

# 4 Needs & Opportunities

The needs and opportunities are those that the City should pursue in the 20 year planning horizon. Needs and opportunities work hand-in-hand with one another. Needs are identified as a condition of something that is required or wanted while opportunities are defined as a chance for progress or advancement. The Comprehensive Plan 2034 document identified needs and opportunities which are unique to Brookhaven. These needs and opportunities have been modified in this update based on items identified by staff as completed [see Appendix G Report of Accomplishments (2014-2019)] as well as input from the Planning Commission/Steering Committee, comments received during the community involvement meetings, and recommendations from the public at large.



This section explains each need and opportunity and initiates discussion of potential strategies to address them. Needs and opportunities are divided into the following focus areas:

- Land Use
- Community Facilities and Resources
- Economic Development
- Population
- Housing

The Community Work Program in Appendix B identifies specific actions that are recommended for the City to undertake to address each need and opportunity.

Figure 4-1: Needs and Opportunities

# 4.1 Land Use

In the next several years, Brookhaven will continue to face pressure for infill development within its single family residential neighborhoods and for redevelopment along its major roads and within its activity centers. Brookhaven is well positioned to be the beneficiary of positive of public and private investments. Ensuring that the City has the right regulations and incentives in place to preserve neighborhoods while growing compatible mixed-use activity centers of varying intensities is of paramount importance. Land use policies and initiatives should facilitate active streets, healthy living, and a sustainable economy that balances retail and service uses with additional office space. These priorities reflect a community-wide perspective; priorities by unique areas of the city are identified in the Character Area Map.

## PRIORITIES

### 1.1. Need: Further Brookhaven as a walkable and bikeable community

As the City experiences redevelopment and growth, public and private actions should further Brookhaven as a walkable and bikeable place. Increasing activity in the surrounding regional activity nodes such as Perimeter Center, the Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta campus, Executive Park, and the Emory Medical Center (Pill Hill) will bring additional people to and through the area. Furthering alternative modes of getting around will help preserve quality of life and traffic congestion as these and other areas grow. This includes prioritizing funding for networks of active transportation facilities, such as sidewalks and bikeways, to connect the community to important city nodes.

### 1.2. Need: Review tree ordinance (ensure appropriate protection)

A full and lush tree canopy is a defining characteristic of the City of Brookhaven. The tree ordinance and associated landscaping requirements play an important role in preserving and enhancing the tree canopy in a community. The City should review the existing ordinances to ensure the right level of preservation is occurring. Public investments in trees in the City’s parks and other public spaces can also support this effort.



*New sidewalk and street infrastructure along Buford Highway*

### 1.3. Need: Address visual clutter in the community

The character of the City of Brookhaven is largely what one views as along the street while driving. Much of this visual clutter is likely a result of nonconforming uses or signs that can be phased out over time through targeted and increased code enforcement, adjustments in the City’s sign ordinance, placement of utilities underground, and the development of design guidelines for certain corridors in the city.

### 1.4. Need: Further health and exercise in the community through supportive infrastructure and design

The way our communities are designed directly impact our long term health. There are various strategies that can be taken to better achieve a healthy community. This includes allowing for uses like community gardens and farmers markets as well as ensuring access to park space within a

reasonable distance of all residential areas and making walking and biking a viable alternative for trips via trails, etc.

**1.5. Need: Continue planning efforts that refine and implement the vision and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan 2034 document and the Character Area Study**

The city should continuously work to implement the ideas expressed by the community during its previous planning efforts by completing further studies of targeted areas and amending codes and ordinances as needed to ensure recommended actions are executed.

**1.6. Opportunity: Install a bicycle and pedestrian bridge connection through the Brookhaven MARTA station across Peachtree Road**

This idea should be approached with MARTA as it pursues development of its parking lots as part of the Transit Oriented Development initiative on its underdeveloped property at the station. This should also be considered as improvements are made along Peachtree Road at North Druid Hills

Road and the City further considers and plans for a permanent location for its civic and government center.



