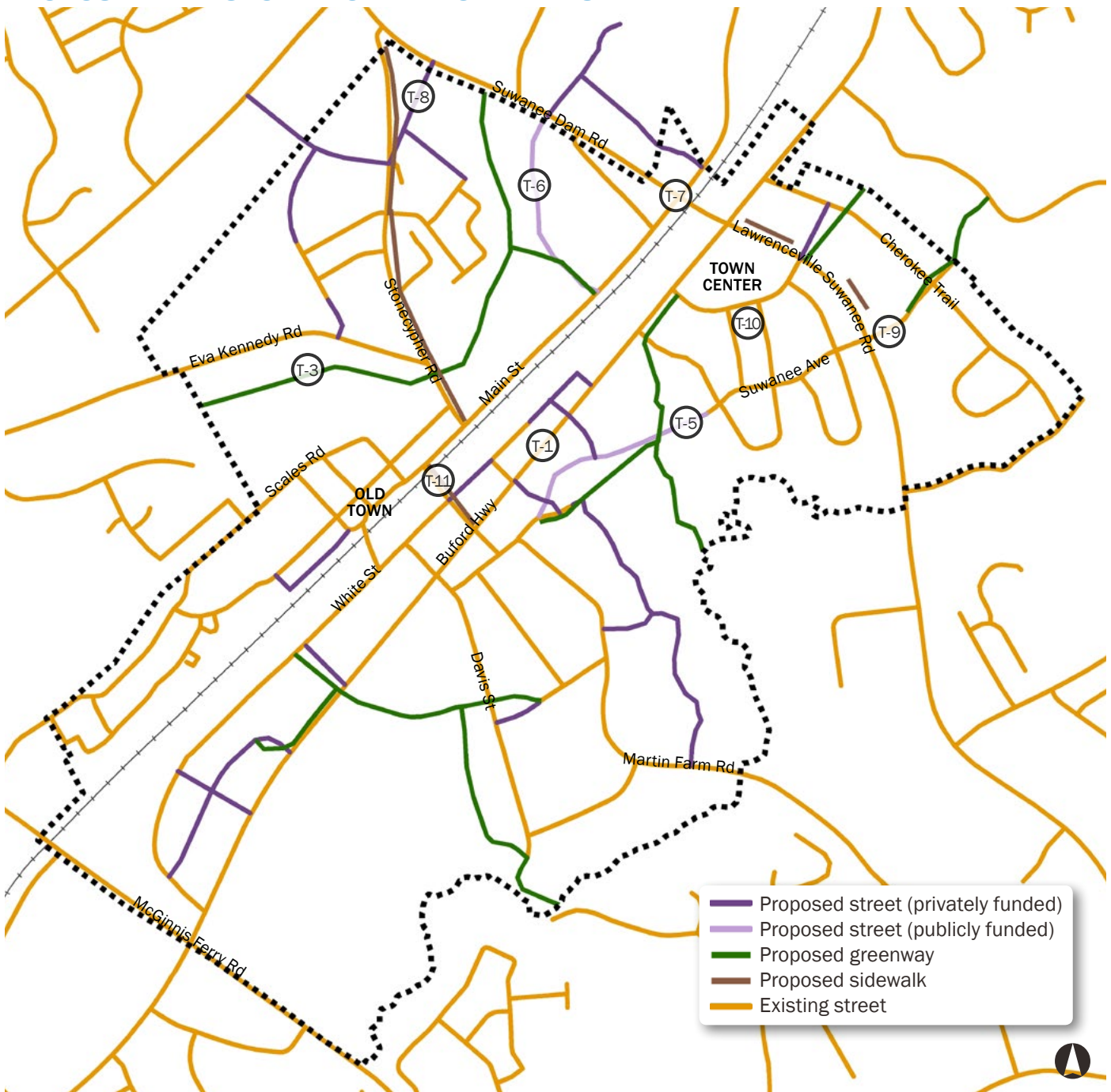
**Provide a greenway connection from Stonecypher Road south to McGinnis Ferry Road (T-3).** This important link should occur along Brushy Creek. This significant expansion of Suwanee's greenway system will form the spine of the DeLay Park and improve connections among residential areas, Old Town, and Town Center.

