

2. Downtown Opportunities



2.1 SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

One of the LCI goals is to involve stakeholders through an outreach process. The process described in the above section included stakeholder interviews, an online survey, core team meetings and public workshops throughout the three phases. The community involvement from Phase I focused on gathering input on a variety of topics related to land use, housing, economic development, history, arts & culture, transit, transportation, pedestrian & bike connectivity, open space, and downtown events. The summary of the input is described as issues, needs and opportunities under three key elements: land use and development, mobility, and identity/branding/place-making. This input helped in identifying the future vision, goals, and strategies for downtown growth.

(The highlighted text indicate high priority issues and needs)



Land Use and Development

Issues:

- **Lack of restaurants and shopping options in Downtown**
- If residential population increases in future, the noise impact from events should be evaluated
- Physical constraints for Downtown growth are the historic cemetery, wide traffic corridors, railroad, and sewer capacity
- Concern about the amount of retail proposed in the planned development if there is a lack of critical mass in Downtown
- Concern about public safety along Level Creek Road, Church Street, and Spring Hill Drive.
- Lack of regional level economic development/business opportunities to attract a large number of jobs in and around Downtown
- **Neighborhood stability, housing conditions and redevelopment potential in mobile home parks and older neighborhood areas.**

Needs/Opportunities:

- **More residents in/around Downtown core**
- Attract more businesses such as bars, restaurants, and services in walking distance
- Opportunity to tap into the growing filming industry
- The potential for transit-oriented development on the south side of Peachtree Industrial Boulevard and Buford Drive
- Mixed-use development on north of Highway 20/Cumming Highway
- Retrofit existing housing stock and infill housing strategy as a way to supply diversity of housing, and to improve development character of the older neighborhoods throughout the LCI area
- Diversity of housing type for multi-generation and income-level such as townhomes, cottages, small lot single family, and urban style apartments
- **Focus on architectural character of the future mixed-use and housing development**
- Need for medical offices and facilities near Downtown
- Attract small tech companies or professional services
- Explore the opportunity for a satellite campus of a college/ university

Mobility

Issues:

- **Due to the major traffic corridors and railroad, walkability is the biggest challenge in the area**
- Spring Hill Drive is unsafe for pedestrian circulation due to speeding on the one-way street and some undesirable activities
- **Whitehead Road has sidewalks only on one side and lacks pedestrian-friendly environment**
- Lack of sidewalks on Level Creek Road; unsafe pedestrian connection to Sugar Hill Elementary School

Needs/Opportunities:

- Wider sidewalks on West Broad Street
- **Need for streetscape improvements on Highway 20** from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to Sycamore Road; the improvements could include decorative sidewalks, pedestrian street lights, and a landscaped median. Potential funding opportunities are CIP, SPLOST or LCI funds
- **Need for a pedestrian bridge over Highway 20 to connect the northern neighborhoods with Downtown**
- Connect Spring Hill Drive to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to expand the connectivity to Downtown
- Need for sidewalk improvements along Sycamore Road
- Shared bike lane or dedicated bike lane along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard
- Separate pedestrian and bike facilities in order to create safe mobility network
- Explore opportunities for recreational biking routes to and from Downtown
- Add banners and decorative flowers to existing streetlights on West Broad Street
- Evaluate and analyze potential transit options on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard

Identity/Vibrancy/Place-Making

Issues:

- Concerned about pricing of the ticketed events in The Bowl
- Concerned about the theater in E Center as it may compete with the Buford Theater and could be challenging to sell 400 tickets

- Alton Tucker Boulevard should be renamed to West Broad Street
- **Lack of urban parks and plazas in walking distance**
- Lack of large passive green space with walking trails
- Lost history associated with Buice School before its demolition

Needs/Opportunities:

- Need for more family-oriented activities and events
- In addition to the recreational Ice Rink event, Ice Hockey league could be established in coordination with City's Parks and Recreation Department
- Christmas parade as Downtown event
- **Need for more activities for youth**
- Pop-up gallery at E Center
- **Cohesive branding for the City**
- Preserve the history of Downtown
- Art display opportunity on the planned Sugar Loop greenway
- **Connect Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods through art walk and living wall**
- Build partnerships with various art institutes to expand presence of art

Profile of Respondents:

- 96% live within 5-mile of Sugar Hill
- 73% live in the City of Sugar Hill
- 44% living in Sugar Hill for over 10 years
- 92% own a single family house
- 63% never walk/bike/skate to Downtown
- 73% drive to work
- 56% between 18 - 45 year old
- 32% between 46 - 65 year old

