



TOWN CENTER VISION & PLAN
Imagine Remarkable!

Adopted **October 25, 2021**





THE CITY OF JOHNS CREEK PRESENTS



TOWN CENTER VISION & PLAN

Imagine Remarkable!

Adopted **October 25, 2021**



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**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF JOHNS CREEK, GEORGIA TO ADOPT THE
TOWN CENTER PLAN**

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council approved and adopted the City of Johns Creek 2018 Comprehensive Plan on October 8, 2018, as a broad guide for future growth and transportation improvements; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 Comprehensive Plan identified the need for development of a Town Center Plan as a key implementation effort identified in the Community Work Program; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Council identified the development of a Town Center Plan as a strategic priority for the city; and

WHEREAS, the objective of the Town Center Plan was to establish appropriate land use, open space design, street and multi-modal networks, and streetscape standards to create a sense of place commensurate with the scale and quality of the City; and

WHEREAS, the Town Center Plan, attached as Exhibit 'A', has been completed and functions as a vision and guide for development of the Town Center and specifically addresses land use and transportation strategies, and open space and infrastructure investments; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and City Council of the City of Johns Creek hereby adopt the Town Center Plan and as such it shall be effective upon its adoption

SO RESOLVED, this 25th day of October, 2021.



Approved:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Bodker", is written over a horizontal line.

Michael E. Bodker, Mayor

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Allison Tarpley", is written over a horizontal line.
Allison Tarpley, City Clerk

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Project Partners

Johns Creek City Council

Mike Bodker, Mayor
Lenny Zaprowski, Post 1
Brian Weaver, Post 2
John Bradberry, Post 3
Chris Coughlin, Post 4
Stephanie Endres, Post 5
Erin Elwood, Post 6

Project Management Team

Ed Densmore, City Manager
Kimberly Greer, Assistant City Manager
Ben Song, Community Development Director
Yang Chen, Assistant Community Development Director
Chris Cannon, Economic Development Director
Nick O'Day, Chief Data Officer
Chris Haggard, Public Works Director
Erica Madsen, City Engineer
Bob Mullen, Communications Director
Jennifer Chapman, Senior Communications Manager

Project Consultants

Pond & Company

Andrew Kohr, PLA, ASLA, Project Manager
Matthew Wilder, PLA, ASLA, LEED AP, Principal
Eric Lusher, AICP, Planner
Cherie Akers, AICP, Planner
Lauren Blaszyk, AICP, Planner
Jonathan Corona, Planner
Aubrey Sabba, PLA, ASLA, Planner
Sydney Thompson, ASLA, Planner
Roger Bledsoe, Designer

MXD Development Strategists

Chris LeTourneur, MCIP RPP
Martin Anstey, M.SC
Andrew Fayn, M. PL
Elie Jahshan, M. PL

Technical Advisory Committee

Alexander Stone
Amy Little
Ashley Connor
Bob Gray
Bill Schmidt
Brian Downey
Brian Johnson
Carol Bartolo
Chimei Mu
Chris Cupit
Chris Jackson
Cleve Gaddis
Dilip Tunki
Don Rowe
Gigi Vatter
Irene Sanders
J. Wayne Baughman
John Buckett
Kamini Anand
Keith Olander
Larry DiBiase
Lauren Higdon
Melanie Brandt
Raghava Tadavarthi
Xin Xue

Alternate Technical Advisory Committee Members

Amy Wells
Ashish Gandhi
Christopher Taylor
Dennis Carman
Karen Nolz
Kevin Tate
Mark Valliere
R. David Ware
Robert Frame
Tory Landry

A special thanks to members of the Johns Creek community who provided their input throughout the planning process.