**Expand the greenway network as shown on the map on the following page (T-4).** These additional greenway connections will link existing and proposed developments to the larger greenway system.

**Extend Suwanee Avenue to the southwest to connect with King Street (T-5).** This key link will improve access to Town Center, especially for neighborhoods along Martin Farm Road. Care should be taken to ensure that it remains a neighborhood street rather than a high-speed road.

**Construct a new street along the edge of the DeLay Park site between Main Street and Suwanee Dam**

# PROPOSED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS



Locations shown for proposed streets are approximate.  
 Alignments are preliminary and subject to modification during future engineering and design. Locations are illustrative only.

**Road (T-6).** This will improve access to Old Town, while also providing an appropriate frontage to the park.

**Extend the median at the intersection of Suwanee Dam Road and Main Street to prevent left turns from and onto Main Street (T-7).** Once the proposed new street connections described above are complete, they will help improve access to Main Street and Old Town. This project should then be constructed to reduce safety issues with left turns and backups that occur at the railroad crossing.

**Realign Stonecypher Road to connect to Suwanee Dam Road farther east (T-8).** This adjustment will allow for a full intersection that includes left turns, which are currently not permitted because of the short distance between Stonecypher Road and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard.

**Install a traffic signal at the intersection of Lawrenceville Suwanee Road and Suwanee Avenue (T-9).** With the proposed extension of Suwanee Avenue into George Pierce Park, this light will help vehicles and pedestrians more safely cross Lawrenceville Suwanee Road, but a warrant study will need to be conducted first to ensure that the traffic signal meets GDOT standards.

**Conduct a parking analysis in Town Center (T-10).** This study should determine how many spaces are vacant on typical weekdays and weekends as well as during large and small special events. Solutions can then be explored to meet needs identified in the study.

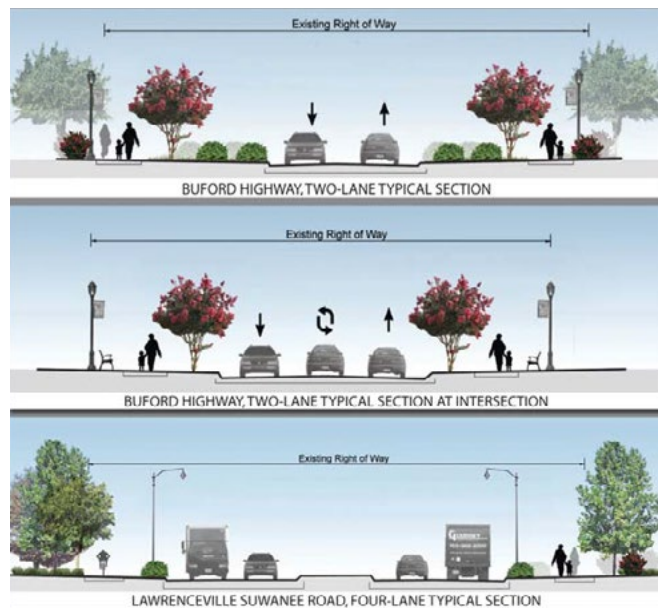
**Implement streetscape improvements along Russell Street to connect the roundabout to Old Town (T-11).** The proposed roundabout at Russell Street and Buford Highway will provide a gateway to Old Town, but sidewalks, street lights, traffic calming, and other improvements should run along Russell Street to complete the link.

**Implement streetscape improvements along Main Street in Old Town (T-12).** Sidewalks, streetlights, parking, and other downtown amenities should be added to Main Street between Russell Street and Calaboose Street in Old Town.

**Implement streetscape improvements along Main Street between Russell Street and Suwanee Dam Road (T-13).** These pedestrian improvements will strengthen the link between Old Town and Town Center, and provide a safer place to walk.



