



CITY OF
Peachtree
CORNERS
Innovative & Remarkable

Economic Development Plan
2017–2022



Economic Development Plan 2017–2022

“Ad hoc approaches to economic development generally fail to address community needs or long-term goals and typically have a limited positive impact. Devising a strategic plan puts each step along that plan into context. As each new project is taken on, the strategic plan is a reminder as to why those new projects are being implemented and what purpose they serve for the community.”

—International Economic Development Council, 2015



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Five years after incorporation, the city of Peachtree Corners is vibrant and growing, with leadership focused on well-conceived, strategic development. Several projects currently under construction are sure to generate business interest and are intended to serve as catalysts for future development.

To date, the city has approached economic development incrementally, addressing a variety of important areas, such as Technology Park, the Holcomb Bridge corridor, Arts and Culture, and a Town Center. The city has also invested in building infrastructure and nurturing entrepreneurs. While there are some challenges in Peachtree Corners, the city has an opportunity to further improve its economic health and vitality through careful analysis and dedicated economic development activity.

A study involving the collection of qualitative and quantitative data was performed and key themes were identified, resulting in an economic development plan that is structured around stakeholder feedback and best practices.

Findings conclude that the city's convenient access to major roads is its largest asset, a strength the city can leverage in future marketing efforts. However, traffic congestion is a significant concern and may cause future workforce development problems, especially given the lack of public transit. During interviews, several employers stated they had difficulty attracting qualified workers primarily due to existing housing and transportation options.

The study also found that there are opportunities to increase communication with businesses and build partnerships. The majority of survey respondents stated the city should focus on business reten-

tion, expansion, entrepreneurial development, and business attraction (BRE). Increased engagement with the business community was also suggested during qualitative interviews with some of the city's top employers.

A need for more city promotion was repeated during interviews. There seems to be a lack of city identity and confusion as to "where Peachtree Corners starts and where it ends." Common themes identified during analysis of the survey results and employer interviews were:

Strengths:

- Proximity to major roads and airports
- Good value of office space
- Quality of life

Weaknesses:

- Traffic and transportation issues
- Lack of public transit
- No sense of place or understanding of city boundaries
- Aging commercial properties
- Lack of walkability

Opportunities:

- Aging commercial properties
- Support for business retention, expansion, entrepreneurial development, business attraction
- Support for arts and entertainment
- Support for trails and parks

- Partnership opportunities with companies
- Branding and promotion

Threats:

- Workforce concerns stemming from transportation issues
- Workforce concerns stemming from a lack of appropriate housing
- Ongoing perception problem
- Lack of understanding of city boundaries

To address the opportunities for improvement, 10 strategies are recommended:

1. Capitalize on the strengths of Peachtree Corners
2. Promote and market the City as the premiere location for business in Georgia
3. Reduce traffic congestion wherever possible
4. Implement a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program
5. Increase business engagement
6. Expand current business clusters
7. Increase transportation options
8. Combat aging commercial property
9. Identify staffing needs
10. Attract middle-skill employees to cultivate a pipeline of talent

The findings included in this plan highlight where activity is most needed and provides a work plan until 2020. This document should not be viewed as a first, and final, plan for economic development. It

is a foundation document that should be reviewed every 5-10 years to accommodate successes and identify new courses of action. The strategies included in this document effectively provide a long-term framework for economic development efforts, as the city strives to successfully position itself at the forefront of the Southeast region.



BACKGROUND: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Opportunity

The city of Peachtree Corners stands at the threshold of a new economic era. Incorporated in 2012, the city is seeking to expand its economic development efforts to improve the fiscal and economic health of the community. By taking a comprehensive and strategic approach to economic development, the city will develop a “road map” to support and sustain existing businesses, promote reinvestment and revitalization, and attract private investment within a highly competitive regional market.

There is no magic formula for every community all the time, according to Mary Jo Waits, director of the National Governors Association, Best Practices Council. What worked yesterday, may not work today. However, “failing to plan is planning to fail,” so a comprehensive and strategic approach to economic development is needed to successfully position Peachtree Corners at the economic forefront of the Southeast region. ***The key to success is to focus on the city’s tag line and ensure every initiative contributes to making Peachtree Corners the most innovative and remarkable city in the metropolitan Atlanta area.***

Traditional economic development activity—business attraction, retention and expansion, workforce development, tourism, and infrastructure development—remain critical functions of economic development. Current discussion among economic development professionals deals not only with these areas, but also accelerating the growth of local industry through cluster-based analysis and placement. Unlike a single company or industry, regional clusters are the source of jobs, income and growth, according to Harvard Business School Professor Michael Porter. These clusters— or geographic concentrations of competitive firms in related industries—do business with each other and share talent, technology and infrastructure.

This study seeks to analyze current businesses and industry activity, identify best practices and define a plan for action. While there are some challenges in Peachtree Corners, the city has an opportunity to improve its economic health and viability through thorough, careful analysis, dedicated economic development activity, and strategic decision-making.



**THIS DOCUMENT
WILL HELP ANSWER
THE FOLLOWING
QUESTIONS:**

Where are we now?

*Where do we want to be five
years from now?*

How do we get there?

Some economic development activity is already underway. The city has actively adopted incentives to help catalyze redevelopment by making projects more financially doable. It has also hired consultants to assist in planning for arts and culture and the reinvention of Technology Park. However, the city’s economic development approach thus far has been largely piecemeal in nature. The city is currently lacking a city-wide, strategic economic development plan that includes priorities and a work plan to guide staff activity.

In this study, the city’s current situation will be assessed. Current conditions will be analyzed, and the results of stakeholder interviews will be used to articulate desired outcomes. At the end of this document is a timeline and a work plan that will be used to guide staff activity for the next five years.

Methodology

In order to develop a collective and realistic understanding of the local economy, a study involving the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data was performed. Local businesses were surveyed through the business license renewal process, the Peachtree Corners Business Association, and the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce. The city received 259 responses to the survey, roughly 11 percent of total 2,244 businesses in the city. In addition, personal interviews were conducted with 10 of the city’s largest employers.

Background information was obtained from the U.S. Census, Georgia Power, the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, the city’s Comprehensive Plan, and the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) study.

A SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was conducted using information derived from the survey and interviews. Based on stakeholder feedback, established research, and best practices from the International Economic Development Council, city staff developed a strategy for addressing the economic needs of the entire city to enhance economic health. An on-going program for work was subsequently generated and is included at the end of this document.



CITY PROFILE

The City of Peachtree Corners is 17 square miles in size and fortunate to have major thoroughfares running through it, including GA 141 and GA 140. Peachtree Corners is 32 miles from Atlanta’s Hartsfield–Jackson International Airport.

The Atlanta Business Chronicle lists several Peachtree Corners companies as “Atlanta’s Best Places to Work” including: Insight Sourcing Group, BECA, Relus Technologies, NanoLumens Inc., and I.B.I.S. The city is also home to one of Atlanta’s top 25 engineering firms, Pond & Co., and top commercial contractors Fortune-Johnson Inc. and Hogan Construction Group LLC.

A strong business-oriented foundation was laid in the late 1960s by businessman Paul Duke, who envisioned a “Live-Work-Play” community. In 1967, Duke initiated the planning of the office component of Peachtree Corners, Technology Park/Atlanta, a campus of low-rise buildings nestled in a wooded environment and in close proximity to major roadways. The campus subsequently became home to a variety of engineering and technology companies. Technology Park is now a regional business hub containing 3.8 million square feet of office space on 500 acres.

When Technology Park was first built in the 1970’s, it was a leader in attracting and showcasing technology-focused businesses. However, the business model for technology-based corporate campuses has evolved and the physical attributes of Technology Park are now in need of transformation.

Total Population	39,910
Median Age	36.2
High School Education or Higher	93.4%
Bachelor’s Degree or Higher	53.8%
Families with Children	34.6%

U.S. Census, 5 year estimates, American Community Survey, 2010–2015



Demographics and Socio-Economics

Peachtree Corners is a diverse community with a population that is 59.6 percent white, 23.7 percent black, 8.8 percent Asian and 14.1 percent Hispanic or Latino. Asian groups are primarily Indian, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese. Over 30 percent of households in Peachtree Corners have an income of more than \$100,000, making Peachtree Corners one of the more affluent areas of Gwinnett County.

According to Esri data provided by Georgia Power, nearly 25 percent of residents in the workforce are in the “Professional Pride” tapestry classification, consisting of well-educated career professionals who maintain upscale, suburban lifestyles. Families are mostly married couples and more than half of this segment have children. The median household income for this segment is \$127,000 (Esri.com/tapestry).

Approximately 27 percent of the Peachtree Corners workforce consists of a tapestry segment known as the “Young and Restless” or well-educated young workers in professional/technical occupations, as well as sales and administrative support roles (Esri.com/tapestry). They are typically renters in single-family households with a median annual income of \$36,000.

The “Enterprising Professionals” group comprises more than 15 percent of the city’s workforce. They are well-educated and climbing the ladder in science, technology, engineering and mathematics occupations. They have a median household income of \$77,000 (Esri.com/tapestry).

