

This document is the official Sandy Springs North End Task Force Report; focusing on housing issues found in INITITIVE 1 & the Appendix, and other relevant pages. There have been no changes in content. (April,2019)



**SANDY SPRINGS**

GEORGIA

## **PLAN FOR THE NORTH END**



You will see highlighting of various phrases to draw attention to them for significance.

## MISSION OF THE NORTH END REVITALIZATION TASK FORCE

The mission of the North End Revitalization Task Force is to create a vision and plan for revitalizing Sandy Springs' North End that is achievable and sustainable, that benefits the city as a whole, and that creates a place for the families presently living in the neighborhoods. In doing its work, the Task Force will describe the role that the city should play in this plan, the roles that others—including businesses and landowners—will be asked to play, and will recommend a set of actions for the City Council to consider in 2019.

This plan has no provisions for accommodating any of the displacement of the current residents. And, has no limits or provisions to address the resulting gentrification that it will cause.

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### Explanation about the significance the Appendix:

The Final Task Force Report on six main activities (called Initiatives) represents a consensus view; it was not unanimous. The Task Force was comprised of 14 members. Three of the members were advocates for affordable housing, 9 were involved with commercial real estate development in one way or another, and 2 were involved in community activities.

The three affordable housing advocates were unable to find agreement with the others; and, voted NO on Initiative One dealing with housing. As a result, although they voted YES on the other 5 separate Initiatives in the Plan, they had to vote NO on the OVERALL plan due to its disruptive impact on the North End.

The Appendix contains the views of the dissenters:

- Page 47 – Is an alternative proposal for housing that was reviewed in the final Task Force meeting representing the views of three advocates. Presented by David Couchman.
- Page 50 – Is the justification as to why the Task Force official plan failed to address the issues facing the Task Force; it also contains links to sites for further research. Written by Melanie Noble-Couchman.
- Page 53 – Outlines additional concerns, reasons for voting NO, and examples as to how other cities are addressing the issue. Written by Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic.

A review of the Appendix will give a different perspective as to how the North End can be “revitalized” without causing massive displacement of the residents which would create destabilization of the North End’s workforce, public schools & enrollment, and major changes in the socio-economic profile of the area.



The Task Force members were appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.  
Notice the highlighted affiliations of the members.

## TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Jack Arnold, executive with Stream Realty Partners, a full-service real estate company

Carolyn Axt, former executive director of Leadership Sandy Springs

David Couchman, philanthropist

Melanie Noble-Couchman, philanthropist

Charles Crosby, executive with CORE Project Management, a construction management company and board member of the Community Assistance Center

Jeff Garrison, partner at S.J. Collins Enterprises, a commercial real estate company

Colin Hubbard, executive at Shelton McNalley, a real estate firm, board member Sandy Springs Education Force and board member of Leadership Sandy Springs

Don Huffner, executive at Collier Enterprises, a commercial real estate firm

Patrick Jones, managing director, Walker & Dunlop Investment Sales, a real estate investment company

Richard Munger, partner/senior vice president of residential development, North American Properties

Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic, vice president with the Southeast office of Enterprise Community Partners, which provides technical assistance about affordable housing

Ronda Smith, president of the Sandy Springs Council of Neighborhoods

Steve Soteres, Sandy Springs City Council member and vice president, Choate Construction

Gabriel Sterling, vice chair of the Sandy Springs Development Authority and former City Council member

Fourteen members of the Task Force; nine were employed in the commercial real estate field in some capacity (all voted for the Plan). Two were involved with community non-profits (both voted for the Plan). 3 were affordable housing advocates (ALL voted AGAINST the Plan).

Notable who was not on the Task Force:

- \*No residents from the apartments,
- \*No one of color
- \*No one with a child in PUBLIC schools
- \*No representative of business or public school

## RECOMMENDED STARTING POINT: The “catalyst project”

For revitalization to occur in the North End Revitalization Area, it will require a new kind of development with enough scale to demonstrate the area’s potential to developers, landowners, businesses and potential residents. We suggest beginning with a “catalyst project” that can show others how walkable, mixed-income projects with mixed uses can work in the North End. This catalyst project could serve as a template for future developments.

Using this plan as a template puts at-risk, potentially thousands of additional apartments.

As we outlined in Strategic Initiative 1, successful mixed-income projects must create a “sense of place” as they offer housing in a variety of price points, sizes and styles. As we learned in our six months of studying the North End, there are obstacles to doing this, involving land costs, topography, regulatory issues and reputation. This is why we recommend a “catalyst project,” a development of sufficient scale to show how mixed-income developments with a mix of uses can work, and one that’s done with a close partnership with the City, so cost and regulatory issues can be addressed in a collaborative way. As these issues are addressed, this catalyst project could be a model for future developments in the North End—all of which could be walkable, mixed-income communities with mixed uses, tied together by the Greenline.

In the Task Force meetings, developers discussed two additional locations where this plan would be suitable: Northridge and Morgan Falls areas. Neither of these locations are identified in this report.