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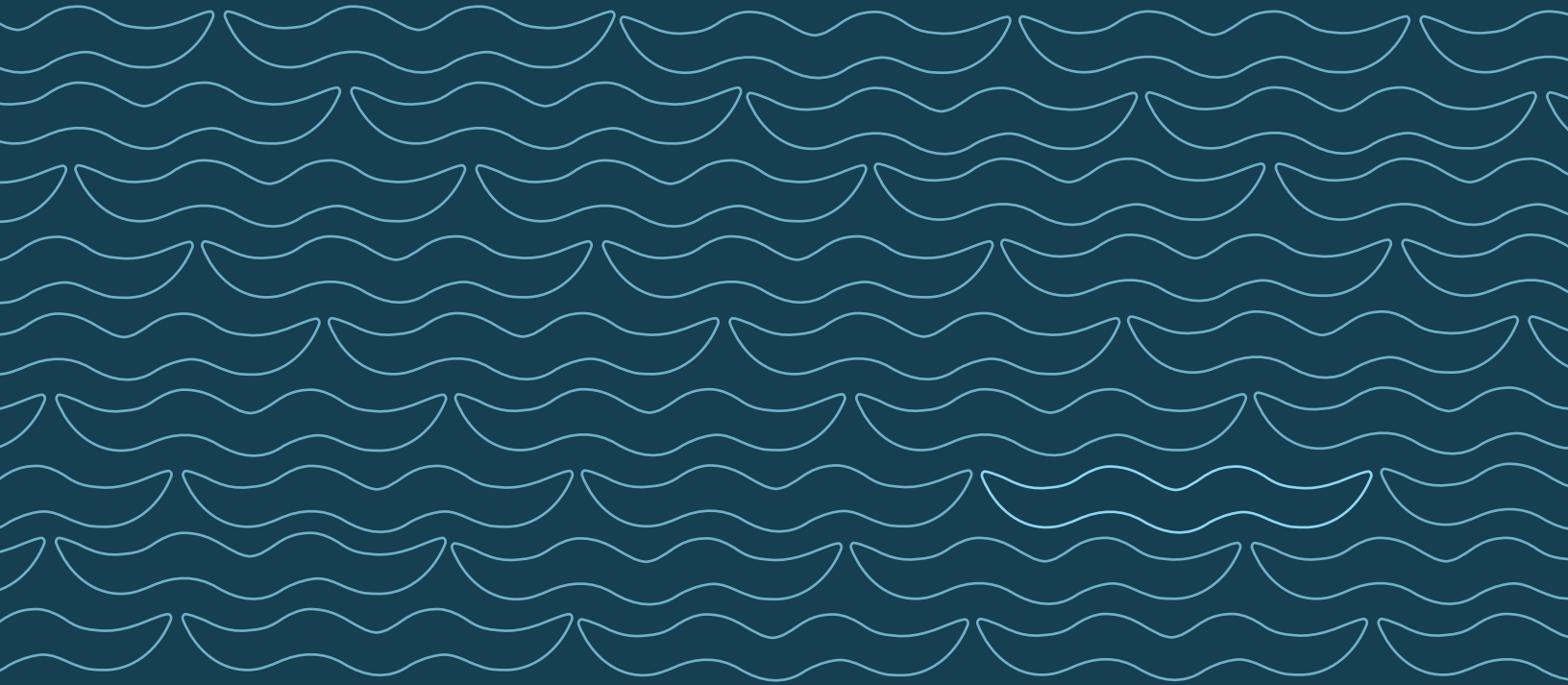
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

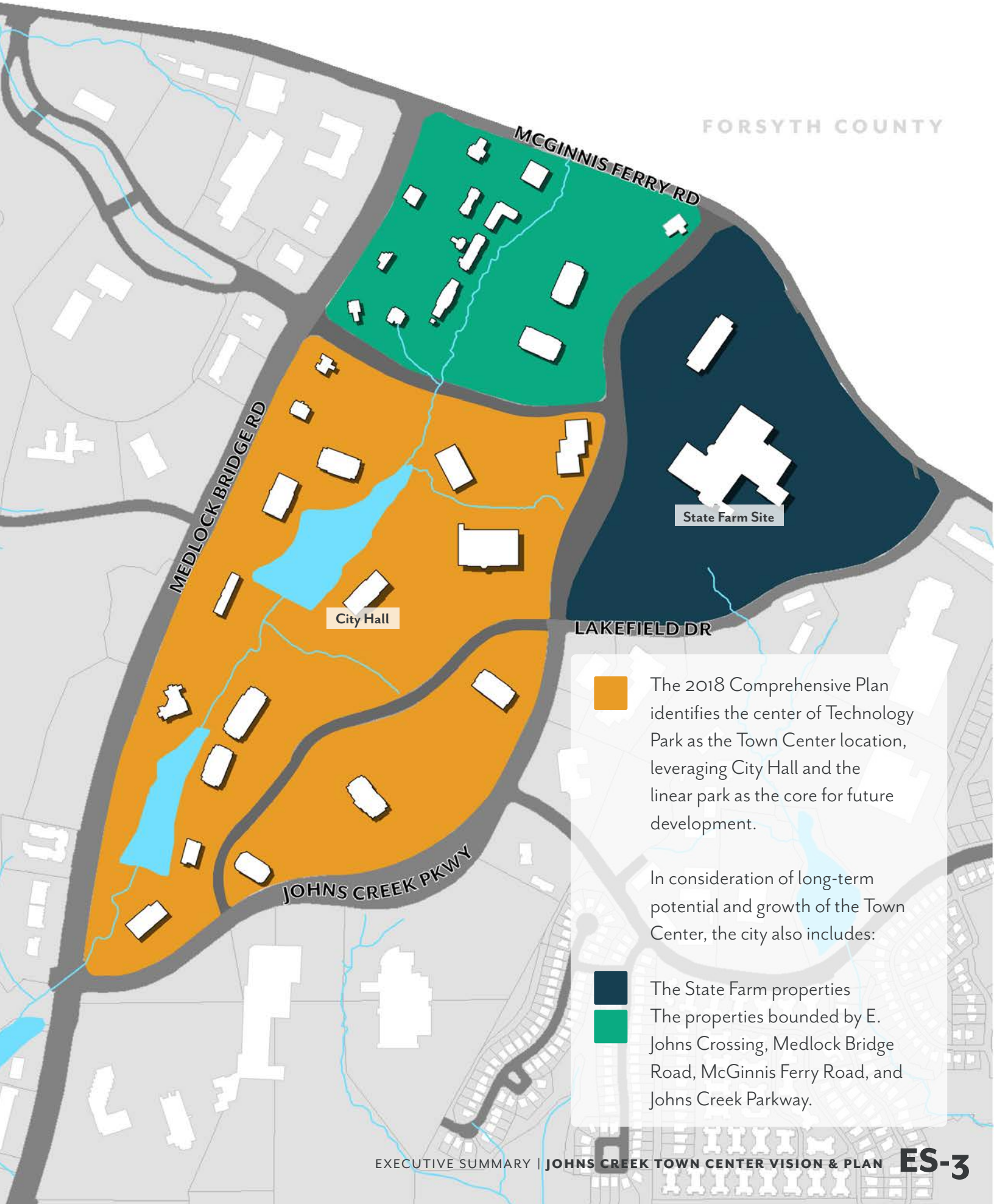
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY


The City of Johns Creek has grown to over 84,000 people in its relatively short history and boasts a high median household income, great schools and public parks, located adjacent to the Chattahoochee River and access to GA 400, allowing the city to steadily attract new residents and businesses.

However, a changing community requires effective planning, and the city has taken a proactive approach to managing growth and development. Johns Creek has three primary documents that serve as the framework for the Town Center Vision & Plan. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for the city. Technology (or “Tech”) Park is a community area identified in the 2018 plan as a candidate for future redevelopment into a Town Center. Technology Park is a prominent employment node that comprises the majority of the city’s office and industrial stock, and sits across Medlock Bridge Road/SR 141 from Emory Johns Creek Hospital. Home to 10,000 employees and several major corporations including Alcon Laboratories, Ebix, and Bomgar, Technology Park is a key piece of the city’s economic infrastructure. Over 80% of the city’s office product is located in the Technology Park campus, yet much of the stock was built in the 1980s and follows an older suburban business park land use pattern with low density buildings surrounded by parking.


Office vacancy rates in the park are at 13%, which is higher than the overall submarket. The high vacancy rate can be attributed to the recent relocation of State Farm’s headquarters from Technology Park to Dunwoody. Retail vacancy rates remain healthy at 6% due to the presence of a stable population base with strong buying power. This suggests that there is an opportunity to reimagine the land use mix in Technology Park to adapt to changing work trends while providing an amenity-rich environment that is attractive to innovative companies and next-generation talent.

Technology Park was envisioned as a true civic area with City Hall incorporated into the core of the new “downtown.” Creating this change will also require a land use change that is a key component of this master plan process. The 2016 Strategic Economic Development Plan showcases Technology Park on its cover and states “To achieve economic prosperity, the city needs new investments, increased public/private partnerships and increased high paying job creation.” Achieving this economic prosperity will require the Town Center plan to understand the economics and development potential of Technology Park and the surrounding parcels. The 2016 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan highlights the significance of the Tech Park Linear Park (referred to as Creekside Ponds in the plan) as a catalyst project that can inform future development including a potential “town green”. This remains a critical element and one that will serve to help frame the rest of the Town Center.



 The 2018 Comprehensive Plan identifies the center of Technology Park as the Town Center location, leveraging City Hall and the linear park as the core for future development.

In consideration of long-term potential and growth of the Town Center, the city also includes:

-  The State Farm properties
-  The properties bounded by E. Johns Crossing, Medlock Bridge Road, McGinnis Ferry Road, and Johns Creek Parkway.

THE PROCESS

The Town Center Plan will assess and align land use, economic development, parks & open space, transportation & mobility, and urban design & placemaking. With these key topics in mind, the planning team executed the following process to form the Town Center's vision.

1 Listen

Begin by listening to the community to form a vision for the new Town Center.

2 Assess

Assess residential, retail, service, and employment opportunities for the new Town Center.

3 Envision

Develop visuals that speak to the community's needs and desires.

4 Synthesize

Form a cohesive plan with maps, graphics, and a narrative to describe the overall plan.