*A parking analysis should be conducted to understand the demand for parking in Town Center, especially during large events (image courtesy Scott Quady)*



*Street section examples from 2009 Downtown Master Plan*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Economic Development Policies

**Increase diversity of housing types.** Promote development of luxury apartments, senior housing, homes with smaller yards for lower maintenance, and homes with parks, shopping, and other amenities within walking distance. These will appeal to retirees as well as Generation Y who value a more urban feel.

**Encourage homes that are affordable to young families and other first-time buyers.** Smaller yards, townhouses, cottage courts, and other housing types can provide homes with lower price points.

**Continue to host and promote events in Town Center as a major economic development driver.** Care should be taken so that events have minimal negative impacts on local businesses.

**Continue to explore unconventional funding sources and development incentives.** Successful public projects and private developments may require multiple funding sources or incentives to overcome market constraints.

**Focus commercial uses along Buford Highway immediately adjacent to Town Center and at Russell Street.** This will avoid over-saturation of the market and help ensure the success of businesses.

**Continue to foster public-private partnerships.** The Downtown Development Authority will be a key partner to help ensure high-quality development that complements downtown.

### Economic Development Projects

**Recruit an anchor use to be located at or adjacent to Town Center (O-10).** Options could include a small grocer, fitness center, entertainment venue, or arts center.

**Continue efforts to recruit a chef-driven, unique, fine dining restaurant at or near Town Center (O-11).** This could attract visitors and serve as a driver for other businesses.

**Incorporate public art and creative signage into design of the proposed roundabout (O-12).** This will direct visitors into Old Town and help create a unique sense of place.

**Rebrand Old Town as a destination (O-13).** Promote and attract businesses with an established clientele, those unique enough to draw from a larger area, and those less reliant on in-person sales (perhaps because of online sales).



*High quality, sidewalk-oriented apartments should be a part of the housing mix*



*Cottages and other home types will help make home ownership more affordable and ensure diversity*



*A small grocer could form an anchor that would draw people and businesses (image courtesy K. Kendall)*

**Recruit a destination restaurant or commercial anchor to Old Town (O-14).** Consider and evaluate the feasibility of discounted rent, performance based rent, renovation assistance, free parking/valet, or other options. Pierce's Corner is one possible location for this tenant.

**Conduct a feasibility study for a performing arts center (O-15).** The significant investment that would be required in such a facility warrants a study to look at competitors in the region, ideal size for a facility in Suwanee, and the number and type of events it could be expected to hold.



*A chef-driven restaurant in Town Center or Old Town could serve as an anchor (image courtesy hotel der oeschberghof)*

## SPECIAL TOPICS

The following topics emerged during this planning process as key pieces to the future of Downtown Suwanee. They are addressed here in detail and are supported by specific recommendations in the following section.

### Old Town

Old Town is the historic heart of downtown Suwanee. A quaint area separated from Buford Highway by the railroad, Old Town is home to a number of client-based businesses such as attorney's offices, hair salons, instrument repair shops, and other similar establishments. Traditional retail businesses that rely on high traffic counts and high visibility are unlikely to locate in the area as configured. The Buford Highway reconstruction project and associated roundabout may impact traffic patterns, visibility, and overall area awareness in such a manner that traditional retail businesses may choose to locate here. The market analysis performed as part of this update indicates that office and destination type commercial uses are the most suitable uses for Old Town at this time.

### Pierce's Corner

Pierce's Corner, a historic two-story brick building in Old Town Suwanee, is owned by the Suwanee Downtown Development Authority (DDA). The building is considered an important asset in revitalization of Old Town Suwanee. The 6,000 square foot building was constructed in 1910 and has been used as office, residential, and commercial space. The Pierce's Corner property is zoned to a commercial district that allows for alcohol sales and a restaurant use.

Over the last couple of years, the City has pursued and secured a listing for parts of Old Town on both the State and National Register of Historic Places. Pierce's Corner is included in that district, which makes it eligible for both state and federal tax incentive programs created to encourage economic redevelopment of historically significant structures.