*Areas still in need of additional walking and biking infrastructure*



*Existing infill housing in the Ashford Park Neighborhood*



*New mixed-use development in Brookhaven Town Center*

## 4.2 Community Facilities & Resources

While it is a developed area, Brookhaven is in its youth as a city and, as such, is in the early phases of establishing a strong foundation of the facilities and resources that it has in place. Areas that are a top priority to the community in terms of both needs and opportunities include transparency, preserving the tree canopy and the city's other natural resources, and addressing utility needs, as further described by each of the items below.

### PRIORITIES

#### 2.1. Need: Preserve the city's tree canopy

The city's tree canopy is one of the aspects of Brookhaven that sets it apart as a neighborhood-centric area within a growing urban context. The opportunities for development and redevelopment bring with it the opportunity to preserve the existing tree canopy while enhancing it with new plantings at previously developed sites. Tree protection should extend from residential to commercial areas and be addressed within both the public realm and private spaces of the city.



*Fernwood Park utilizes the creek system as a community park*

#### 2.2. Need: Stormwater management - evaluate existing program to ensure sufficient capacity to meet needs

As redevelopment and neighborhood development occurs in the city, there will be an increase in impervious surfaces, which will call for additional stormwater management needs. Brookhaven took over management of the stormwater system when it became a city and therefore will be responsible for upgrades.

#### 2.3. Need: Identify infrastructure and utility capacity improvements (water and sanitary sewer) needed to support Future Land Use Plan

Infrastructure and utility capacity are a vital need to facilitate desired development and redevelopment in a community. The City of Brookhaven's water and sewer services are provided and improved by DeKalb County. A full inventory of the city's water and sewer capacity has not been completed since Brookhaven became a city.

#### 2.4. Need: Leverage city's creek system for greater access by community, while protecting their long-term health and viability

North Fork Peachtree Creek and Nancy Creek are two of Brookhaven's most cherished natural resources. The vision for the long term is to make these areas more accessible via development of trail networks and appropriate protections to ensure the creeks are healthy and sufficiently buffered from area development.

#### 2.5. Need: Establish a Town Center

Although establishing a Town Center will likely occur in the mid to long term period, it is essential that in the short term the city identifies a more detailed strategy for what the town center contains, including government offices, civic space, and other community amenities that are desired by the community as well as how the center will interact with private development.

**2.6. Opportunity: Improve coordination with DeKalb County Schools or consider development of a charter school system**

Schools play a fundamental role in the success and health of a community. Quality schools provide a desirable place to live and raise a family and can also provide supplemental facilities for community events and activities. There is ongoing concern in the Brookhaven community about the quality of the public schools in Brookhaven and the degree by which the DeKalb County Schools are adequately planning for the school needs of the population.

**2.7. Need: Document and protect historic resources**

Brookhaven is a well-established community with a variety of historic structures and districts, some of which were identified by community members

and stakeholders during the visioning process. Currently there is no local identification system or local policy in place to protect these resources being removed or altered. The City should complete a historic resources survey and identify ways to protect and preserve these resources in the future.

**2.8. Need: Ensure access to emergency services**

Safety and access to emergency services is an important role of local government. Although Brookhaven has its own Police Department, it still relies on DeKalb County for fire and related services as well as coordination with other local emergency services in cases where the emergency is too large or difficult to be accessed by Brookhaven police.

## 4.3 Economic Development

Needs and opportunities for the economic development component are divided into three groupings:

- **Community Product Enhancements** - Brookhaven, itself, serves as a product to market to prospective residents, employees, and businesses. The community product that the implementation of this Comprehensive Plan will further develop will be instrumental in attracting and retaining future and existing investors. These needs may be used as tools to expose potential investors and residents to the Brookhaven way of life.
- **Economic Opportunities** - This section outlines how the City should move forward to ensure it continues to attract well-matched businesses with quality jobs and facilitate growth of local start-ups.
- **Collaboration and Communication** - The City can position itself as a leader among city programs by clearly defining its role early and establishing how it will share roles with its partners to reduce redundancy and maximize impact. This section outlines how the City can work with its partners for effective collaboration.