5 Celebrate

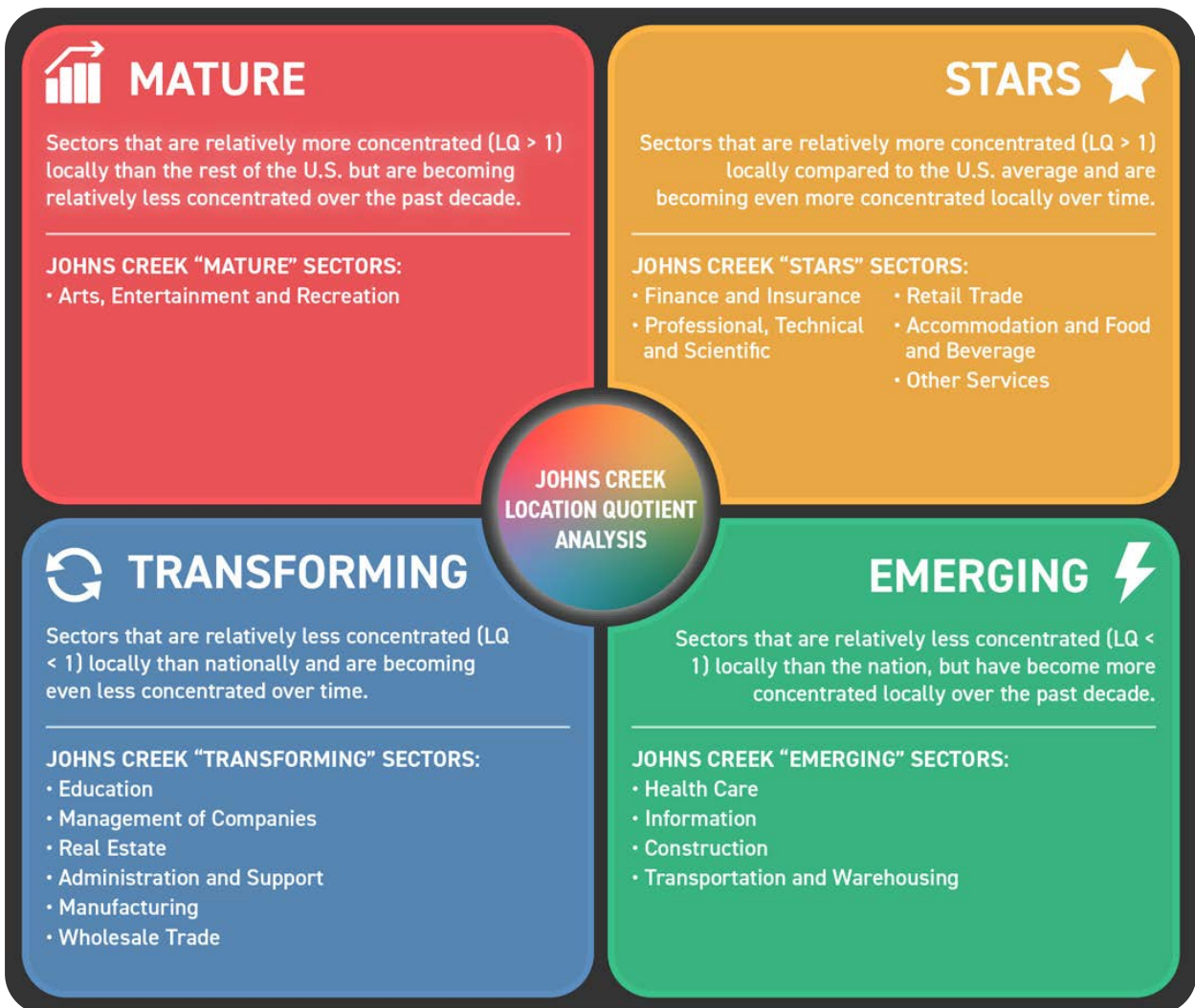
Adopt a final **Johns Creek Town Center Vision & Plan.**

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

An economic and real estate market analysis was undertaken to create a market-driven development program for the Johns Creek Town Center. This analysis provides a baseline understanding of land uses that have greatest viability for development in the study area and demonstrates both the short-term and long-term opportunities for the Town Center Vision & Plan. Current residential, office, retail, hotel, and supplementary uses were

analyzed in Johns Creek, North Atlanta, and the Metro Atlanta region to understand development challenges and opportunities. The market-driven development program informs what the appropriate mix, size, and phasing should be for the future Johns Creek Town Center, and ensures that the plan is supported by both the public and the local development community.

Johns Creek Location Quotient Analysis 4Q Model



ECONOMIC ANALYSIS - KEY TAKEAWAYS AND IMPLICATIONS

Metro Atlanta Economic Diversity

The diversity and strong growth of Metro Atlanta's economy will lead to a quicker Covid-19 recovery than many other metro areas. The economy is supportive of real estate development.

Health Care & Wellness is Integral

The health care sector is a major economic driver in Metro Atlanta and Johns Creek. It has seen significant growth over the past decade and has plenty of room for further expansion going forward. Supportive sub-sectors such as research and development and innovation are industries that can be a focus for the Town Center.



Local Labor Profile is Strong

Johns Creek residents work in industries that are complementary to the current economic sectors and employers of the City. The Town Center can target future companies that match the labor profile such as professional white-collar sectors (tech, health care, etc.)

Strong Fundamentals, Limited Activity

There is a strong need for the Town Center to be a "game changer" that will rejuvenate a tired and outdated employment node. Catalytic projects can demonstrate to future employers and tenants that the area is economically desirable.

OFFICE ANALYSIS - KEY TAKEAWAYS AND IMPLICATIONS

Metro Atlanta is Resilient, but Oversupply can Delay Demand

While the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed leasing activity and increased vacancy rates, the development and business community is optimistic that office will rebound in the Metro. A glut of proposed projects in a 10-mile radius means that the Town Center should incorporate office typologies into future phases.

