



Urban Redevelopment Plan

2020

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Norcross Urban Redevelopment Plan is intended to implement the vision and goals communicated by the City of Norcross 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan). The footprint of this Urban Redevelopment Plan encompasses the entirety of Norcross' city limits, but the most impactful analysis and recommendations – as it relates to redevelopment efforts – are focused on areas of the City with the highest levels of poverty and blight.

In conjunction with the adoption of this Urban Redevelopment Plan the City will be seeking Georgia Opportunity Zone status re-designation for specific parcels that are the most blighted and distressed. These parcels are located along major business/transportation corridors that are ripe for the creation of employment opportunities but are currently underdeveloped. Georgia Opportunity Zones are valid for ten years. Norcross's previous Georgia Opportunity Zone status expired on December 31, 2019. Therefore, the City is required to apply for re-designation. Georgia Opportunity Zones help bring significant job tax credit advantages to establishments located within the Opportunity Zone area and enhance the image of the City as a preferred location to do business. This Urban Redevelopment Plan, in concert with Georgia Opportunity Zone designation, will help lead to the goal of a revitalized, vibrant and sustainable community where both Norcross businesses and residents can live, work and play.

In addition, as the City of Norcross continues its economic and community development efforts, it will also seek out opportunities to collaborate with important local partners such as Gateway85 CID, Gwinnett County, Partnership Gwinnett, and property owners along its major corridors. Together, these efforts will encourage the transformation of Norcross' commercial corridors (much of which is underdeveloped) into more attractive and profitable places of business.

Consistency with Adopted Plans

In 2019 the City of Norcross adopted its 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a “roadmap” for the different visions and goals in each area of the City. It was developed through an extensive public planning process involving a wide variety of local business and community leaders, public officials and residents. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan also builds upon two previous LCI studies (completed in 2001 and 2008).

The 2040 Comprehensive Plan breaks the City into thirteen zones, or ‘Character Areas’ – each with their own visions, goals and key implementation actions. The plan has three main components: Community Vision; Needs and Opportunities; and a Community Work Program.

The *Community Vision* section lays out the future vision and goals that the community desires to achieve in text, maps and graphics.

The *Needs and Opportunities* section is an overview of Norcross today and includes changes since the last plan; this section also includes a list of priority needs and opportunities.

The *Community Work Program* section is a five-year work program of distinct activities, initiatives, programs and administrative systems that are recommended to implement the plan.

Collectively, the three main components of the Norcross 2040 Comprehensive Plan are intended to generate local pride and enthusiasm about the future of Norcross, communicate what is unique and important about the city, and provide an implementation program for achieving the Community Vision.

The Plan contains policies and strategies developed by the community to guide decision makers on the issues of growth and redevelopment. Those policies and strategies form the heart of the City of Norcross Urban Redevelopment Plan and are incorporated herein to provide for the maximum degree of consistency between this Urban Redevelopment Plan and other Norcross community plans.

As mentioned previously, the City of Norcross has participated in two LCI studies. The 2001 study centered on the downtown and was a key component to the growth of the City during the last few years. The 2008 study covered the City south of Buford Highway to Interstate 85. The information and concepts discussed in the LCIs have been incorporated into the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and brought into this Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Boundaries of the Redevelopment Area

The Redevelopment Area is equivalent to the corporate limits of the City of Norcross as of June 3, 2019. See Exhibit A in Appendix.

Negative Conditions within the Redevelopment Area

Pervasive Poverty, Underdevelopment, General Distress and Blight Criterion

Pervasive Poverty:

According to United States Census data, the poverty rate in the City of Norcross is 21.4%, which is well above the poverty rates in Gwinnett County (12.1%), the State of Georgia (16.9%) and the United States (14.6%).

In fact, according to State of Georgia Department of Community Affairs rules, four out of the five census block groups in Norcross qualify as “Areas Displaying Pervasive Poverty” because they have poverty levels of 15% or more (see Exhibit B in Appendix). This data highlights the need for proactive economic development

strategies to help spur development throughout the City.

Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-year Estimates, 2017

Underdevelopment:

The last two decades have been characterized by a significant amount of disinvestment and underdevelopment throughout the city as well as along the major traffic corridors, including Buford Highway, Jimmy Carter Boulevard, Beaver Ruin Road, Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, and the areas adjacent to Interstate 85. Like much of metro Atlanta, there was a large population boom starting in the mid-to-late 20th century through the first decade of the 2000s – and the population continues to rise. That population increase helped transform Norcross from a rural community to an area with a more dense, suburban feel.

As Norcross continued to build out, investors and developers began to seek newer, less expensive land development opportunities further north in metro Atlanta along the I-85 and Ga-400 spines. This focus on development in other areas has contributed to the loss of a significant number of investment and jobs in the greater Norcross area over the last two decades. Although some of those jobs have been replaced, they have been replaced by jobs with lower paying wages.

The economic stagnation has hit the retail sector particularly hard. This is evident by the increased presence of vacant properties and businesses along the commercial corridors and in the shopping plazas of Norcross and other nearby cities.

The City has implemented several strategies to counteract the loss of jobs and the decrease of property values. Efforts by the City have included the formation of a Downtown Development Authority; the creation of a Tax Allocation District; and adoption of a Unified Development Ordinance and zoning map featuring brand new zoning categories.

Although these efforts have led to an easier, more straightforward and clear development process, redevelopment of the area has been sporadic and inconsistent.

The following pages of this Urban Redevelopment Plan contain summaries of the underdevelopment conditions in each of the 13 Character Areas identified in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. There are six categories of underdevelopment conditions:

- Economic Underutilization of Developable Land
- Structural Age and Deterioration
- Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout
- Lack of Retail Market Appeal
- Lack of Rental Revenue Generation
- Underachievement as an Employment Center

Please note that each Character Area in Norcross is unique and ranges from having zero to all six of the various underdevelopment conditions.

As part of the redevelopment plan, the City wishes to re-energize the various employment centers, lower crime, raise the quality of life, create employment opportunities and spread prosperity. Towards that end the City has worked aggressively in its efforts to promote redevelopment. Many steps have been taken over the last several years to counteract the challenges facing the community. Measures to correct these challenges can be found in the corresponding noted pages of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Character Area 1: Atlantic/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (pp. 16-17. Comp Plan)

The Atlantic/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard area is one of the entrances to Norcross. It represents a major employment center that is focused on Jimmy Carter Boulevard and is characterized by light industrial and flex space properties.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: In the six years since the previous Comprehensive Plan was completed (Norcross 2034 Comp Plan), the Atlantic/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard Character Area has been completely built out, so there is no green space upon which to develop. However, there are a number of potential improvements that could be made to the buildings that have been developed in this area, which will be discussed in the following sections.

Structural Age and Deterioration: The majority of the commercial buildings in this Character Area were constructed between 1970 and 1984 and have experienced only minor improvements since that time. Consequently, they are somewhat out of date and not built to the most modern standards.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: The commercial centers and freestanding structures in this area are inefficient with respect to site use and density. Most are considered unattractive with respect to current standards and obsolete with respect to utilization.

Character Area 2: Medlock/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard (pp. 18-19. Comp Plan)

Oriented along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, the Medlock/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard Character Area is a mix of professional and institutional uses that doubles as a boundary along Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, the City of Peachtree Corners and adjoining residential areas. This is also the location of the new Paul Duke STEM high school.

Structural Age and Deterioration: There has been some recent demolition of older warehouse/distribution buildings along this corridor in favor of newer buildings as well as relatively new retail construction. However, there is still a large presence of commercial buildings in this area that were constructed between 1973 and 1986 that have experienced only minor improvements since that time. Consequently, much of the building stock is out of date and has become somewhat dilapidated.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: The commercial centers, office buildings and freestanding structures in this area are inefficient with respect to site use and density. Most are considered unattractive with respect to current standards and obsolete with respect to consumer market appeal. There is little inter-parcel access and connectivity between properties is limited.