Race	
White	59.6%
Black	23.7%
Asian	8.8%
Hispanic or Latino	14.1%
Two or More Races	1.7%

U.S. Census, 5 year estimates, American Community Survey, 2010–2015

Income	
Median Household Income	\$65,319
Mean Household Income	\$93,177

U.S. Census, 5 year estimates, American Community Survey, 2010–2015

City Resident Occupations

Management, business, financial	24.1%
Computer, engineering, science	9.9 %
Education, community services, legal, arts, media	11 %
Healthcare practitioner and technical occupations	4.2 %
Protective Services occupations	1.2 %
Construction, natural resources, maintenance	7.3%
Food preparation and serving related occupations	4.5 %
Production, transportation, moving occupations	5.5 %

U.S. Census, 5 year estimates, American Community Survey, 2010–2015

Population and Jobs

Approximately 24 percent of city residents are employed in management, business, or financial occupations. About 10 percent are employed in computer engineering or science, and 11 percent in education, arts or entertainment. Approximately 7 percent of residents work in construction, natural resources, or maintenance.

Roughly half of working city residents travel 10 to 29 minutes each day, with one-third traveling 30 minutes to an hour each day and just under 10 percent traveling more than an hour for work each day, according to the U.S. Census. Approximately 1.8 million workers live within a 30-minute drive of Peachtree Corners (EMSI, 2016).

The largest city, per capita, in Gwinnett County, Peachtree Corners’ 2015 population estimate is 40,980. If growth continues at a consistent rate, the city population will increase to 50,000 people by 2030. With the construction of the Town Center and Multi-Use Trail, however, population increases may be greater than regression analysis suggests.

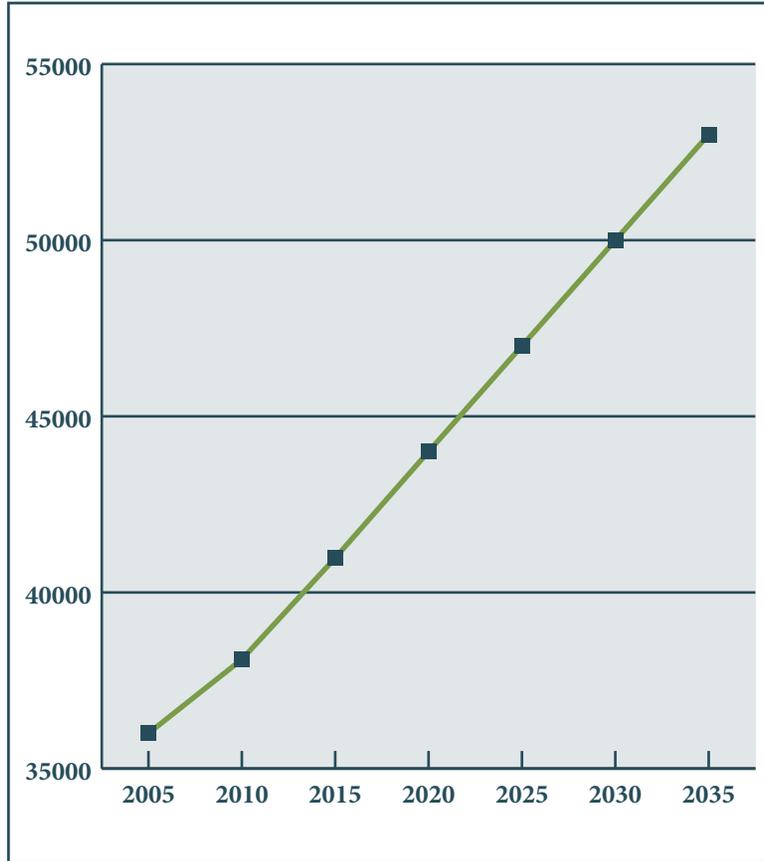
In Peachtree Corners, as in Atlanta, there is roughly the same number of jobs as people. The cities of Johns Creek, Roswell and Duluth have far fewer jobs than residents.

According to Georgia Power:

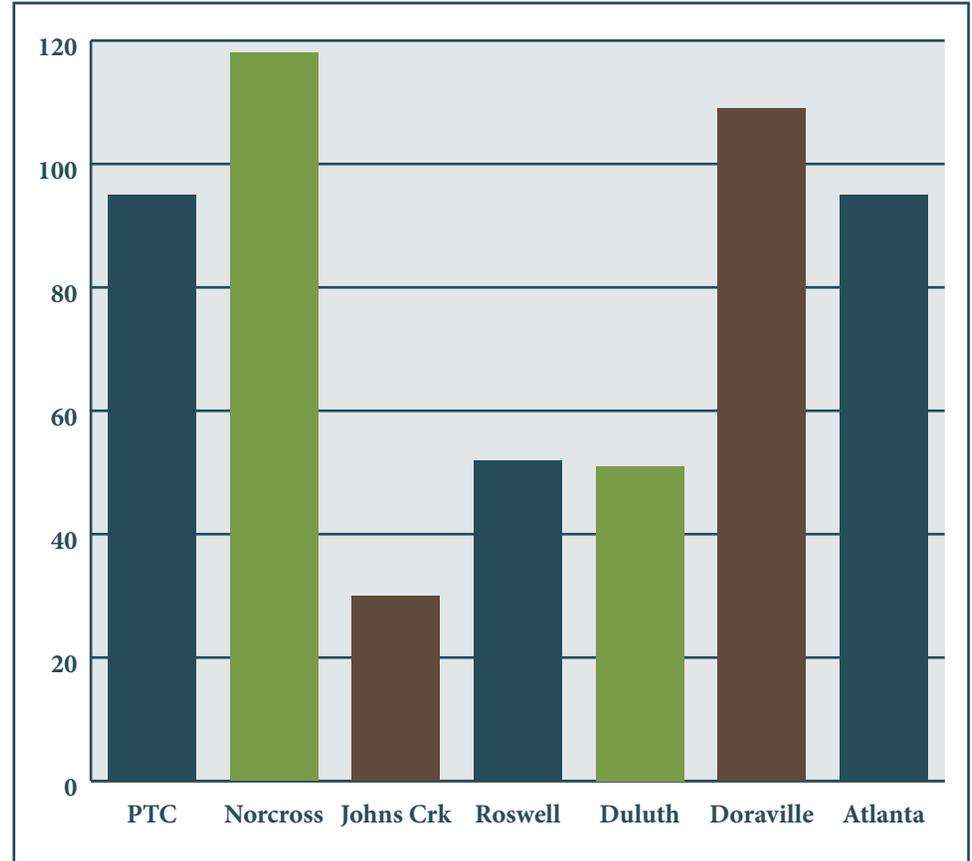
- 488,000 workers live within a 15-minute drive of Peachtree Corners
- 1.8 million live within a 30-minute drive of Peachtree Corners
- There are 86,700 technology jobs and 10,800 life sciences jobs within 30 minutes of Peachtree Corners.



POPULATION PROJECTIONS



POPULATION TO JOBS

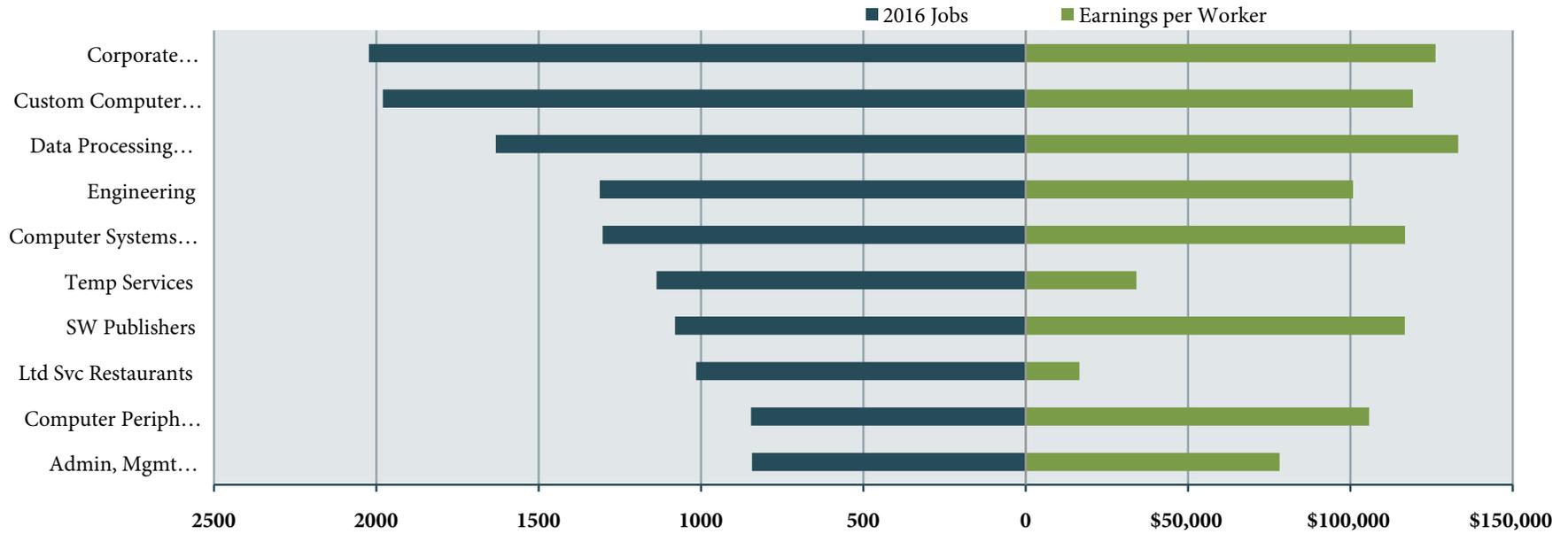


LARGEST INDUSTRIES

Business Name	Number of Employees
Comcast	682
Phoenix Corp.	618
Immucor Inc.	535
Pond & Company	500
Careerbuilder LLC	464
Computer Generated Systems (CGS)	379
Level 3	350
Fleetcor Technologies	316
One Diversified	304
ACI Worldwide	302
Milner Document Products	234
CentricsIT LLC	232
Nextel South Corp.	226
Navex (The Network)	229
Netplanner Systems	225
Veritiv Operating Company (Unisource)	218