Preserve One Thing



- Old/Dilapidated Buildings
- Buice School

Precedents for Downtown

- Restaurants
- Shopping
- Grocery
- Variety of Open Spaces

- Suwanee
- Duluth
- Avalon
- Greenville

Issue	Critical (%)	Major (%)	Minor (%)	Trend
Lack of housing options to meet all age groups and income levels	11% ↓	24% ↓	64% ↑	
Lack of open space and recreation amenities	14% ↓	53% ↑	33% +	
Aging and underutilized commercial properties	29% +	44% +	28% ↓	Underutilized
Increased traffic on existing roadways	35% ↑	44% +	21% ↓	Increased
Lack of transit and mobility options	21%	32%	47%	
Lack of bike infrastructure and facilities	21%	39%	40%	
Public safety	18%	36%	46%	
Loss of historic and natural resources	13% +	36%	51% +	
Lack of dining and shopping options	48% ↑	44% +	8% ↓	Lack of
Other (Please list below.)	12% ↓	12% ↓	76% ↑	

What is the impact to development in Downtown Sugar Hill over the next 5-10 years for each of the listed issues? (X) SUMMARY
sample size = from 145 to 202; total sample size = 204; 59 missing; 95% confidence level

- Retail/Commercial
- Mixed-Use Development
- Single Family Residential

- Local Chef-Driven Restaurants
- Boutique Shops
- Entertainment
- Craft Brewery/Brew Pub

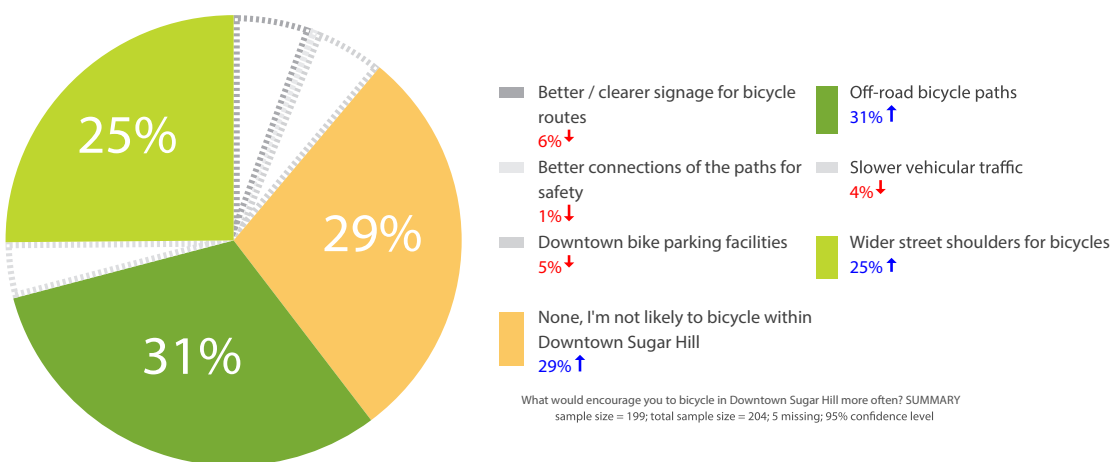
- Housing above Retail
- Townhomes
- Smaller Single Family (Cottages, Ranch)

