

North Point Activity Center

LIVABLE CENTERS INITIATIVE

Executive Summary



April 2008

Prepared for:
City of Alpharetta

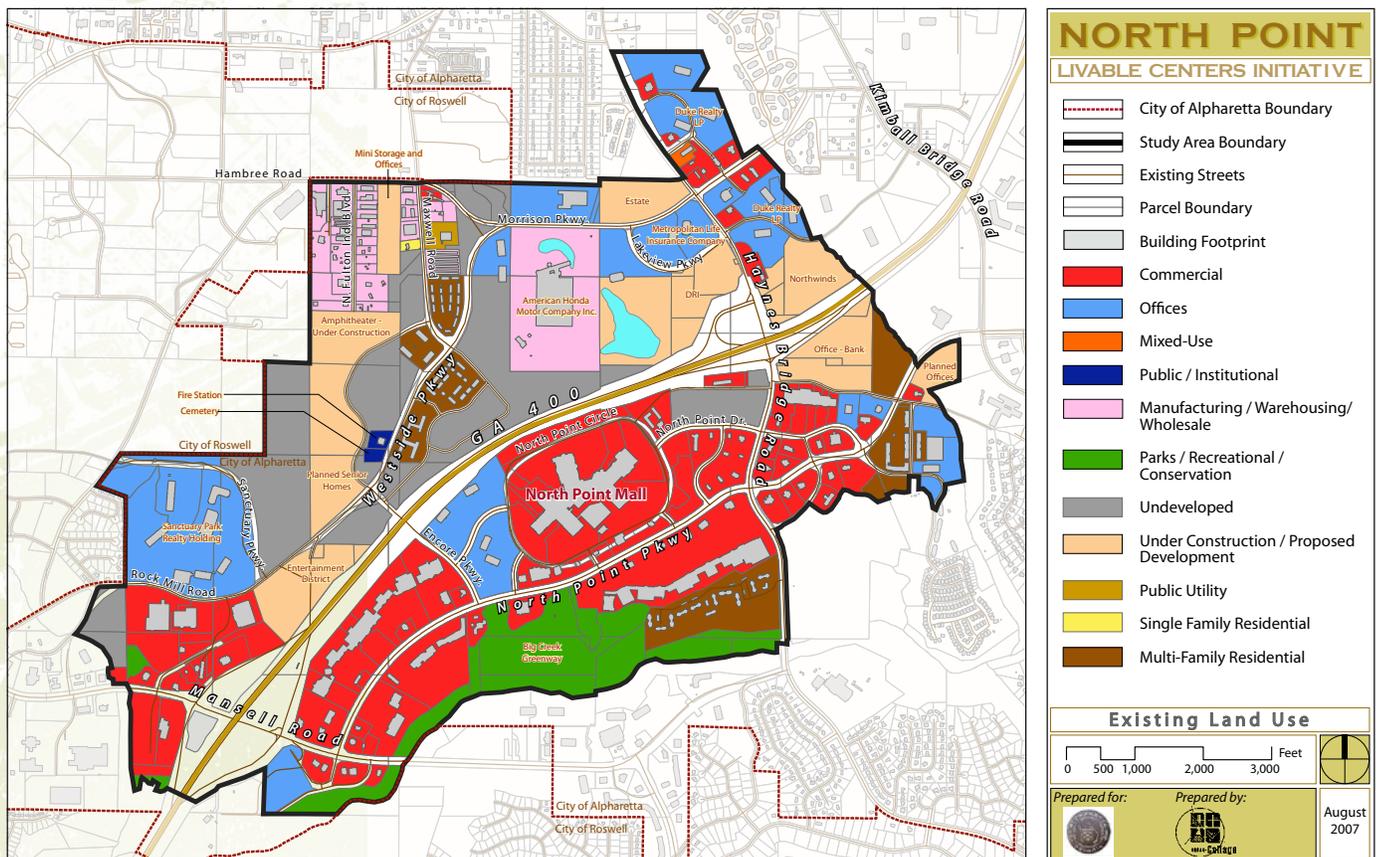
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Introduction and Purpose