To repeat some of what is included in Strategic Initiative 1, the right kind of catalyst project, we feel, would focus in its earliest stages on green space and owner-occupied housing to create its sense of place and would produce excitement about the potential of the North End. A walkable connection to the Chattahoochee River would enhance this sense of place. In time, the project should also include other components of the vision, including mixed uses and mixed-income and “lifetime” housing that could attract everyone from millennials to downsizing seniors.

The priority is to displace the current apartment residents since they will not be able to qualify for home-ownership.

The City would need to identify parcels or a “node” with enough scale to create this initial project. The ideal location for such a project would have as many as possible of the following attributes:

- Easy access to Roswell Road
- Assemblage of a large, contiguous acreage under a minimum amount of owners (60 to 80 acres or more)
- Proximity to retail redevelopment opportunities on Roswell Road
- Proximity to the Chattahoochee River
- Proximity to Northridge with easy access to GA 400
- Proximity to future MARTA stations, offering the benefits of a transit-oriented development
- Potential to connect with green space and parks
- Proximity to established owner-occupied neighborhoods such as Huntcliff

This kind of acreage is only available where there are currently 1200 contiguous apartments which are 94% occupied.

Removal of the apartment density at North River negates the possibility of a TOD (Transit Oriented Development). Only viable if, current density is maintained.

Looking at these criteria, we feel the best place of the North End to locate the catalyst project would be the North River area, which was one of the revitalization “nodes” suggested in the City’s comprehensive plan, The Next Ten.

It is not likely that this catalyst project will be feasible for the private sector to undertake on its own, so it will need a partnership with the City and innovative funding sources. At the beginning, the partnership will require the City’s commitment to help solve critical components related to the development’s financial feasibility, infrastructure and green space, the City’s flexibility with



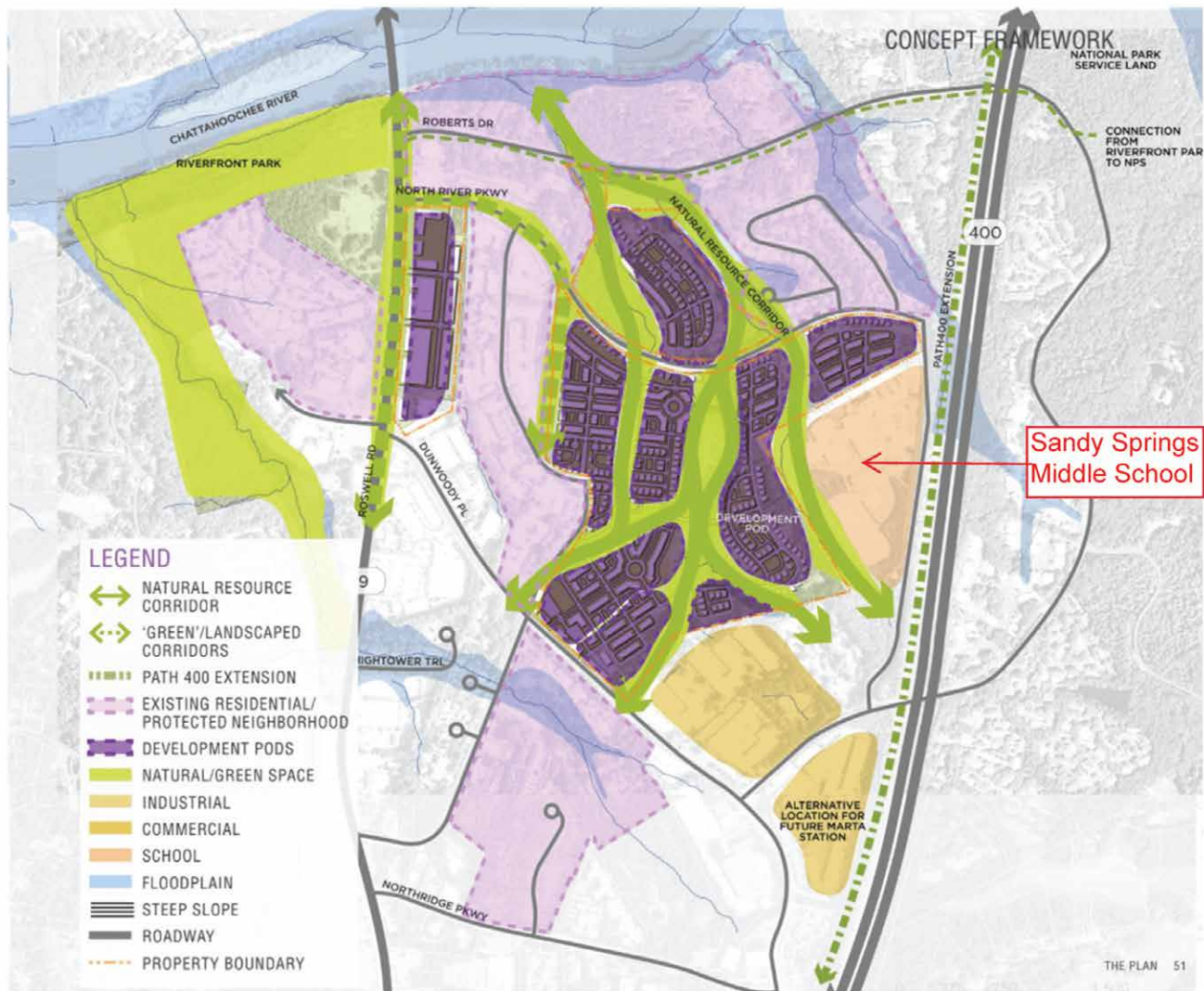
zoning ordinances and building codes. As a full partner in such a project, we believe, the City could offer this flexibility while still protecting the public-input process, as was successfully done in the City Springs project.

