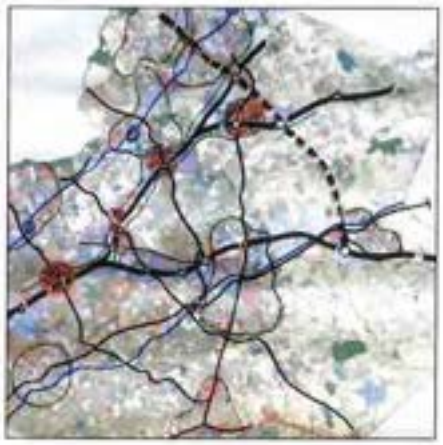


Workshop 7

University Parkway & Atlanta - Athens Rail Corridor

Gwinnett County

THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY'S BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

Blueprints for Successful Communities

Blueprints for Successful Communities Partners

The Georgia Conservancy
Urban Land Institute
Greater Atlanta Home Builders Association
American Institute of Architects
American Society of Landscape Architects
Institute of Transportation Engineers
Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
Consulting Engineers Council
Georgia Planning Association
National Association of Industrial and Office Properties
Atlanta Neighborhood Development Partnership

University Parkway & Atlanta - Athens Rail Corridor

Community Design Workshop

Gwinnett County

Results of a community design workshop for Gwinnett County, Georgia

March 2001

Sponsored by:

GEORGIA POWER
A SOUTHERN COMPANY

AT&T

SUNTRUST

UPS

Cecil B. Day Foundation, Inc.

John H. and Wilhelmina D. Harland Charitable Trust

THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY'S BLUEPRINTS FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

A component of the Blueprints for Successful Communities Initiative of The Georgia Conservancy in partnership with:

- **The Interprofessional Community Design Collaborative**
- **The Georgia Tech Urban Design Workshop**

Hosted by:

- **University Parkway Alliance**
- **Georgia Rail Passenger Authority**

Contents:

Blueprints Initiative	2
The Atlanta - Athens Rail Corridor	3
Gwinnett County Overview	4
Corridor Study Sections	6
Assets and Challenges	8
Corridor Growth Framework	10
The Parkway and Commuter Rail	12
Lilburn	14
Lawrenceville	18
Dacula	22
Recommended Strategic Actions	26
Participants	28

About this report

Since beginning the Blueprints for Successful Communities Community Design Workshop process in 1995, The Georgia Conservancy, Georgia Tech, and the Interprofessional Community Design Collaborative have worked with five communities. In 1999, at the request of the University Parkway Alliance, we initiated the first regional project in the Blueprints workshop series: the transportation corridor, road and rail, between Atlanta and Athens. This corridor runs through six counties and more than a dozen towns. Due to the size of the area, the Blueprints workshop process was split into two phases. Phase One was conducted from September to December 1999 and covered Barrow and Oconee counties, the eastern or outer segment of the corridor. This report focuses on Phase Two, which covers Gwinnett County. The "edge" counties and cities—Athens-Clarke County, Dekalb County, and the City of Atlanta—are represented in the project via a Regional Steering Committee.

The Blueprints Initiative

Renowned planner Jan Gehl once compared cities to all-night house parties, saying, "Cities, like parties, come in three versions. Some you don't go to unless you have to; some you leave as soon as you can; and others you go and stay for much longer than you planned." When cities, towns and neighborhoods become lost in the morass of sprawl development they begin to feel like places you want to leave as soon as you can.

There is a growing consensus among members of the environmental and business communities that the current trend of low-density, decentralized, automobile-dependent development so common in this country for the past 50 years is a major threat to quality of life. Not only is it expensive for local governments to serve, but the impact that this urban form has on the environment is staggering. Automobile emissions create toxic air pollution. Storm water surging across miles of asphalt poisons rivers and streams. Thousands of acres of farms, woodlands and open space are lost to strip malls and parking lots.

In Georgia, a diverse group of people including homebuilders, architects, planners, developers, environmentalists, and neighborhood leaders are among a growing number who are beginning to understand the link between the health of our environment, our economic stability and the way we use land. In 1995, The Georgia Conservancy convened such a group of people to foster public awareness about better ways to grow communities. A coalition was formed called Blueprints for Successful Communities.

The Partners have been instrumental in raising public awareness in Georgia and in the Atlanta region specifically about alternative land use and transportation strategies that are good for the environment and good for the economy. There are two Blueprints program elements: educational conferences and community design workshops.

Through the workshops, communities participate in the design of their own neighborhood, and are able to create a model to guide the future of their community. This model will hopefully lead to a community designed for people, where walking to the corner store is commonplace, where tree-lined streets and bike paths are the norm, and where traffic congestion and air pollution are minimal.

The workshop activities and recommendations are based on a set of principles developed by the Blueprints Partners.

Blueprints Principles

Successful Communities:

- work together to produce a high quality of life that they want to sustain.
- work to create regional strategies for transportation, land use and economic growth.
- understand that sustainable community design is based on the effect of the built environment on the natural environment, aesthetics, scale, history and culture.
- promote efficient use of existing infrastructure, energy, water and land.
- incorporate compact integrated land uses which bring people closer to work, to school and shopping and safeguard undeveloped lands for agriculture, greenspace and recreation.
- are designed to be safe, healthy, economically strong, environmentally sound and inclusive.

The Importance of Regional Planning

No county or city by itself can make a dent in an air quality problem or plan for a watershed's integrity. The shared vision for a greenway along a river from the mountains to the piedmont is bigger than even existing groupings of counties can encompass. Ecosystems know nothing of political boundaries or social units. Across Georgia there is now growing consensus that solutions must be found across local boundaries to protect natural systems and the state's quality of life.

Regional strategies for transportation, land use and economic growth offer not only a more sensitive approach to natural resources, but also a more efficient and effective use of government funds. These Blueprints Community Design Workshops for the University Parkway / Atlanta-to-Athens Rail Corridor begin a process of planning at the regional level that takes into account all of these advantages.

THE ATLANTA / ATHENS CORRIDOR

The corridor stretching from downtown Atlanta to Athens has for some time been one of the region's highest growth areas. The corridor faces even more accelerated growth with the addition of two major transportation improvements.

- The recently completed University Parkway (Ga. 316) linking I-85 to Athens.

- The proposed first phase Commuter Rail corridor following the existing CSX rail line and paralleling the Parkway. With the region's air quality problems and the creation of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, this rail line becomes a high priority project in the region.

The presence of these transportation projects creates an urgent need to determine if there is a better way to manage growth in the area in such a way as to reduce traffic, improve air quality, protect environmentally sensitive areas, create efficient infrastructure systems, and in general, create more livable communities. At the same time, this urgent need becomes a unique opportunity to point the way to a more sustainable future for the Atlanta region.

To address the challenge of this corridor, two separate planning workshop processes are being undertaken:

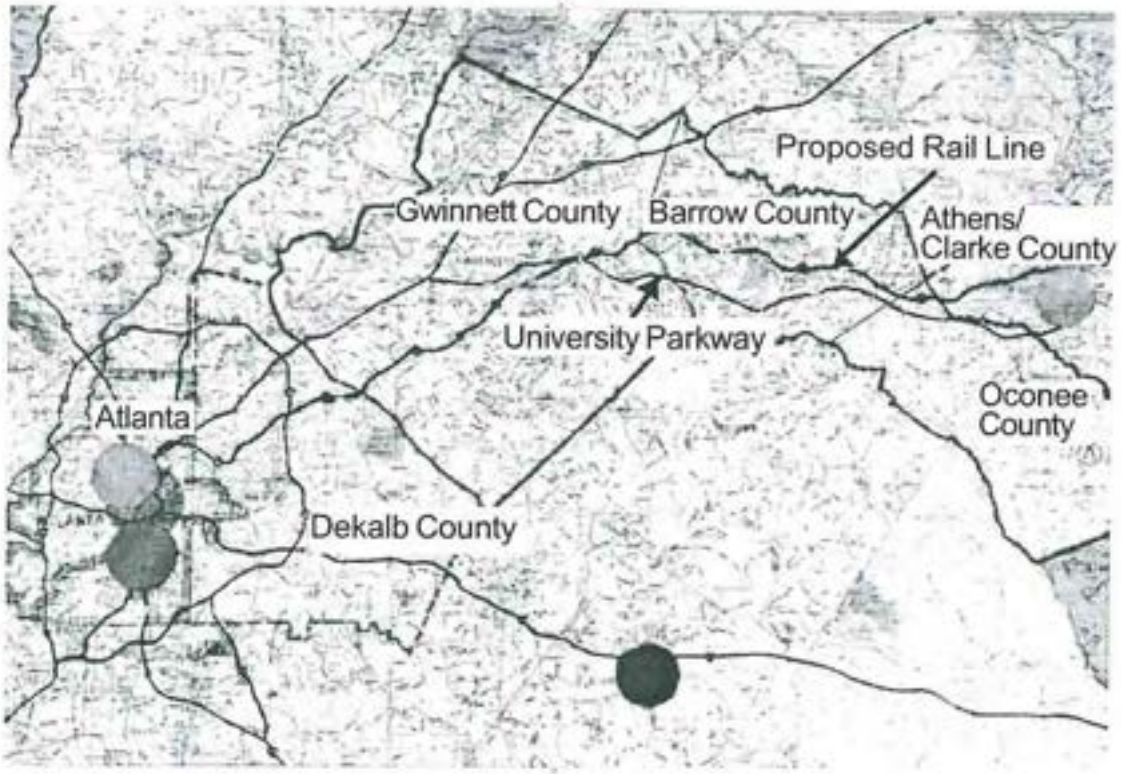
- The "outer" (eastern) half of the corridor, characterized by historic small towns and rural areas now under intense development pressure (Barrow and Oconee Counties terminating in Athens-Clarke County.)

- The "inner" (western) half of the corridor, characterized by urbanization and existing low-density suburban development (in Atlanta and Dekalb and Gwinnett counties.)

This study presents the findings of the workshop addressing the portion of the "inner" half of the corridor that goes through Gwinnett County. Two specific questions for this section of the corridor are:

1. Can the Commuter Rail and Parkway be catalysts to help shape a more sustainable development pattern while protecting the historic towns along the rail line?

2. Can economic development opportunities created by the Commuter Rail and Parkway be harnessed to maintain the jobs/housing balance in Gwinnett County, improving both job opportunities and additional tax base for the county's economy?



GWINNETT COUNTY OVERVIEW

Population and Households

Located in the northeast corner of the Atlanta metropolitan area, Gwinnett County has shared in the economic success of the region overall since the 1970s. In the mid-1990s, Gwinnett was one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation. Projections provided by the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation suggest that this growth will slow somewhat over the next two decades, but will still remain strong in the county overall. The County is projected to add 277,000 people by 2020, for a total population topping 700,000.

The Gwinnett County Comprehensive Plan summarizes three main concerns in terms of population and employment growth. First, while growth and development have led to an increased quality of life for many of the county's residents, the county faces a challenge in planning for continued growth at a rapid pace. Second, an aging population raises the concern for providing alternative transportation, as well as adequate medical services and housing. Third, the expected deterioration of inner-ring suburbs in the western portion of the county presents a challenge for revitalization and reinvestment efforts.

The Comprehensive Plan notes several demographic trends that will influence the location and type of land development over the next two decades. Areas of high population growth are projected to shift from the more urbanized southwest portion of the county to the more rural northeast. As this happens, population and new housing development in the west is predicted to stabilize, and possibly decline in some areas; while relatively rural areas in the east will experience heavy development pressure. The population map on the opposite page illustrates this trend. Darkened areas on the Future Land Use map on the opposite page provide a general idea of what Gwinnett is projected to look like by 2020.

Household Income

Overall, Gwinnett is a prosperous county. Its 1990 mean household income levels are higher than the Atlanta region, the state, and the nation. This relatively high income level provides a strong market for goods and services.

Employment

Gwinnett County has experienced phenomenal economic growth, with a tenfold increase in the number of jobs between 1970 and 1990. The county's unemployment rate is consistently lower than that of the state and region. The Comprehensive Plan attributes the county's strong economic boom to:

- the availability of developable land in close proximity to Atlanta
- access to an excellent regional transportation system
- quality public services
- a well trained and educated work force
- an aggressive business community and cooperative county government who actively pursue new economic development opportunities.

Gwinnett is projected to add over 200,000 jobs between 1995 and 2020, for a total of 411,000—a 95 percent increase. This will boost the jobs-housing ratio from 1.33 jobs per household in 1995 to 1.49 in 2020.

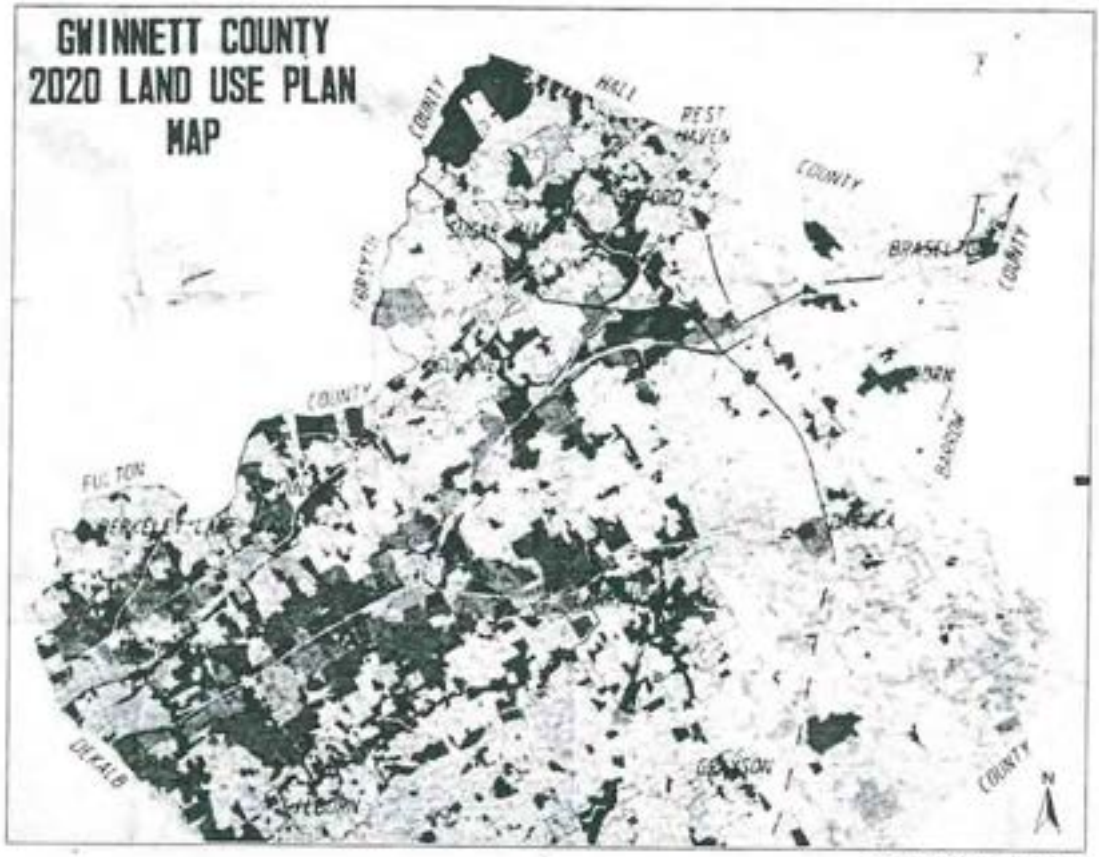
Real Estate Market

County- and region-level real estate market data provided by Robert Charles Lesser Company (RCLC) shows that Gwinnett County's residential and industrial real estate markets are strong in comparison with the Atlanta metro region as a whole.