Character Area 3: Pinckneyville (pp. 20-21, Comp Plan)

Norcross High School is the main hub of this small activity center that contains a mix of residential, institutional, and small scale commercial and office uses.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: There are several properties within this Character Area that are either older, unutilized/vacant or have operations that feature higher intensity, more industrial land uses that do not complement the newer residential developments nor the institutional establishments that constitute the area.

Structural Age and Deterioration: The few commercial properties in this Character Area were built between 1963 and 1997, with the majority of them having been constructed in the 1980s. These unrenovated buildings have become undesirable to most prospective buyers and lessees.

Character Area 4: North Peachtree Street Neighborhoods (pp. 22-23, Comp Plan)

This area of Norcross is one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City and features a large concentration of historic homes. This area has been somewhat protected from the economic challenges that have affected areas which are more commercial in nature. It remains a strong, stable residential location in Norcross.

Character Area 5: Hopewell Woods (pp. 24-25, Comp Plan)

The Hopewell Woods Character Area is also one of the oldest neighborhoods in the City. The majority of properties in this area are residential and institutional in nature, along with one large single-tenant office building. The housing stock in Hopewell Woods may be one of the most diverse in Norcross, featuring everything from single family homes with large acreage to new construction single family homes, townhomes as well as a significant amount of multifamily.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: Due to the abundance of small and aged single family homes on large properties, there is a significant amount of undeveloped greenspace. A considerable proportion of developable land within the area is underutilized with respect to potential density and type of development (and resulting market and taxable values).

Structural Age and Deterioration: The majority of homes and buildings were constructed before 1950 (including two locations of public housing units spread across nearly seven acres). These homes have experienced only minor improvements since that time. Consequently, they are out of date and have

become somewhat dilapidated over the years.

Character Area 6: Buford Highway/Jimmy Carter Boulevard Activity Center (pp. 26-27, Comp Plan)

The Buford Highway/Jimmy Carter Boulevard Activity Center is located on the southern end of Buford Highway at the city limits. This Character Area represents a transition between more intense uses near the intersection of Buford Highway and Jimmy Carter Boulevard and the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: A significant proportion of developable land within the area is underutilized with respect to potential density, type of development and/or resulting market and taxable values.

Structural Age and Deterioration: Although there have been some renovations to certain properties, the majority of the retail and commercial buildings (constructed in the 1970s and 1980s) have experienced only minor improvements. Consequently, some are out of date and have become somewhat dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: The commercial centers and freestanding structures in this area are inefficient with respect to site use and density. Most are considered unattractive with respect to current retailer standards and obsolete with respect to consumer market appeal. Parking is inefficient, and store frontage and signage are below current market standards.

Lack of Retail Market Appeal: Despite being in a high-traffic corridor the vast majority of retail tenants in this area do not have the brand recognition, product offerings, marketing capacity, pricing, merchandising or basic critical mass to appeal to the increasingly affluent potential customer within either the primary or secondary retail markets. This is reflected in the relatively low asking rents throughout the Character Area.

Lack of Rental Revenue Generation: Commercial rental rates in the area are significantly below those achieved in newer developments.

Underachievement as an Employment Center: There are relatively few professional or business services (and a lack of variety of those services) offered in the area. Retail and service industry employment is constrained by the lack of competitive retail offerings and restaurants.

Character Area 7: Town Center (pp. 28-29, Comp Plan)

This area represents the civic heart of the community and offers a variety of dining and shopping options. City Hall as well as the historic downtown are both located

in this Character Area. It has been the centerpiece of recent redevelopment efforts.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: Although there have been efforts over the past two years to upgrade the developable land in the area through residential and institutional projects, a significant portion of developable land within the area remains underutilized with respect to potential density, type of development and/or resulting market and taxable values. The City does own some land in this Character Area, which is an advantage for directing development towards desirable projects and outcomes.