Given market dynamics of the Old Town District, and the City's investment in the Buford Highway corridor (which will further connect Old Town and Suwanee Town Center and serve as a catalyst for future development within the corridor), Pierce's Corner will receive even more interest and subsequently redevelop as either mixed-use office/retail, or a purely office use. While that reality is within reason, the zoning allows for restaurant and retail as well. The market analysis indicates that the historic Old Town area is most likely to attract destination-type uses. As such, while a restaurant or similar use may be desirable in this location, patience may be required in order to find the right type of destination use. Ownership of the building allows the DDA and City of Suwanee



*Destination businesses have succeeded in historic Old Town because they draw customers from a large area*



*Pierce's Corner is a valuable historic resource in Old Town and is eligible for historic tax credits*

to be flexible in considering all options presented for the redevelopment and use of Pierce's Corner.

### Metal Products

The "Metal Products" site is located at the end of Main Street in historic Old Town. The approximately 5-acre tract is bisected by Jackson Street. The property to the north of Jackson Street is undeveloped, while the property to the south is developed with an approximately 40,000 square foot metal building and an approximately 2,000 square foot office. The metal building was constructed around 1975.

Previous planning efforts have attempted to describe how the site might be redeveloped in the future. In the Old Town Master Plan adopted in 2002, the plan shows the site being redeveloped with Main Street extended through the property and to Jackson Street. Along the Main Street extension the plan envisions small footprint commercial buildings where the metal building now exists. On the north side of Jackson Street, the vacant property would be developed with a parking lot that would serve the new commercial buildings.

In the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan adopted in 2009, the plan envisions 1-2 story mixed-use primarily residential development of the property south of Jackson Street. Like the earlier version of this plan, Main Street is extended through the property and up to Jackson Street with a small pocket park located between the road and the cemetery located on Jackson Street. The north side of Jackson Street is envisioned with two-plus residential, which is essentially higher intensity single-family residential with accessory dwelling units.

Neither of the previous planning efforts fully addresses a couple of important factors: 1) there is a successful underground metal storage tank manufacturing company currently located on the property, and this business has not expressed any strong desire to move to a new location or shut down at the current location, and 2) there is not a market for true retail in the Old Town Area. As long as the current business is operating successfully, there is not really a viable redevelopment opportunity on the property. The market in Old Town is likely to only support destination type businesses, such as the businesses currently located in the area.

Considering these two factors, the City must be prepared to be patient and flexible regarding future redevelopment of the property. Higher density single-family opportunities are most appropriate on the northern side of Jackson Street. Destination-type uses, commercial or office, mixed in with residential, will most likely be considered for the larger portion of the property currently occupied by the metal fabrication operation. Proper recognition should be given to the reality that until the current business is looking to relocate or close its doors, opportunities for development of this property will be limited.

### City Water System

The City operates a small water system that serves approximately 350 customers in the Old Town area. The water system was created in 1952 and many of the primary water lines were installed in the 1960s and 70s. The system has historically relied on one well located on Stonecypher and has one 150,000 gallon elevated storage tank at the top of Scales Road. In 2001, during the master planning process, various options for the water system were explored including paying for water from the Gwinnett County water system (the systems currently have a cross connection), selling the water system to Gwinnett County, or continuing to operate the water system. Subsequently the City continued to operate the system.

In 2008 and 2009 the City undertook an evaluation of the water system. This evaluation recognized the need to adjust water rates in order to more accurately reflect the true cost of providing water service, provide an additional well that would help the system accommodate



*The existing Metal Products facility in Old Town is a viable business with no plans to close or relocate*



*The 2009 Downtown Master Plan envisioned redevelopment of the Metal Products site with a mix of retail and housing*



*The City of Suwanee has invested considerable efforts to update its water system*



additional users and provide better water pressure for fire flows, and undertake several water line replacement projects. The City has subsequently invested considerable efforts into updating the water system, including the addition of a well along with an additional pump and replacement of water lines on Martin Farm Road and Stonecypher Road.

The City is committed to providing a high level of service to its water system customers. However, the City is open to exploring the merits and feasibility of transferring the water system to Gwinnett County as opportunities arise.

### Arts/Cultural Facility

Another topic that emerged during the planning process is the potential role of an arts center in Suwanee's downtown. The scale of an arts center could vary significantly based on the components it contained, which could include studios, a gallery, performing arts center, professional or community theater, classrooms, a cultural center, or other components.