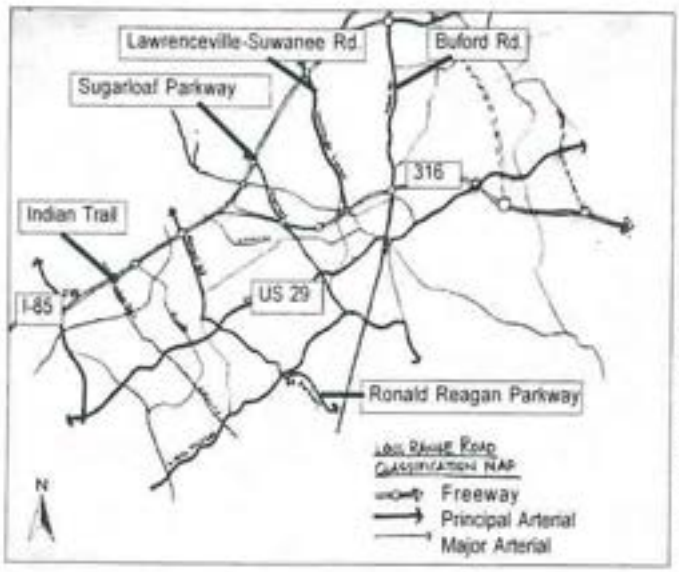
Gwinnett County Projections	1995	2020	# Change	% Change	AARC*
Households	157,679	275,514	117,835	75%	2.3%
Density (households/acre)	0.56	0.98	0.42		
Population	425,733	703,151	277,418	65%	2.0%
Density (persons/acre)	1.52	2.51	0.99		
Total Employment	210,372	411,192	200,820	95%	2.7%
Density (jobs/acre)	0.75	1.47	0.72		
Jobs/Housing Ratio	1.33	1.49	0.16	12%	0.4%

*AARC = average annual rate of change

Source: Gwinnett County Department of Transportation, draft projections prepared for the Comprehensive Transportation Plan currently under development, April 2000.

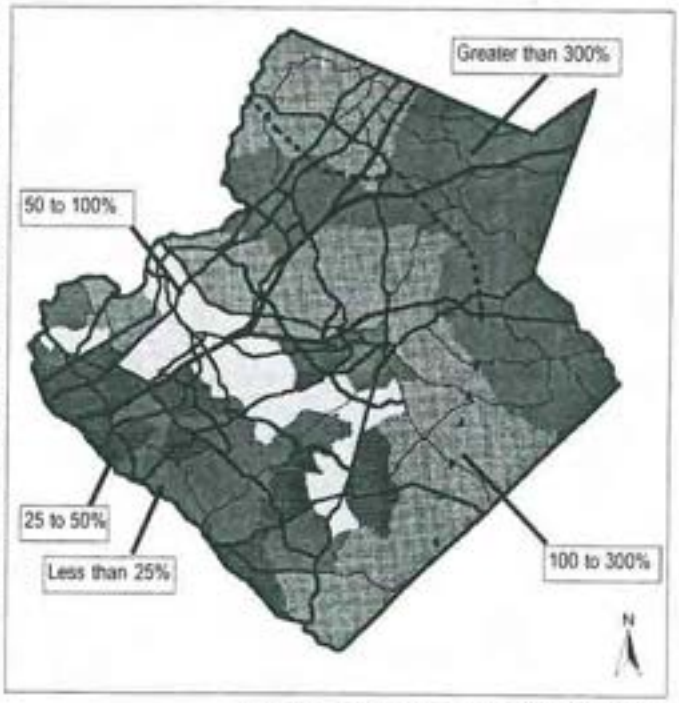


Future Land Use Map



Long Range Road Classification

Source: Gwinnett County Planning Dept.



Projected Change in Population, 1990-2020

Source: Gwinnett County Planning Dept.

CORRIDOR STUDY SECTIONS

The Urban Design Workshop divided the rail corridor into three separate sections within Gwinnett County. These sections—Lilburn, Lawrenceville, and Dacula—are made up of the census tracts bordering the University Parkway and the proposed CSX rail line.

LILBURN

- Between 1970 and 1990, Lilburn's population increased by 457 percent—outpacing the growth rates of the county, the region, and the state. The Lilburn section is projected to reach a total population of 144,000 by 2020. This is a 0.6 percent increase per year over 1995 estimates.
- The number of households is projected to grow 33 percent between 1995 and 2020, to a total of 61,000. Household density is also anticipated to increase by 33 percent, to 2 households per acre in 2020.
- Population and housing growth in the Lilburn section is projected to stabilize and growth rates could decline as growth pressure pushes toward the northeast. A decline in investment in this western portion of the county presents challenges for encouraging infill development and redevelopment.
- Total employment is projected to increase by an average of 1.5 percent per year between 1995 and 2020, to a total of 67,000 jobs. This results in a jobs-housing ratio of 1.08 jobs per household in 2020.

LAWRENCEVILLE

- The Lawrenceville section's population growth is projected to slow from its rapid growth during the 1970 to 1990 period. However, it will still increase by 50 percent (or 1.6 percent per year) between 1995 and 2020, to nearly 120,000 residents.
- The number of households in the core of the city is projected to grow at a much slower rate than that in surrounding census tracts. Households in the Lawrenceville section overall will grow 49 percent by 2020, for a density of 1.01 households per acre.
- Household growth in the tracts north of the city of Lawrenceville has been rapid during the 1990s. This development rate will cool somewhat in the next 20 years, but the area will still be a high-growth area relative to the core of the city and the western portions of the county. Areas to the east and southeast of Lawrenceville are projected to experience high rates of housing development through 2020.
- The number of jobs for this section is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent between 1995 and 2020, resulting in a jobs-housing ratio of 1.75 jobs per household.

DACULA

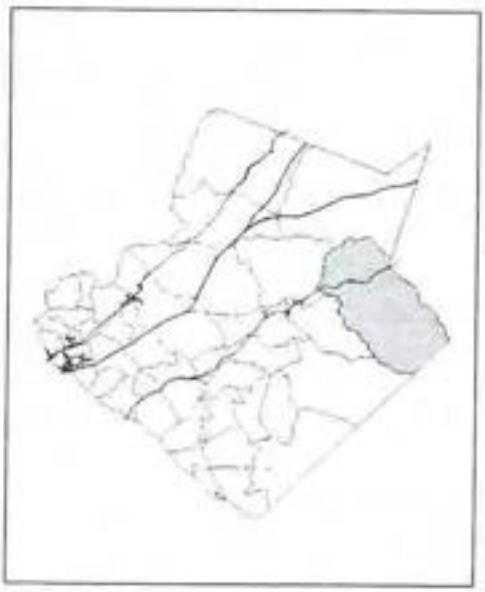
- The Dacula section consists of a single, large census tract surrounding the City of Dacula, in the eastern end of Gwinnett County.

- Of the three rail corridor study sections, the Dacula section is projected to experience the most dramatic changes in the next two decades, growing an average of 6.8 percent per year between 1995 and 2020, to a population of 32,000. Household density is also projected to significantly increase, from 0.16 households per acre in 1995 to 0.78 households per acre in 2020.

- Although the primary real estate "hotspots" will occur farther north and east in the I-85 corridor through 2010, rapid household growth is projected to extend southward toward the city of Dacula between 2010 and 2020.

- The Dacula section is one of the poorer tracts in terms of 1990 mean household income. Incomes will likely rise as a wealthier population moves into the new development expected in the area.

- Total employment in the Dacula section is projected to grow nearly twice as fast as the number of households between 1995 and 2020, resulting in a jobs-housing ratio of 2.21 jobs per household in 2020—more than double the 1995 ratio.



TABLES

Population	1995	2020	% Change	AARC*
Lilburn	123,000	144,000	17%	0.6%
Lawrenceville	80,000	120,000	50%	1.6%
Dacula	7,000	32,000	357%	6.3%

Households	1995	2020	% Change	AARC*
Lilburn	46,000	61,000	33%	1.1%
Lawrenceville	30,000	44,000	49%	1.5%
Dacula	2,400	12,000	394%	6.6%

Average Household Density (Households per acre)	1995	2020	% Change	AARC*
Lilburn	1.7	2.2	32%	1.1%
Lawrenceville	0.7	1.0	35%	1.2%
Dacula	0.2	0.8	394%	6.6%

Total Employment	1995	2020	% Change	AARC*
Lilburn	47,000	68,000	45%	1.5%
Lawrenceville	36,000	73,000	102%	2.9%
Dacula	3,000	27,000	760%	9.2%

Jobs/Housing Ratio	1995 Ratio	2020 Ratio	1995-2020 Change	AARC*
Lilburn	0.93	1.08	0.41	0.6%
Lawrenceville	1.28	1.75	0.26	1.3%
Dacula	1.27	2.21	0.74	2.2%

*AARC = average annual rate of change

Source: rounded estimates from the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation, Draft Comprehensive Transportation Plan

ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

A Steering Committee made up of local community members was asked to describe the assets and challenges of their community to help inform discussions on solutions.

LILBURN

Assets:

- Safe community
- Access to shopping and attractions in Atlanta, Gwinnett, Stone Mountain, Athens, etc.
- Great public and private schools
- Highly educated population in Lilburn & the surrounding area
- Good working relationship with the county regarding planning
- Pedestrian-friendly area with sidewalks
- Greenway, parks, 87 acres owned by city
- Not too much traffic (?)
- Craft Show

Challenges:

- Coordinated growth
- Bringing in the rail line
- Traffic
- Maintaining current quality of life
- Diversity in the schools - population outside Lilburn using schools
- Leasing out all commercial zoned areas as commercial
- Potential to promote uniqueness

Gwinnett has invested over $3 billion in infrastructure in the last 10 years.

LAWRENCEVILLE

Assets:

- Good city government
- Good level of interaction between county/city
- Private and public wealth, benefit of 1% sales tax
- Sense of community
- Hospital - community minded
- Churches and church partnerships
- Parks and recreation
- School system including Gwinnett Tech
- Excellent road system
- Communication between county government and general population
- Good Chamber of Commerce
- Strong civic and service clubs with leadership development programs
- Cohesiveness, e.g. many different groups meet in the GJAC

Challenges:

- NIMBY-ism
- Antipathy of public transportation
- Racism
- Destination-oriented transportation
- Difficult to move east-west
- Working with adjacent counties on road problems
- People who want to make sure environment is undisturbed
- Not serious enough about recycling, water quality, water conservation, water quantity
- Lack of sidewalks (disagreement on location, perspective)
- No place to walk in bad weather downtown
- Automobile mentality downtown

DACULA

Assets:

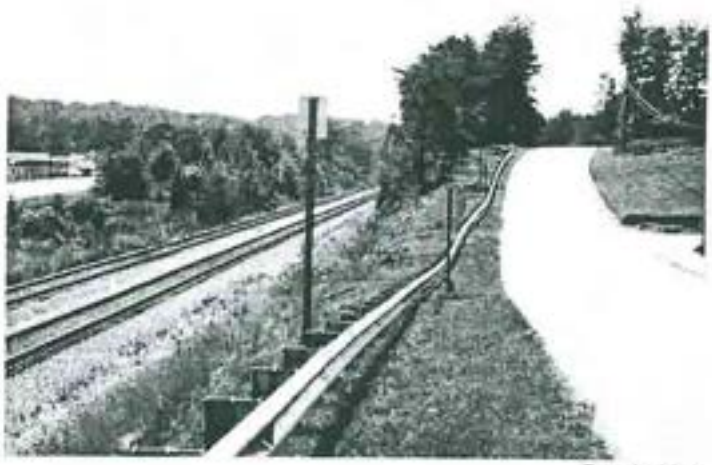
- Parks, big trees
- Historic Sites
- Downtown
- Very good schools
- Sense of community- small town feeling within city limits
- Other communities in area with definition
- Postal system combines areas (shared zip code)
- Combined efforts to fight the landfill
- Growth
- Good location concerning road system
- Land available
- Access to shopping
- Rail system (freight)
- People
- Good athletics
- New police precinct and fire station
- New post office
- Churches
- Air quality and no light pollution (can see the stars)

Challenges:

- Traffic
- Rail Crossings (traffic and safety issue)
- Big trees (asset and challenge)
- Lack of infrastructure (drainage, storm sewer)
- Water: water quality, county controlled water, area sits on a recharge area, in two watersheds.
- No mix of residential, commercial, light industry
- No multifamily (disagreement as to whether good or bad)
- Unfunded mandates
- Tax base- lack of commercial & industrial
- Keeping the Alcovy River clean!
- No restaurants downtown
- Parks & Rec. keeping up with growth
- Crime, gangs
- Lack of sidewalks
- Have to commute out to work
- No grocery store (yet)
- "Stepchild" in county system- some recent improvement
- No library!
- Only one stoplight in town
- Commuter Rail- where?

Train Crossing

Ronald Reagan Parkway



Dacula Line

CORRIDOR GROWTH FRAMEWORK

Infill and new development opportunities in the proposed rail corridor will be based on existing development patterns and the policies of the Gwinnett 2020 Comprehensive Plan (adopted in October 1997) as well as on locations of future rail stations. The Comprehensive Plan identifies four "Regional Characteristic Areas" (indicated in the map on page 11) that have shaped and will continue to shape County growth:

- Western Urbanized Area: existing high density mixed use area in the inner I-85 corridor
- Southern Residential Area: existing low density residential development
- Northern High Growth Area: area of current high mixed use growth in the outer I-85 corridor
- Eastern Rural Area: largely undeveloped area proposed for low density growth and characterized by infrastructure limitations and areas of environmental sensitivity.

In addition to these areas, the County's existing and future growth pattern is also shaped by five major transportation corridors:

- I-85: largely developed, containing substantial employment and retail centers, including three regional shopping malls and the Gwinnett Civic Center
- Ga. 316/University Parkway: in early stages of development, touted as a research, education, and "clean" business corridor, while maintaining a green "parkway" character
- Northern Arc: in planning stages, will most likely have interchanges only at interstate crossings
- Athens Rail Corridor: follows old rail line through historic towns and existing residential suburbs
- Gainesville Rail Corridor: a future corridor, also following old rail line through historic towns, but with higher density employment and retail development.

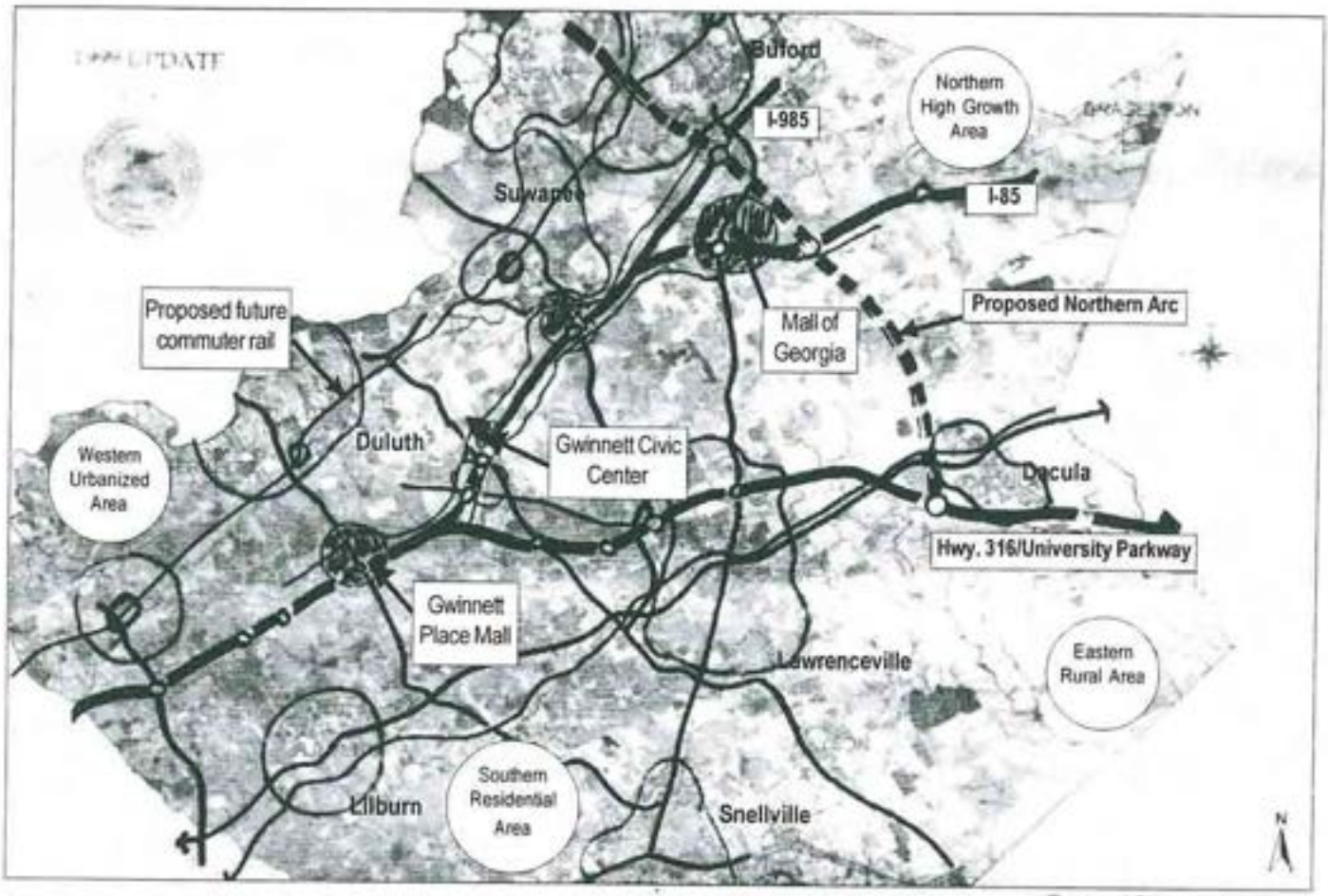
By overlaying these distinct corridor characteristics with existing development patterns and the policies and proposals of the Gwinnett Comprehensive Plan, four separate sub-areas, each with its own development potential, can be identified for the rail corridor.