The North Point Activity Center Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) Study was developed under the direction of the City of Alpharetta with funding assistance from the North Fulton Community Improvement District and Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The goal of the LCI program is to encourage planning and investment in existing Activity Centers, integrate land use and transportation planning, and encourage the creation of more sustainable, livable communities consistent with regional development policies. Communities who successfully complete and adopt LCI Plans and show progress toward meeting the plan's initiatives through enacting appropriate development regulations, approving commensurate development projects, and showing local commitment toward necessary transportation improvements may be awarded up to \$4 million in funding toward each of two pre-qualified transportation improvement projects.

The North Point LCI Study provides an opportunity for the City of Alpharetta to prepare for the future of the North Point Activity Center and prioritize transportation improvements, including opportunities for future transit, to address existing congestion and provide for future growth. The plan should also result in a future vision and redevelopment strategies for the district's major retail properties as many of them enter the second half of their life cycle.

Figure 1: Existing Land Use



Source: City of Alpharetta, 2006 and Windshield Survey, 2007

The North Point Activity Center Study Area is roughly bounded by Mansell Road to the south, Haynes Bridge Road to the north, and 1500 feet on either side of North Point Parkway to the east and West Side Parkway to the west. The area, along Georgia 400, is a regional destination for many office workers, a major shopping destination, and will become a significant entertainment center with the opening of Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park this summer. The surrounding area is known for its high quality residential development and high quality of life. The existing land use map on the previous page (Figure 1) illustrates the current development pattern within the Activity Center.

In addition to existing development in the activity center and two major developments that have been approved but are incomplete at this time (Cousins Westside and Northwinds) the activity center and City of Alpharetta continue to experience significant development pressure. Undeveloped property is quickly disappearing, comprising less than 15% of the total land area in the North Point Activity Center. By way of comparison, more than 12% of the Activity Center's land area is either under development or expected to be so within the next two years. As undeveloped properties disappear, future growth in the area must be accommodated through redevelopment of existing properties. The greatest redevelopment potential in the area will be large surface parking lots in and around major North Point developments (North Point Mall, existing office developments, etc.) and aging retail properties that will require rejuvenation, reinvestment, or redevelopment to maintain the area's high quality of life.

Community Vision



Preferred Commercial Development Types

To help establish a future vision for the North Point Activity Center the Planning Team developed a web-based community survey. The survey, which included a combination of visual preference exercises and short-answer questions generated almost 500 interested visitors and 337 complete responses over a period of 15 days in November 2007. The survey was also administered to a Core Team of city officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders. The survey results showed strong community preference toward:

- Multi-story, mixed-use, walkable environments as a model for future redevelopment in the North Point Activity Center,
- Incorporation of publicly accessible open space as part of any significant development / redevelopment project,
- Enhanced pedestrian connectivity, the ability to walk within and between existing developments, and enhanced connectivity to enhance future transit potential,
- Enhancement and extension of bicycling opportunities within the Activity Center and a preference toward off-street bicycle facilities,
- A future transit stop in the North Point Activity Center to enhance connectivity and reduce traffic congestion.

The process also included a series of five (5) Core Team Meetings. The Core Team meetings actively shaped the plan's vision, strategic direction, and recommendations and were attended by City Council members and staff, North Fulton CID Board members and staff, and other interested stakeholders. Three public presentations were conducted to provide an opportunity for additional community input during the process. The third public meeting, held

on February 5, 2008, included significant participation from North Point Area residents who expressed excitement and support for the plan's development and transportation concepts.