It is difficult to envision a location for a potential arts center without a clear idea of the components it would include and its potential building footprint. A small art gallery could potentially occupy existing retail space anywhere in downtown, while a performing arts center could require a large building with significant parking.

The presence of the arts in downtown Suwanee has been a significant asset to the community and will continue to do so. The arts can also be a driver of economic development and attract visitors and so are consistent with the vision for the future of downtown. The Comprehensive Plan discusses several economic development strategies, including a focus on quality of life and creating a sense of community. Support of the arts is consistent with these goals.

In the citizen-driven Suwanee 20/20 Vision Plan, these goals are clarified and expanded. The Suwanee 20/20 Vision Plan notes that "Suwanee values a rich cultural life . . . Therefore, the City's support for arts and culture is aimed at creating a place and a vibe that is conducive to both economic and community development . . . Suwanee believes it can and should be a model community. A key factor in taking Suwanee to that next level, in achieving that kind of quality of life, is a commitment to the arts."

The Suwanee 20/20 Vision Plan states a series of goals that support the provision of some kind of arts facility, including: 1) Explore the feasibility of a performing arts venue for a community theater, community choir, etc., and 2) Consider providing vacant space to artists for a nominal fee. Based on these elements of prior planning efforts, the presence of an arts/cultural facility in downtown is consistent with the overall goals of the City.



*An arts/cultural facility could feature a number of potential components (image courtesy stnorbert)*



*Several neighboring communities, including Buford, have competing performing arts centers*

In recent years, performing arts facilities have played a role in downtown areas of some nearby cities. Buford recently constructed a facility that seats 274 people, Lawrenceville has the 240-seat Aurora theater, and Duluth has the 260-seat Red Clay Theatre, just to name a few examples. In addition, Gwinnett County is served by the Gwinnett Center, which includes a performing arts center that seats over 700 and an arena that seats between 3,500 and 13,000 people depending upon configuration.

The private sector, art-related non-profits, and local government can all play different roles in the provision of an arts facility. A number of questions will need to be answered as the concept progresses. These relate to the ownership, location, management, size, and components of the facility, in addition to who will construct it and whether it will be part of another building or a standalone facility. All of these are questions that need to be addressed in the context of Suwanee's community priorities. The private sector and non-profit organizations will certainly play a continued role in the

arts, but the extent of their involvement and financial commitment may vary. A feasibility study should be conducted to determine more of the particulars of an arts/cultural facility, particularly if the City will be involved in its creation.

### Gwinnett County Training Facility

The Gwinnett County Board of Education currently owns and operates a school bus driver training facility on a 23 acre tract located on Buford Highway just south of Davis Street. The facility includes several smaller buildings and a 31,000 square foot former school building. While the school system currently has no plans to relocate the training facility in the future, the City should be aware of opportunities to redevelop the property. The property and uses on it have the potential to impact the activity level around the future roundabout on Buford Highway at Russell Street.



*A performance space occupies the first floor of this mixed use building in downtown Coralville, Iowa (image courtesy City of Coralville)*

# Moving Forward



## Action Matrix

Implementation of the vision for the future of downtown Suwanee should occur according to the Action Matrix on the following pages. The Action Matrix lists all recommended projects along with a general start date, rough cost estimates, possible funding sources, and those parties responsible for implementation.

Project schedules range from immediate to over ten years in duration. This extended schedule will require that ongoing attention and priority is given to the plan and its implementation. As the history of democracy in Suwanee has shown, continued citizen involvement and input as exhibited throughout the study process will be essential to the long-term success of the plan.

City staff should track projects and maintain milestone dates and deadlines to help keep projects on schedule and moving toward completion. This effort will aid elected officials in establishing policies and setting priorities for funding and implementation of the projects outlined in the Action Matrix.

The Atlanta Regional Commission requires LCI studies, including 10-year updates such as this one, to be updated every five years. This will be important, not only to maintain eligibility for transportation implementation funding, but to update the Action Matrix and any other aspects of the plan based on progress made, changing market forces, and any other new variables.