1. Lilburn/Ronald Reagan Parkway
- older, stable suburban residential development
- historic town center of Lilburn
- high accessibility at crossing of rail line and Ronald Reagan Parkway.

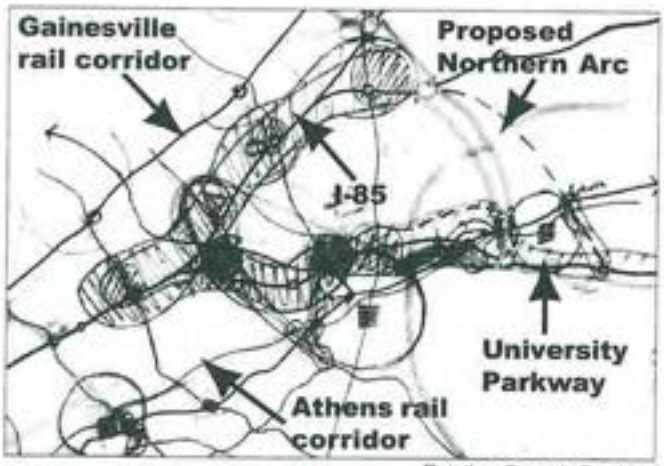
2. Lawrenceville/Sugarloaf Parkway
- historic civic county core/mixed use
- roads radiating from historic town center creates bottleneck
- important interface between historic core and both University Parkway and the rail corridor
- 2 viable station options: Downtown Lawrenceville with historic depot and Sugarloaf Parkway with infill opportunities.

3. University Parkway/Ga. 29
- unusual confluence of high access corridors: University Parkway, commuter rail, Ga. 29, proposed Northern Arc, and Gwinnett Airport.
- environmental sensitivity along Alcovy River.

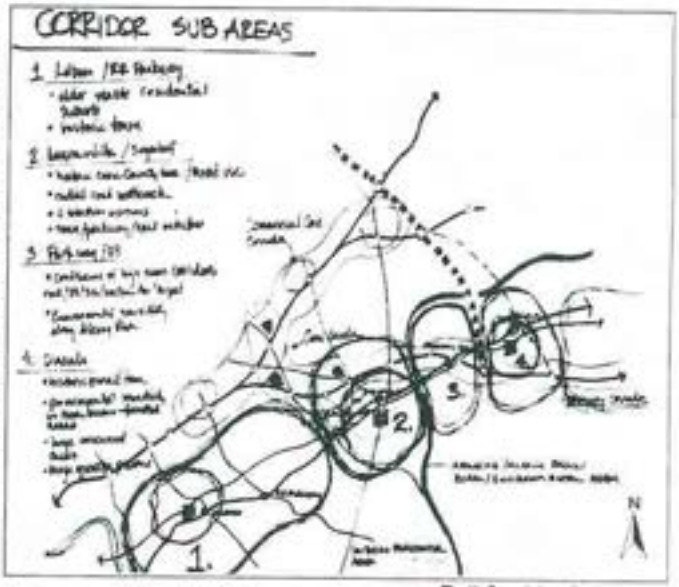
4. Dacula
- Historic small rail town
- Current high development pressure
- large unsewered remaining area
- environmental sensitivity in river corridor and adjacent large forested areas.



Regional Characteristic Areas



Existing Growth Corridors



Rail Corridor Sub-areas
(See p. 10 for text)

THE PROPOSED COMMUTER RAIL SYSTEM

This information comes from the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority Draft Major Investment Study (MIS) (1999).

- The Athens-to-Atlanta rail line is one of twelve lines in a proposed statewide commuter rail system, with Atlanta as the hub. The Athens, Senoia and Bremen lines are proposed as the first phase of the project.

- The proposed Athens commuter rail line will run on current right-of-way owned by CSX. Currently, CSX runs approximately 25 freight trains per day on this track. CSX must agree to share its right-of-way before construction of stations can proceed.

- Based on the on-going Athens Corridor Alternatives Analysis, the initial rail service alternative on the existing freight line from Athens would begin with one train inbound to Atlanta in the morning with a total of three trains from Cedars Road in Dacula. The reverse would be true for the evening return trips. A bus would make a mid-day and a late evening round-trip to Athens, stopping at all stations. In later years there would be two trains running between Athens and Cedars Road and six to seven trains between Cedars Road and Atlanta. The train is a diesel-powered locomotive with bi-level coaches that seat some 140 passengers each.

- Rail stations will be simple, open-air platforms with parking lots nearby. Parking and ridership projections are shown below.

- Heavy peak-hour traffic congestion currently occurs on most major routes throughout Gwinnett County, especially in the western half. Traffic congestion is caused by development occurring more rapidly than the infrastructure can handle efficiently and the sprawling land use patterns. In the absence of travel mode options such as transit (bus or rail), travelers must use the existing roadways.

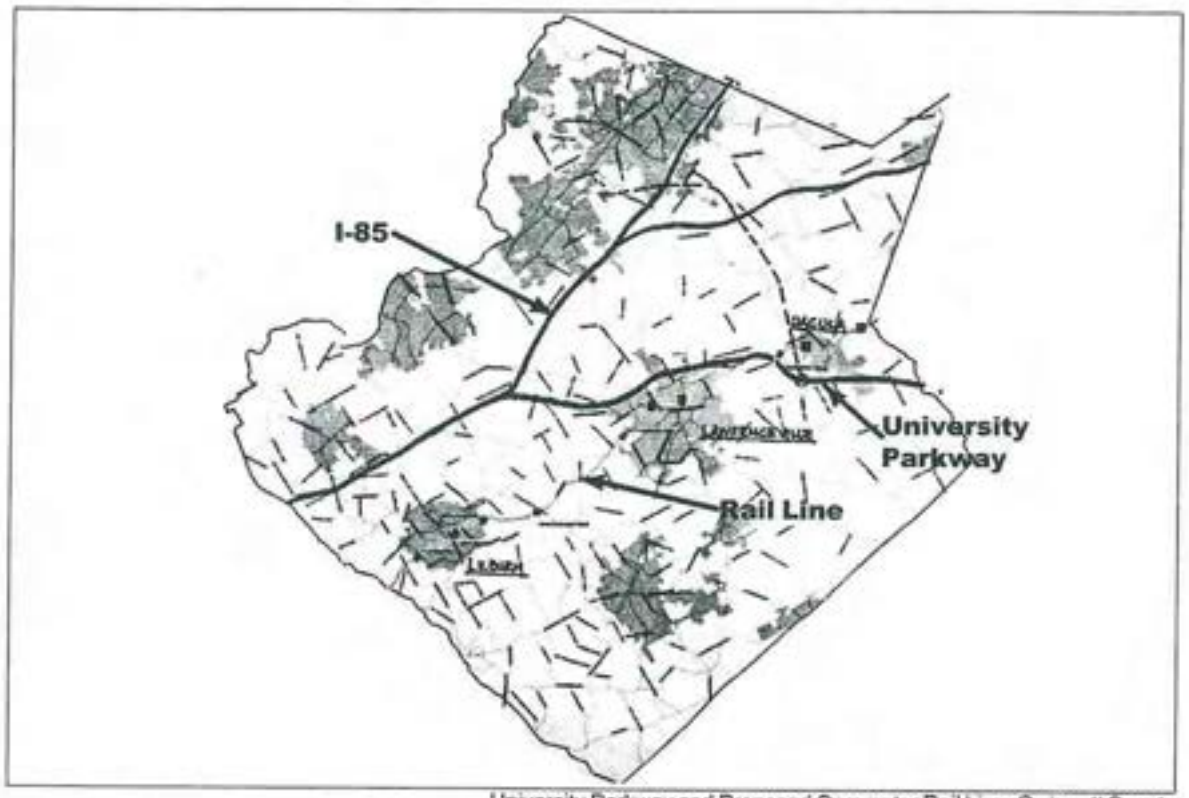
Athens-Atlanta Commuter Rail Projected Ridership, 2010*

Station	Peak Period Inbound Boardings
Athens MMTC	100
Bogart	300
Winder	500
Cedars Road	700
Lawrenceville	1,000
Ronald Reagan Pkwy.	1,500
Lilburn	1,400
Tucker	700
Emory	100
Atlanta MMPT	-
Daily One-way Patronage	6,300
Total Daily Patronage	12,600

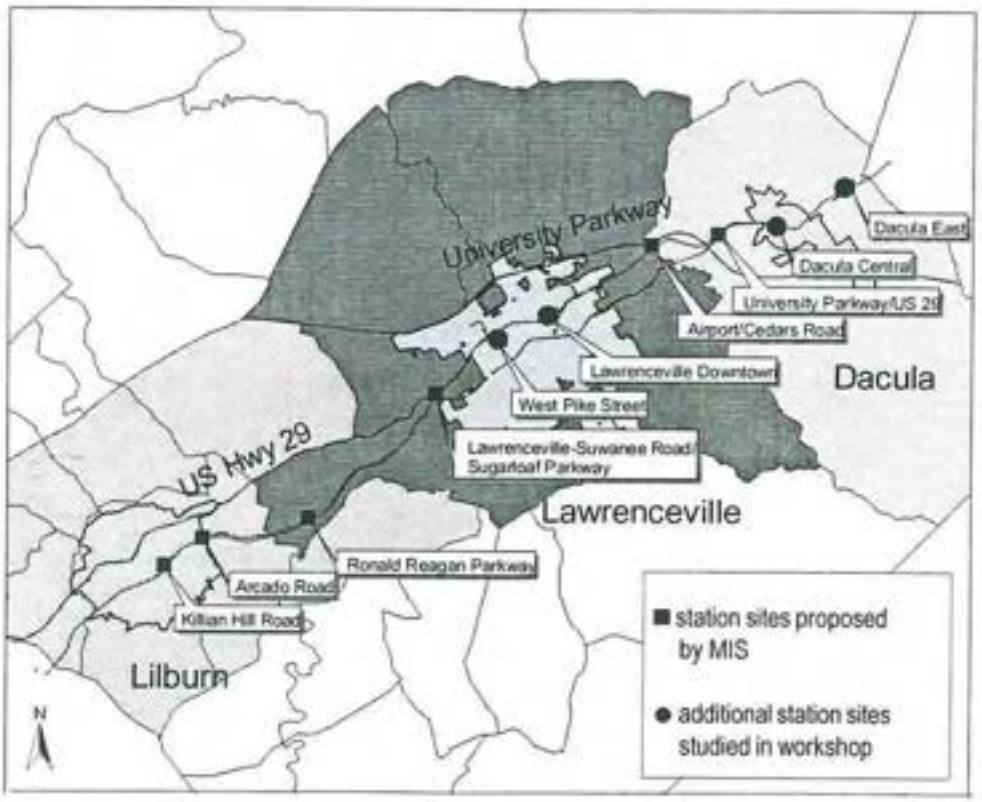
Gwinnett County: Proposed Workshop Station Sites

Station	Location
LILBURN	
Killian Hill Road	Just east of Downtown Lilburn
Arcado Road	East of Arcado Road on the south side of the rail line
Ronald Reagan Parkway	West side of Ronald Reagan Parkway at Bethesda Church Rd.
LAWRENCEVILLE	
Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road	Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road near Sugarloaf Parkway, south side of the rail line
West Pike Street	South side of the rail line near West Pike Street, west of Downtown Lawrenceville
Downtown	Downtown Lawrenceville, near the corner of Maltbie St. and Buford Dr.
DACULA	
Airport/Cedars Road	University Parkway near the entrances to the airport and Gwinnett Progress Center
US 29/University Parkway	US Highway 29 near Circle Road, half a mile east of University Parkway intersection
Dacula Central	US Highway 29 east of the High School, in western part of Downtown Dacula
Dacula East	US Highway 29 at Freeman's Mill Road

*Source: "Alternative 2: Commuter Rail Using Existing Freight Rail Corridor. Alternatives Screening Report," Georgia Rail Consultants, December 2000.



University Parkway and Proposed Commuter Rail Line, Gwinnett County
Source: Georgia Rail Passenger Authority, January 1999



Commuter Rail Stations studied by workshop

LILBURN

Section Characteristics

- Mature commercial and residential development
- Infill opportunities
- Train stations, parking lots, and the traffic generated by commuter rail riders must be placed within the limits of existing infrastructure.
- Existing, vibrant downtown area
- Community support for station downtown

Killian Hill / Downtown *(940 – 1,640 parking spaces)*

- The Downtown Lilburn area is located just to the west of the station site and has some small business establishments and a community park.

- Within a mile of the station site, detached single-family residential neighborhoods are well established. The land use plan proposes future residential uses that are in keeping with the densities of these neighborhoods.