Once the catalyst project is successfully implemented, the City would be in a much better position to consider regulatory “abatements” throughout the North End, and to draft design guidelines and future policy requirements that could guide future market demand, including policies that would encourage renovation of existing housing stock in the North End.

Earlier in the report (page 12), the developers outlined the needs for city financial participation in the form of infrastructure subsidies in the amount of \$1m to \$1.5m per acre.

Without policies limiting gentrification and ways to accommodate displacement there would be little left for preservation and renovation.

This is the target area for the Catalyst Project that was indicated on page 10 of the report



Apartment communities: 1,266 apts - containing over 2,200 bedrooms.

ReNew	219
Azela Park	447
Dunwoody Crossing	212
Carlye	388



**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE 1:** Plan developments that are centered in communities, are walkable with a mix of uses, are connected to the Greenline, and offer mixed-income housing including affordable, workforce and “lifetime” housing options.

#### **Why this is important to revitalization**

At the heart of our vision for a revitalized North End is a new approach to development. This approach aims to bring more residents to the North End while making sure that existing residents have a place in what is built. It also aims to make the North End a place where people can live a lifetime—as single adults, as families, as seniors—thanks to a mix of housing types and financial options.

The key is to create a “sense of place” at various points (or nodes) in the North End. Having mixed-use developments that are walkable is one way of creating this “sense of place.” The best way of doing this, we believe, is through developments that are centered in communities, with appropriate scale and public amenities such as parks that encourage residents to know one another, and with new forms of mobility, such as walking and biking trails.

To do this, we recommend two early efforts: One, develop policies and plans for the North End that will create the centered, mixed-income, walkable communities with a mix of uses that we will spell out below. Two, begin with a “catalyst project,” an early example of how this new kind of development can take place. We urge that both of these efforts take place simultaneously because, in planning the catalyst project, the city will learn more about the plans and policies it will need to spread this style of development throughout the North End Revitalization Area.

It is important to note that we do not recommend any effort to require that landowners change their existing properties. If they are content with their existing land uses and these land uses comply with city standards, they should have the ability to continue their current business models. But as landowners or developers seek new uses for the land, we urge the city to have a plan and set of policies in place to guide development—again, as community based, mixed-income, walkable communities with a mix of uses that are served by new forms of mobility.

We are aware that one part of our vision is unfamiliar to many in Sandy Springs: the idea of mixed-income communities. But as we will explain below, mixed-income communities are growing in number and scale around the country, including in the Atlanta area, while creating healthy and diverse communities. And we see this ability to unite the wonderfully diverse citizens of Sandy Springs, while presenting homeownership options for those previously unable to qualify for a home in Sandy Springs, as a better alternative than the concentration of older multifamily rental housing currently in place. We are convinced that mixed income is better for working families, better for the affluent and middle-class families who will move to the North End seeking a sense of place, and better for the city as a whole.

#### **Background**

The ideas behind this Strategic Initiative came from the citizens during the North End Revitalization Task Force’s July 2018 visioning session. In that two-hour session, 270 citizens worked in small groups describing their vision for the North End. By the end, they had come up with nearly 350 ideas and images of the North End as it could be in 25 years’ time. Among the

This plan does not describe how this is to be accomplished and has no policies for handling displacements and gentrifications BEFORE the construction BEGINS.

This seems to be backwards; the policies and plans should drive the “catalyst” and not done at the same time!

“Spreading” this type of development will displace thousands of current residents in the North End. This is a huge destabilization for our work force and businesses; along with students & their families in our public schools.

There is no mention as to the price range of these homes. At today’s land cost and building cost, they will be expensive unless heavily subsidized with taxpayer dollars.

Who knows that it is better? BETTER FOR WHOM? Replacing working families with affluent middle-class families? The apartments are presently 94% occupied.



most widely shared images were walkable communities with a mix of uses that offered affordable and workforce housing as well as middle-class and affluent housing, and “lifetime” housing options.

Since July, the Task Force has searched for ways to make the citizens’ vision a reality. This led the Task Force to City plans like “Next Ten,” which foresaw the development of “nodes” in different parts of the North End. The term we have used for nodes is “centered communities.”