Structural Age and Deterioration: A majority of the retail buildings and homes in this Character Area were constructed between 1885 and the 1950s and have experienced only minor improvements since that time. Consequently, they are out of date and have become somewhat dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: Most of the commercial centers and freestanding structures in this area are inefficient with respect to site use and density. While many have been rehabilitated, some are still considered unattractive with respect to current retailer standards and obsolete with respect to consumer market appeal. Parking is inefficient, and store frontage and signage are below current market standards and design.

Lack of Retail Market Appeal: As reflected in lower than average asking rents and sales, retail tenants within the area do not have the brand recognition, product offerings, marketing capacity, pricing, merchandising or basic critical mass to appeal to the increasingly affluent potential customer within either the primary or secondary retail markets.

Lack of Rental Revenue Generation: Commercial rental rates in the area are significantly below those achieved in newer developments.

Underachievement as an Employment Center: There is a lack of variety of professional and business services offered in the area – particularly along the Buford Highway corridor, which has a high proportion of used car dealerships and auto mechanic shops. Retail and service industry employment is constrained by the lack of competitive offerings. Although lunch patrons have increased recently due to an increase of residents, some restaurants in the Town Center Character Area have failed to maximize their respective lunchtime crowds. This is likely due to the low daytime employee population in the immediate area.

Character Area 8: Langford Road Industrial Center (p. 30, Comp Plan)

The Langford Road Industrial Center represents another hub of mostly industrial warehousing and distribution-focused companies. It is located on the northern end of Buford Highway at the city limits.

Structural Age and Deterioration: The majority of the retail and commercial buildings in this area were constructed between 1960 and 1990 with no new construction since 2007 and only minor improvements made since then. Consequently, most are out of date and have become somewhat dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: The commercial centers and freestanding structures in this area are inefficient with respect to site use and density, particularly among the aging Class C industrial warehouse and distribution buildings along Cole Court. Most are considered unattractive with respect to current industrial standards and obsolete with respect to end-user appeal. In addition, the area is not pedestrian friendly. This character area is very close to the downtown core, so an improvement of pedestrian connectivity here would be a positive change.

Character Area 9: Summerour (p. 31, Comp Plan)

The Summerour area of Norcross is characterized by a dual mix of institutional and residential uses. Baldwin Elementary School and Summerour Middle School are both at the heart of this Character Area.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: A good amount of the developable land along Beaver Ruin Road could be characterized as underutilized with respect to potential density, commercial retail/services development and/or resulting market and taxable values.

Structural Age and Deterioration: The majority of the retail buildings and apartments were constructed between the 1970s and 1980s and have experienced only minor renovations or improvements since that time. Consequently, they are out of date and have become somewhat dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Lack of Rental Revenue Generation: Commercial rental rates in the area, as well as apartment rental rates in particular, are significantly below those achieved in newer developments.

Underachievement as an Employment Center: There are relatively few retail, professional or business services offered in the area, particularly along the main access road (Beaver Ruin Rd).

Character Area 10: South Cemetery Street (p. 32, Comp Plan)

The South Cemetery Street Character Area is populated by a concentration of light industrial as well as heavier commercial uses, including automobile and truck-related establishments.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: A significant proportion of developable land within the area is underutilized with respect to potential density, type of development and/or resulting market and taxable values.

Structural Age and Deterioration: The vast majority of the buildings in this area are commercial warehouses constructed in the 1980s. There are also a number of converted residential structures. A few of the buildings date back to the 1950s and there is one building as old as 1930. Consequently, most are out of date and have become quite dilapidated as a result of the passage of time and frequent use.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: Most of the commercial freestanding structures in this area are considered unattractive and not up to modern industrial standards.

Character Area 11: Jimmy Carter Boulevard/North Norcross Tucker Activity Ctr (p. 33, Comp Plan)

About 80 percent of the buildings in this area are part of a nearly 70-acre light industrial business park. Warehousing and distribution operations dominate the Character Area, with the remaining commercial space split between restaurants, retail, two extended stay hotels and a small selection of professional and business services establishments.