Lacking Competitiveness

Johns Creek has seen little action in new development or major office leases over the past decade, losing ground to Alpharetta, Peachtree Corners, Norcross, etc. The Town Center must create an environment that provides a competitive positioning to secure new and exciting employers.

Think “Right Sized”

The study area currently is focused on large-scale campus office. A variety of employment typologies include garden office, mixed-use office, etc. will provide opportunities for a diversity of tenants to locate in the Town Center.

What does this mean for the Johns Creek Town Center Plan?



Connectivity is Key

Employment continues to locate along major transportation corridors (highway and MARTA). The lack of this connectivity for Johns Creek means that other attractors are required to overcome this shortfall.

Re-Use of State Farm Property

The vacancy of the State Farm property allows for creative thinking to reimagine a major anchor for other employment uses based on rising economic sectors such as healthcare, medical, life sciences, and tech.

The Cool Factor

Major proposed office projects in North Atlanta are primarily in Alpharetta. The Town Center should determine how to create a lively and amenity-rich place that is appealing to developers and end-user tenants.

RETAIL ANALYSIS - KEY TAKEAWAYS AND IMPLICATIONS

Older Existing Supply

Most existing retail supply in Johns Creek is outdated strip centers, and neighborhood and community centers that have suburban-centric development patterns. High disposable incomes and the desire for more modern retail offerings indicates a need to construct new retail inventory that will be competitive with neighboring communities such as Alpharetta or Duluth.

Strong Retail Demand, even with Covid-19

While the future of brick-and mortar retail in a post Covid-19 world is uncertain for certain retail categories, Johns Creek and surrounding communities have remained relatively resilient. Strong retail spending profiles for Johns Creek residents offers the opportunity to develop new retail in the Town Center once the market stabilizes.



MULTI-FAMILY ANALYSIS - KEY TAKEAWAYS AND IMPLICATIONS

Continued Demand for a Variety of Housing Types in Metro Atlanta

Metro Atlanta has experienced continued demand for multi-family housing; however, construction in Johns Creek has lagged surrounding municipalities. Strong population growth in Fulton and Gwinnett County across a wide swath of age-cohorts over the next twenty years will allow the Town Center to capture a portion of future demand if a variety of multi-family housing is offered.

Accessibility is Important

Most new multi-family developments are located within or adjacent to major multi-use retail, entertainment or employment nodes that offer regional highway or public transit (MARTA) networks. The Town Center Plan area lacks both this existing critical mass as well as transportation connectivity and will need to explore creative solutions to overcome this challenge.

What does this mean for the Johns Creek Town Center Plan?



Provide a Diversity of Housing Options

An aging population in Johns Creek that is looking to downsize from single-family homes into lower-maintenance units, and children who have grown up in the City but prefer more urban environments as young professionals, creates an opportunity to fill in the gap for higher-end multi-family housing in a more “urban” environment and reduce leakage to areas such as Alpharetta and Duluth.

Creating Downtown in the Suburbs Attracts Desirable Clientele

Suburban mixed-use town centers such as Avalon and Halcyon Forsyth command rental values that rival more urban areas such as Buckhead or Midtown. The Town Center should position itself as a higher-end mixed-use community with a strong amenity profile to cater to young professionals and downsizers from Johns Creek.

High Amenity Living

Although townhouse and condominium values are strong and continue to grow within the three submarkets, amenities, both in terms of local amenities (i.e. dining, recreation, entertainment, etc.) as well as on-site amenities (i.e. pool, community center), are important to drive multi-family demand in a primarily single-family market.

HOTEL ANALYSIS - KEY TAKEAWAYS AND IMPLICATIONS

Opportunity for a Higher-end Hotel

Demand modeling demonstrates the opportunity for an upscale 4-star hotel. This would differentiate itself from existing hotels already located in Johns Creek and the immediate area. A 4-star hotel would not directly compete with the existing hotels, but rather provide a unique market offering.

Hotels Locate on Transportation Corridors

In the North Atlanta suburbs, hotel development has primarily followed major roadways, such as I-85, or along MARTA. Hotel development within the Town Center will have to find creative solutions to make it attractive, despite the disadvantage of not being on a major transportation corridor.



Create a Critical Mass of Uses to Enable a Hotel's Success

An upscale 4-star hotel matches the local demographics of Johns Creek, but will require an urban town center that has a diversity of anchor uses to generate demand and attract a hotel developer/operator. Proposed uses such as increased residential density, Emory Hospital expansions, entertainment and culture, and new employment would all be beneficial in making a 4-star hotel viable in the Town Center.