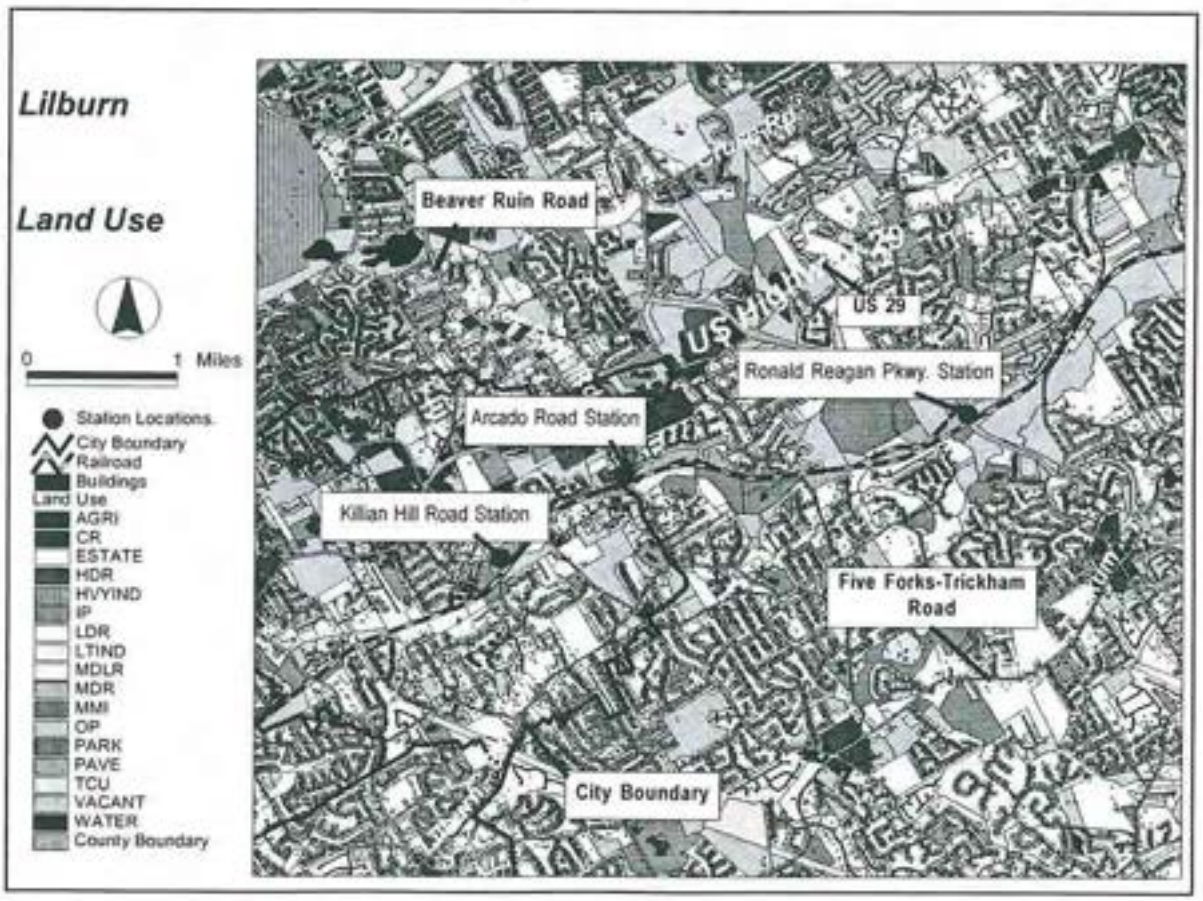
Arcado Road *(940 – 1,640 parking spaces)*

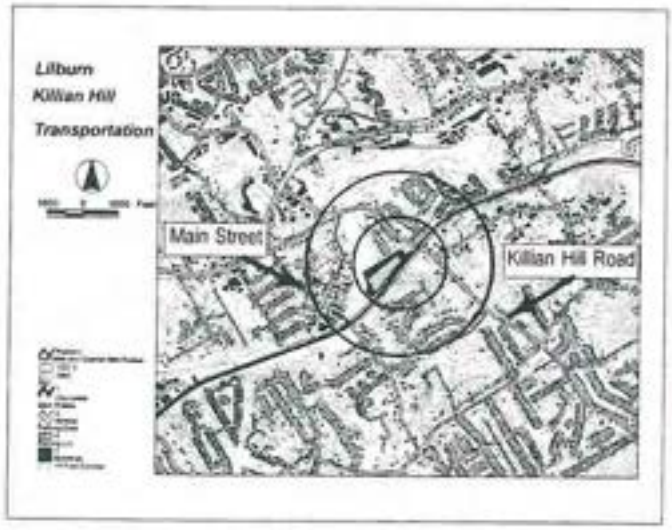
This station site sits in an area dominated by industrial development. Because of its accessibility to Lawrenceville Highway and its proximity to Downtown Lilburn, this site has good potential for commercial development.

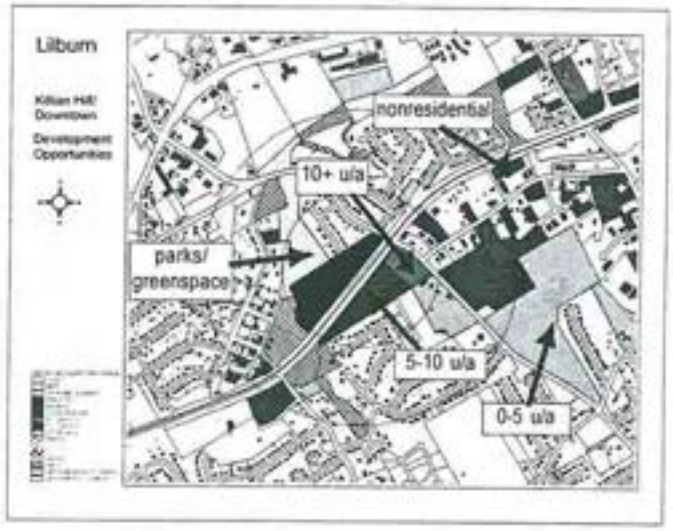
Ronald Reagan Parkway *(1,080-1,880 parking spaces)*

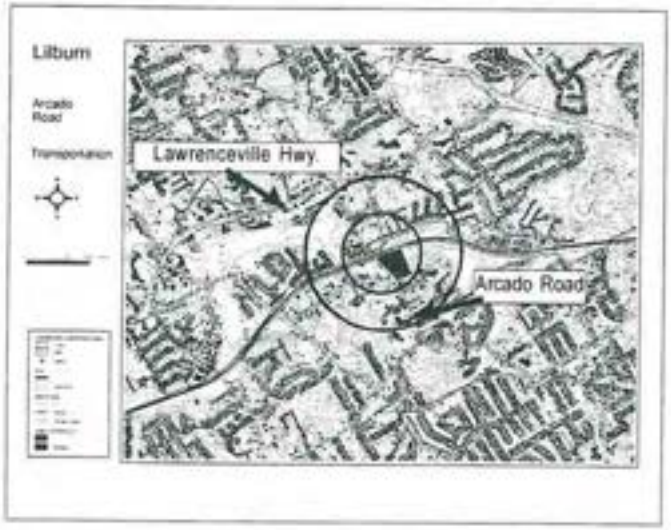
- This site has been identified in the Major Investment Study as a major ridership station, due to its high degree of accessibility to major arterials linked to Ronald Reagan Parkway.

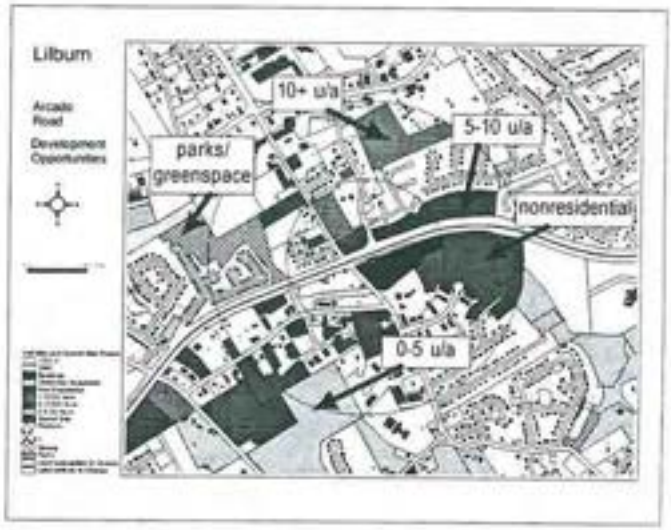
- While the area is highly accessible to major arterials, only Ronald Reagan Parkway and Bethesda Church Road connect to the station itself. Extension of major streets (Lester Road on the west and Bethesda Church Road) is desirable.

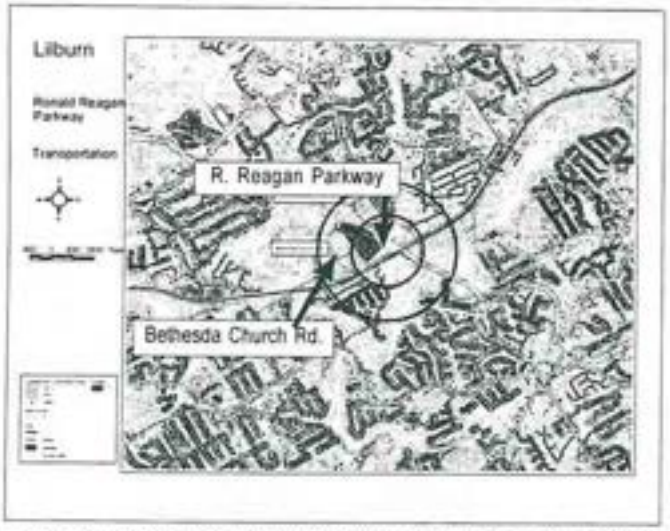


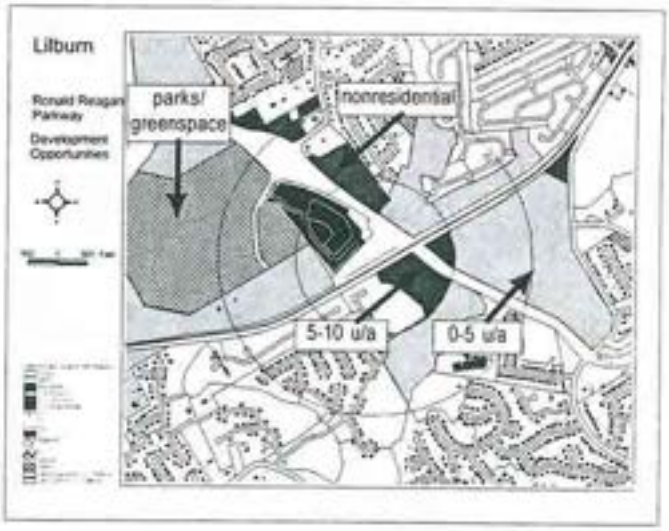












Note: These maps were originally presented as large wall maps for use in the workshops. They are depicted here for the purposes of showing general station location and to demonstrate the kind of analysis undertaken by the Urban Design Workshop.

u/a = dwelling units per acre

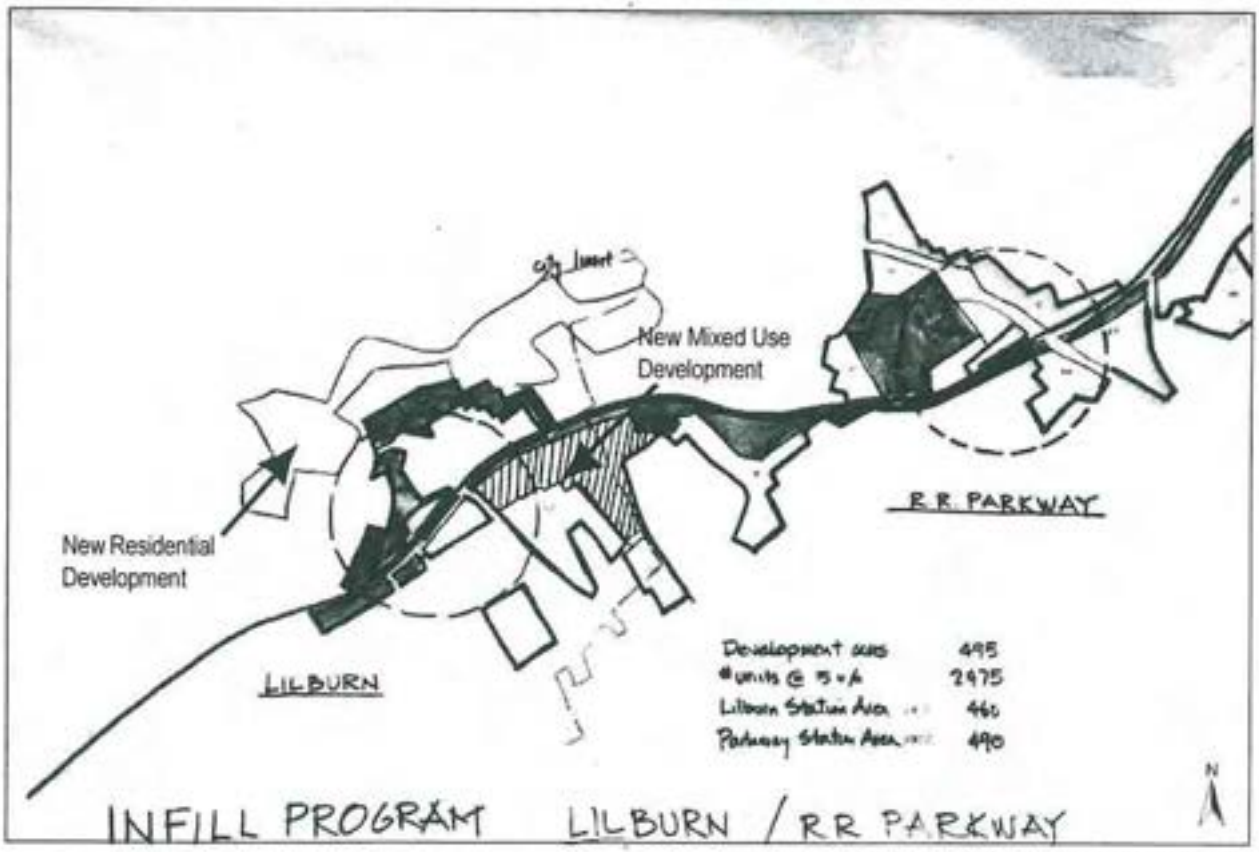
LILBURN
Station Area Plans

Despite the area's existing low density residential character, there exists a surprising amount of underdeveloped land along the rail corridor. This is largely due to: a) the presence of floodplain and other environmentally sensitive areas, and b) abandoned or underused industrial areas along the rail whose viability has deteriorated in the past 50 years. These areas comprise nearly 500 acres, and although some areas still have limited development suitability, the potential for retrofit infill around commuter rail station sites is clearly present. Two station areas are proposed.

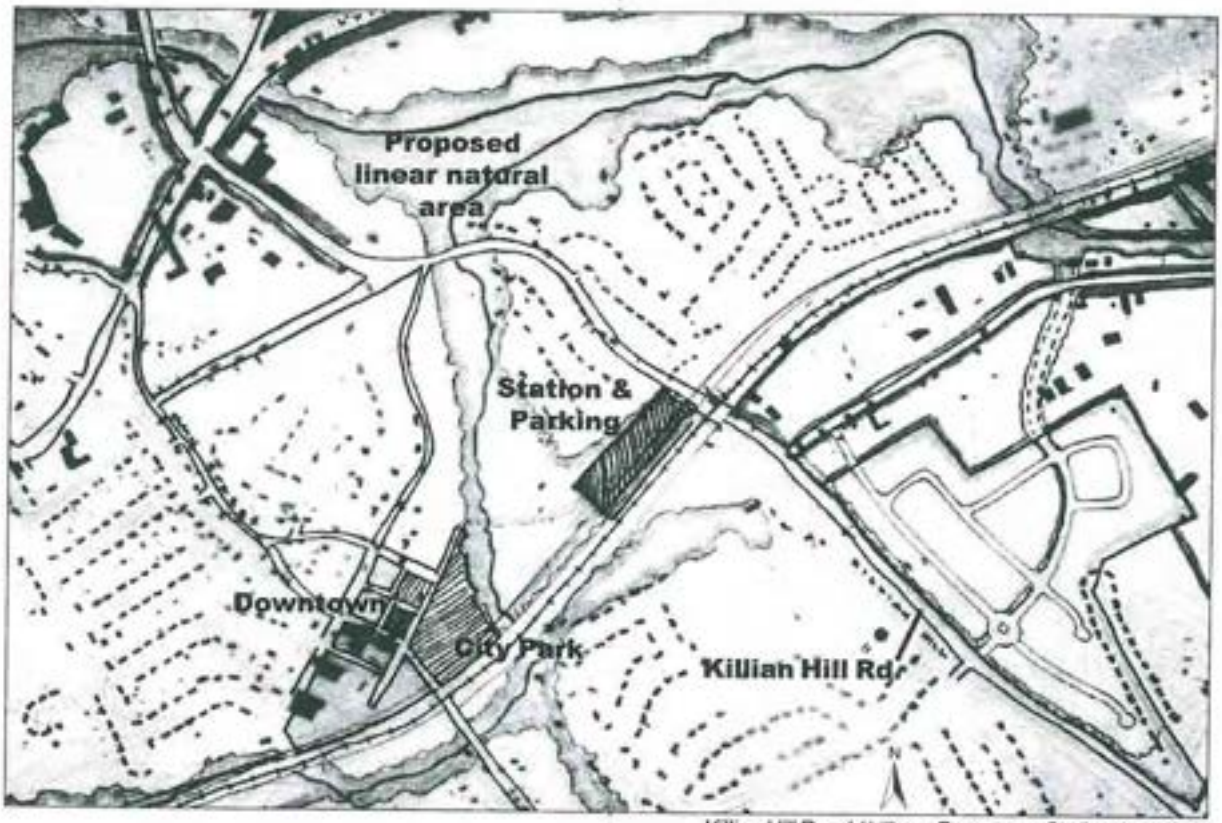
1. Killian Hill Road/ Lilburn Downtown
This site is clearly favored over the other Lilburn alternatives, by both the workshop participants as well as by a previous analysis by the City of Lilburn, for several reasons:

- good automobile and future bus access via Killian Hill Road.
- a site adjacent to downtown Lilburn, to support the existing town center, but without the negative impacts of access and parking.
- the presence of large undeveloped tracts south of the rail line that could support compact residential development within walking distance of the station.
- direct access to Lilburn's park and adjacent proposed linear natural area.