We also have become aware of a number of successful mixed-income developments in other parts of the Atlanta area. We believe the Pinewood Forest community in Fayetteville in particular represents the type of walkable, owner-occupied housing with a variety of price points that would work in Sandy Springs.

We have come to feel strongly that the starting point should be a “catalyst project” creating a sense of place, one with enough scale to show how mixed-income, walkable communities with a mix of uses can work. As you will see in Section 5 of this report, “Where to Begin,” we have suggestions about where such a project could be located and how the city could work with developers in a way that ensures that this initial project succeeds and becomes a template for projects to come.

### Obstacles

The greatest obstacle is finding the right mix of policies, plans and financial incentives to begin private-sector revitalization. This is the reason we think the first step is to begin with a catalyst project created by a strong partnership between the City and a developer. In this project, policies and plans can be developed that can guide the revitalization of the entire North End.

During the planning for the catalyst project, many specific obstacles will arise. But we can anticipate several:

- Current Sandy Springs building code and policies (e.g. wood frame construction limitations, parcel interconnectivity, parking regulations) will likely be a barrier to the kind of mixed-income, mixed-use developments we envision. Current zoning ordinances will also be a barrier for these kinds of developments. Local regulations add a premium to the cost of redevelopment projects, as compared to other local jurisdictions.
- Land costs are currently too expensive to justify owner-occupied redevelopment without public partnerships or outside resources, especially on sites that have an existing (and financially sound) use. And there are very few raw land development sites in the North End. Redevelopment sites exponentially increase the costs of a project for the developer, as they must consider the current income-producing ability of the property when making an offer to purchase.
- Higher costs associated with topography on many parcels will also increase the costs of development and increase the challenge of creating affordable and profitable developments.

### Recommended starting point: The “catalyst project”

The challenges we’ve listed above serve to make this point: We suggest starting with a catalyst project that can show others how walkable projects can work in the North End and can serve as a

In the July meeting, maintaining diversity and affordability were high on the list. This plan does not address how these objectives will be accomplished.

This development, currently under construction, is for small homes from \$288,000 to over \$1M with 5 to 8 per acre. Is this worth displacing current affordable apartments that are 12 - 14 per acre and in good shape; and, are at 94% occupied?

“...strong partnership...”? Later in the Report this partnership is described as significant taxpayer subsidies in various forms for the developers.

RIGHT!!!! This plan is so costly. Wouldn't it be better to preserve the current inventory; and, build new owner homes on underutilized land like low density office buildings and obsoleted shopping centers?

More reasons to maintain what we have. In fact due to the topography, stream buffers, and river considerations significant new regulations will be applicable to new construction which will probably result in higher cost and fewer homes being built.

template for future developments. Successful mixed-income projects create a sense of place and offer housing in a variety of price points, sizes and styles within the same community, such as Pinewood Forest in Fayetteville. To do this, the city must be committed to a partnership that will work through the obstacles and find good answers for revitalizing the North End.

The right kind of catalyst project, we feel, would focus in its earliest stages on green space and owner-occupied housing to create its sense of place and would produce excitement about the potential of the North End. A walkable connection to the Chattahoochee River would further enhance the sense of place. In time, the project should also include other components of the vision, including mixed-use and mixed-income "lifetime" housing that could attract everyone from millennials to downsizing seniors.

You'll find more about our catalyst project recommendation—including a location we think could work for this project—later in this report.

We need an impact study and resulting policies in-effect, otherwise this plan will have a destabilizing impact on the North End which is why we don't want to use this Plan as a "template" for redevelopment.

This will reduce the housing inventory which will raise the prices of current rents, displace the residents thus further destabilizing the community.

"In time..."? When and where will this happen? There is nothing in the Plan that shows how this will occur in terms of how much or type; and what price range.

See Page 26 for the apartment developments; over 1200 apartments with over 2200 bedrooms. THIS IS THE TARGET AREA.



Each Initiative has an accompanying Action Plan and time-line. This detail often highlights the significance of some of the issues.

#### DEVELOPMENT ACTION STEPS

Recommendation	Actions	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding
Identify the initial catalytic project location that can create a "sense of place" for North End revitalization	Appoint a North End Revitalization Zone Committee (NERZC) with industry and financial expertise to assist City staff in outreach to development community	City Council	Less than 3 months	
	Issue RFP for developers to master plan an area in North End that can support a catalyst project with scalable mixed-use and mixed-income housing	City of Sandy Springs	6 months	
	Begin discussions about a potential public-private partnership for a scalable mixed-use and mixed-income project, based on RFPs	City of Sandy Springs Development partner	1 year	
	Execute MOU outlining terms of public-private partnership	City of Sandy Springs Development partner	1-2 years	
	Begin construction	Development partner	2-5 years	

An impact study should be mandatory for a project of this size and scope. An RFP should not be issued until an impact study has been done and policies are approved to limit gentrification and accommodate current resident displacement

MOU is a Memorandum of Understanding and is formalization of what will later become a binding contract.