Suzanna's Kitchen Inc.	212
Siemen's Industry	210
GC&E Systems Group Inc.	210
Construction Market Data Group	210
Lakeview Behavioral Health	197
Elite Flooring & Design	195
LMS Intellibound Inc.	189
Hapag-Lloyd (UASC)	180
Professional Career Development Institute	172





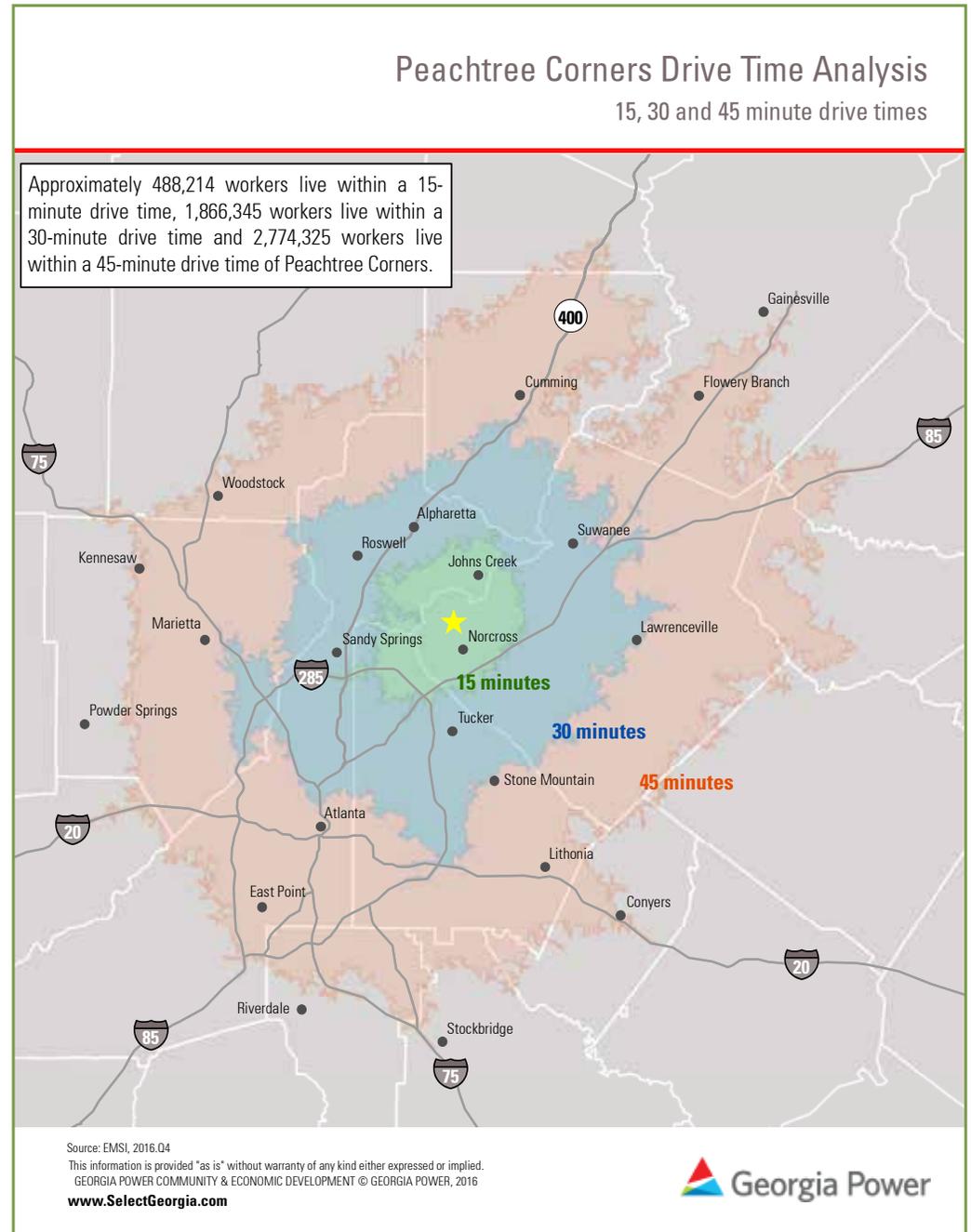
Industry	2016 Jobs	2021 Jobs	Change in Jobs (2016-2021)	% Change	2016 Earnings per Worker
Corporate, Subsidiary, and Regional Managing Offices	2,023	2,336	313	15%	\$126,228
Custom Computer Programming Services	1,980	2,294	314	16%	\$119,234
Data Processing, Hosting, and Related Services	1,632	2,036	404	25%	\$133,211
Engineering Services	1,312	1,422	110	8%	\$100,814
Computer Systems Design Services	1,303	1,500	197	15%	\$116,827
Temporary Help Services	1,137	1,090	-47	-4%	\$34,104
Software Publishers	1,080	991	-89	-8%	\$116,764
Limited-Service Restaurants	1,015	1,185	170	17%	\$16,539
Computer/Computer Peripheral Equipment and Software Merchant Wholesales	846	637	-209	-25%	\$105,772
Administrative Management & General Management Consulting Services	843	1,120	277	33%	\$78,191

Source: Georgia Power

The city’s major sectors are consistent with the region. According to the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard’s Business School, the Atlanta Region shows a high concentration of employment in 10 major sectors:

- Business Services
- Distribution and Electronic Commerce
- Transportation and Logistics
- Education and Knowledge Creation
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Communications Equipment and Services
- Financial and Insurance Services
- Marketing, Design, and Publishing
- Information Technology and Analytical Instruments

Manufacturing Percentage	
Doraville	4.8%
Duluth	3.9
Johns Creek	1.9
Norcross	6.2
Peachtree Corners	5.3
Roswell	2.3
Alpharetta	2.4



A LOOK AT SURROUNDING CITIES

Hard data alone may not accurately present an overall picture of the health and performance of a community, but benchmarking a community’s economic data against other cities helps add perspective. For comparison, Peachtree Corners staff analyzed the industry and labor market of Johns Creek, Alpharetta, Roswell, Norcross, Doraville, and Duluth. Using business license data, and data from Georgia Power, staff analyzed Peachtree Corners’ businesses by NAICS code, and studied the target industries of the other cities.

Manufacturing

Peachtree Corners and Norcross have more manufacturing, both in total number and percentage of total business than the other cities; Norcross at 6.2 percent and Peachtree Corners at 5.3 percent (see figure p.9). There are five metal fabricators and supply companies in the city of Peachtree Corners; Phoenix Corporation, Steel Fab. Inc., Ryerson Inc., Ryerson Tull, and Cherokee Metals Company. Such a concentration demonstrates an established cluster. Approximately 4,840 people are employed in manufacturing in Peachtree Corners.

Restaurants

Roswell, which has 88,000 residents, is known for its dining options (restaurants, coffee houses, bars, etc.) According to NAICS codes, the 313 dining establishments comprise 5.3 percent of the total businesses in Roswell. Interestingly, Peachtree Corners has 141 dining establishments, comprising 4.8 percent of total businesses. Johns Creek, with a population of 76,000, has 191 dining establishments, for 7.4 percent of total businesses. Johns Creek, however, does not have a reputation as a top-notch dining location which may mean Roswell simply does a better job of promoting dining businesses and marketing the city as a place to eat and drink.

Dining Establishments	
Doraville	7.9%
Duluth	5.8%
Johns Creek	7.4 %
Norcross	3.9 %
Peachtree Corners	4.8 %
Roswell	5.3 %
Alpharetta	6.1 %



Retail

Peachtree Corners currently has 402 retail businesses. According to the Bleakly Advisory Group, which conducted a redevelopment study for the city, the retail sector is performing better than the office and apartment rental sectors. The presence of the Forum, with roughly 60 retail shops, may account for much of this positive activity. The city’s supply of retail is similar to Roswell’s, at 14 percent. In surrounding cities, the retail segment is comparable, between 12 to 19 percent.

Professional, Scientific, Technology

By percentage, Alpharetta, Roswell and Peachtree Corners were found to have the highest number of Professional, Scientific and Technology businesses at about 12 percent of the total. For comparison, Johns Creek’s total was 7.4 percent, while Norcross and Duluth were slightly under 10 percent, and Doraville 8 percent. Peachtree Corners has roughly 5,485 people working in Professional, Scientific, and Technology Services, more than any of the comparison cities. Roswell followed closely with 5,344 people working these fields. Technology and Life Science companies are currently considered “target” companies in Peachtree Corners.