Structural Age and Deterioration: Nearly all of the buildings in the area were built in the 1980s and are still functional – However, the buildings that house the restaurant, retail and professional/business service establishments appear to be in disrepair, with structural as well as aesthetic issues that need to be addressed.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: None of the commercial warehousing and distribution buildings in this area have clear heights higher than 22 feet. The standard clear height for modern industrial buildings is at least 24 feet. Thus, the industrial buildings in this Character Area are inefficient with respect to site use and obsolete with respect to the highest industry standards. Parking and loading areas are also inefficient.

Lack of Retail Market Appeal: The retail tenants in this area do not have the brand recognition, product offerings, marketing capacity, pricing, merchandising or basic critical mass to appeal to the increasingly affluent potential customer within either the primary or secondary retail markets.

Character Area 12: South Norcross Neighborhoods (pp. 34-35, Comp Plan)

The South Norcross Neighborhoods Character Area is a collection of residential, single family neighborhoods that was first developed more than 50 years ago. A culturally diverse community, many of the residents in this area help support the

employment in and around the greater Norcross region. Much of this area was annexed into the city over the last 15 years and since then has experienced an increase in crime as well as a decrease in home values. In addition, many owner-occupied homes have turned into rental properties. The City, however, has made a concerted effort over the past several years to clean up the neighborhoods through code enforcement efforts and proactive policing.

Character Area 13: I-85 Activity Center (pp. 36-37, Comp Plan)

The I-85 Activity Center is a growing regional employment center that parallels the highly-trafficked Interstate-85 corridor. A diverse mix of buildings and businesses populate this area, with the majority being industrial and flex space, followed by a sizeable amount of office and retail space.

Economic Underutilization of Developable Land: A small proportion of developable land within the area is underutilized with respect to potential density, type of development and/or resulting market and taxable values. For example, there are a number of churches that occupy former warehouse space and two extended stay hotels located on large pieces of land that could be utilized for different uses.

Inefficient and Obsolete Commercial Design and Layout: A majority of the commercial buildings in this area were constructed in the 1980s. In addition, a significant amount of these buildings are lower-quality Class C buildings that have been leased to end-users whose operations are not the highest and best use for the space (e.g. churches occupying office or flex industrial space). Many of the commercial spaces in this area are considered unattractive with respect to current industrial and office standards.

Lack of Rental Revenue Generation: Commercial rental rates in the area are significantly below those achieved in newer developments.

General Distress and Blight Criterion:

Despite experiencing the longest economic expansion in United States history, up until the recent coronavirus-led economic downturn many cities and towns were still making attempts to fully capitalize on the positive momentum created by that expansion.

More specifically, the emergence and explosive growth of e-commerce over the last five years – and subsequent collapse of the nation’s brick-and-mortar retail sector as we knew it – has led to hundreds of thousands of job losses and a proliferation of empty shopping centers and storefronts.

The City of Norcross was not spared from this downturn and still has its fair share of struggling strip centers and aging shopping plazas. Many of these commercial properties are along the main corridors of the City and some of those with the

worst conditions are in and around the downtown core.

These conditions, combined with a noticeable increase of aging, obsolete buildings over the past several years as well as the inability of property owners to obtain rents equal to or higher than average rents in the region, illustrate the concerning levels of distress and blight in the City of Norcross.

Community’s Land Use Objectives

This Urban Redevelopment Plan is consistent with the land use objectives of Norcross. Existing land uses in the redevelopment areas consist of a combination of commercial (office, industrial, retail, multifamily), residential (single family, duplex, triplex, quadplex) and mixed-use. The City Zoning Ordinance categorizes land uses into generalized categories.