At this point, 1 to 2 years, there has been no study as to how many or type of housing is needed for future requirements. Why the rush to start?

Recommendation	Actions	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding
Signal to market that the City is committed to revitalization in north Sandy Springs	Adopt a new "North End Revitalization District" that includes the areas of the North End that will be part of this revitalization effort	City Council	Less than 3 months	
	Fund a feasibility study of all the development nodes identified in the Next Ten Roswell Road Small area plan	City of Sandy Springs	1 year	
	Engage national homebuilders to raise awareness and discuss opportunities in the North End that can support scalable mixed-use and mixed-income projects	City of Sandy Springs NERZC	Less than 6 months	
	Engage with national retail and office developers to raise awareness and discuss opportunities in North End that can support scalable mixed-use and mixed-income projects	City of Sandy Springs NERCZ	Less than 6 months	
	Address security perceptions by adding additional police patrols / code enforcement	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	
Address financing "gap" for private development for initial catalyst project	Consider multi-year funding for future land acquisition for a catalyst public-private project in the North End	City of Sandy Springs	1-3 years	\$1MM-\$1.5MM per acre
	Adopt fee waivers and other incentives an initial catalyst master planned project for projects within the "North End Revitalization District"	City of Sandy Springs	1 year	
	Lobby the Georgia Department of Community Affairs to include eligible Sandy Springs census tracts in future applications for federal Opportunity Zone status	City of Sandy Springs Georgia Department of Community Affairs	3 months	

A signal to the market is already occurring. Revitalization is happening. This plan will hasten gentrification if policies are not in place first. At what point will the residents be notified? And, what will they be told?

The Next Ten identifies many other areas of low income housing throughout the city where this plan would be a "template" for potential development causing further displacement. This will expand gentrification. This should not be acceptable.

These actions make it very clear that this plan requires major taxpayer investment. Who is benefiting from this money? The developers? the home owner who buys the home they will build? Whose money is it? The city's taxpayer.

This action will exploit the current low-income residents' status to access Federal funds that will facilitate plans which will ultimately displace them. This is NOT the kind of city we are.



Recommendation	Actions	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding
	Offer property tax abatement programs to offer tax savings for qualified economic development projects within the North End Revitalization District	Sandy Springs Development Authority	1 year	
	Explore opportunities for first-time homebuyer programs, including possible down-payment assistance programs, as in Marietta and City of Atlanta	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	
Identify City policies needed to provide flexibility for development projects in the North End	Concurrent with catalyst project, City assigns resource to complete comprehensive study of baseline data on public schools, housing, transportation and business in North End. Data to inform NERZC in making policy recommendations; provide annual report to City Council	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	
	Instruct NERZC committee to work with staff to address regulatory obstacles within the North End Revitalization District	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	
	Adopt a North End Revitalization Zone that could provide relief from certain regulations to incentivize initial investors in the catalyst project	City of Sandy Springs	6 months	
Encourage mixed-income housing options	Use policies and incentives to encourage mixed-income housing, including waiving impact and permit fees	City of Sandy Springs	Ongoing	
	Explore how the City can provide financial assistance for existing property owners to renovate properties in exchange for keeping housing affordable	City of Sandy Springs Community Development	Less than 6 months	
	Begin discussions with large national homebuilders about opportunities throughout North End that can support scalable mixed-income projects	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	

Doing this study concurrently does not seem to be logical. What if the results of the study do not "support" the plan being executed?

Why are impact and permit fees being waived? Who benefits from them being waived? This is a taxpayer subsidy.

Preserving is good and worthwhile; but, only a small part of the plan with NO DETAIL as to how or when other than this brief mention.

Recommendation	Actions	Responsible Party	Timeline	Funding
	Educate developers on public-financing options that are available for mixed-income housing, such as state and federal Low Income Tax Credit (LITC) and aligned public research studies (ULI, Federal Reserve, etc).	City of Sandy Springs  Ga Dept of Community Affairs	6 months	
	Explore incorporation of an Affordable Housing Impact Statement during the public zoning process to help with monitoring of mixed-income housing throughout Sandy Springs	City of Sandy Springs	1 year	
	Assign City resource to engage with philanthropic community in providing creative solutions to preserving and expanding affordable housing	City of Sandy Springs  Non-profit community	6 months	
	Upon the successful implementation of the catalyst project, reassess incentives and regulatory "abatements" to that could require mixed-income in future housing projects	City of Sandy Springs	5-10 years	
Ensure private development will be connected with any future parks	Prioritize parks projects within the Master Plan to focus in North End	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	
	Engage with Path 400 for a study and creation of a master plan of connected paths throughout the North End Revitalization District	City of Sandy Springs	Less than 6 months	

Explore? Why isn't this required? and, Why during rezoning? This should be done earlier in the process.

Does this mean that the developers' subsidies may continue for future development?



## APPENDIX

At its final meeting on Dec. 5, 2018, Task Force members voted on the overall plan and, individually, on the six Strategic Initiatives. Five of the initiatives received unanimous support; one, Strategic Initiative 1, received three no votes. The three members who voted no for Strategic Initiative 1 also voted no on the overall plan.