TARGET INDUSTRIES

In 2013, the City of Peachtree Corners designated Technology and Life Sciences as “targeted” industries (City Ordinance 2013-02-07) for which incentives may be available. A look at the list of top employers provides some insight into the industry in Peachtree Corners. Much of it is in line with these targets. Comcast, for example, provides advanced fiber networks solutions, while Level 3 offers managed network and network security, as well as other internet communications services. ADVA Optical Networking provides fast, high-capacity communications networks. Nextel South Corp. provides digital network, high-speed Internet and telephone services. Navex Global provides ethics and compliance software and services, while Fleetcor is a global provider of specialized payment products and services. As for Life Sciences, Immucor is a leading provider of transfusion and transplantation diagnostic products

Retail Percentage	
Doraville	19%
Duluth	15%
Johns Creek	12.9%
Norcross	14.8%
Peachtree Corners	13.7%
Roswell	13.8%
Alpharetta	15.2 %

Professional, Scientific, Technology	
Doraville	7.3%
Duluth	9.4%
Johns Creek	7.4 %
Norcross	9.6 %
Peachtree Corners	12.1 %
Roswell	12 %
Alpharetta	12.4 %

worldwide, while Parallon is one of the healthcare industry’s leading providers of business and operational services.

The city’s current industry mix is in line with Gwinnett County’s target industries, which are: IT Solutions, Healthcare Science, Manufacturing, Supply Chain and Regional Corporate Headquarters. Knowing what industries are in the Peachtree Corners area enables the city to not only better understand the competitive needs of its business community, but also take steps to expand the breadth of existing clusters. According to a 2006 Brookings Institution discussion paper, the best public policy strategy for “creating” clusters is for governments to direct attention at establishing the right conditions for new clusters to emerge while nurturing the existing ones.

Clusters can be found by studying the North American Industry Classification codes. Observable clusters of business in Peachtree Corners include : Electronic Parts and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers, Computer Related Services, Office Administrative Services, Services to Buildings and Dwellings, and Publishing.

Johns Creek has identified similar targets, with Professional, Scientific and Technology services as a second-tier priority, along with Scientific Research and Development. Primary targets for Johns Creek include Software Publishing, Computer Systems Design, and Physicians Offices.

The city of Roswell is an older city and largely built-out. Its economic development efforts focus on four target sectors: Small Business and Professional Services, Restaurants, Healthcare, and Logistics. Duluth, in contrast, has seen significant economic growth in the last decade. Duluth’s major industry sectors include Professional and Corporate services, Distribution and Warehousing, Advanced Manufacturing and Information Technology. Doraville targets Construction, Data Centers, Film, Food Service, Logistics, Manufacturing, Professional services, Retail, Wholesale and Telecommunications. Alpharetta bills itself as the “Technology City of the South,” and boasts large concentrations of technology companies. Having experienced considerable economic growth in the last 15 years, Alpharetta focuses on Information Services, Corporate and Regional Headquarters, Telecom, Health IT and the Retail Trade.



Incentives for Targeted Businesses

Peachtree Corners has been active in the adoption of policy geared toward attracting target industries. The city approved an ordinance in 2013 designating certain “targeted businesses” in fields such as technology and life sciences. The city manager, or his designee, is authorized to offer inducements to targeted businesses, such as a reduction in development or building permit fees and an acceleration of the plan review and permitting processes. Inducements may include:

- Reduction of development permit fees,
 - Reduction of building permit fees,
 - Reduction of application fees for public hearings,
 - Reduction of business occupation taxes,
 - Reduction of any current or future impact fees, and
 - Acceleration of the plan review and permitting process.
- Inducements may be offered to targeted businesses which meet the following threshold levels:

Tier 1: Targeted Business adds at least 25 new jobs and the jobs pay an average salary of at least 1.25 times the county average for that industry.

Tier 2: Targeted Business adds at least 100 new jobs and the jobs pay an average annual salary of at least 1.25 times of the county average for that industry or \$60,000 plus health benefits, whichever is greater. *(City Ordinance 2013-02-07)*



Policy Actions

With city support, a new startup incubator, **Prototype Prime**, opened in 2016. Located at 147 Technology Parkway, Prototype Prime's mission is to assist early-stage hardware and software startups in launching. The space includes a design and development lab and a custom-built podcast recording room. Currently Prototype Prime has eight startups and is designed to support 25 startup businesses.

In 2017, the city approved a **Tax Exemption Program for New and Emerging Technology Businesses**, in particular, startups in the Prototype Prime incubator. The program applies to businesses in certain fields related to high technology, life sciences, information technology and intellectual property. Under the program, businesses may receive an exemption from occupational business license fees, capped at three years or when gross receipts exceed \$1 million.

The city has taken steps through various planning and policy decisions to attract businesses, development and especially redevelopment. In 2015, the mayor and council approved a **Trails and Open Space ordinance** that allows private land owners to dedicate land that is undevelopable in return for density credits. The Echo Lakeside development in Technology Park is a good example of a project made possible by that ordinance. Echo Lakeside was able to acquire 104 units of density credits toward a housing project in exchange for donating over 15 acres of vacant land that will be used for part of a trail system. The ordinance is expected to assist in incentivizing similar projects.

The Holcomb Bridge Corridor is another area positioned for redevelopment. In 2016, the Bleakly Advisory Group completed a report that included strategies for redeveloping older buildings, especially apartments. This work was identified as a top priority in the **Holcomb Bridge Road Corridor Study** based on the community's desire to see the area revitalized. Various strategies were identified including the creation of overlay districts, holding property in the Downtown Development Authority, issuing revenue bonds for specific projects, writing down city-owned property and creating joint venture partnerships with the DDA. These **Redevelopment Strategies for Aging and Commercial Properties**, resulted in an amendment to the zoning ordinance, allowing for increased building heights in overlay districts, making projects more financially feasible.

To address the need for reinvigorating Technology Park, the city hired MXD Consultants, a Canadian firm specializing in land use and trans-



portation strategies for master planned areas and commercial hubs. The consultant has developed an **Innovation Hub Master Plan** to help reinvigorate and transform Technology Park into an innovation center.

The city also hired the Sizemore Group, an architectural and strategic planning firm, to develop an **Arts and Culture Master Plan** which provides direction for public and performing art. “It might not show up in the bottom line, but developing bike trails, parks and alleyways and commissioning public sculptures can be as integral to economic development as a timely and enticing financial or tax incentive,” said Katharine Czarnecki, vice president of the Community Development for the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

In 2013, the city adopted a **Comprehensive Land Use Plan** for the next 20 years. Through the public participation process, it was determined that residents desired mixed-use development and public gathering places. The city engaged in a **Livable Centers Initiative** study to plan a town center. The **Town Center** includes restaurants, retail shops, office space, townhomes and a town green area for programmed events and for people to gather.

A **Comprehensive Transportation Plan** was adopted in 2017, identifying roadways in need of major capacity improvements, and specifying where traffic congestion could be relieved. The plan, prepared by Pond & Co., also noted preliminary bike and pedestrian improvements, safety corridor improvements, and areas where additional study is needed. The projects included, but were not limited to, road widening and capacity improvements, operational intersection improvements, new road and multi-use trail construction, and pedestrian improvements.



As stated, earlier, the city has approached economic development piece-by-piece, addressing a variety of important areas, such as Technology Park, the Holcomb Bridge Road corridor, Arts and Culture, and a Town Center. The city has also invested in nurturing early entrepreneurs. Although much work has been performed, the City of Peachtree Corners is lacking a comprehensive strategy for addressing the economic needs of the entire city, especially as it relates to ongoing staff activity. An on-going program for sustained economic growth for the entire city will combine fresh stakeholder feedback, established research, best practices from the International Economic Development Council, and a work plan.

Business Retention and Expansion

Satisfied businesses can be a community's best ambassadors, spreading the word about the benefits of conducting business in the city. Cities must be proactive in developing and maintaining strong relationships with the business community to sustain a "business friendly" image (Morse, 2004).

Business retention and expansion (BRE) is an economic development strategy of proactively connecting with existing businesses to understand and respond to local business needs. These programs help businesses stay, grow and become more committed to the community. BRE programs establish relationships with businesses to strengthen existing companies, identify at-risk businesses needing assistance, and to serve as a link between private industry and government.

Business retention and expansion programs generally have been managed in three areas: local government, private organizations, and through public-private partnership organizations, such as Partnership Gwinnett. Partnership Gwinnett is a community and economic development initiative of the Gwinnett Chamber. It is dedicated to bringing new jobs and capital investment to Gwinnett County. It does not typically engage in business retention (BRE) programs at the local level.

"The BRE program serves as an early warning system to alert local economic development officials to the plans, problems, and concerns of individual companies, which could lead to their eventual relocation out of the jurisdiction or, as in the case of at-risk companies, lead to layoffs or even closure"

(IEDC, 2015, p. 60).