- Level Creek Road
- Church Street
- Whitehead Road

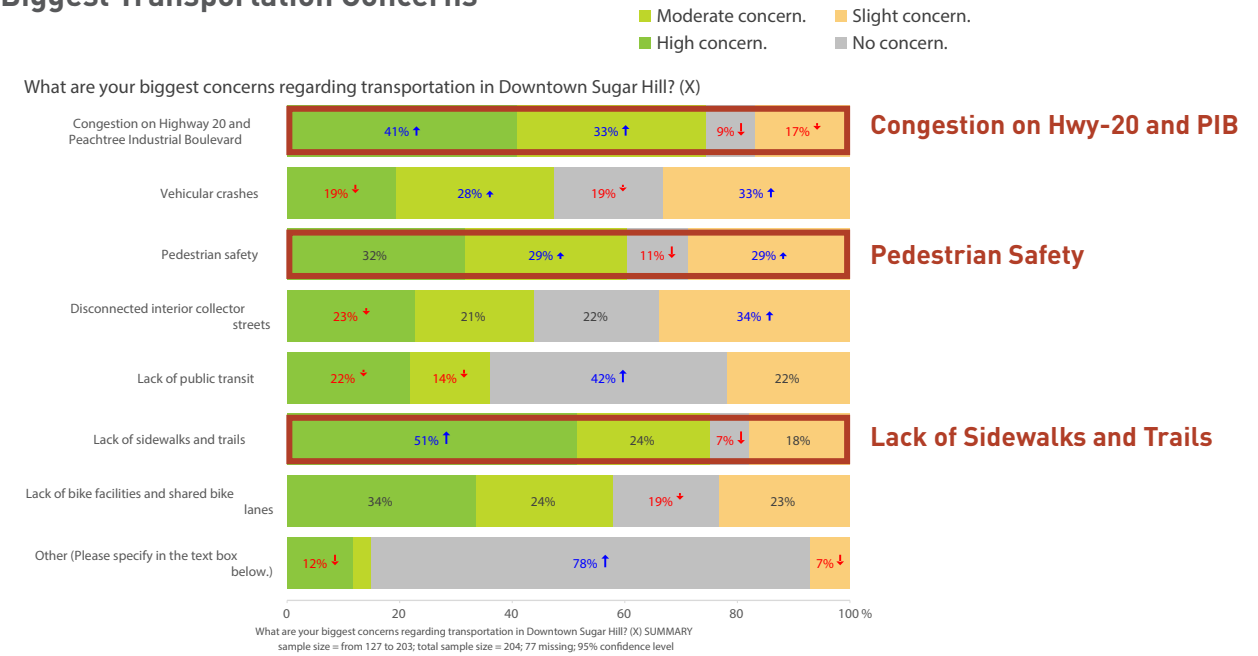
- Add pedestrian-activated signalized crosswalks
- Add pedestrian refuge islands
- Construct pedestrian bridge over the road

- More complete sidewalk network
- Wider sidewalks
- Outdoor/sidewalk dining

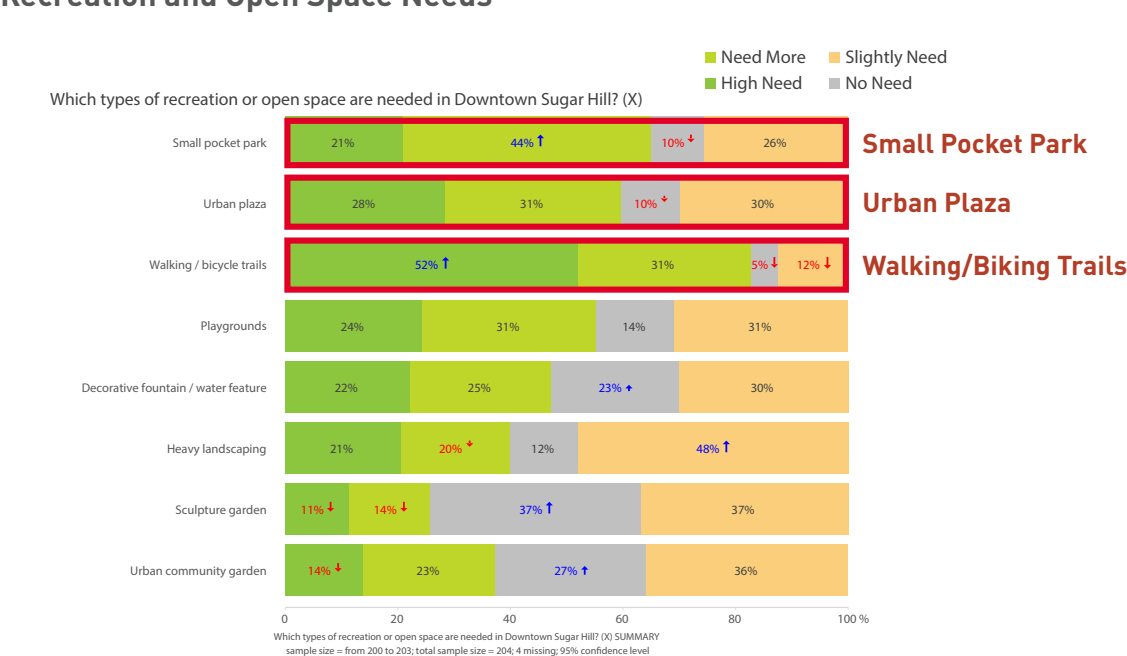
What would encourage you to bicycle in Downtown Sugar Hill more often?