The Task Force agreed to make space in this report for David Couchman, Melanie Noble-Couchman and Meghan Shannon-Vlkovic to explain their concerns.

### **David Couchman**

Not being able to reach a consensus with others on the Housing Affordability sub-group, Meghan Vlkovic of Enterprise Community Partners, Melanie Noble-Couchman, and David Couchman created an alternative plan for submission on Dec. 5. An outline follows:

#### **Plan developments that:**

- Add new development of mixed-income, mixed-use housing on underutilized low-density land parcels.
- While recognizing the importance of preserving the housing inventory for the current workforce living in the North End.

This approach fulfills the mission of the Task Force:

- Create a vision and plan for revitalizing Sandy Springs' North End that is achievable and sustainable
- That benefits the city as a whole
- And creates a place for the families presently living in the neighborhoods.

The launch of North End revitalization with the building of a community center, access to the Chattahoochee River and other projects will immediately spark interest and rapid economic development.

Displacement of the apartments will impact the city: The apartments house 69% of the residents of the North End. As a result, the City should conduct an impact study to understand the potential effects of revitalization on the socioeconomic demographics and workforce dynamics. It needs to develop strategies to address anti-displacement and negative impact of gentrification prior to their becoming an issue.

#### **Loss of these homes means there will be instability in the community:**

- Shortage of workers for businesses
- Shortage of home-service worker (health aides, lawn, restaurant, cleaning, etc.)
- Increased traffic congestion as workers commute farther
- Reduction and disruption in public school enrollment
- And significant rebalance of socioeconomic and racial diversity (presently 68% non-white).

The dissenting members were allowed 10 minutes in the last meeting to present their alternatives and concerns on Initiative 1. At the conclusion they could only accept questions for "clarification".

Each dissenting members' concerns was limited to around 800 words to be included in this report's Appendix.

The dissenting members felt it is important to have new development, while preserving the current inventory of multi-family housing.

Revitalization is already occurring; and, the addition of a community center was a consensus in the July meeting.

Many cities are realizing the value of “naturally occurring affordable housing” (NOAH) and the important benefits they serve. This needs to be an integral part of the City’s plan.

The current high demand for rental properties, reflected in the 94% occupancy rate, coupled with limited public resources to address affordability indicate we must prioritize preservation of this resource for the city’s families and workforce. Once these units are lost, they will not be replaced. Since 2005 Metro Atlanta has lost more than 10,000 units and is projected to lose another 4,000 by 2019.

New development is needed, in addition to the NOAH preservation. The North End has large tracts of low-density office space and underutilized shopping centers that are available for new mixed-income, mixed-use development to accommodate growth without impacting the families living in the North End.

Homeownership options: Combining new development while preserving apartments extends greater flexibility for homeownership for all. New developments with housing options at all incomes and the potential conversion of apartments to condominiums facilitate homeownership for first-time homebuyers.

This would give many residents an opportunity otherwise unattainable in Sandy Springs.

Preservation of existing while adding new mixed income housing brings more residents to the North End. Background: In the July and October community input meetings, concerns were expressed about:

- Gentrification (rising rents as well as displacement)
- Importance and desire to maintain diversity
- Need to both increase the affordability of rents as well as homeownership

Other cities are creating policies and strategies to address the above issues.

Other issues:

These following challenges are lessened if the existing “footprints” are used through preservation of NOAH stock.

- The City has no control of land.
- Land is costly to acquire.
- Land and construction costs are expensive.
- Topography and conservancy challenges exist on many parcels.
- Current Sandy Springs building code and policies are challenging.

Any reduction in apartments will lessen the “attractiveness” of MARTA to build a TOD regardless if it is heavy rail or BRT.

Public perception of negative impact of apartments on the community:

- Low performance in public schools,
- Higher than normal crime
- Depressed retail
- Subsidized rent for the unemployed

May forward-thinking cities are already doing this with incentives for home owners and penalties for tearing down existing housing.

Smart development uses land wisely and capitalizes on existing resources. Our apartment are a valuable asset to Sandy Springs; and, need to be preserved.

Many misconceptions are not the reality.



But facts do not support these perceptions and need to be addressed with community education.

How do we start? The City needs to proceed cautiously. It will affect:

- Literally thousands of people
- Culture, fabric and diversity of our community
- Workforce and business vitality

**With community and stakeholder involvement:**

1. Create a “housing needs forecast” for the city; as a part of this study conduct a feasibility analysis to fully understand:
  - The financial viability
  - Required return
  - And unintended consequences of resident displacement, to our schools, our traffic and our employers in the city.
2. Develop policies and plans for new development on the North End that will:
  - Create incentives to maximize the inclusion of mixed income in all developments.
  - Create centered, mixed-income, mixed-use walkable communities.
  - Mitigate the negative effects of resident displacement due to gentrification.
3. Develop strategies to incentivize existing multifamily property owners to renovate and improve their properties and ensure affordability.
4. Develop strategies to incentivize business owners, entrepreneurs and artists to relocate to the North End.