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Site Visits and Surveys

According to the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), local government is the most logical entity to handle retention programs (IEDC, 2015, p. 57) and site visits are a key component. Information gathered from visiting the companies may be maintained in a database and enable local officials to stay aware of the dynamics of the local economy, the well-being of companies, and the health of industry sectors (IEDC, 2015).

Partnering with companies on events or special projects is another way of increasing collaboration and communication between business and local government. Crowdfunding initiatives build community and bring people together to enhance local identity (Czarnecki, 2016). Governments and companies effectively agree on matching, dollar-for-dollar contributions to a specific project that activates public and community spaces, such as outdoor plazas, nature trails, public art, or community centers. Crowdfunding enables local companies to take an active role in transforming communities.

In addition to site visits and surveys, there are several tools and techniques used in BRE programs, including marketing, workforce and housing development, identifying clusters, and creating site opportunities.

Marketing and Recruitment

Information is critical to business. Businesses looking to expand or relocate need up-to-date information, such as market and supplier analysis, city and state comparisons, workforce analysis, and general community information. Local economic development practitioners act as a broker between the sources of assistance and companies needing it (IEDC, 2015).

In an attempt to assist businesses looking to expand or relocate to Peachtree Corners, the city has taken steps to improve Economic Development information on its city website. Available commercial properties are displayed on the city website through the real estate data company Xceligent, enabling site locators, investors and others to obtain details about properties quickly and at no cost. Also on the city website are interviews with corporate executives from Pond, Glenfield Capital and Conway, which provide testimonials about the value of locating in the city.

“If city leaders are to successfully chart their city’s economic course, they need to utilize all tools at their disposal, including Internet tools.”

*—James Vanderleeuw,
Dept. of Political Science,
Lamar University*

A study conducted at Lamar University found that most cities are not using their websites to promote strategic economic goals (Vanderleeuw & Sides, 2014). A significant number of governments were found to be merely mimicking other local governments in designing their websites. To fully harness their websites, the authors wrote, cities should seek to communicate with specific target audiences, as well as a generalized audience.

Businesses need accurate, up-to-date information and communities need rock-solid marketing techniques to reach the needs of the business community (IEDC, 2015). In Peachtree Corners, there are currently no recruitment activities performed in-house, such as marketing the city at conventions, conferences and industry events. Rather, the city relies too heavily on Partnership Gwinnett and the Georgia Department of Economic Development to bring in new capital investment.

In addition to city resources, several non-governmental organizations provide useful information to businesses. Utilities, such as Georgia Power, have infrastructure investments in the community and therefore rely on business growth and retention, so they are a good source of data. Through its economic development arm, Georgia Power provides technical assistance, customized research and project management services to governments and businesses. Resources and data are also available from the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Workforce Solutions Division, which provides on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, and customized training programs. Each is initiated to assist in closing skills gaps.

Workforce Development and Housing

Workforce development has become one of the most important issues in economic development. To be competitive in a global market, the local labor force must have the skills and education to meet the needs of local companies. Much of workforce development is currently handled at the state and county level. While local economic development organizations may not be the direct administrators of workforce development programs, it is important they work with key stakeholders in identifying problems and developing solutions (Wiles, 2013). According to a 2010 report by the National Governors Association, approximately 40-45 percent of all job openings will be in middle-skill occupations. The report noted the importance of high-quality technical education.

Companies frequently send site locators to investigate communities before committing to a location. They ask questions regarding the available workforce—questions about public transit, housing, worker inflow/outflow, drive times, on-the-job training and incumbent worker training reimbursements.

Finding and retaining workers is a key competitive challenge, creating both an opportunity and requirement to diversity the workforce (Holified, et. al , 2012). Filling the pipeline with a variety of workers, not just the highly-skilled, is important. Similarly, maintaining a range of housing options affordable to a range of income levels is essential to sustaining our communities and must be addressed at both the regional and local levels (Schwartz, 2016).

One challenge is that the term “affordable housing,” still carries the stigma of failed housing projects of the 1960s and 1970s. Few seem to argue with the need to provide seniors, veterans, nurses, teachers, firefighters, police officers and retail workers, a decent and affordable place to live. (Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress, 2013). However, a recent Trulia study found teachers can afford less than 20 percent of homes for sale in 11 of 93 major U.S. metro areas. First responders could afford less than 20 percent of homes on the market in six major metros (Kusisto, 2017).

Providing a range of housing choices to accommodate households of all income levels, sizes and needs is one of the principles in the Atlanta Regional Commission’s Plan 2040 (p. 18).



One in four working renters and 16 percent of working homeowners pay more than half their income for housing (Ault, 2016). Researchers have suggested that workers forced to make long commutes are less productive and spend less of their income in the community of their employment (Hsieh, C. and Moretti, E., 2015).

A lack of a comprehensive rail system in metropolitan Atlanta creates a challenge for businesses needing a wide range of workers, including those in service sector jobs and government employees. A rail system is also absent in the City of Boulder, Colo., but the city has taken other steps to ensure companies have access to lower and mid-range wage earners. Boulder has successfully implemented a home affordability program called Homeworks for those of low and middle incomes, according to Eric Swanson, homeownership coordinator for the City of Boulder. It involves required set-asides from developers.

Boulder also adopted an inclusionary housing ordinance that requires developers to set aside 20 percent of residential projects to be sold at a reduced rate. Homes are sold at below-market rates to income-eligible buyers who intend to occupy the home. Homes are governed by permanent affordability covenant that limits the resale price on the home. There are also exemptions for retirees. Swanson said there are currently 750 homes in the program.

Interest in inclusionary zoning approaches is increasing. A growing number of cities are using zoning authority to increase the development of workforce housing units, according to Stockton Williams, of the Urban Land Institute. Inclusionary zoning is intended to generate a below-market end use that the market would not normally provide. More than 500 cities and counties in 27 states have adopted inclusionary zoning policy, according to the Institute.

Policy—including zoning, density, and design requirements—provide incentives to encourage developer participation. However, developers still need to build a profitable product. Developers also need sufficient demand to support a profitable project, as well as need resources (Williams, 2016). Cities often need to provide development incentives to ensure project feasibility, such as density bonuses, tax abatements, or reduced parking requirements. Good communication with the public and readily accessible information is important to avoid NIMBY concerns.

Inclusionary development —or affordable housing—is one approach to generating workforce housing units and attracting a diverse mix of workers. Identifying and supporting clusters in concert with providing needed housing is another technique for growing a local economy.

Provide a range of housing choices to accommodate households of all income levels, sizes and needs and to ensure that workers in the community have the option to live there.
***—Atlanta Regional Commission
 PLAN 2040 Principles***

Industry Clusters and Job Growth

Using cluster strategy has become a popular economic development planning tool. Generally, clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses that draw competitive advantage from their mutual proximity and connections. Cluster analysis can help identify a region's economic strength and challenges (Brookings Institution, 2011).

Clusters can be identified by studying the North American Industry Classification codes. Observable clusters of business in Peachtree Corners include Electronic Parts and Equipment Merchant Wholesalers, Computer Related Services, Office Administrative Services, Services to Buildings and Dwellings, and Publishing.

A classic example of clustering is the aerospace cluster in Arizona. The state used a strategic framework developed in the early 1990s by Arizona State University's Morrison Institute for Public Policy to develop a statewide economic strategy. From the framework emerged a best practice regarding the use of cluster working groups to help policymakers understand industries and their challenges (Waits, 2000). Each cluster group represented a separate industry. The groups remained in place after the initial study to assist in strategy development.

Using the cluster analysis approach is key for improving the local economy (IEDC, 2011). By taking a more aggressive approach and "casting a wide net," communities build on existing industries in the area. "The industry cluster concept has proven to be a powerful framework for companies to organize, work together and work with government to meet their needs and promote their interests" (Waits, 2007).

Creating Site Opportunities

Creating new site opportunities is a critical element in most retention and expansion strategies (IEDC, 2015). By visiting companies regularly, economic development staff is alerted to site concerns and may assist companies in finding alternatives. Manufacturing, warehousing and distribution companies often face issues in older areas. Perhaps land has increased in value and started to squeeze out manufacturing uses. Or it may be that an area has deteriorated, sparking concerns about crime or failing infrastructure. It may be simply that the company is growing and the space no longer meets their needs. If these concerns are caught early enough, economic development practitioners may be able to promote other sites within the city or rectify concerns about crime or deteriorating infrastructure before the company goes elsewhere.

Opening the lines of communication will assist city leaders in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the business climate, as well as demonstrate to local companies an appreciation of their contribution to the local economy (Swager, 2005).