Preferred Residential Development Types

Preferred Open Space Character

Preferred Street and Circulation Images

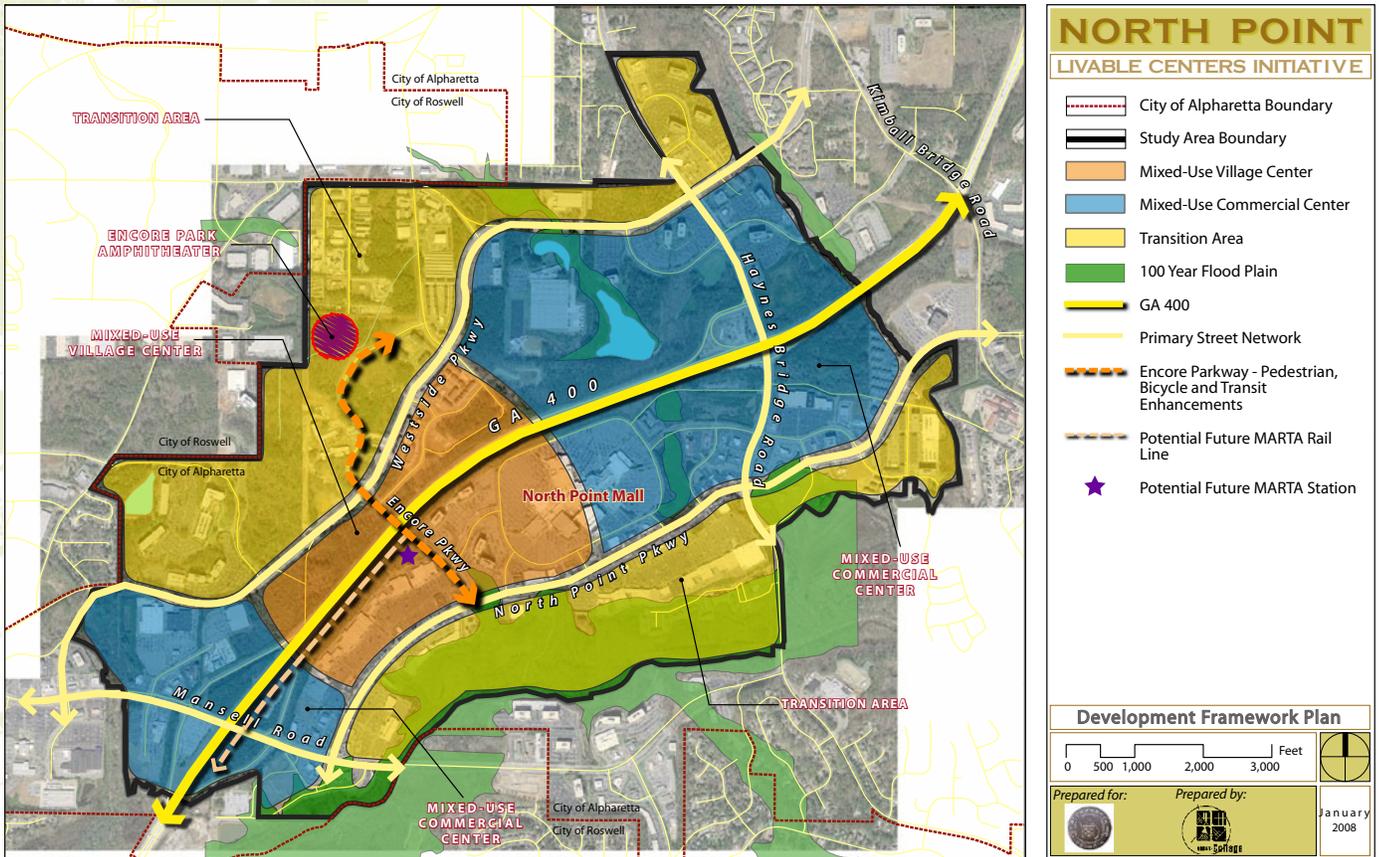
Development Recommendations

The LCI Planning process resulted in a Development Framework Plan that outlines three mixed-use character areas, each with recommended development attributes based on appropriate building heights and character, transportation access and connectivity, and the ability to reinforce and create high-quality development with a strong sense of place in the North Point Activity Center. The Conceptual Land Use Framework Plan on the following page (Figure 2) displays the three recommended character areas.