Zoning

The redevelopment area is comprised of 16 different zoning districts and has been illustrated via map (see Exhibit A in Appendix). The different zoning districts are:

- R100 Single Family Residence
- R75 Single Family Residence
- R60 Single Family Residence
- RTH Townhome Residence
- RD Residential Duplex District
- PRD Planned Residence District
- OI Office-Institutional
- C1 Neighborhood Business
- C2 General Business
- HX Historic Mixed-use
- NX Neighborhood Mixed-use
- CAR Commercial Auto Related Business
- CX Commercial Mixed-use
- BH Buford Highway
- M1 Light Industry
- M2 Heavy Industry

Description of Parcels to be Acquired

The City of Norcross Urban Redevelopment Plan does not require any parcels to be acquired by the city at this time. If circumstances should change such that property acquisition either becomes a probability, is desired, or is necessary, the plan will be amended to reflect these changes.

Structures to be Demolished or Rehabilitated

There are no structures anticipated to be demolished. The plan will be updated in the event any changes occur in future actions.

Plan to Leverage Private Resources for Redevelopment

State of Georgia Opportunity Zones

The City of Norcross has identified different resources it can utilize to encourage and stimulate redevelopment in targeted areas as well as throughout the City. One of these resources is the State of Georgia's Opportunity Zone Program. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs manages this program and, through an application process, decides which parcels within a particular municipality are approved to be designated with Opportunity Zone status.

The program is intended to assist local governments in the redevelopment and revitalization of older commercial and industrial areas in communities that are adjacent to one or more contiguous census block groups with a poverty rate of 15 percent or higher.

New or existing businesses located in a Georgia State Opportunity Zone property that create two or more jobs in a calendar year can receive a tax credit of up to \$3,500 per new Georgia job. Credits can be used toward income tax liability and state payroll withholding.

State Opportunity Zone properties in Georgia have ten-year horizons. The previous ten-year period for Norcross Opportunity Zone properties ended on December 31, 2019. Upon adoption of this Urban Redevelopment Plan, the City of Norcross will work towards re-designating certain parcels along its commercial corridors with official State Opportunity status. Passing an official Urban Redevelopment Plan is an important factor in the successful establishment of State Opportunity Zone properties.

Federal Opportunity Zones

Norcross will also be looking to take advantage of the Federal Opportunity Zone program. Created by the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, Federal Opportunity Zones are tools intended to encourage economic development and job creation in distressed communities around the country. As a result of this measure investors can receive substantial tax benefits if they build projects in these areas.

The program allows investors to defer tax on any of their capital gains from previously invested money if that money is invested through a Qualified Opportunity Fund (an investment vehicle set up for the sole purpose of investing in properties located in Federal Opportunity Zones).

Community Improvement Districts (CIDs)

Norcross is an active participant in the Gateway85 Community Improvement District and one of its City Councilmen is a Board Member of the CID. Its borders overlap approximately half of the City. The efforts of the City and CID have assisted in helping to reduce crime, clean up commercial areas, as well as enhancing the built environment through strategies that revolve around traffic and landscaping improvements.

Regional Economic Development Partners

The City of Norcross plans to take advantage of the many local organizations in economic development such as Partnership Gwinnett, a public-private initiative dedicated to bringing new jobs and capital investment to Gwinnett County. They work with Gwinnett cities as well as local partners to attract and retain jobs, cultivate capital investment, support educational institutions, foster workforce development, and contribute to the quality of life in the County.

Strategy for Relocating Displaced Residents

Norcross has determined that a relocation strategy is not necessary at this time because the city is focusing on targeting unoccupied, blighted or underdeveloped commercial areas where the relocation of residents is not a relevant issue. Should the need arise and the displacement of residents become necessary in the future, the Plan shall be amended to include a relocation plan and strategy for any residents who may potentially be affected.

Covenants and Restrictions to be placed on Properties

No covenants or restrictions will be placed on properties at this time.

Needed Public Infrastructure

Public water and power are readily available throughout the target area.

Strategy for Implementing the Plan

Upon adoption by the Norcross City Council, the City of Norcross will be the implementing entity for the Urban Redevelopment Plan.