Biggest Transportation Concerns



Recreation and Open Space Needs



2.3 MARKET POTENTIAL SUMMARY

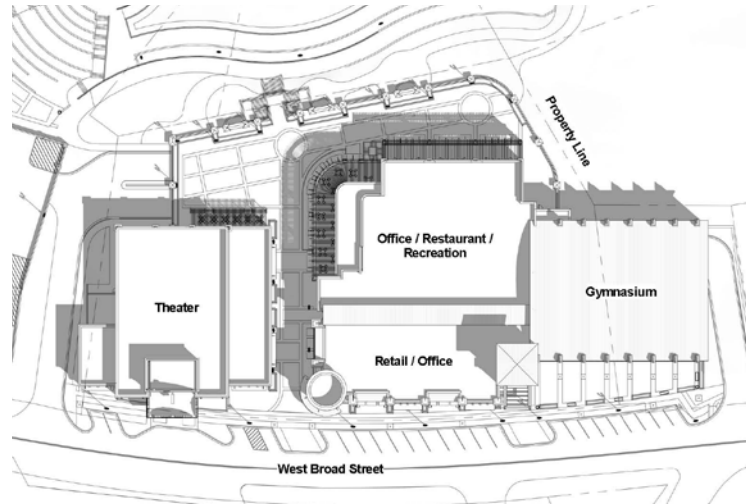
The market and real estate analysis has been part of several planning efforts in the past completed by the city of Sugar Hill, including the most recent Sugar Hill SR20 Corridor Study, Aspire Highway 20. A portion of the corridor study was part of the LCI area hence many findings applicable to the primary market area would be applicable to the future market demand in downtown. In addition to a refined demographic and market assessment for the Primary Market Area, the LCI study focused on potential housing, retail, and office demand in downtown over the next 10 years. The detailed analysis is included in the appendix section but the following summary includes the highlight of the market potential.

- The study area can expand the opportunity to become a mixed-use walkable node in Gwinnett County by capturing demand for “for-rent” residential, “for-sale” residential (single-family and attached residential), retail and office.
- “For-rent” residential: provide a mix of attached housing types and accessory dwelling units.
- “For-sale” residential: provide a mix of single-family, townhomes and other “missing middle” housing types
- Retail opportunities: grocery, pharmacy, and other store types to serve growing local populace
- Additional restaurants to serve both locals and visitors with a focus on creating vibrant and walkable places through outdoor dining and sidewalk cafe.
- Office opportunities: buildings in mixed-use setting targeting professional service companies such as doctors, lawyers, insurance agents, real estate agents, architects, engineers, banks, start-ups, etc.

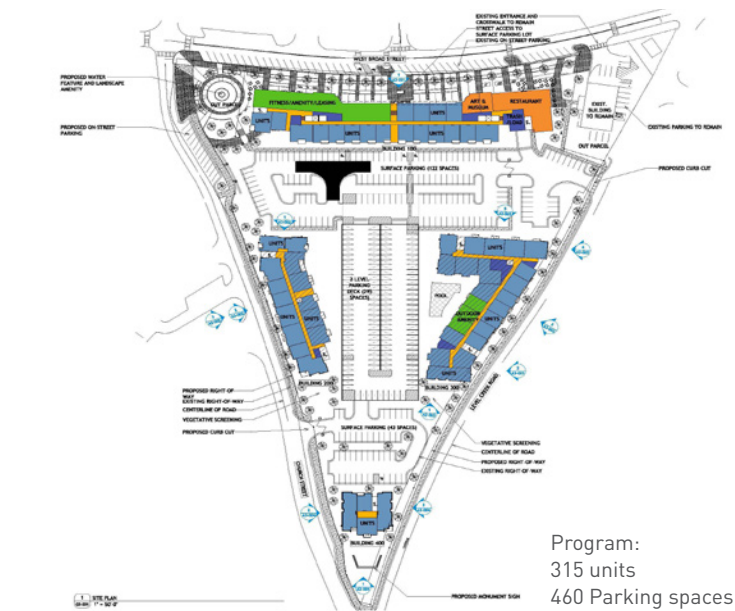
The above retail and office demand estimate is based on the potential market need based on the potential growth of critical mass over the next 10 years. The above estimated numbers do not include the proposed retail/commercial opportunities as part of the planned mixed-use projects in downtown. Between E Center and Broadstone, the total proposed retail space is about 49,000 SF.