## Short and Long-Term Actions

Short-term steps toward implementation include the zoning amendments shown in the Action Matrix, but realizing the plan's vision requires a long-term commitment. The plan's future vision cannot be achieved overnight, and if it is not consulted and reviewed regularly, it risks becoming obsolete.

As Suwanee moves forward with implementation, it is important to remember the following. The general vision of the plan, including the Framework Plan, represents the results of an intentional and inclusive public involvement process. It is unlikely that the general vision will change substantially in the short term, even if the steps toward implementation do change.

While the vision may be unlikely to change in the near future, it is important that the community recognize that the vision/plan can and likely will change over time. The future addition or subtraction of policies or projects should not be viewed as a compromise of the study, but rather its natural evolution in response to new conditions.



*Some projects will require public funding in order to be implemented*



*Some projects, such as zoning updates, can occur administratively in the short term*

Many of the assumptions used to guide this process, including the economic climate, land costs, transportation costs, and development trends, are never fixed. The City of Suwanee must be prepared to respond to changes in order to ensure an ongoing relevant plan.

One of the greatest long-term values of this document, in addition to its role in procuring transportation funding, is that it lays out a detailed land use framework or vision. This vision should guide all future redevelopment efforts. Future proposals should be reviewed for compatibility with the framework and vision prior to approval to help ensure that the vision becomes a reality.

Action Matrix: Transportation Projects

ID	DESCRIPTION	CONSTRUCTION YEAR	TOTAL PROJECT COSTS (INC. CONTINGENCY)	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	FUNDING SOURCES	LOCAL SOURCE	LOCAL MATCH
T-1	Buford Highway Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities from McGinnis Ferry Road to George Pierce Park	2016	\$8,859,723	City of Suwanee	Local, STP-Urban (>200k) ARC	City General Fund	\$844,058
T-2	New sidewalks						
T-2a	Along Stonecypher Road	2021	\$564,900	City of Suwanee	Local	City General Fund	\$564,900
T-2b	Fill gaps on north side of Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	2018	\$56,200	City of Suwanee	Local	City General Fund	\$56,200
T-3	Greenway from Stonecypher Road to McGinnis Ferry Road	2022	\$1,886,800	City of Suwanee	Local	City General Fund	\$1,886,800
T-4	Other greenway expansions						
T-4a	From Suwanee Dam Road along Brushy Creek to Stonecypher Road	2022	\$635,200	City of Suwanee	Local	City General Fund	\$635,200
T-4b	From White Street to Plum Street and Suwanee Creek Greenway	2029	\$1,620,300	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$324,060
T-4c	From Town Center to Suwanee Creek Greenway, incl. King Street spur	2029	\$1,079,200	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$215,840
T-5	Suwanee Avenue extension to connect with King Street	2024	\$3,136,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$627,200
T-6	New street along DeLay park site	2022	\$2,220,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$444,000
T-7	Extend median on Suwanee Dam Road at Main Street	2024	\$406,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$81,200
T-8	Realign Stonecypher Road	2024	\$2,029,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$405,800
T-9	New traffic signal at Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and Suwanee Avenue	2028	\$337,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, Private	City General Fund	\$67,400
T-10	Parking analysis for Town Center	n/a	\$30,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI	City General Fund	\$50,000
T-11	Russell Street Streetscape improvements from Buford Highway to Main Street	2020	\$134,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$26,800
T-12	Main Street Streetscape improvements from Russell Street to Calaboose	2020	\$136,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$27,200
T-13	Main Street Streetscape improvements from Russell Street to Suwanee Dam Road	2020	\$621,000	City of Suwanee	Local, LCI, TE	City General Fund	\$124,200