The Covid-19 Recovery is Uncertain

Hospitality has been strongly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, nearly bringing the industry to a halt. The industry's recovery is considered long-term, reliant on when travel can return to pre-pandemic levels. A hotel in the Town Center should be considered a longer-term opportunity, in secondary phases of development.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Johns Creek Town Center – Market-Supported Development Program – 20-Year Demand

Land Use	Johns Creek Town Center Development Program LOW	Johns Creek Town Center Development Program MODERATE	Johns Creek Town Center Development Program HIGH
Multi-family (Rental + For-Sale)	533 UNITS	712 UNITS	890 UNITS
Office	283,000 SF	377,000 SF	471,000 SF
Retail	168,000 SF	224,000 SF	280,000 SF
Hotel Mid-Priced (4 Star)	70 Rooms	140 Rooms	210 Rooms
Hotel Lower Priced (3 Star + 3.5 Star)	70 Rooms	140 Rooms	210 Rooms

While the demographics of Johns Creek present some challenges, the strong regional fundamentals of North Atlanta and the Metro market including population growth, household income and economic growth present development opportunities for the Town Center.

The Metro Atlanta region is growing quickly, and North Atlanta is expected to capture a large amount of future growth. Johns Creek is primarily built-out and has limited greenfield development potential. Coupled with the lack of a central gathering place in the city, the opportunity presents itself for a unique town center that represents the diversity of Johns Creek. The Town Center can also be an economic development tool that will grow the

city’s employment and diversify the tax base. This matches the main goals of the Johns Creek SEDP which includes promoting the city image for economic development and positioning the city for economic development, among others.

This focus can be on niche sectors that are already considered “Stars” or “Emerging” sectors such as Professional, Technical and Scientific Industries, Education, Information, and Healthcare. Targeting high value, knowledge-base industries can create new economic anchors that will support the current and future labor force, attracting high wage earners and thus, support higher quality retail, entertainment, and services for the Town Center.

PLAN ELEMENTS

Paired with the in-depth market research conducted, the vision provides a framework for the Town Center Master Plan and informs design principles, overarching themes, and other plan elements that create a cohesive Town Center Master Plan.

The vision captures the essence of the planning process and the subsequent actions to be taken. This plan lays the foundation for a street framework, open space, the establishment of neighborhoods, and feasible projects that can be executed over the next 5 years.

“ Johns Creek Town Center is an **iconic destination** that represents the city’s diversity, culture, and values. As both a gateway and a connector, the Town Center incorporates a series of experiences that appeal to a variety of audiences and age groups. This inclusive and *remarkable* place is defined by intentional neighborhoods connected via natural resources and greenways that is synonymous with wellness and sustainable living. ”



STREET FRAMEWORK

Technology Park's street network currently lends itself to deliberately separated lots, and is not conducive to walkability and effective circulation. This plan adopts a street design framework with design standards from best practices suitable for the built environment and with future development in mind. The proposed grid network promotes economic development, environmental sustainability, and the community's desired character.

This section highlights new street typologies by taking advantage of existing right-of-way and routes that just make sense from a connectivity standpoint. The following are the proposed typologies:

- The Edge
- Linear Parkway
- Main Street
- Local Road
- Shared Street
- Green Alley



TRAILS & OPEN SPACE

Programmed outdoor spaces are essential to the function of this Town Center. Trails, parks, and open space can serve multiple functions, and in this case, they will operate in tandem with prospective development, creating a vibrant community and maximizing the potential for the Johns Creek Town Center.

Like the street grid, the proposed trail network will serve those living in the vicinity of the plan area as well as visitors. The system of sidewalks and trails will provide interesting and safe routes for cyclists and pedestrians alike. Trail types include the following:

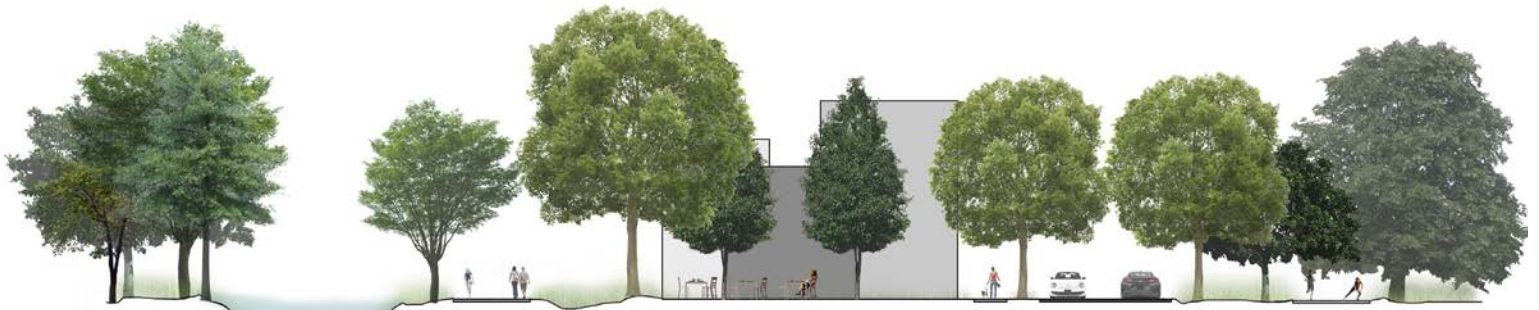
- Linear Park Trail
- Multi-Use Trail
- Edge Trail
- Nature Trail



OPEN SPACE

Vacant, publicly-owned land throughout Technology Park creates conditions suitable for programmed open spaces. Parks and outdoor recreation and entertainment have been identified as top priorities for the public. Of the 192 acres, 64 acres could be planned for open space, accounting

for 33% of the plan area. This significant amount of open space will promote a healthy mix of public realm-focused land among developed acreage. Open space zones are as follows: Community Commons, Linear Park, Community Open Space, and Water Restoration.