Project	Retail	Office
E Center	+/-30,000 SF	15,000 SF
Broadstone	+/- 6,000 SF	

FIG. 2: RETAIL/OFFICE GROWTH FOR THE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT IN DOWNTOWN



E Center Site Plan, Under Construction
Source: City of Sugar Hill



Broadstone Alliance, Planned Mixed-Use Development
Source: City of Sugar Hill

Just the E Center alone will meet about 50% retail demand when completed in the Summer of 2018. With the construction of Broadstone, downtown will meet half the projected retail demand and a quarter of office demand. The future mixed-use projects in downtown core could accommodate office demand and any additional future commercial/retail space along with housing development in the growth areas. Downtown Sugar Hill will have to create a much larger and denser critical mass than the projected residential within 5-15 min walking area in order to successfully support the proposed retail opportunities.

In this regard, the master plan focus is to provide a variety of housing types between the dense downtown core and the single-family homes outside the LCI area. The new housing growth could offer “missing middle” typologies (townhomes, duplex, quadplex, multiplex, and accessory dwelling units)

to create a relatively denser community in order to build the critical mass in close proximity to the downtown core. Such typology could cater to smaller households with 1 or 2 people (almost 46% of the total City households) who currently do not have other options except single-family homes. As new construction home prices have consistently risen for both single-family and townhomes in the local market area, sales volumes have slowed. As new buyers with small households appear, the smaller footprint “missing middle” homes would be a great opportunity to introduce somewhat affordable options in walkable downtown.

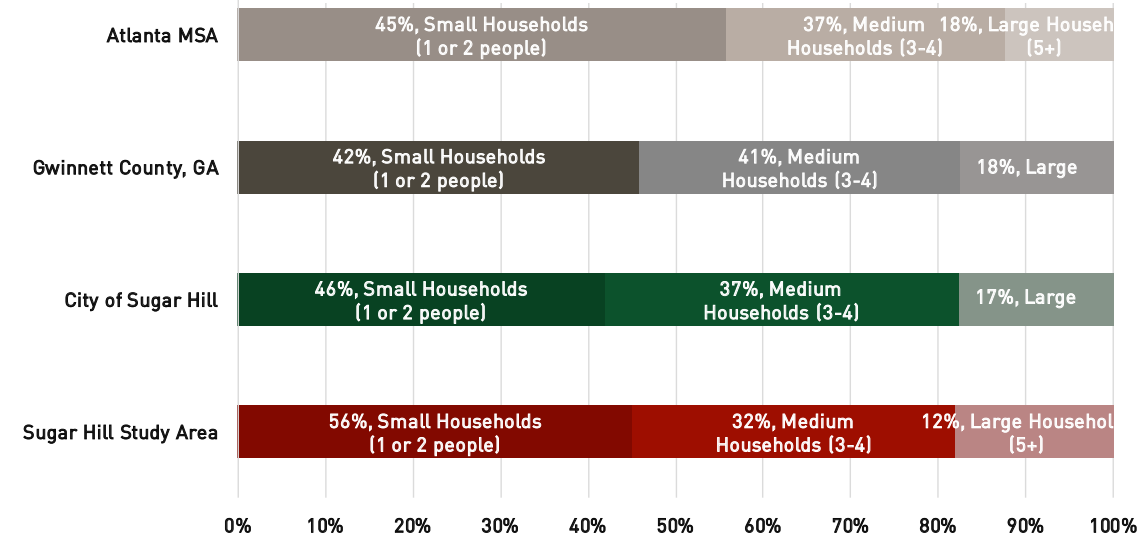


FIG. 3: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS (SOURCE: ENVIRONICS ANALYTICS)

	“Dry Goods” Retail	Food and Beverage Stores	Restaurants
New Sq. Ft. 2017-2027	25,000 – 29,000	11,000 – 15,000	23,000 – 27,000
TOTAL POTENTIAL NEW RETAIL SF: 60,000 – 70,000			
TOTAL POTENTIAL NEW OFFICE SF: 40,000 – 50,000			

FIG. 4: FUTURE RETAIL/OFFICE DEMAND

	Market Rate Rental: \$875+/month	For-Sale Single-Family: \$150K+	For-Sale Attached: \$150K+
New Units 2017-2027	875 - 925	150 - 200	160 - 210
TOTAL POTENTIAL NEW HOMES: 1,185 – 1,335			

FIG. 5: FUTURE RESIDENTIAL DEMAND