Everyone affected should be involved with the process and plan. City needs to take the time to do it RIGHT!

**Melanie Noble-Couchman**

I could not approve Strategic Initiative 1. This necessitated me not voting for the complete plan.

Following are the sections and excerpts which are italicized and underlined from Strategic Initiative 1, with comments as to why I did not support it.

**Why this is important to revitalization:**

**Page 8-1st paragraph:**

*"existing residents have a place in what is built"* There are no provisions to accomplish this objective. Policies, strategies and incentives should be created before the project begins; relocation with dignity of residents within the area so their children can remain in school and they retain their jobs. <https://housing.arlingtonva.us/get-help/rental-services/relocation/>

**Page 8-3rd paragraph:**

*"develop plans/policies simultaneously with catalyst project"* Why not before? Needs to be created first to discourage gentrification and loss of thousands of affordable rental units. <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/how-cities-preserved-affordable-housing-in-2017>; and <http://www.kxan.com/news/local/austin/city-considers-charging-fee-for-demolition-to-help-pay-for-affordable-housing> 20180312075020233/1031448594

**Page 8-5th paragraph:**

*"previously unable to qualify for a home"* What is entry price for homeownership and quantity of "affordable ownership" options? Georgia Dream Down Payment Program for teachers, first responders and health care professionals requires maximum purchase price \$250,000. [https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/georgia\\_dream\\_brochure\\_-\\_english\\_nov.\\_2018.pdf](https://www.dca.ga.gov/sites/default/files/georgia_dream_brochure_-_english_nov._2018.pdf).

*"better alternative than concentration of older multi-family housing"* Better alternative for whom? Currently rented at 94% occupancy. A nonprofit owner can transition these into mixed-income. If razed, we will lose our workers, mostly lower middle-income families and find it difficult to replace them. Denver is an example: <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/councilor-thinks-denvers-100m-short-on-affordable-housing-impact>

**Background on this idea:**

**Page 9-top of page:**

*"offered both affordable and "lifetime"* housing options The residents asked for both affordable rental and affordable homeownership; this plan permanently removes apartments and lower wage earners from the city. <https://www.reporternewspapers.net/2018/07/26/sandy-springs-residents-brainstorm-north-end-redevelopment-ideas/>

**Page 9-2nd full paragraph:**

*"Pinewood Forest"; "owner-occupied"* This is the plan's example: a low-density, single-family development in Fayette County that is heavily subsidized and not proven. If we build this type of housing, we will lose the density. The current density of 10-12 units per acre makes a MARTA/ATL TOD attractive at Option 2 (contiguous to the proposed

The City changed the formatting of the report from the time that the Task Force ended until the submission to the Council. Changes have been made to the page numbers in this section in to reflect the city's reorganization of the report.

The Plan's example at Pinewood Forest is minimum starting price of \$288,000.



North River location). MARTA Option 1, according to MARTA, can only be a "Commuter Station", bringing no economic development.

**Recommended starting point:**

**Page 40-1st paragraph:**

"beginning with a catalyst project that can show others how a mixed income, walkable project...can work in the North End and serve as a template for future developments."

Creating a large, catalyst project with low density and plans for replication in the North End and elsewhere will deplete the affordable, workforce housing throughout the city, increasing traffic, pricing out our workers, depleting our public schools and leaving employers without workers.

**Page 40-2nd paragraph:**

"Creating a Sense of Place with enough scale" Building a large park, a community center, along with mixed-use development in old strip centers can achieve a "sense of place" with home ownership and revitalized retail without reducing affordable housing.

**Page 40-3th paragraph:**

"Green space and owner-occupied housing...creates excitement about the potential of the North End" Is this green space for public access? Forward-thinking cities are creating this same excitement by being innovative and using underutilized office and shopping centers for owner-occupied housing. Austin, Tx Strategic Housing Plan  
<https://www.austintexas.gov/page/reports-publications>

**Page 40-4th paragraph:**

"Assemblage of...60 to 80 acres or more" Removes up to 1,200 bedrooms in 1,000 apartments, 94% occupied. Building only ownership, not including affordable rental and not allowing current residents to return doesn't fulfill the mission.

New construction needs policy and strategy for including affordability i.e. inclusionary zoning, incentives for AMI, etc., but will not address the scale needed to house our workforce without a preservation strategy.

"best place for catalyst project would be North River area" Building a large park, a community center, etc., will be a catalyst without displacing the residents in the apartments.

**Page 40-6th paragraph:**

"City's commitment to help solve critical components related to the development's financial feasibility" What does this mean? This plan calls for public funds, resources, zoning and ordinance concessions as subsidies to lower the cost (currently \$1 – 1.5 million/acre) to make for-profit development profitable while displacing thousands of workers. The developers are looking for the city to cover this gap. Is this how public money should be used?

Page 41-1st paragraph:

"Once the catalyst project is successfully implemented..."