1. Mixed-Use Village Center - The primary development recommendation is for the creation of a mid-rise, mixed-use village center within ½ mile of Encore Parkway between North Point Parkway and Westside Parkway. The concentration of a mixed-use, walkable district, including a concentration of residential development, has the ability to create a unique sense of place within the North Point Activity Center, reduce vehicle trips, reconnect the east and west sides of Georgia 400, provide a viable pedestrian network from the Activity Center's core commercial area to the Cousins Westside Development and Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park, and support enhanced transit and/or alternative transportation opportunities.
2. Mixed-Use Commercial Centers seek to take advantage of Georgia 400, Mansell Road, and Haynes Bridge Road to accommodate significant vehicular traffic by locating high intensity uses within a short distance of the Georgia 400 interchanges. While still providing pedestrian connectivity to the mixed-use village center, the two commercial centers are better suited to accommodate taller, regional serving development with higher vehicular traffic demands.
3. Transitional Areas - Areas outside of the village and commercial core and beyond North Point and Westside Parkways should become transitional, mixed-use areas. Transitional areas provide somewhat limited pedestrian

connectivity back to the Village Center and Commercial Centers due to the need to concentrate pedestrian movements across major roadways. Additionally, building intensities likely need to diminish as development moves away from the core of the activity center toward existing city and neighborhood development.

Figure 2: Conceptual Land Use Framework Plan



In each of the three character areas mixed-use development, particularly vertically mixed development, is recommended. Concentrated vertical mixed-use development can enhance walkability, reduce the number of short distance vehicle trips, and create a unique sense of place.

Implementation of these character areas requires a series of actions by the City of Alpharetta:

- Development of an alternative zoning category or incentive package to encourage vertical, mixed-use development appropriate to each character area including regulation of building heights, typical block sizes, limits to curb cuts, placement of buildings along pedestrian sidewalks, building design guidelines, regulation of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, parking guidelines, open spaces, and landscaping requirements,
- Clarification of the city's multi-family housing policies specific to the North Point Activity Center and the future vision for the area,
- Incorporation of the LCI Plan and its recommendations into the city's future land use plan and comprehensive plan and identification and/or acquisition of land near the intersection of Georgia 400 and Encore Parkway for a future North Point Activity Center transit facility.

Transportation Projects and Funding

Based on an evaluation of the existing transportation system and the future development framework, the Planning Team has outlined a list of suggested transportation projects (Figure 3) consistent with the community vision for the future of the North Point Activity Center.

1. Encore Parkway

Description: Widen Encore Parkway to provide transportation enhancements to accommodate 2-3 lanes of traffic with appropriate turn lanes, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities from Westside Parkway to North Point Parkway

Length: 1,992 feet

Project Type: Multi-use Bike/Ped Facility

Projected Cost: \$2 Million

2. Encore Parkway Bridge over SR 400

Description: Widen Encore Parkway bridge over SR 400 to accommodate 2-3 travel lanes, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities

Length: 342 feet

Project Type: Bridge Upgrade

Projected Cost: \$2.5 Million

3. New Roadway

Description: Create new roadways to provide connectivity within large scale development/redevelopment projects extending from Encore Parkway between North Point Parkway and Westside Parkway

Length: 2,730 feet

Project Type: General Purpose Roadway Capacity

Projected Cost: \$2 Million

4. Mansell Road Intersections

Description: Traffic Signal Timing and intersection improvements at four locations on Mansell Road from Davis Drive to North Point Parkway