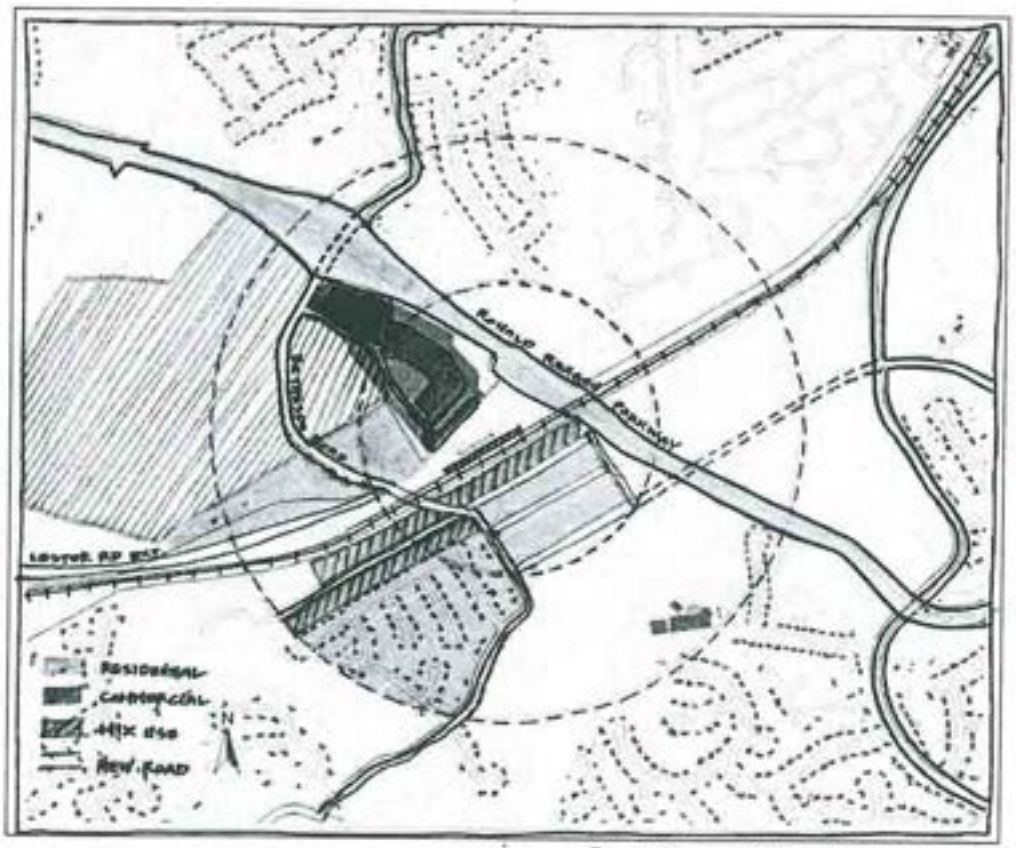
2. Ronald Reagan Parkway
This site is important to the proposed rail system due to excellent access via the Parkway and its extensions to the rest of the County, particularly to the south, where north-south access is limited in general. As a result, it has the highest projected ridership of any station on the Athens line. However, it is less desirable for station area development than is first assumed by analysis of available land in the area due to environmentally sensitive flood and slope areas and difficulty in providing access across the rail line and Parkway. In addition, as of September 2000, there is an active proposal to change the zoning at this site to a use that could preclude or significantly modify its use as a rail station site.



Lilburn/Ronald Reagan Parkway Site Concept



Killian Hill Road / Lilburn Downtown Station Area Plan



Ronald Reagan Parkway Station Area Plan

LAWRENCEVILLE

Section Characteristics

- High degree of commercial and residential development
- County seat
- All roads lead to Lawrenceville

Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road *(870-1520 parking spaces)*

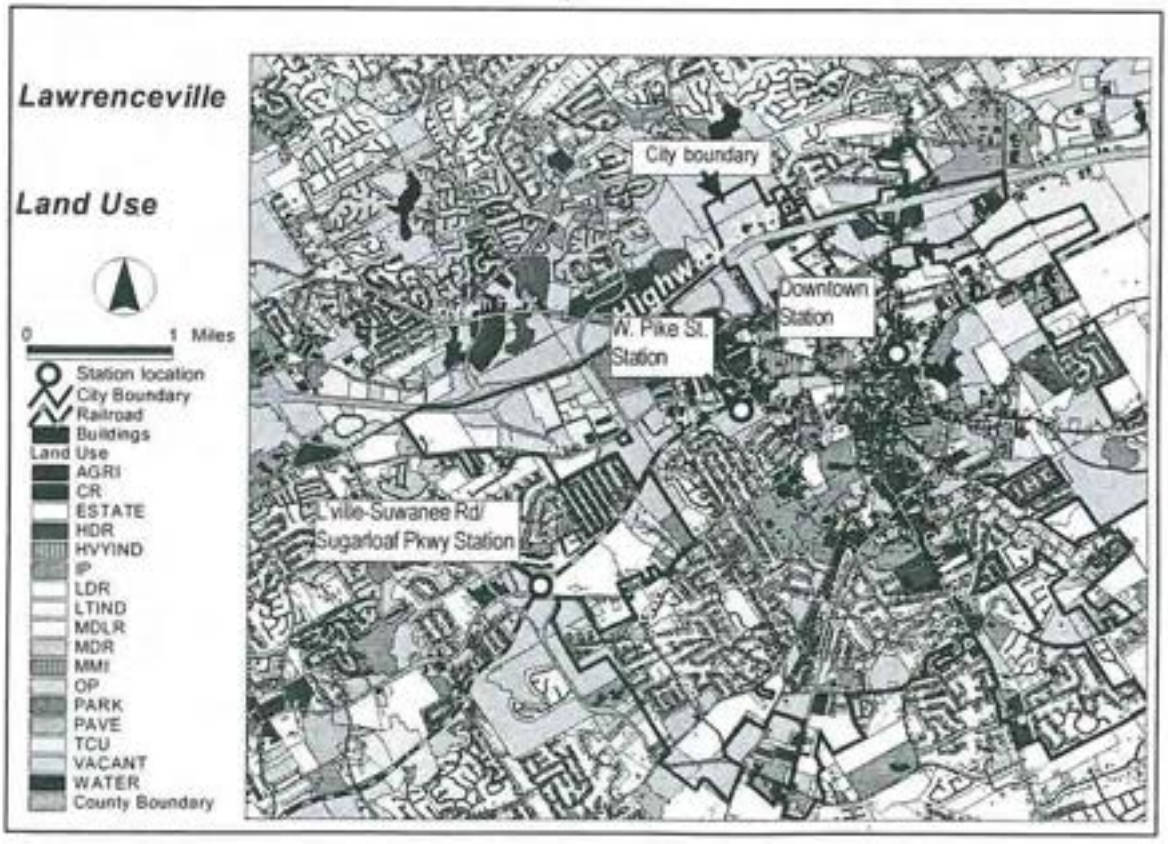
- Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road was recently expanded into this region; thus the site and the area around it are largely empty. The area is reasonably flat, making it well-suited for development.
- This station site is ideally located in terms of automobile accessibility, being on Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road and close to Sugarloaf Parkway, Lawrenceville Highway (Route 29), and Old Norcross Road.

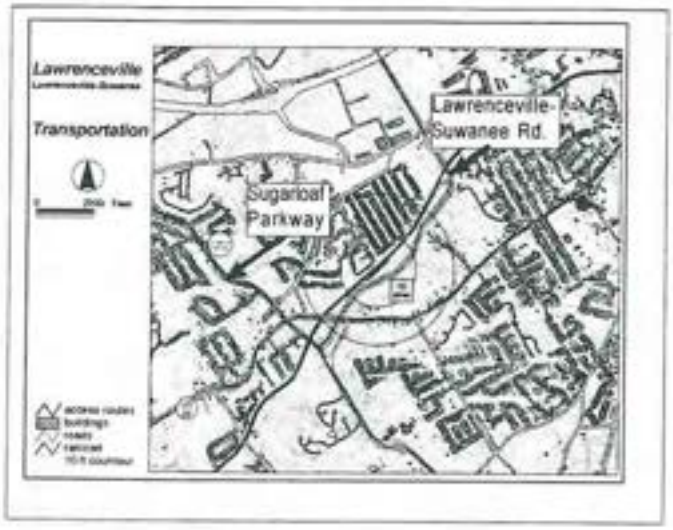
West Pike Street *(870-1520 parking spaces)*

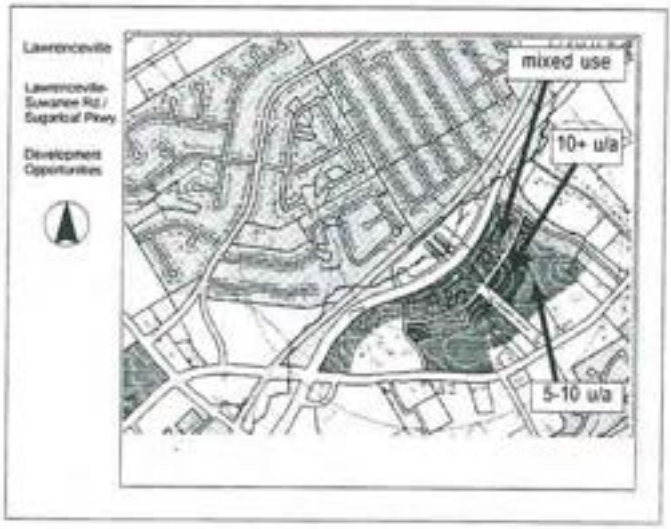
- West Pike Street is one of the most heavily used roads in the area.
- Residential developments surround the site to the south, but there is still plenty of room for some light station-oriented development.

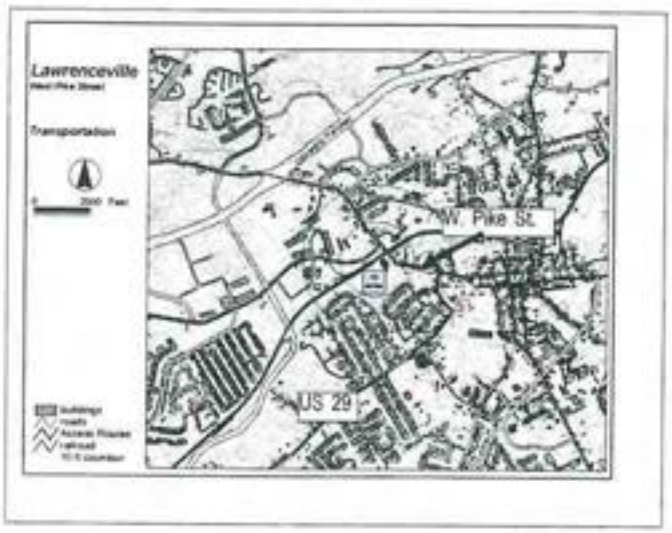
Downtown *(870-1520 parking spaces)*

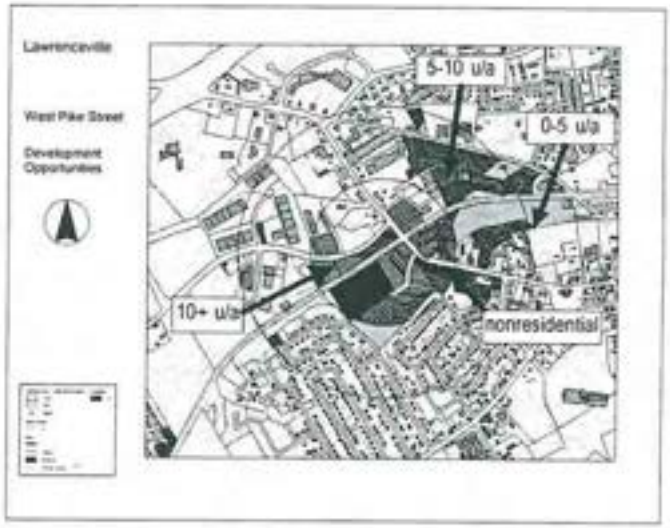
- This station site is located on Maltbie Street near Buford Drive in Downtown Lawrenceville. Though not in the center of Downtown, the site is within walking distance.
- The lack of a large parcel to accommodate the station's parking needs may necessitate the acquisition of several smaller parking lots near the site.

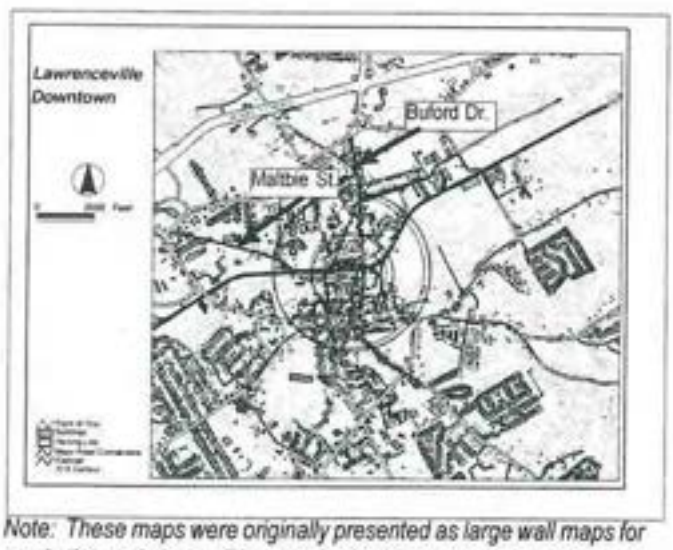


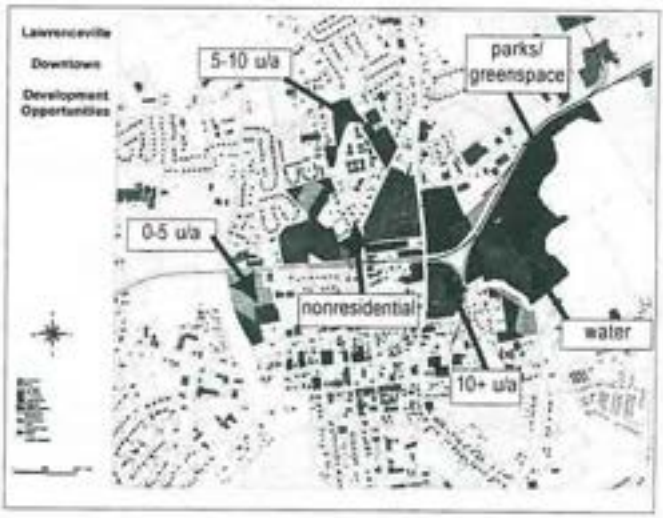












Note: These maps were originally presented as large wall maps for use in the workshops. They are depicted here for the purposes of showing general station location and to demonstrate the kind of analysis undertaken by the Urban Design Workshop.