- How long will the city be subsidizing for-profit development in the North End? Does this mean the replications of this plan will need subsidies too?
- "including policies to encourage renovation of existing housing stock" Doing this at the conclusion of the catalyst project (5-10 years according to the plan's schedule) is too late. Renovation and preservation of the apartments must be addressed before the project begins, or they are lost forever.

City loses control and massive displacement will occur in properties unrelated to the catalyst project, but within the Revitalization Area for example gentrification of the Gateway Project at Wieuca,  
<https://patch.com/georgia/sandysprings/residents-know-of-displacement-for-luxury-development-mostly-through-wordofmouth>

In summary, this plan doesn't reflect the mission, community input, direction from the mayor or pertinent best practices.



### Meaghan Shannon-Vlkovic

The plan elevates smart-growth strategies for the North End of Sandy Springs, but presents significant concerns impacting families that prevented my full approval. I voted in favor of five of the six Strategic Initiatives, with the primary opposition focused on Strategic Initiative 1 due to gaps in the strategy.

### Concerns:

Strategic Initiative 1, which focuses on planning developments that are centered in communities, are mixed-use and walkable, are connected to the Greenline, and offer mixed-income housing including affordable and “lifetime” housing options:

1. Does not recognize protecting and preserving existing housing and units as a priority or as an approach to neighborhood revitalization. Preservation of naturally affordable housing, which Sandy Springs has in the North End, should be a priority within the strategy. According to the information we received, 69% of the families living in the North End are in multifamily properties.
2. Does not recognize anti-displacement policies aligned within this strategy and the overall revitalization plan. At the recent Atlanta Regional Housing Forum, we were reminded that “gentrification is revitalization without anti-displacement policies”. All the strategies recommended in the North End plan will attract market interest, and the City of Sandy Springs will need to get ahead of this unintended consequence by adopting anti-displacement policies and tools to ensure the protection and preservation of families and affordable-housing options.
3. Does not recognize the importance of aligning the catalytic developments in with the potential MARTA/ATL transit expansion locations, creating equitable Transit Oriented Development (TOD) as community-centered approaches for the North End families.
4. Lacked resident input on the Task Force. Given there was no representation of the North End’s 69% renter demographic on the Task Force, it is my interpretation that the obligation and responsibility to protect the interests of these families was expected of the Task Force. In the end, there were no protections included to preserve existing homes or affordability as investment occurs.

### Learning from others:

The challenges to create and preserve affordable homes in Sandy Springs are not uncommon, and cities across the country are introducing policies and tools to support the system. Lessons and practices from other cities can help support new and innovative approaches to equitable development strategies. One example is the Nashville TN Equitable Development Plan:

Promising Practices to Maximize Affordability and Minimize Displacement.

([https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/NashvilleNext/ResourceTeams/Housing\\_Gentrification\\_EquitableDevelopment.pdf](https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/Planning/docs/NashvilleNext/ResourceTeams/Housing_Gentrification_EquitableDevelopment.pdf) )

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston. They have found:

- “Anti-displacement strategies can help communities manage neighborhood change resulting from new investment in housing, businesses, and infrastructure representative of increased market demand. “
- “Doing so can help mitigate the impacts of such change on lower-income households in particular, helping to distribute the benefits of new investment among all members of a community.”

An example tool for anti-displacement is the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in Boston, which created a Managing Neighborhood Change Anti-Displacement Strategies Tool Kit to support its 101 cities. Similar to MAPC, the North End plan presents an opportunity for the City of Sandy Springs to work with the Atlanta Regional Commission on similar preservation and anti-displacement strategies. (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/managing-neighborhood-change-anti-displacement-strategies-toolkit/>)

A recent report on Preserving Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing in Metro Atlanta (NOAH) shares recommendations and interventions by policy makers, foundations, developers and nonprofits. Building relationships with sellers and brokers is one of the initial recommendations identified in the NOAH report.

(<https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/download?fid=9645&nid=7096> )

An example of a city taking this approach is Seattle. The City of Seattle incorporated working with owners/sellers into its Preservation, Equity and Anti-Displacement programs and tools , where the City Council passed an Notice of Sale Ordinance requiring that all properties five or more units report to the City's Office of Housing their "intent to sell".

(<http://www.seattle.gov/hala/about/preservation-equity-and-anti-displacement> )

Approved in 2015, the "notice of intent to sell" provides the City with information about the sale of properties with rents affordable to low-income tenants in order to support preservation of these properties. The City, in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority and community partners, can use the notification information to evaluate properties and deploy a range of property preservation tools, including incentives and acquisition.

#### Summary:

The Task Force's mission stated we were to "create a vision and plan for revitalizing Sandy Springs' North End that is achievable and sustainable, that benefits the city as a whole, and that creates a place for families presently living in the neighborhoods." To mitigate displacement of present families, preservation and anti-displacement policies will be necessary. In addition, a market study to support a housing plan that leverages market conditions, while preserving affordability and homes of current residents needs to be completed to inform an equitable development strategy.