Project Type: Roadway Operations

Projected Cost: TBD

5. Haynes Bridge Road Intersections

Description: Traffic Signal Timing and intersection improvements at ten locations on Haynes Bridge Road from Devore Road to Georgia Lane

Project Type: Roadway Operations

Projected Cost: TBD

6. Big Creek Greenway Extension

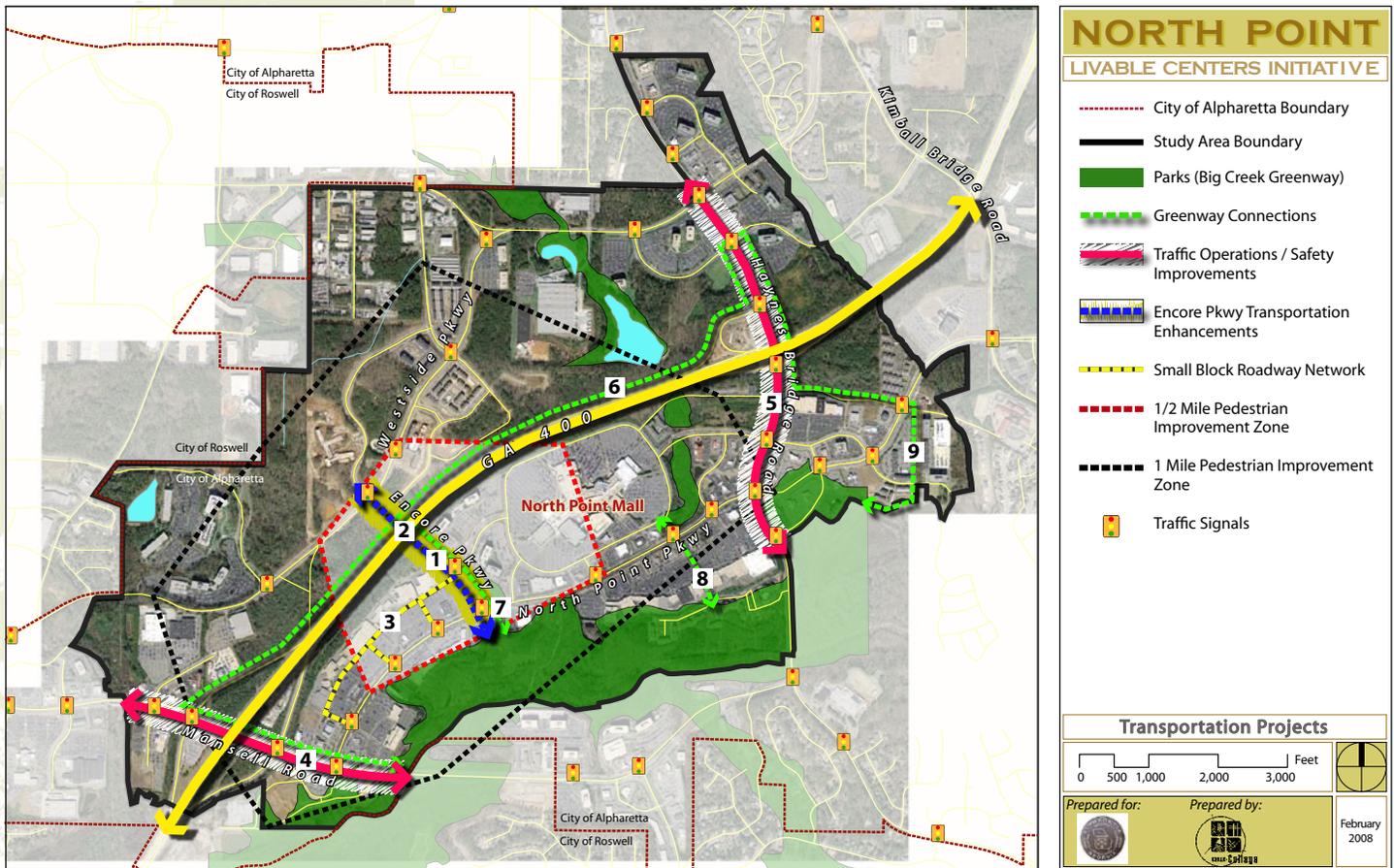
Description: Extension of Big Creek Greenway from Mansell Road to Haynes Bridge Road through the west side buffer of Georgia 400