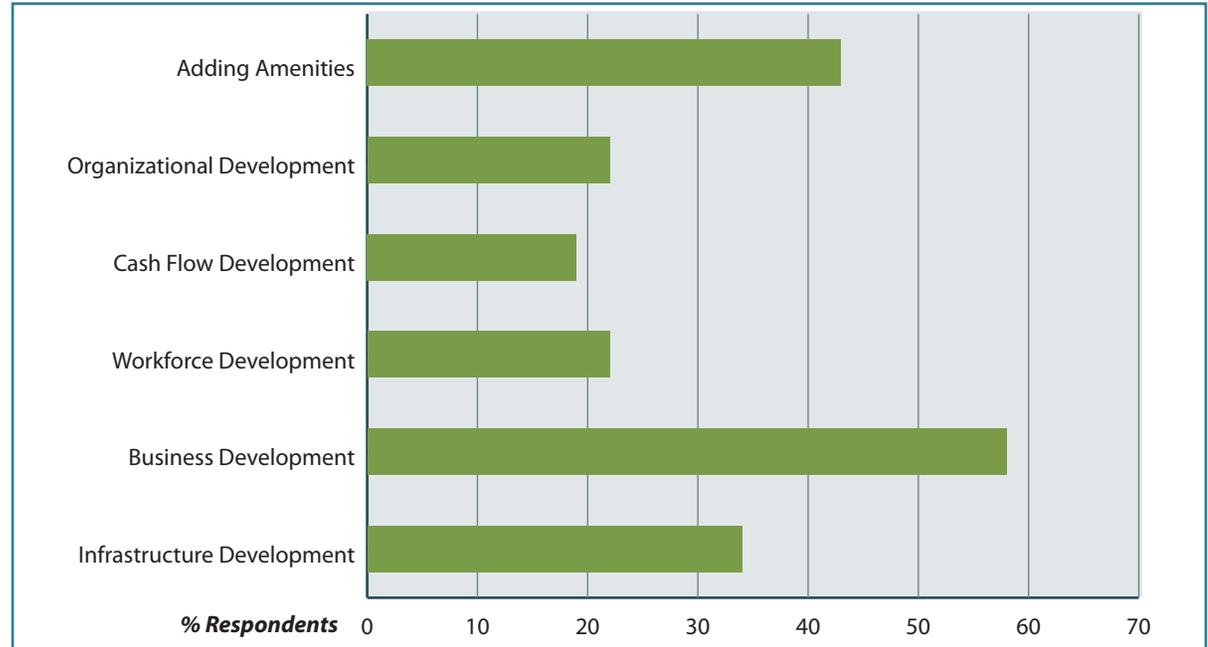
Staff recently surveyed the business community to assist in identifying perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Key words and complaints were noted and included in the summary of findings on the next page. For complete survey results, please see the Appendix.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY FINDINGS

The city surveyed the business community of approximately 2244 businesses and received 259 responses, or about 11 percent. Business owners and operators identified strengths and weaknesses of conducting business in the city, and suggested areas of focus for city economic development activity.

Nearly 55 percent of survey respondents cited the city’s proximity to major roadways as a benefit to having a business location in Peachtree Corners. It was the leading response to this question. However, transportation and traffic problems were overwhelmingly identified as the city’s biggest challenge (79 percent). So while businesses find access to major roadways a strength to conducting business here, traffic congestion is viewed as a weaknesses. Also noted as challenging for the city were aging commercial property (21 percent) and the perception of crime (17 percent).

WHAT SHOULD THE CITY FOCUS ON TO SUPPORT YOUR BUSINESS?



For complete survey results see Appendix.

Nearly 59 percent of businesses surveyed stated the city should focus effort on business retention, expansion, entrepreneurial development, and business attraction. In fact, business development drew the most support, followed by adding amenities (43 percent) and infrastructure development (34 percent). Approximately 19 percent of respondents supported cash-flow development (tourism, expanding markets), 22 percent supported organizational development (strategic planning, analysis, setting goals) and workforce development.

Although 39 percent of businesses noted the city’s high quality of life as a benefit, the majority supported adding more amenities, with roughly 40 percent of respondents favoring increased dining opportunities, more parks and green space, arts and entertainment, and walking trails. More technology companies, high-end restaurants and corporate headquarters are desired, as well as evening entertainment.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 10 significant employers in the city; Comcast, Milner Office Products, Pond, Phoenix Metals Company, Glenfield Capital, Lincoln Property Group, Iron Mountain, Level 3, the Atlanta Marriott Peachtree Corners, and Siemens. Respondents were asked open-ended questions and not led in any particular direction.

The majority of positive remarks were made in relation to the city's location, proximity to major roadways and access to airports. The city's convenient access to major roads, by appearances on paper, is its largest asset. As such, there may be opportunities for advertising the city's desirable location and reverse commutes. Also in terms of promotion, a need for a public relations or image campaign was specifically mentioned by several employers, including Glenfield Capital, Iron Mountain, the Marriott and Siemens. Among those interviewed, there was a lack of understanding of city boundaries. "It's hard to know where Peachtree Corners starts and where it ends," said Jorge Magana, vice president of global operations at Level 3. Also reported was a lack of understanding of what the city is about and why it is a good place to do business. "The city would be wise to devote time and resources to promote the city's positive business environment," said James Cate, managing principal of Glenfield Capital.

Increasing the involvement of the corporate community was suggested by Iron Mountain, the Marriott, and Pond. Business engagement may take the form of events such as races, tournaments or health challenges. Corporate engagement could also be stimulated through a crowdfunding initiative, where companies fund small, but transformational projects, such as trail hubs or greenspaces.

In keeping with the survey results, traffic congestion was voiced as a detriment to business by the majority of companies interviewed. Referred to as a "log jam" by Pond, traffic was often the first problem mentioned. Several employers specifically suggested the city lobby for rail. Providing a safer crossing of Peachtree Parkway near Technology Parkway (Jay Bird Alley) for pedestrians was mentioned by Pond and the Marriott.

Workforce problems were reported by Milner, Phoenix Metals, and Level 3. Phoenix hires a lot of southeastern Europeans who he said are "more intelligent and better workers." Attracting qualified workers has been a challenge, as it is difficult to find people with the needed math and computer skills. Level 3 seeks employees with aptitude, a good attitude and technical ability.

Several employers mentioned the need for a recreational trail system and were pleased to hear the city is in the process of constructing one. There were also several requests for weekend entertainment and good-quality, unique, independently owned restaurants.

Aging commercial buildings were noted as both a blessing and a curse. Approximately 20 percent of survey respondents noted it as a problem. Matt Davis, of Lincoln Property Group, said the city has a reputation for having an older product. "There is a feeling that Peachtree Corners is 1970s," he said, encouraging strategies for adaptive re-use of old buildings. However, the city is viewed as affordable, especially in the context of escalating rents in Atlanta. According to James Cate, of Glenfield Capital, Peachtree Corners rates are between \$18-\$21 per square foot, while rates at central perimeter are about \$25 to \$34 a square foot.

For site visit interview notes, see Appendix.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Proximity to major roadways and airports</p> <p>Good value of office space</p> <p>Quality of Life</p>	<p>Traffic and Transportation Issues</p> <p>Lack of public transit</p> <p>No sense of place or understanding of city boundaries</p> <p>Lack of business engagement</p> <p>Aging commercial properties</p> <p>Lack of walkability</p>	<p>Aging commercial properties</p> <p>Support for business retention, expansion, entrepreneurial development, business attraction</p> <p>Support for arts and entertainment</p> <p>Support for trails and parks</p> <p>Partnership opportunities with companies</p> <p>Branding and promotion</p>	<p>Workforce concerns stemming from transportation issues</p> <p>Workforce concerns stemming from a lack of affordable housing</p> <p>Ongoing perception problem</p> <p>Lack of understanding of city boundaries</p>

CONCLUSION

The city's convenient access to major roads is its largest asset, a strength the city can leverage in future marketing efforts. However, traffic congestion is a significant concern and may cause future workforce development problems, especially given the lack of public transit. There is also activity that could be taking place to increase communication with businesses and build partnerships.

The majority of survey respondents stated the city should focus on business retention, expansion, entrepreneurial development, and business attraction (BRE). Increased engagement with the business community was also suggested during interviews. Several of the city's top companies expressed interest in partnering with the city.

During interviews, several employers stated they had difficulty attracting qualified workers. Employers are looking for workers with a positive attitude and aptitude. During interviews, there was concern about a lack of public transit adversely affecting workforce availability. However, only 11 percent of respondents to the survey considered a lack of suitable workforce a challenge.

A need for more city promotion was repeated during interviews. There seems to be a lack of city identity. Several large employers who were interviewed did not know "where Peachtree Corners starts and where it ends." In essence, it is essential that the city designate specific resources for business recruitment, retention and expansion, as well as engagement in events to build relationships with local businesses.

The following is a list of recommended actions, and associated tasks. Following the list is a suggested timeline for the activity. Several activities are recommended for the duration of the 5-year-plan.

Work Plan

A. Capitalize on strengths of Peachtree Corners

1. Conduct a city "Place" campaign to educate the public about the orientation of the city and its boundaries. Promote the city's proximity to major roadways and airports in marketing material including advertising in general and business publications, and on the city's website.
2. Develop a strategic public relations and marketing plan that seeks to emphasize city strengths and city projects, the value of lease rates, and arts and culture activity.

B. Reduce Traffic Congestion.

1. Prioritize projects in Comprehensive Transportation Plan designed to reduce congestion at choke points and create more connectivity including, road widening, capacity, intersection improvements, and new roads.
2. Expedite multi-use trail construction to connect businesses to retail areas by engaging in dedicated easement acquisition efforts.
3. Conduct a feasibility study for the creation of pedestrian crossings on Peachtree Parkway, especially near hotels (Woodhill Drive), and look for ways to connect hotels to retail and restaurants.