### COMMUNITY PRODUCT ENHANCEMENTS

#### 3.1. Opportunity: Continue to enhance, diversify, and attract business establishments and unique restaurants

According to public input collected, the diverse restaurant scene in Brookhaven, particularly those along the Buford Highway Corridor, is an important part of its community fiber. Continuing to enhance and diversify Brookhaven's business establishments and unique restaurants will further Brookhaven as a well-rounded community and welcoming business environment that better serves its residents and business community.

#### 3.2. Opportunity: Identify opportunities for community festivals and events

Although Brookhaven is not as racially diverse as the Atlanta metro and the state, the city is significantly ethnically diverse, with Hispanics making up a quarter of its population. Brookhaven's cultural diversity is one of its prized assets and should be celebrated. Events that bring the community together to highlight various cultures, neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations are informative to citizens wanting to know more about their city, foster appreciation of distinctive groups represented in the city, and encourage community pride which supports talent retention, a key goal of economic development.

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

#### 3.3. Opportunity: Use the Buford Highway Economic Development Strategy to drive development of a citywide Economic Development Strategy

As a new city, Brookhaven has the opportunity to establish a strong foundation that can support many years of solid economic development initiatives. A holistic economic development strategy addresses many of Brookhaven's economic development needs including bringing all partners to the table to build consensus, fleshing out the city's economic development goals, the business sectors the City and its partners want to grow, and determining implementation steps.

#### 3.4. Opportunity: Establish additional incentives to encourage sustainable development in the city

Competitive incentives are utilized in many cities, regions, and states to promote targeted growth and development. Once Brookhaven's economic development goals are established, the City should then evaluate which incentives feasibly support these goals and pursue steps to actualize them (opportunity zones, tax allocation districts, etc.).

#### 3.5. Opportunity: Identify ways to regularly engage business community in feedback on city needs and concerns and vice versa

Business retention and expansion (BRE) is a vital component of economic development. The degree to which local government engages with

existing businesses through formal outreach varies greatly. It is important for the City and partners to coordinate their efforts and establish clear roles across economic development initiatives, including BRE, understanding that effective economic development is achieved through public private partnerships.

**3.6. Need: Leverage the Brookhaven MARTA station to encourage further desirable development along the Peachtree Corridor**

The Brookhaven MARTA station is a key asset for the community's development, and it also has the potential to be a top economic development asset. As the City moves forward with its planning and design efforts around the MARTA station, it will need to be proactive in coordinating with MARTA and the ARC to ensure that the firms pursued and attracted are consistent with business sectors in line with the City's economic development goals.

**COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**3.7. Need: Streamline information accessibility between economic development partners and for site selectors and prospective companies**

A city's website, along with websites of other economic development partners, is often the front door to the community – a first impression to site selectors, prospective companies, and future residents. The City's website can also help build, shape and support relationships with internal constituents. The City should create an

economic development component to its website that is navigable, visually appealing, and visibly interconnected to other websites.

**3.8. Need: Ensure a well-rounded view of the city through coordinated data analysis**

A vital piece to economic development is data analysis: understanding the community's economic dynamics and quickly responding to inquiries. The City must position itself as its own expert, aware and ready to share information about its assets and opportunities, and cognizant of and addressing any perceived or real challenges. The City needs to be able to provide the most recent data available for a variety of indicators, which can be displayed on its economic development online portal.

**3.9. Need: Optimize efforts and resources at county and regional levels**

Organizations such as the DeKalb County Development Authority, DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, and DeKalb Workforce Development at the county level and the numerous regional and state organizations, including but not limited to the Atlanta Regional Commission, Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Georgia Department of Economic Development, and Georgia Department of Community Affairs have goals that benefit local areas, resources that Brookhaven may be able to tap into, and programs and access to opportunities that the City may leverage.

## 4.4 Population (Community Building)

As a young city, Brookhaven is at a vital point for building a true sense of community and connectedness among its diverse neighborhoods and populations. Part of community building is helping further the needs and goals of all groups of the population.