Length: 11,291 feet

Project Type: Multi-use Bike/Ped Facility

Projected Cost: \$2 Million

Figure 3: Transportation Strategies



7. Big Creek Greenway Extension

Description: Extension of Big Creek Greenway from North Point Parkway at Encore Parkway to Greenway
 Length: 348 feet
 Project Type: Multi-use Bike/Ped Facility
 Projected Cost: \$500,000

8. Big Creek Greenway Extension

Description: Extension of Big Creek Greenway from North Point Circle/Mall to Greenway
 Length: 1,936 feet
 Project Type: Multi-use Bike/Ped Facility
 Projected Cost: \$1.5 Million

9. Big Creek Greenway Extension

Description: Extension of Big Creek Greenway from Haynes Bridge Road to North Point Parkway
 Length: 1,870 feet
 Project Type: Multi-use Bike/Ped Facility
 Projected Cost: \$1.5 Million

10. Property Acquisition for future North Point Transit Facility

Description: Acquisition of land for future transit facility (rail, BRT, shuttle and/or heliport)
 Project Type: Transit
 Projected Cost: TBD



The transportation projects listed above combine to enhance the balance of viable modes of travel throughout the Activity Center. To that end, the North Point LCI Plan includes recommendations concerning:

- Improving operations and safety along major vehicular routes,
- Enhancing the pedestrian environment throughout the Activity Center and promoting creation of a more dynamic, walkable environment,
- Providing safe, effective bicycle routes to link the North Point area and other destinations within Alpharetta and North Fulton,
- Extending and providing greater accessibility to the Big Creek Greenway, a major strength of the North Point Activity Center,
- Enhancing future potential for transit or alternative transportation solutions (rail, bus, helipad, etc.) in the North Point Area,
- Maintaining potential for local circulator services and connections to the North Springs MARTA Station until, and in support of, the realization of regional transit facilities in North Fulton.

To design and implement the suggested transportation projects a variety of funding sources will be necessary. Below is a list of funding sources and their potential to fund the above listed projects:

- LCI- two projects can be pre-qualified for LCI funding. The Planning Team and Core Team recommend that the Encore Parkway improvements (combined as one project) and greenway extension on the west side of Georgia 400 from Mansell Road to Haynes Bridge Road through the west side buffer of Georgia 400 be selected by the City of Alpharetta for prequalification with the Atlanta Regional Commission as part of the Livable Centers Initiative Program. Following pre-qualification, the City may apply for up to \$4 million in construction funding for each of these two projects. Prequalification of the greenway project will likely require the City to consider lighting the trail to serve as a viable commute alternative.
- GDOT- Mansell Road and Haynes Bridge Road ATMS and intersection improvements are most likely to be funded with assistance from GDOT as part of safety and/or technology upgrades.
- TE- Additional greenway connections from the Big Creek Greenway to the west side of Georgia 400 would most likely be funded through transportation enhancement funds or other open space/greenway/trail grants.
- The City's partnership with the North Fulton CID provides additional opportunities for design and engineering funding particularly for Encore Parkway enhancements which have the potential to incent significant redevelopment and change in the area and various intersection/capacity projects.

On April 21, 2008, the City of Alpharetta City Council unanimously approved a resolution to adopt this LCI Plan and incorporate the plan into the City's Comprehensive Plan. The Plan has potential to reshape the North Point Activity Center over the next two decades. However, change requires time. Some of the plan's initiative can begin immediately, others will take years to develop.