C. Implement a BRE program

1. Adopt a regular site visit schedule that includes a systematic method for collecting and maintaining data, such as information on business needs, contacts, products, suppliers, dealers, etc.
2. Expand Economic Development content on the city website to include demographic information, retail market information, workforce analysis, and city and state incentive. (Similar to information currently found in ED packet).

D. Increase business engagement

1. Create a business-oriented newsletter to connect the city and business community, providing an opportunity for companies to share awards and achievements.
2. Launch a crowd-funding initiative to encourage local companies to be part of the development of transformational projects through a dollar-for-dollar match up to \$50,000. Suggested projects may evolve from the Arts Council , multi-use trail system, or Innovation Hub Master Plan recommendations.
3. Connect with corporations to partner with the city on special events, such as races, tournaments and fairs. Examples may consist of a job fair, Techy 10K Race, business expo or other events.
4. Host periodic events to update major employers on city projects and encourage feedback for future projects.
5. Consider selling naming rights to certain aspects of public projects such as sections of the multiuse trail.

E. Expand current business clusters

1. Create industry cluster advisory or working groups that include representatives from cluster industries . The groups will meet with city leaders and provide feedback about their needs, while also receiving an update on city projects. After meeting with these groups, staff will develop a plan supporting these clusters based on feedback.
2. Engage in Target Industry marketing to build on and support existing clusters Using feedback from cluster advisory groups.
3. Seek out businesses like Gwinnett Medical that offer needed services to the community

F. Seek Ways to Increase Transportation Options

1. Encourage local public transit connections
2. Seek opportunities to build relationships with transit providers.
3. Explore a shuttle system that connects Tech Park to the Doraville transit station, and Tech Park to retail and restaurants.
4. Explore alternative modes of travel, such as autonomous vehicles, electric bicycles, golf carts, and shuttles..

G. Combat Aging Commercial Property

1. Promote redevelopment strategies as outlined in the Bleakly study to brokers and industry advisory groups.

H. Identify Staffing Needs Associated with Increased Efforts

1. Identify land acquisition experts to assist with acquiring easements for the trail.
2. Identify human capital available for increasing marketing and economic development efforts.
3. Identify advertising budget and develop marketing strategy.

I. Attract middle-skill employees to cultivate a pipeline of talent

1. Investigate incentives for the creation of work force housing units within mixed use projects, including possible implementation of set-asides after several redevelopment projects are underway. Incentives may include density bonuses, tax abatements, reduced parking requirements, or other inducements.
2. Offer incentives to attract a technical school or technology-focused college to locate a facility within proximity of Tech Park.

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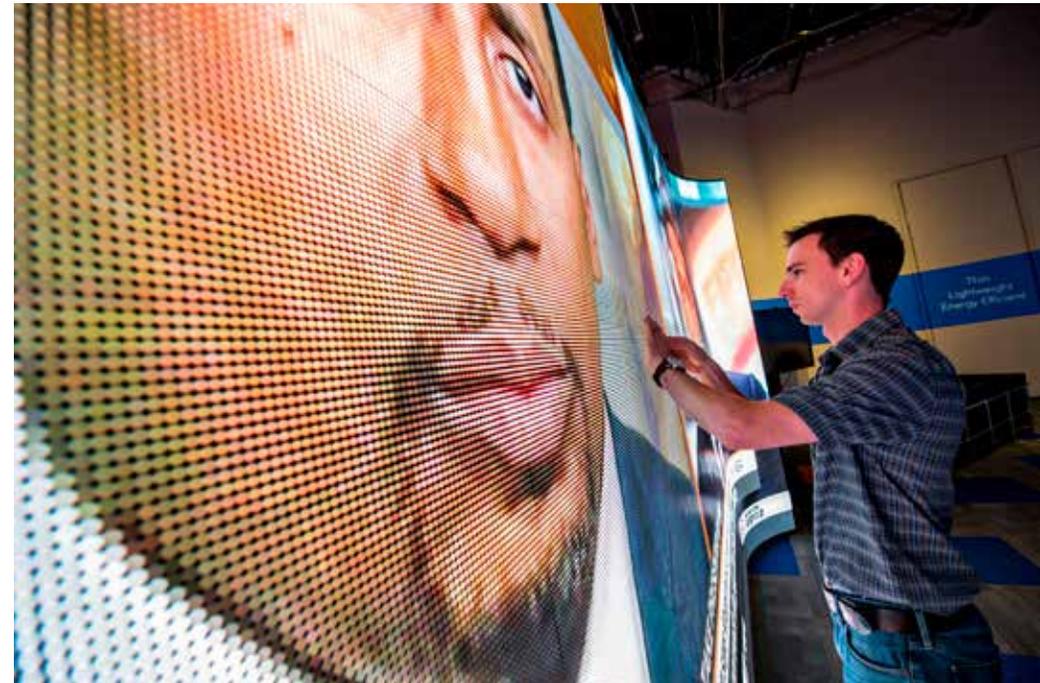
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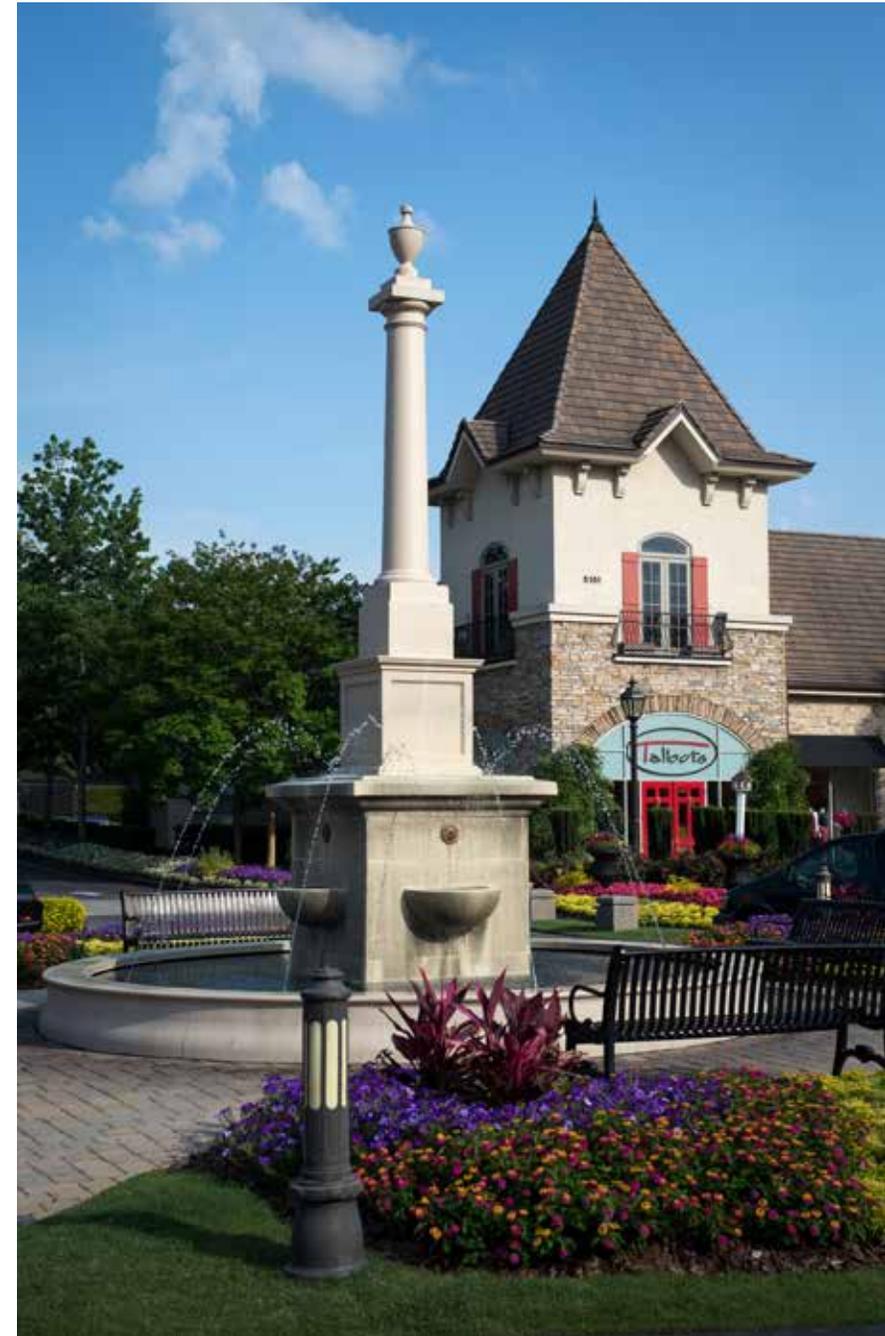
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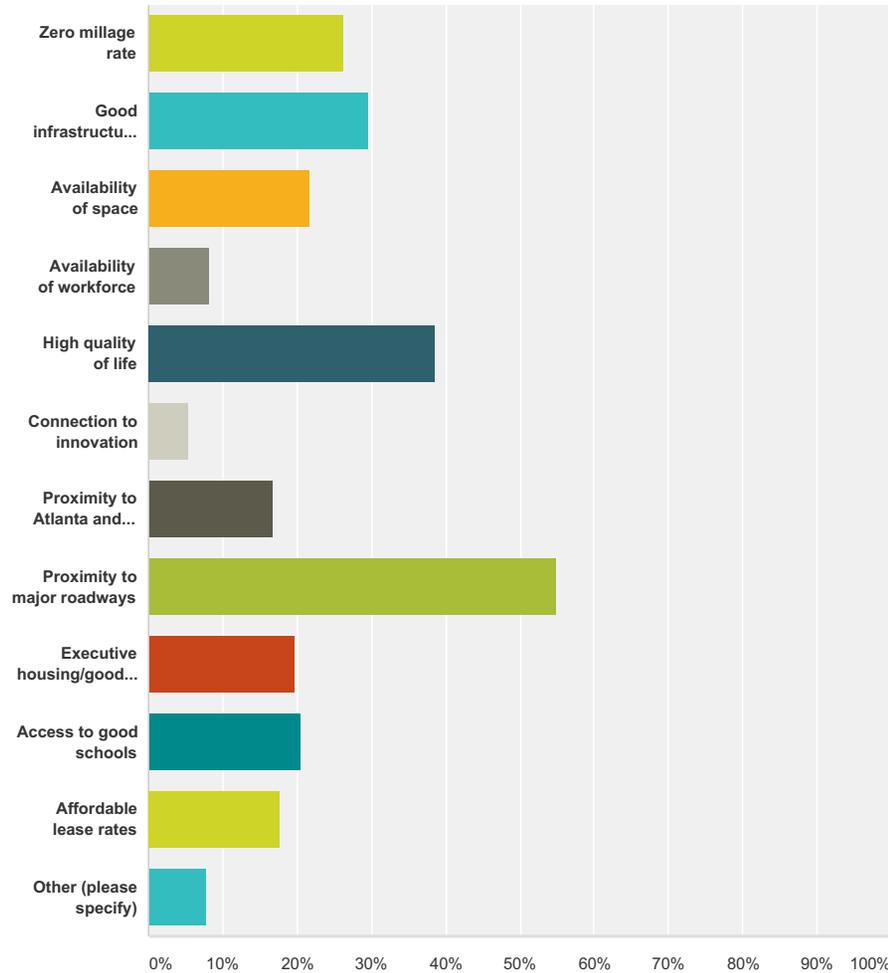