WATER RESTORATION COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE COMMUNITY COMMONS LINEAR PARK



NEIGHBORHOODS

For the purposes of this plan, portions of the site are grouped into thematic Neighborhoods:

- Business Anchor + Gateway
- Civic Exchange
- Innovation Hub
- Creekside Residential.

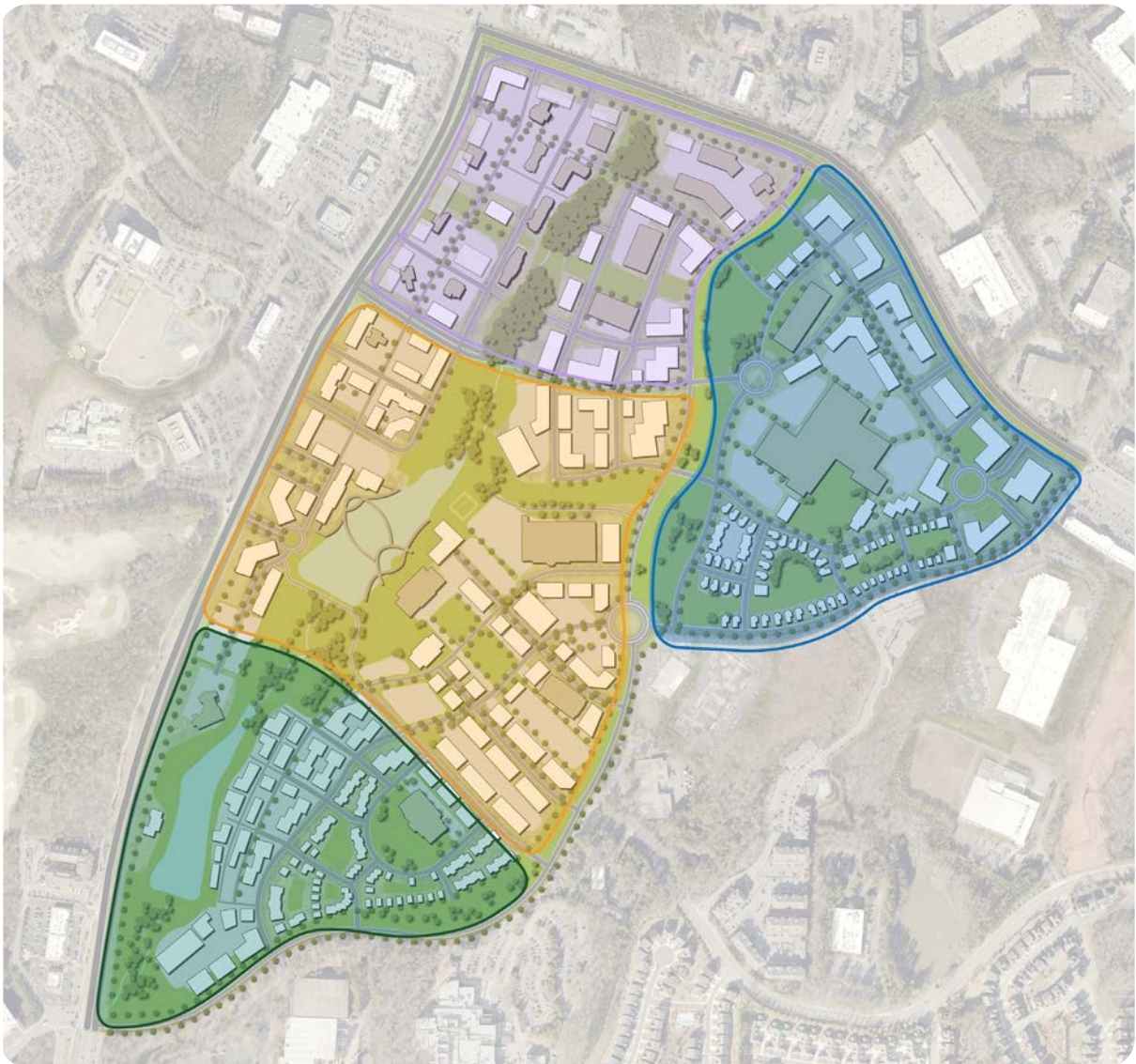
The Town Center Plan identifies appropriate development type and character for each neighborhood designation.