u/a = dwelling units per acre

LAWRENCEVILLE

Station Area Plans

The draft MIS identifies one station to serve the Lawrenceville area, near the Sugarloaf Parkway/Lawrenceville Highway intersection just west of the Lawrenceville city limits. While the DOT study did not consider a station site within Lawrenceville, the workshop participants felt it was important to analyze and discuss the merits of a downtown Lawrenceville location. Of the two downtown sites, the Old Depot site was chosen for further study. Thus, the major issues considered for the two Lawrenceville area alternative sites are as follows:

1. Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road/ Sugarloaf Parkway

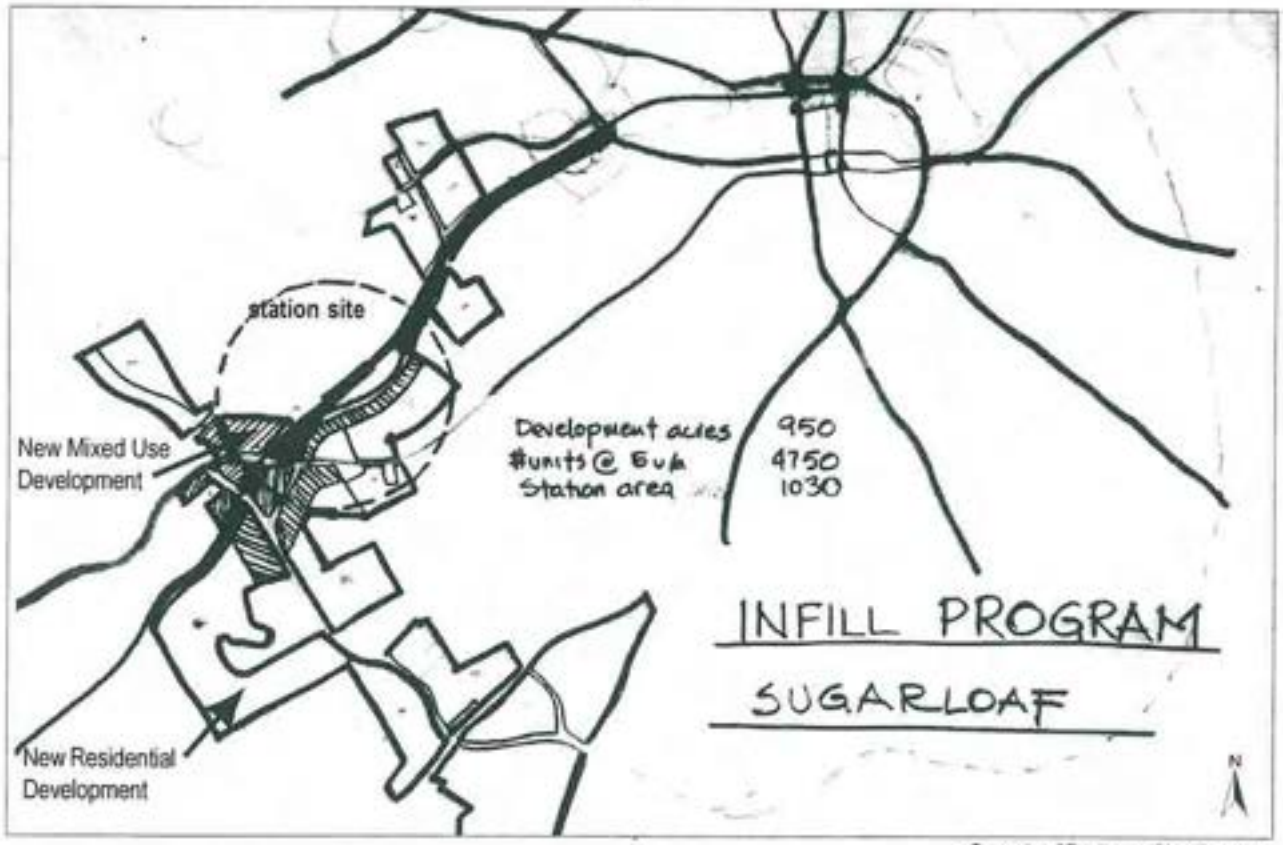
This site, located along the new Lawrenceville/Suwanee Road extension near its intersection with Sugarloaf Parkway and Lawrenceville Highway, is an excellent station location for several reasons. However, the site does lie within a 100-year floodplain, and its development would require mitigation measures.

- Very good automobile and future bus access via all three major arterials, and particularly along Sugarloaf Parkway in both north and south directions.
- Adequate site access and available parking area, with minimal negative impacts on surrounding residential areas.
- An extraordinarily large amount of developable land (over 900 acres)—particularly south of the station site along Sugarloaf Parkway—with adequate infrastructure and station access. This gives the site an excellent opportunity for more compact infill development.

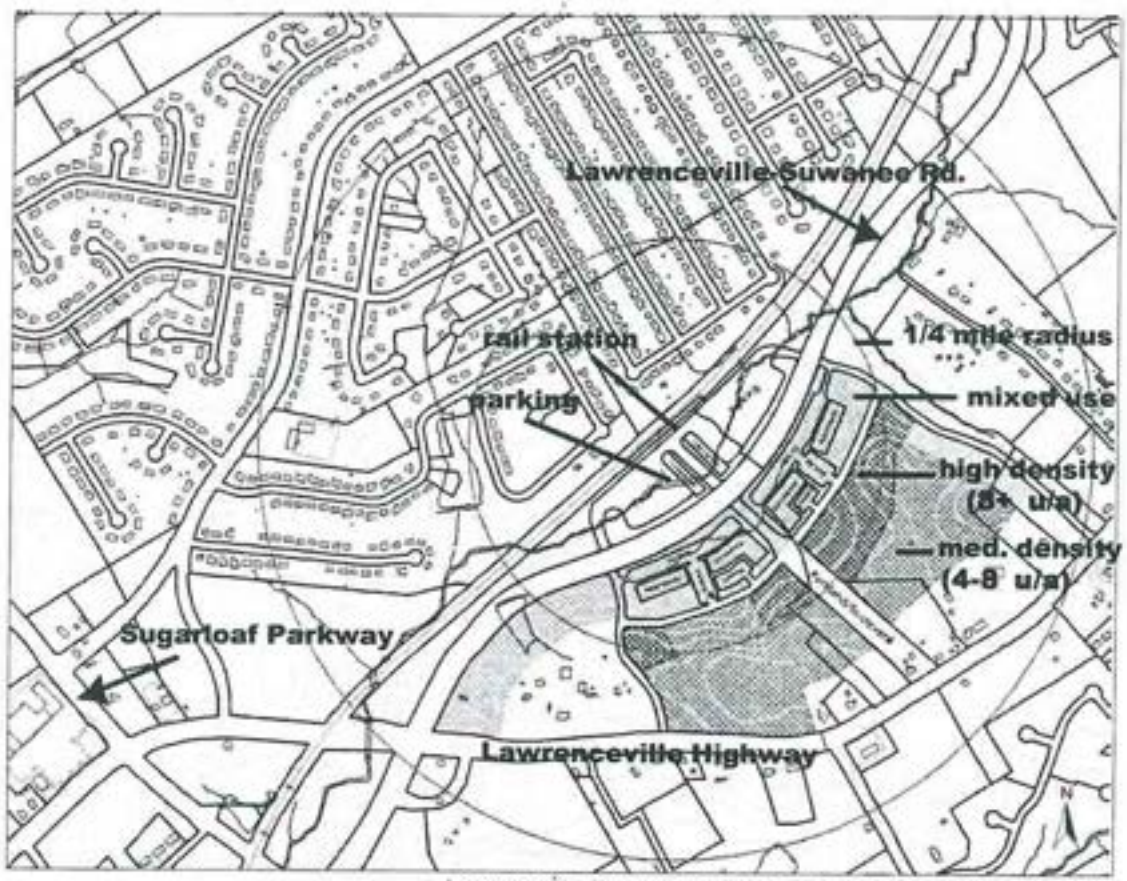
2. Downtown Lawrenceville

This station would be located adjacent to the historic freight depot within walking distance of the Courthouse Square. The site has the following attributes:

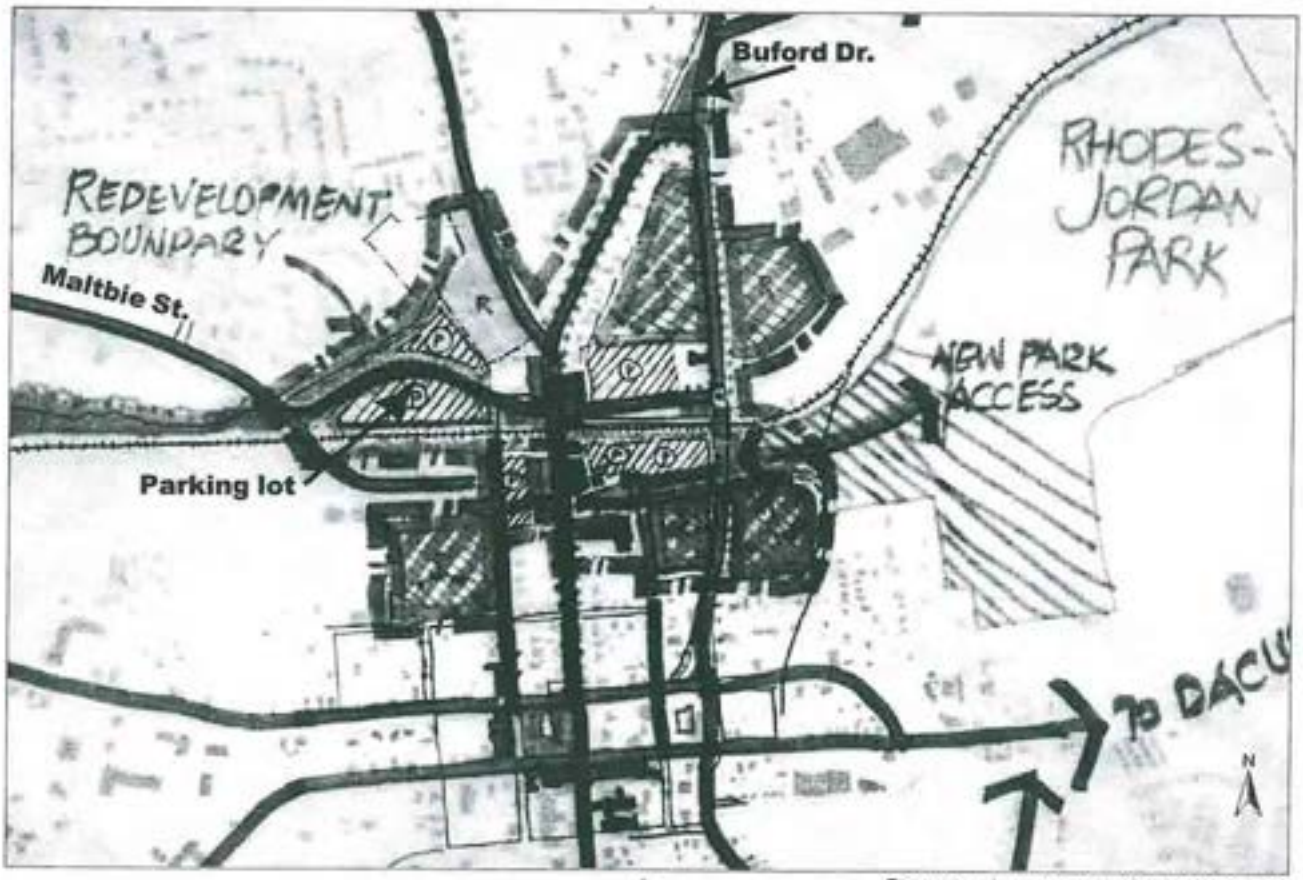
- Excellent access along Buford Drive to the University Parkway and north. Access from the south is less available but could be increased with selected road improvements to aid circulation in the downtown area.
- Adequate land for station parking lots, which may have to be accommodated on several unconnected sites.
- Extraordinary opportunity for the station to act as a catalyst for revitalization and preservation of a large area extending from the courthouse square to the University Parkway, which has urban infrastructure in place.



Sugarloaf Parkway Site Concept



Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road / Sugarloaf Parkway Station Area Plan



Downtown Lawrenceville Station Area Plan

DACULA

Dacula's Center

Section characteristics

- Considerable amounts of both developable land environmentally sensitive areas
- High growth projections
- Active downtown area

Airport/Cedars Road *(170-290 parking spaces)*

- Major point of access located in proximity to University Parkway, US 29, Gwinnett County Airport, and proposed Northern Arc.
- Complex topography at and around the station site will restrict development even though much of the adjacent area is vacant or under-developed.
- No water or sewer service is planned for much of the Dacula area south of US 29.

University Parkway/US 29 *(170-290 parking spaces)*

- There are extensive tracts of vacant land in proximity to the station site with existing sewer facilities. In addition, the topography is relatively flat.
- The site has excellent access to the University Parkway and US 29 intersection, as well as to the proposed Northern Arc of the outer perimeter interstate.
- There is a lack of existing retail and pedestrian access from surrounding neighborhoods.

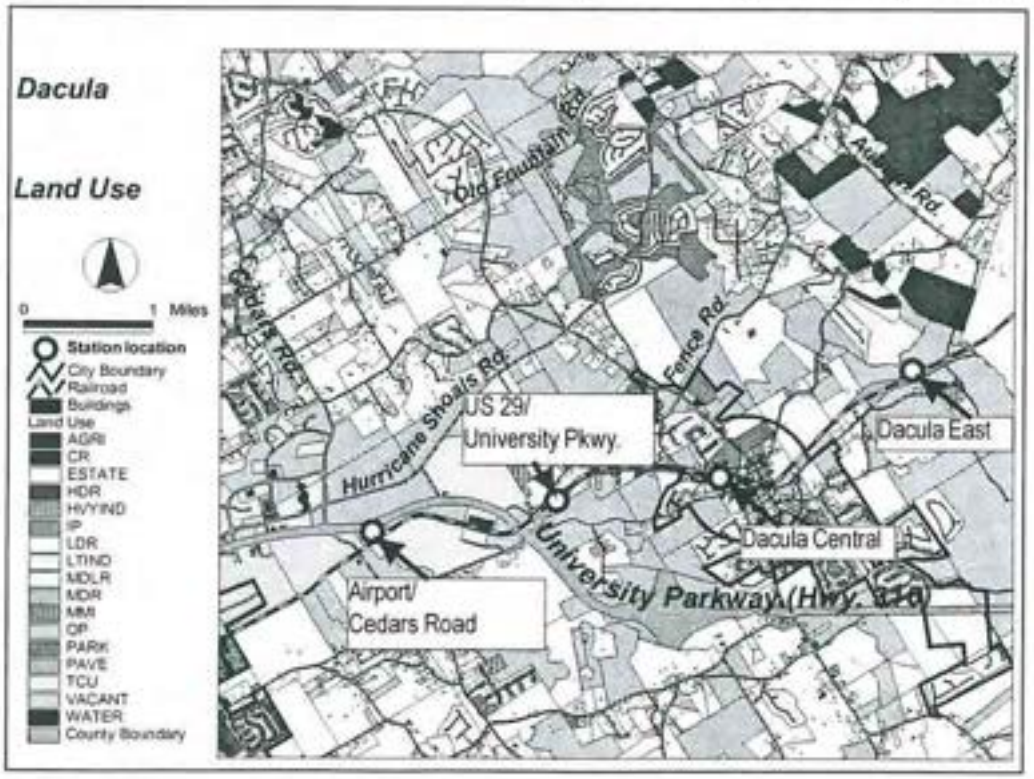
Dacula Central *(500 parking spaces)*

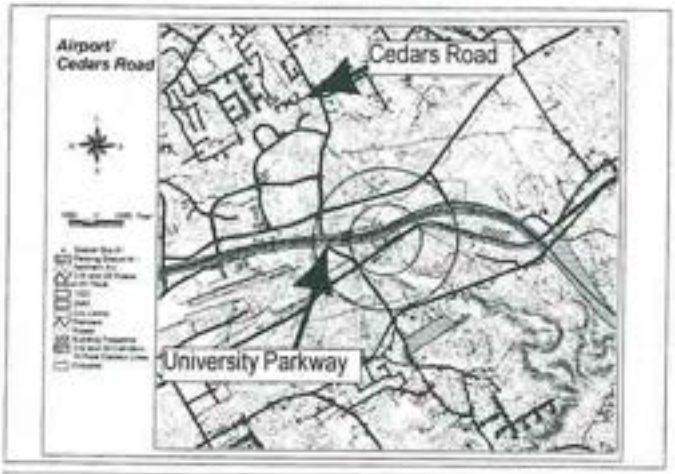
- The station site is located just west of downtown Dacula, within walking distance of Dacula Park and the High School.
- The proposed outer Perimeter and adjacent street network allow multiple points of access to the station site.