### PRIORITIES

#### 4.1. **Need: Complete a strategic wayfinding and branding study for the city that considers signage, lighting and landscaping unique to Brookhaven**

The City should establish and implement a wayfinding and branding program that helps set a unique tone for the City of Brookhaven and creates a physical sense of community and distinction from the surrounding jurisdictions. Although the City has already placed several Brookhaven city limits signs at strategic entry points to the city, several community members have expressed the need to develop notable gateway features at key city entry points.

#### 4.2. **Need: Promote lifelong communities**

The City of Brookhaven has many older residents; it is a goal of the community to ensure that these individuals are able to continue to live and function within the Brookhaven community. Special needs of the aging population can include accessible housing structures that allow for wheel chair entry and first level necessities, American Disabilities Act accessible community facilities including sidewalks and parks, and activities/locations for social interaction.

#### 4.3. **Need: Promote opportunities for community members from all districts to serve on boards or committees**

Ongoing public input is essential to providing city leaders with desired direction from its constituents. It also creates a further sense of pride and ownership among residents. The desire to increase more service opportunities in the city was expressed as a part of both public workshops and the community survey. As community boards and commissions are formed, the City should ensure that the different areas of the city have equal representation.



*Citizens at the Community Involvement Meetings*

#### 4.4. **Need: Enhance City's communications with public**

Community is not something that forms overnight, but one that forms through regular communications, traditions, and interaction among community members. Creating a greater sense of community should be an ongoing goal of the city in its day-to-day operations and strategic events. Actions that could be pursued to enhance communications and other interactions include: continued use of the Brookhaven Blast, regular updates to the City website, City-sponsored festivals, events, and parades (such as the food truck Wednesdays) or public education forums for community members to learn about city operations and departments.

#### 4.5. **Opportunity: Grow the City's arts and cultural offerings**

Some community members have identified the desire for additional arts and cultural offerings. The City should welcome community scale/level arts and cultural offerings provided by the private sector through regular business development and attraction activities. The City should also develop and implement a public art program to further the city's sense of place and civic environment.





*Marist offers a GED program, accessible to Brookhaven residents*

**4.6. Opportunity: Provide translation services for all city services (hire Spanish speaking staff)**

Through stakeholder engagement, it was identified that the Brookhaven community could be more welcoming to all residents and further a reputation as an open and diverse community if it provided translation services for non-English speaking persons. There were mixed opinions about the need for this when the idea was brought to the public during the public outreach process for the Comprehensive Plan.

**4.7. Opportunity: Promote workforce development programs for citizens as needed**

The City can help link community members with GED classes and workforce development programs that up- skill adults to prepare them for jobs available in the city. The City's population is well educated at this point, with nearly 75 percent of the population having at least some college education if not more than a college degree; however, there is still an opportunity to lift up the approximately 12 percent of the population that does not have a high school diploma.

# 4.5 Housing

Brookhaven has a large and diverse housing supply. Many of its single family homes have very high market values and many of the recent housing products that have been developed, including units for sale and for rent, have very high asking prices or rents. There is also acknowledgment that some of the city’s rental housing stock, particularly in some areas of Buford Highway, has reached its useful life and either requires major upgrades to be fit for habitation or should be redeveloped.

## PRIORITIES

### 5.1. Need: Preserve safe and affordable housing in the community

There is great concern that as Brookhaven flourishes as a city it will gentrify and become unaffordable to some of the diverse families and individuals that make Brookhaven a unique place. Preserving safe and affordable housing is a top priority to ensure that the diverse array of Brookhaven community members can continue to live here. MARTA also has a requirement for affordable housing as a part of its Transit Oriented Development initiative, which can help ensure that there is affordable housing in the Peachtree Road Corridor.

### 5.2. Need: Work with DeKalb County to target HUD funding for improvement and preservation of affordable housing in city

The City has identified the poor condition of some of its housing stock during a community



*Housing development along Buford Highway*

wide audit of apartment complexes. The City should continue to work with DeKalb County to identify funding to improve and preserve affordable housing in the city while improving quality of life within existing developments.