 **Business Anchor + Gateway**
(Business Core)

 **Innovation Hub**
(Mixed Use/Flex Core)

 **Civic Exchange**
(Civic Core)

 **Creekside Residential**
(Residential/Flex Commercial Core)



REDEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

The vision of Johns Creek Town Center has been visualized through this plan. Now, how do we begin to make this vision a reality? The city must spearhead a strategic path to implementation in a collaborative manner. This will require support, participation, and cooperation of local leaders, public agencies, property and business owners, developers, and residents.

This section presents an implementation framework for the city to use to initiate and undertake key recommendations included in this document. The actions and strategies identified in this section establish the next steps in continuing the process of planning and investment which entail:

- 1. Phasing Plan**
- 2. Catalyst Sites**
 - Creekside - North Pond (City)
 - Town Center Market Hall
 - Mixed-Age Community
 - Innovation Flex Office Blocks
- 3. Pop-up Quick Hits**
 - Amphitheatre and Performing Arts Space
 - Arts & Culture Trail
 - Outdoor Food & Artisan Market (City)
- 4. Toolbox for Infill and Redevelopment**
 - Organizational Tools
 - Financial Tools
- 5. Strategies for Attracting Business**

PHASING

Johns Creek Town Center is a large planning area that has significant land holdings under both public and private control. A phasing plan is an important tool from a development and infrastructure perspective as public investment should be focused on specific areas to generate a critical mass of activity. The initial phase will begin to change the perception of the current day Technology Park into a true Town Center for Johns Creek.

The Town Center Plan is projected to be built out over 20+ years from a market and economic feasibility perspective. It will take time and patience for infill and redevelopment to occur on certain strategic parcels of land that are privately held. Projected development phasing is based on site availability, market demand and absorption, access, location of current amenities and public infrastructure, and development feasibility.

CATALYST SITES

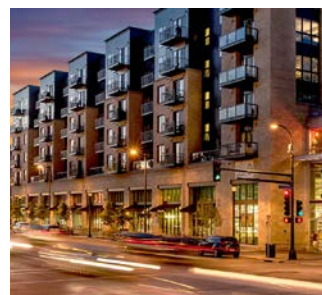
Catalyst Sites are public, private or public-private partnership (P3) projects that stimulate or trigger complementary development or job creation on surrounding areas. These sites are identified as initiatives that could occur in Johns Creek within the first five years of implementation. The following four catalyst sites emerged as the most locally applicable, beneficial and feasible through market analysis, stakeholder consultation, case studies, and the planning process.



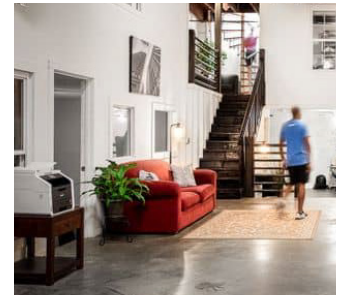
**CREEKSIDE - NORTH
POND (CITY)**



**TOWN CENTER
MARKET HALL**



**MIXED-AGE
COMMUNITY**



**INNOVATION FLEX
OFFICE BLOCKS**

POP-UP QUICK HITS

Pop-Up Quick Hits are public, private, or P3 projects that are effective at improving the perception of an area through placemaking. These initiatives could occur in the first several years of implementation and require relatively little time and fiscal resources compared to catalyst projects.



**AMPITHEATRE/
OUTDOOR
ARTS SPACE**



**ARTS &
CULTURE TRAIL**



**OUTDOOR FOOD &
ARTISAN MARKET
(CITY)**

INFILL & REDEVELOPMENT TOOLS

This plan provides a strategic toolbox of implementation methods that the City of Johns Creek can employ to encourage infill and redevelopment in the Town Center. They are used specifically to encourage private landowners, businesses, and land developers to:

- Improve/retrofit existing buildings,
- Infill on revenue producing parcels,
- Redevelop old or underperforming buildings,
- Construct new development not currently available in the area such as multi-family residential, mixed-use, etc, and
- Capitalize on new and improved open and public spaces, connectivity, and branding.

Each tool, whether it be organizational or financial, has its advantages and challenges. These tools should be reviewed by the City of Johns Creek further to evaluate their benefit and viability for implementation of the Town Center Plan. They should also be combined with other tools in the implementation section to ensure success.

ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS

- In-House Municipal Development Department
- Implementation & Engagement Team
- Special Zoning / Pre-Zoned District
- Public-Private Partnerships (P3)
- Re-investment Organizations
- Prepare a Financial Analysis
- Continue the Technical Advisory Committee
- Meetings with Developers & Businesses
- Fast-Track Approvals Stream
- Marketing Campaign

FINANCIAL TOOLS

- Property Tax Abatement
- Sales Tax Abatement
- Fee Waivers
- Utility Fee Reductions
- Debt Financing
- Capital Recovery Grants
- Private Activity Bonds (PABs)
- Low-Interest Loans
- Capital Recovery Grants
- Tax Allocation District (TAD)