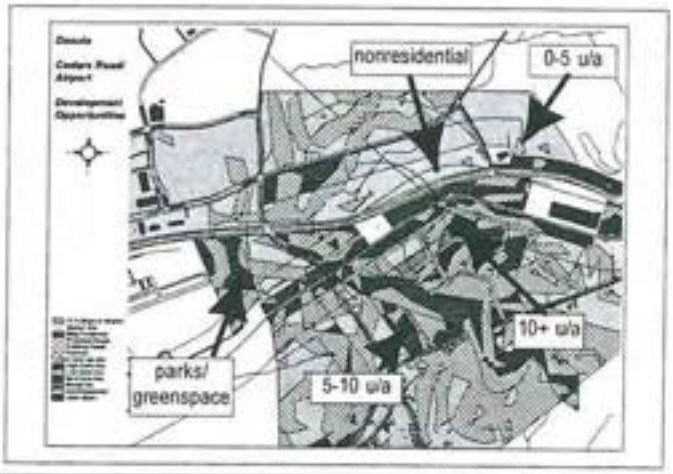
Dacula East *(500 parking spaces)*

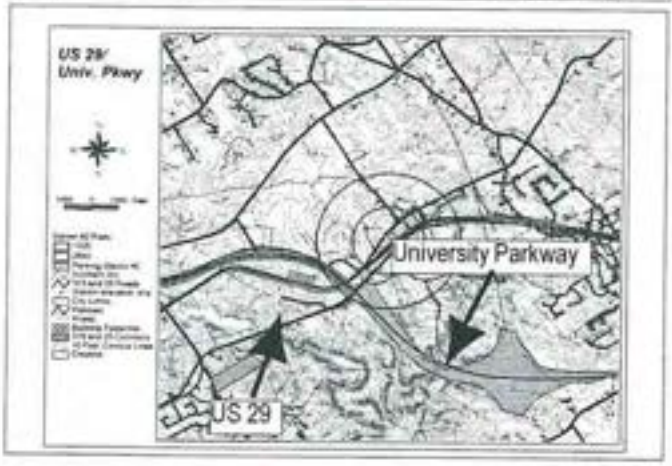
- With significant amounts of developable land, this site presents a transit oriented development opportunity.
- There currently is no planned access from University Parkway onto Old Freeman Mill Road. Any planning process for improvements must consider potential disturbance to residents on this road.

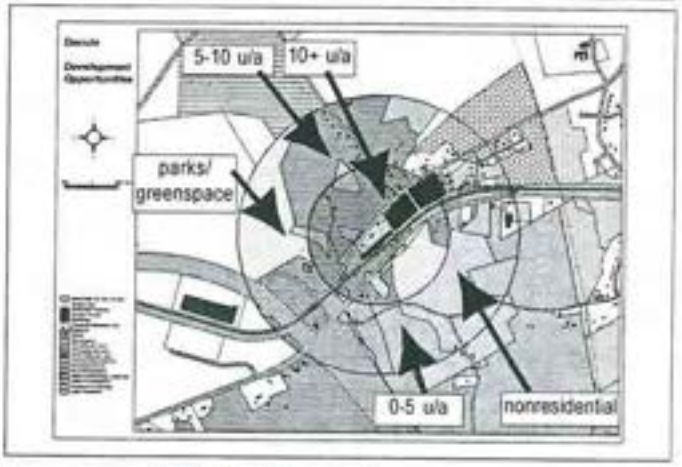
Note: These maps were originally presented as large wall maps for use in the workshops. They are depicted here for the purposes of showing general station location and to demonstrate the kind of analysis undertaken by the Urban Design Workshop.

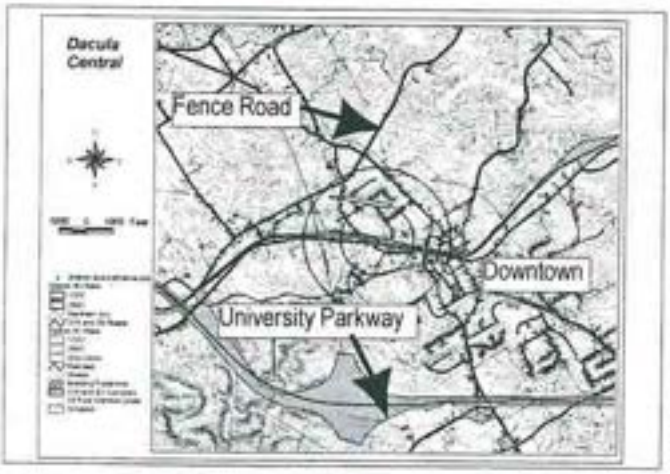


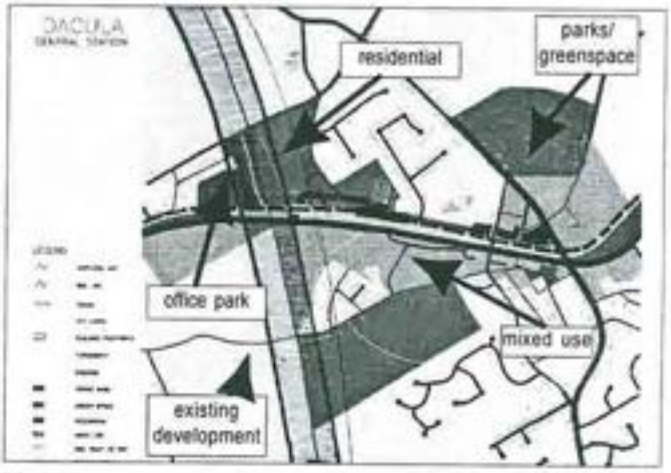


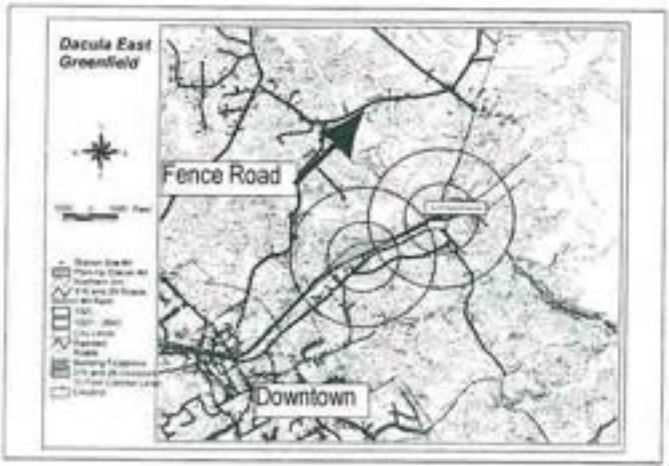


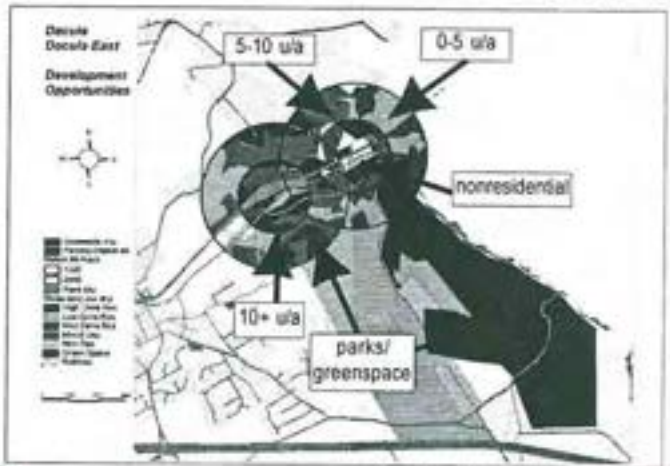












u/a = dwelling units per acre

DACULA
Station Area Plans

The workshop participants clearly favored addressing the possibility of two separate station areas in the Dacula area: the first near the intersection of Lawrenceville Highway, the University Parkway and the proposed Northern Arc (the "Cedar Road" site) and the second east of the Northern Arc serving the Dacula area more directly, either close to downtown or in a greenfield area east of the town center. This suggests the possibility of both sites accommodating stations, each with very different characteristics.

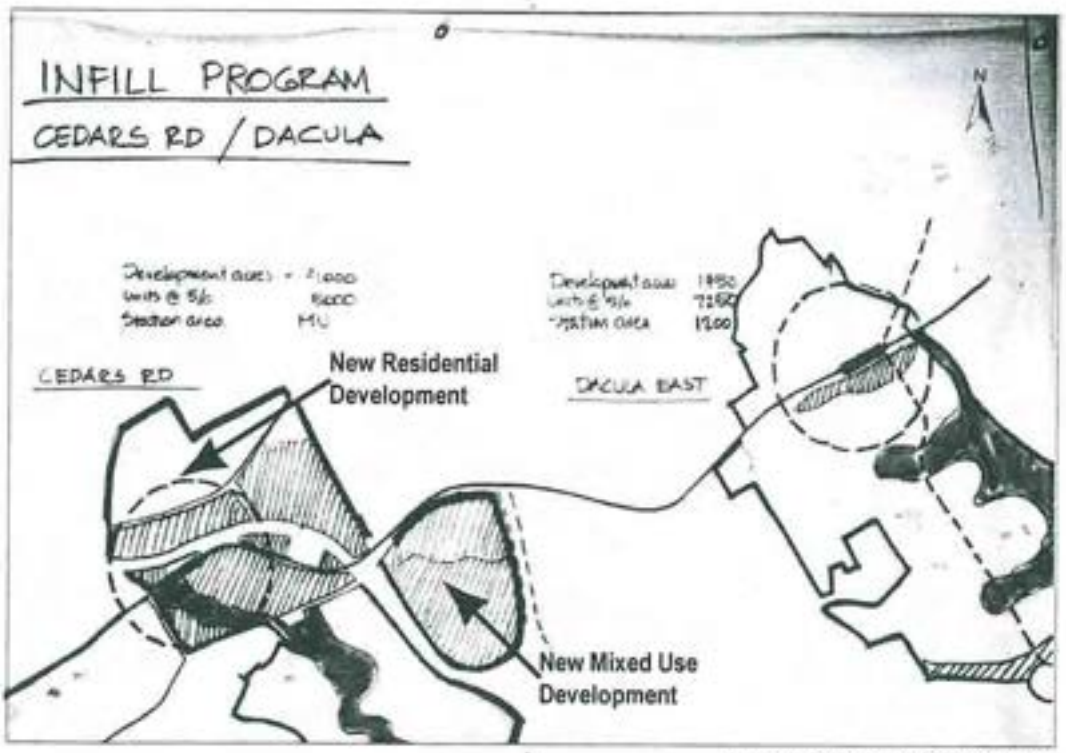
The Cedars Road site, in addition to its regional scale accessibility and proximity to the Gwinnett Airport, has more than 1,000 acres of developable land in close proximity (including areas of environmental sensitivity along the Alcovy River). The merits of a station at this location are many and have been discussed elsewhere in the report. The workshop participants, however, chose to focus their discussion on the second site, which has the most direct impact on the greater Dacula Community. There are two alternatives:

1. Downtown Dacula

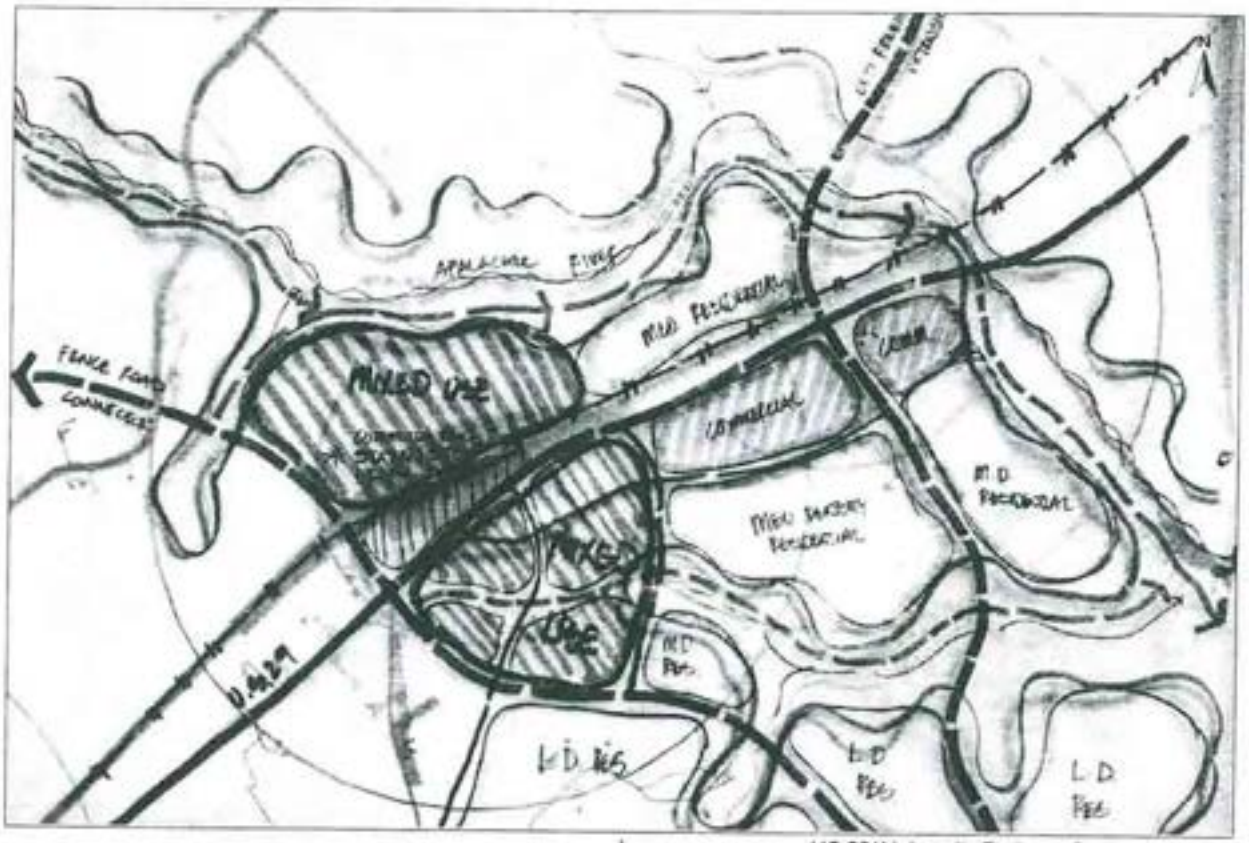
Two sites, just to the west and just to the east of the historic core, were discussed. While both could connect to the core and catalyze a more sustainable town retail center in an area with existing infrastructure, the west site could accommodate traffic to the station with less impact on existing commercial and residential development. This site, along with the Northern Arc, also could help anchor new mixed-use development on the west side of town and greatly enhance (with some annexation) the town's tax base.