Implementation Schedule

Public Hearing	Spring 2020
Adoption of Urban Redevelopment Plan	Spring 2020
Establish State Opportunity Zone	Winter 2020
Promote and Offer incentive packages for new businesses	2021

Appendix

Exhibit A (Norcross City Limits)

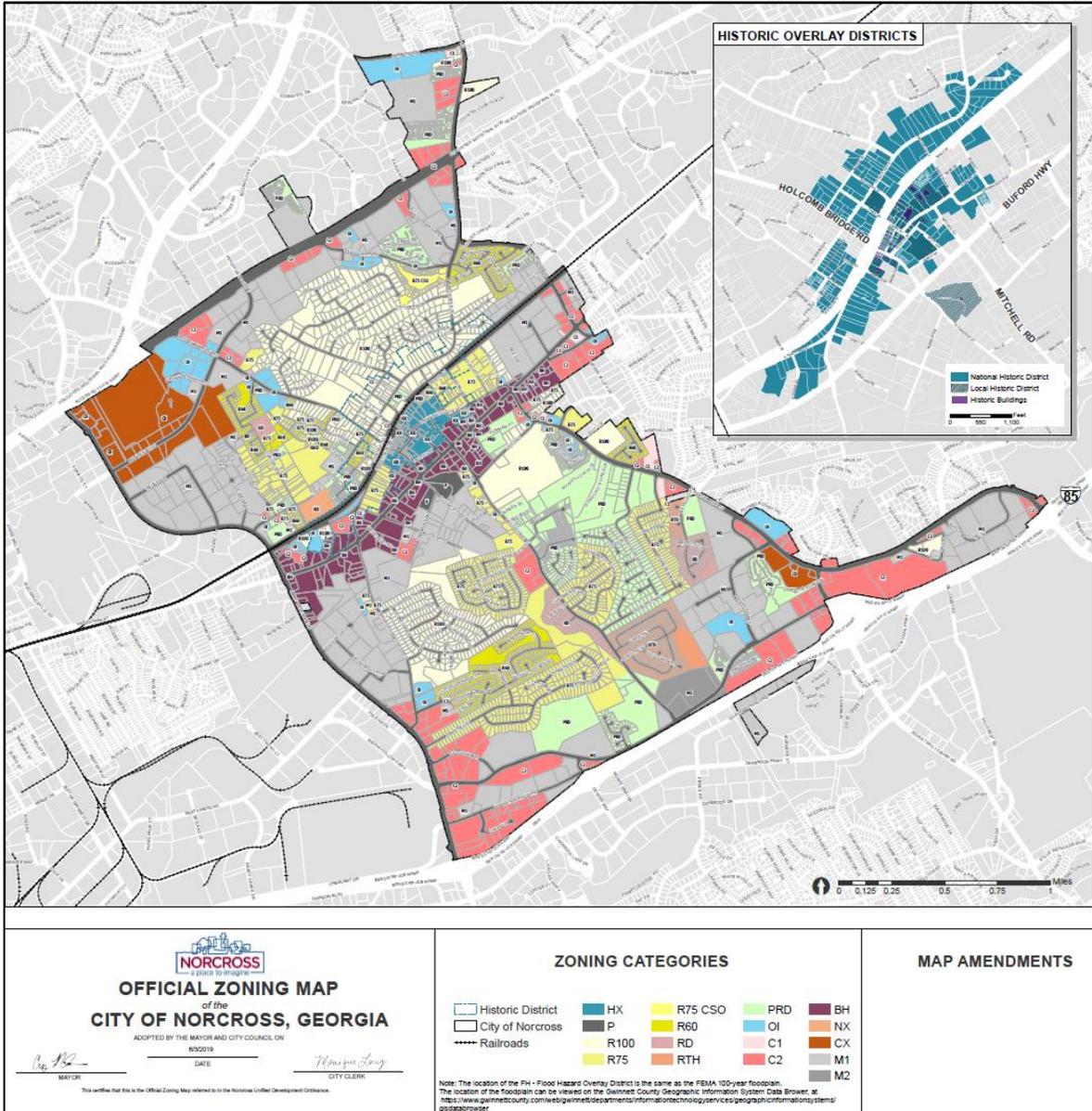
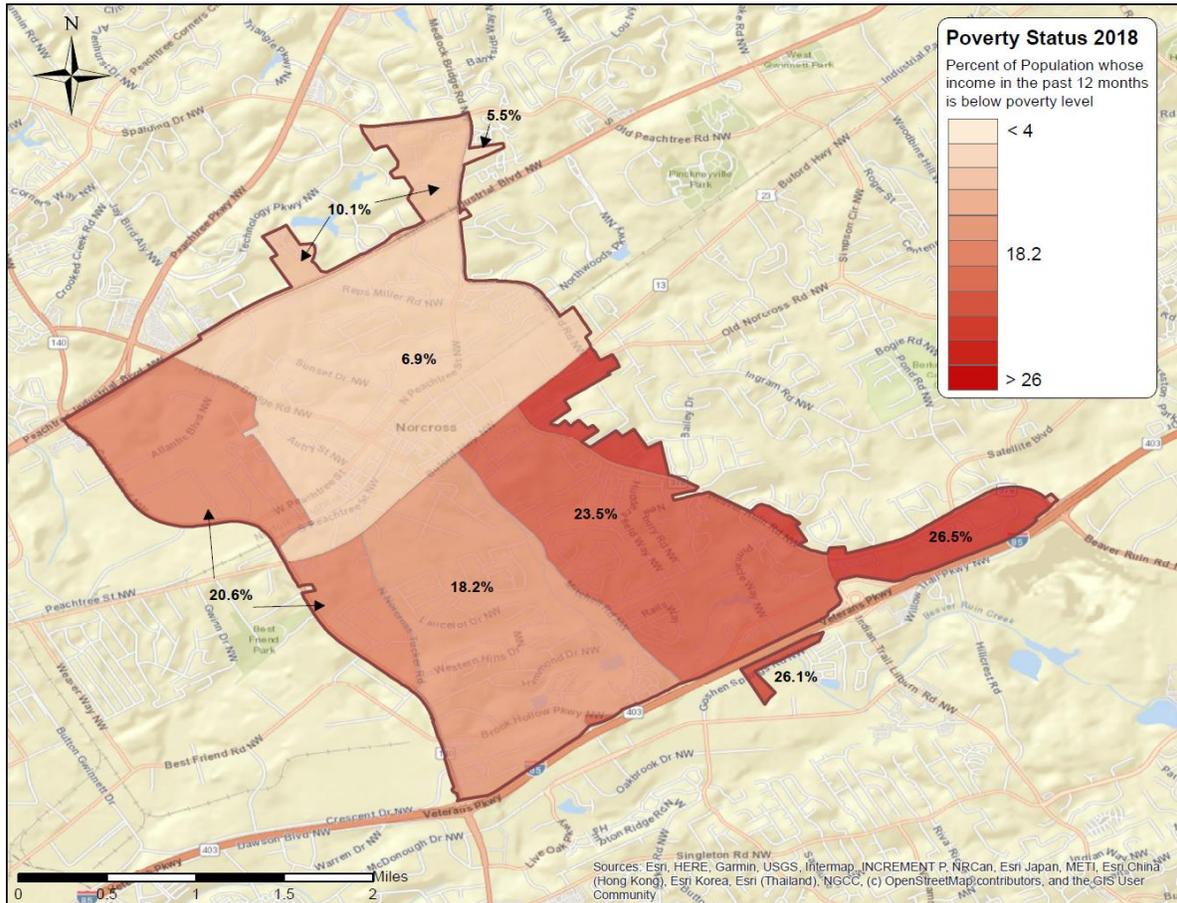


Exhibit B (Norcross Poverty Map)



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