## Action Matrix: Other Projects

ID	DESCRIPTION	COST	START DATE	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	FUNDING SOURCE
0-1	Mixed use project on City owned property	TBD	2016	Private, City of Suwanee, DDA	Private
0-2	Redevelopment along Buford Highway	TBD	2017	Private	Private
0-3	Redevelop gas station site	TBD	TBD	Private	Private
0-4	DeLay park site transformation	\$3-6M	2015	City of Suwanee	City
0-5	Orchard expansion at White Street Park	\$50,000	2015	City of Suwanee	City
0-6	Public plaza at tunnel entrance	\$0.5-1M	2016	City of Suwanee	City
0-7	Evaluate zoning amendment to allow smaller homes	admin. time	2016	City of Suwanee	City
0-8	Evaluate zoning amendment to allow carriage houses	admin. time	2016	City of Suwanee	City
0-9	City Hall Lawn street furniture	\$50,000	2016	City of Suwanee	City
<b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b>					
0-10	Recruit anchor use at or adjacent to Town Center	TBD	ongoing	City of Suwanee	Private
0-11	Continue to recruit a destination restaurant to Town Center	TBD	ongoing	City of Suwanee	Private
0-12	Public art + creative signage at roundabout	TBD	2017	City of Suwanee	City
0-13	Rebrand Old Town as a destination	TBD	ongoing	City of Suwanee	City
0-14	Recruit destination restaurant or anchor for Old Town	TBD	ongoing	City of Suwanee	Private
0-15	Arts Center feasibility study	\$40,000	2016	City of Suwanee	City, Private

## Population + Employment Projections

It is projected that the implementation of the recommendations laid out in the Framework Plan, conceptual redevelopment plans, and other plans recommended in this document will add population and employment in the study area as shown below.

### Projected Short-Term Population Growth in the Study Area

YEAR 2015	SINGLE-FAMILY	DUPLEX	TOWNHOUSES	MULTIFAMILY	TOTAL/AVG.
Existing housing units	568	4	151	22	745
Assumed average household size	3.1	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.9
Total estimated population	1,761	8	317	40	2,126
YEAR 2020					
Net new housing units since 2015	210	0	85	500	795
Assumed average household size	3.1	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.2
Net new population	651	0	178.5	900	1,730
YEAR 2025					
Net new housing units since 2020	210	0	85	500	795
Assumed average household size	3.1	2.1	2.1	1.8	2.2
Net new population	651	0	178.5	900	1,730
Total projected population	3,063	8	674	1,840	5,585

Source: Noell Consulting Group, U.S. Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey

### Projected Short-Term Employment Growth in the Study Area

YEAR 2015	RETAIL/RESTAURANT	OFFICE	OTHER	TOTAL
Existing jobs	363	360	307	1,030
YEAR 2020				
Net new square footage	25,000	10,000	10,000	45,000
Assumed square feet/job	890	434	500	—
Net new jobs	28	23	20	71
<b>Projected total jobs</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>1,101</b>
YEAR 2025				
Net new square footage	25,000	10,000	10,000	45,000
Assumed square feet/job	890	434	500	—
Net new jobs	28	23	20	51
<b>Projected total jobs</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>1,172</b>

Existing employment figures are provided by Noell Consulting Group and the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Projections are based on the proposed framework plan and conceptual redevelopment plans.

Square feet per job numbers come from the U.S. Energy Information Administration Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey.



The long-term population and employment projections provided below are based on existing data from the U.S. Census and field surveys, combined with assumptions about economic growth and the building out of the Framework Plan.

and subject to change. Although the Framework Plan is largely based on a ten-year build-out, longer-term forecasts can be made based on real estate cycles and the assumption that some areas may be redeveloped.

Estimating population and employment growth beyond ten years is difficult at a level as small as the study area. Real estate and economic trends are complex

### Projected Long-Term Population Growth in the Study Area

YEAR	SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTS	DUPLEX RESIDENTS	TOWNHOUSE RESIDENTS	MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTS	TOTAL POP.
2015	1,761	8	317	40	2,126
2020	2,412	8	496	940	3,855
2025	3,063	8	674	1,840	5,585
2030	3,210	9	707	1,928	5,853
2035	3,364	9	740	2,021	6,135
2040	3,526	10	776	2,118	6,430

*Long term projections are based on a 9% increase in the number of housing units each decade, per the low end 2020-2030 projections in the 2030 Suwanee Comprehensive Plan*