2. Dacula East

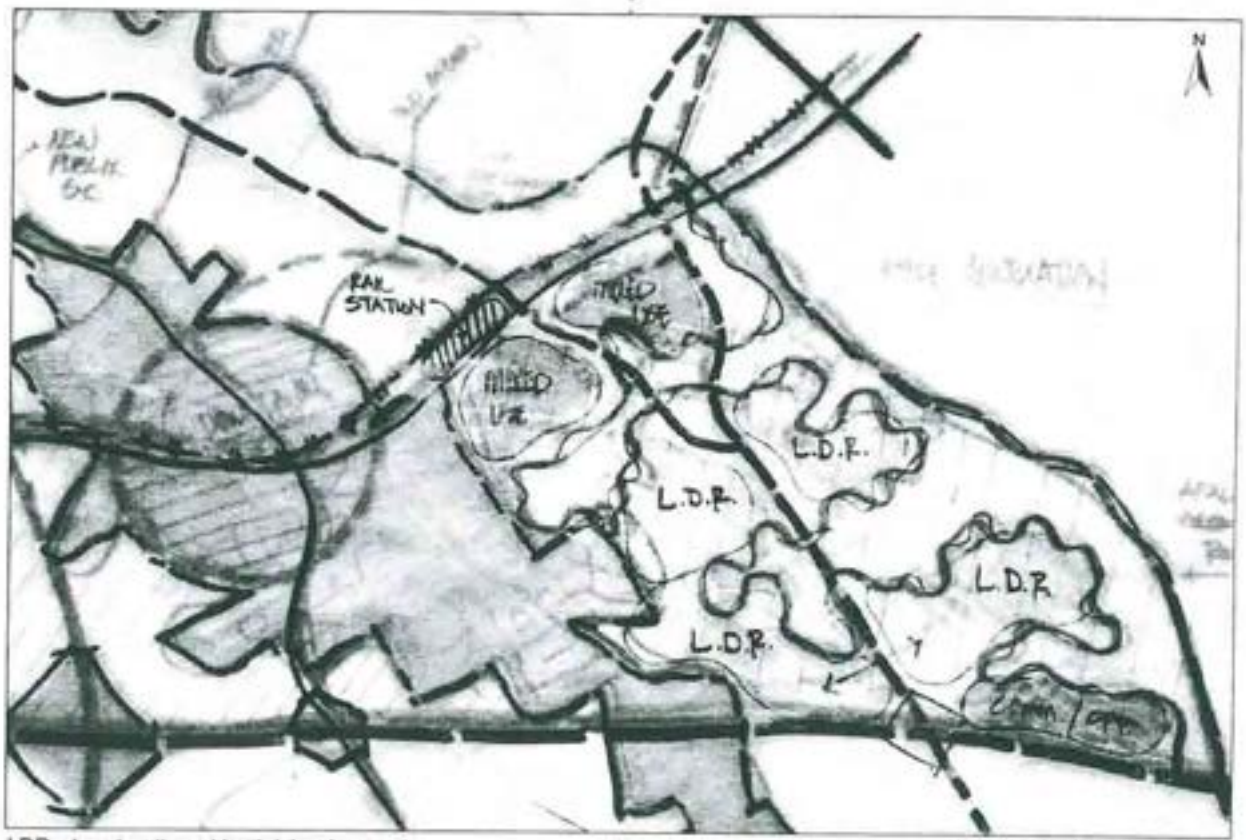
A station site near the intersection of US 29 and Old Freemans Mill Road could provide perhaps the best opportunity for a mixed density greenfield development on the entire Athens Corridor. Presently, the site is undeveloped and unsewered, so both public water and sewer service and improvement of Old Freemans Mill Road from the station site to the University Parkway would be necessary to create a controlled development opportunity of over 1,500 acres. Such a planned development could also set aside adequate steep slope and wetland areas to create a major county-wide passive open space with excellent access from both the rail and the Parkway. This development, therefore, could be a model for sustainable rail-oriented development in the Atlanta Region.



Airport/Cedars Road Site Concept



US 29/ University Parkway Station Area Plan



LDR = low density residential development

Dacula East Station Area Plan

COMPOSITE CORRIDOR STRATEGY

System Options

In addition to consideration of development constraints and opportunities at each of the 10 alternative station sites, three additional areas of study must be pursued at a county-wide level:

a) the optimal system configuration for operation of the rail system, including distance between stations, total travel times, projected ridership and efficient station operation. The MIS recommended four stations for Gwinnett County, one each in Lilburn, Ronald Reagan Parkway, Lawrenceville and Dacula (area east of Lawrenceville).

b) transportation and growth management issues at the county scale, including road improvements necessary to serve stations, compatibility with local and county comprehensive plans and land use and zoning alterations in the station area.

c) local financing capability. It is likely that local governments will be asked to help finance some station area improvements for the rail system. Local willingness and readiness must be considered in selecting station sites within incorporated towns or in unincorporated Gwinnett County.

Two strategic conceptual options are illustrated on page 27:

a) stations between towns in areas of existing high access and infill development potential. These areas have both existing infrastructure and available land to accommodate additional development of more compact densities and mixed uses, which will help reduce traffic congestion and improve the efficiency of all public investments.

b) stations within existing towns; to rely on existing infrastructure investment and contribute to the revitalization and vitality of the three historic town centers

Station Areas

With these considerations and those of the workshop in local station areas, a composite corridor growth management strategy can be analyzed. One suggested composite strategy is shown on page 27 and includes the following stations:

1. Lilburn Downtown, which supports downtown and serve selected infill development and public parkland.

2. Ronald Reagan Parkway, which provides primarily a high access park-and-ride function, mostly to residential areas in the south of the county.

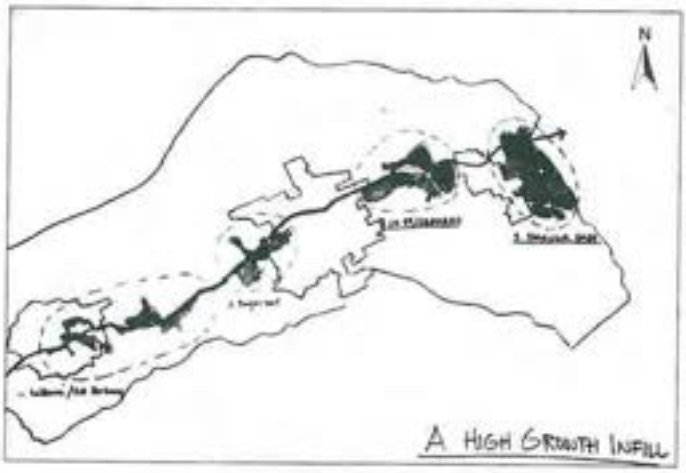
3. Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road/Sugarloaf Parkway. This site has excellent access to both north and south and contains many acres of developable land for compact residential and mixed use development.

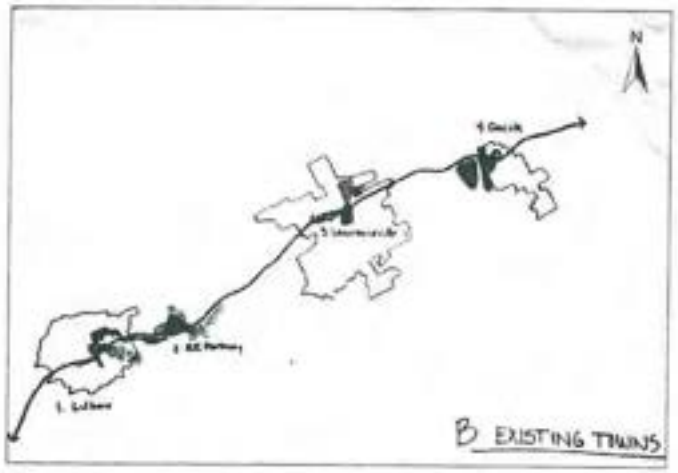
4. Cedar Road/Airport. Located just east of Lawrenceville near the junction of University Parkway, US 29, the rail line and the proposed northern arc, this area affords the best opportunity for high density mixed use development with an emphasis on employment opportunities following the vision established by the University Parkway Alliance.

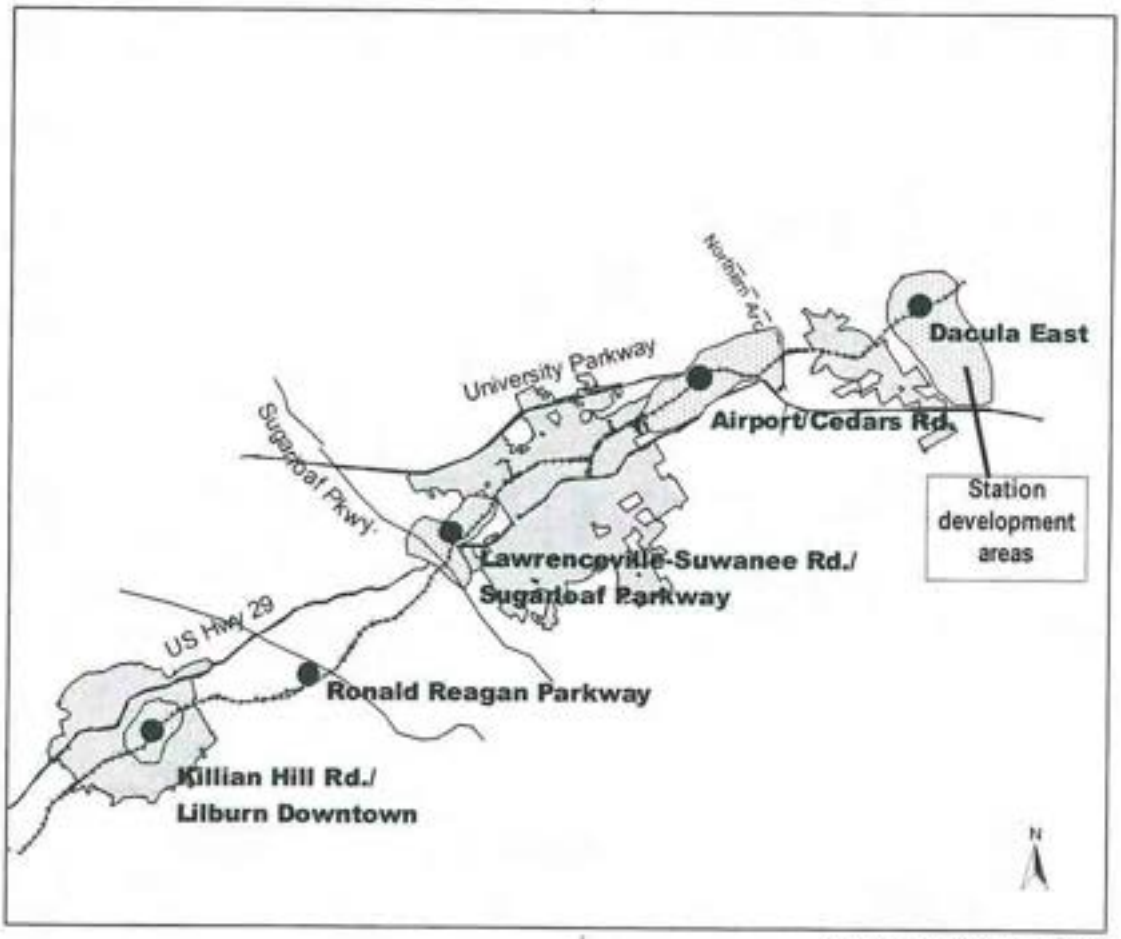
5. Dacula East. Located just east of Dacula, this site provides an excellent opportunity for a future transit oriented greenfield development which can help manage growth and protect environmentally sensitive areas at the east end of Gwinnett. If the City annexes the area it could provide long-term coordinated growth management, infrastructure development and tax base for the community. Ridership projections may show that this station may be a future addition to the system.

Coordinated Growth Management

These recommendations illustrate the benefit of adopting a coordinated growth strategy for the central corridor of Gwinnett County. It will require a coordinated effort between the county and the three municipalities in land use, zoning, infrastructure investment and revenue sharing but will yield extraordinary benefits for the future of the corridor.







Composite Corridor Strategy

PARTICIPANTS

Coordinators:
Susan Kidd, The Georgia Conservancy
Dorothy McDaniel, The Georgia Conservancy
Randal Roark, AIA, AICP, GeorgiaTech

Professional Panel:
Peter Drey, AIA, Peter Drey & Associates
Mike Sizemore, AIA, Sizemore Floyd Associates
John Fish, ASLA, Post, Buckley, Shue & Jernigan
Rob Fisher, ASLA, Robinson, Fisher & Associates
Ed Ellis, ITE, Dames & Moore
Elizabeth Sanford, AICP, ITE, Sycamore Consutling
Sam Begner, ULI, Robert Charles Lesser & Company

Regional Steering Committee:
Mayor Robert Bridges, City of Statham
Paul Chambers, Bell South Athens
Dr. Stan Coley, University Parkway Alliance
Jack Crowley, Dean, Environmental School of Design, UGA
E.H. Culpepper, Georgia Rail Passenger Authority
Wendell Dawson, Oconee County Board of Commissioners
Jim Dove, NE Georgia Regional Development Center
Toni Dunagan, Parsons Brinkerhoff Quade & Douglas
Walter E. Elder, Barrow County Commission
Mayor Doc Eldridge, City of Athens
Steve Logan, Gwinnett County Dept. of Planning
John R. Martin, Georgia Rail Passenger Authority
Paul Mullins, Director Planning & Programming, Ga. DOT
Jeff Rader, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
Dan Reuter, Atlanta Regional Commission
John Stockbridge, Athens-Clarke County Planning
Jim Vaseff, Georgia Power Company

Georgia Tech Graduate Students:
Hyun-Suk Baek
Chris McGarry
Doug Hammel
Peter Hansen
Matthew Heins
Sheila Jones
Karl Koch
Vanessa Lampe
Ungjin Oh
Susan Rutherford
Chuck Shultz
Katherine Smith
Alan Steinbeck

Gwinnett County:
Wayne Hill
Charlotte Nash
Steve Logan, AICP
Marie Dickey
James Summerbell, AICP
David Gill
Keith Hogsed

Lilburn Steering Committee:
Larry Kahn
Hugh Wilkerson
Ron Houck
Allen Carroll
MaryAnn Kenerly
Charles Wilder
Scott Batterton
David Reicherd

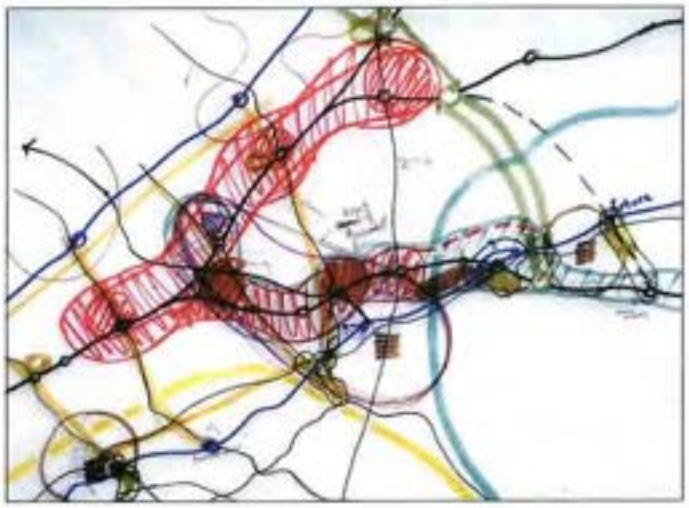
Lawrenceville Steering Committee:
Jack Baggett Jr.
Janetta Johnson
Jan Klen
Howard Allen
Charles Cooper
Richard Johnson
Larry Hurt
Bradford P. Leonard
Bartow Jenkins

Dacula Steering Committee:
Gene Greeson
Fred Norman
R.G. Hale
Betty Hale
Phyllis Lamme
Ellis Lamme
Wendell Holcombe
Paul Sims
Jimmy Wilbanks
James Wall
Marilyn Wall
Neil Park
Georgia Pharr
George Sanders
Billy Stone
Reed Miller

Workshop 7

University Parkway &
Atlanta - Athens Rail Corridor

Gwinnett County



THE GEORGIA CONSERVANCY'S
BLUEPRINTS
FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

The Georgia Conservancy
1776 Peachtree Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
(404) 876-2900
www.georgiaconservancy.org