### Projected Long-Term Housing Growth in the Study Area

YEAR	SINGLE-FAMILY	DUPLEX	TOWNHOUSES	MULTIFAMILY	TOTAL UNITS
2015	1,761	8	317	40	2,126
2020	2,412	8	496	940	3,855
2025	3,063	8	674	1,840	5,585
2030	3,210	9	707	1,928	5,853
2035	3,364	9	740	2,021	6,135
2040	3,526	10	776	2,118	6,430

*Long term projections are based on a 15% increase in the number of housing units each decade, per the 2020-2030 projections in the 2030 Suwanee Comprehensive Plan*

### Projected Long-Term Employment Growth in the Study Area

YEAR	RETAIL/RESTAURANT	OFFICE	OTHER	TOTAL
2015	363	360	307	1,030
2020	391	383	327	1,101
2025	419	406	347	1,172
2030	447	433	370	1,251
2035	477	462	395	1,334
2040	509	493	421	1,423

*Long term projections are based on a continuation of trends as shown in short term projections*

## Consistency with LCI Components

This study and its recommendations are consistent with the components of the Livable Centers Initiative as outlined below.

1. Efficiency/feasibility of land uses and mix appropriate for future growth including new and/or revised land use regulations needed to complete the development program.

*This plan puts forth a vision for a more high density mix of uses in the study area that will accommodate future growth in an efficient manner by placing new residents near jobs, services, infrastructure, and public spaces. The vision is feasible given market constraints, street system, and local regulations, although two small zoning code updates are recommended on page 55.*



*A higher intensity blend of uses in the study area will create a more efficient mix*

2. Transportation demand reduction measures.

*A reduction in the demand for vehicular trips is proposed via a combination of new sidewalks and greenways, more compact development, better street connectivity, and more diverse land uses.*

3. Internal mobility requirements – traffic calming, pedestrian circulation, transit circulation, bicycle circulation including safety and security of pedestrians.

*Pedestrian improvements along a variety of streets include traffic calming measures and elements to promote pedestrian and bicycle circulation. An interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities is proposed, with a focus on safety, particularly along major roads without sidewalks today, and at key crossings.*



*The plan will make it easier to walk and bike in the study area (image courtesy Randall Myers)*

4. Mixed-income housing, job/housing match and social issues.

*Housing types and sizes for people of a variety of ages and incomes are projected and recommended by this study. This is accomplished with a mix of apartments, senior housing, townhouses, and single-family residences. No significant expansions of employment are viewed as economically feasible, so while new commercial space is planned, a significant jobs/housing balance will likely remain.*

5. Continuity of local streets in the study area and the development of a network of minor roads.

*Continuity of local streets is proposed to be enhanced through the creation of new streets with redevelopment and through public investment, as well as through extensions of the greenway network.*

6. Need/identification of future transit circulation systems.

*No transit service is present in the study area. Proposed population and job densities will most likely not make transit feasible in the near future, especially given the longer distances between the study area and major job centers.*

7. Connectivity of transportation system to other centers.

*There are no regional centers in or near the study area except for Town Center, but the plan proposes a number of transportation improvements that would improve vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access to and through Suwanee. Other improvements would better connect residential neighborhoods to Town Center and Old Town.*

8. Center development organization, management, promotion, and economic restructuring.

*Suwanee currently does an effective job of development organization, management, and promotion of existing and proposed assets in and near the study area. Economic development recommendations address how to build on this foundation to gradually improve the local economy.*

9. Stakeholder participation and support.

*Public participation was solicited throughout the planning process through a combination of individual and small group interviews, public meetings, a visioning workshop, an open house, and advisory committee meetings. More information about how meetings were advertised and how stakeholders contributed to the vision of this plan can be found on pages 45-46.*

10. Public and private investment policy.

*Successful implementation of the plan depends on a marriage of public and private investment policy, in which significant public investments in transportation improvements and other areas are complemented by private investments in redevelopment, new streets, and more. Projects may draw from a variety of funding sources, including County funds; city, state, and federal dollars; and private sources.*



*Continued actions on the part of public and private entities can improve center development organization, management, promotion, and economic restructuring*