SURVEY RESULTS

**Q1 What are the benefits of having a business location in Peachtree Corners?
(choose up to 3)**

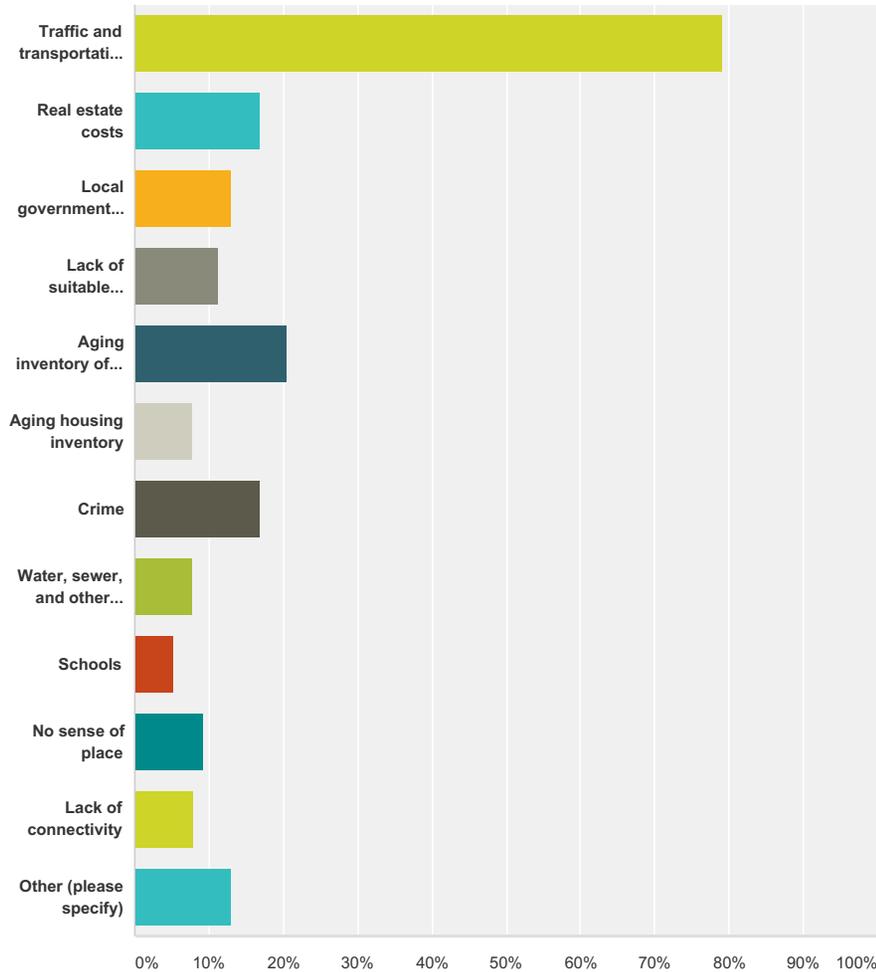
Answered: 259 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	% Responses	No. Responses
Zero millage rate	26.25	68
Good infrastructure (roads, fiber optics, water, etc.)	29.73	77
Availability of space	21.62	56
Availability of workforce	8.11	21
High quality of life	28.61	100
Connection to innovation	5.41	14
Proximity to Atlanta and airport	16.60	43
Proximity to major roadways	54.83	142
Executive housing/ Good neighborhoods	19.69	51
Access to good schools	20.46	53
Affordable lease rates	17.76	46
Other (specify)	7.72	20
Total Responses		259

Q2 What are Peachtree Corners' biggest challenges? (choose up to 3)

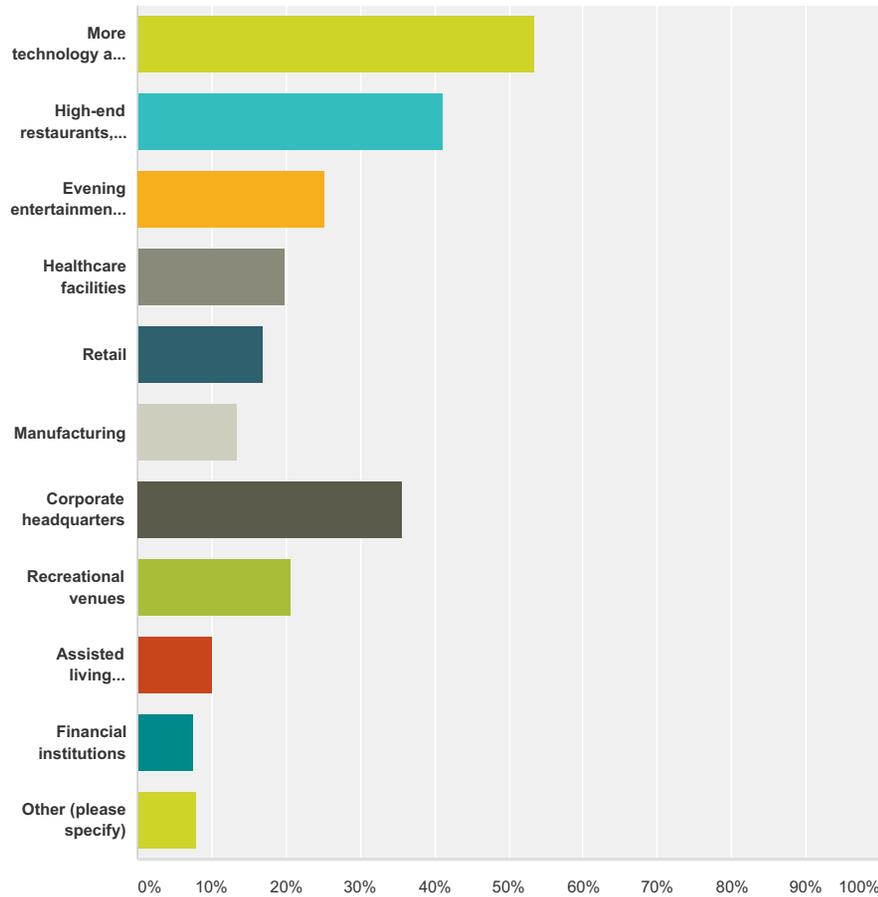
Answered: 249 Skipped: 12



Answer Choices	% Responses	No. Responses
Traffic and transportation issues	79.12	197
Real estate costs	16.87	42
Local government regulations	12.85	32
Lack of suitable workforce	11.24	28
Aging inventory of commercial properties	20.48	51
Aging housing inventories	7.63	19
Crime	16.87	42
Water, sewer, and other utilities	7.63	19
Schools	5.22	13
No sense of place	9.24	23
Lack of connectivity	8.03	20
Other (specify)	12.85	32
Total Responses		249

Q3 What types of businesses would you like to see move into Peachtree Corners? (choose up to 3)

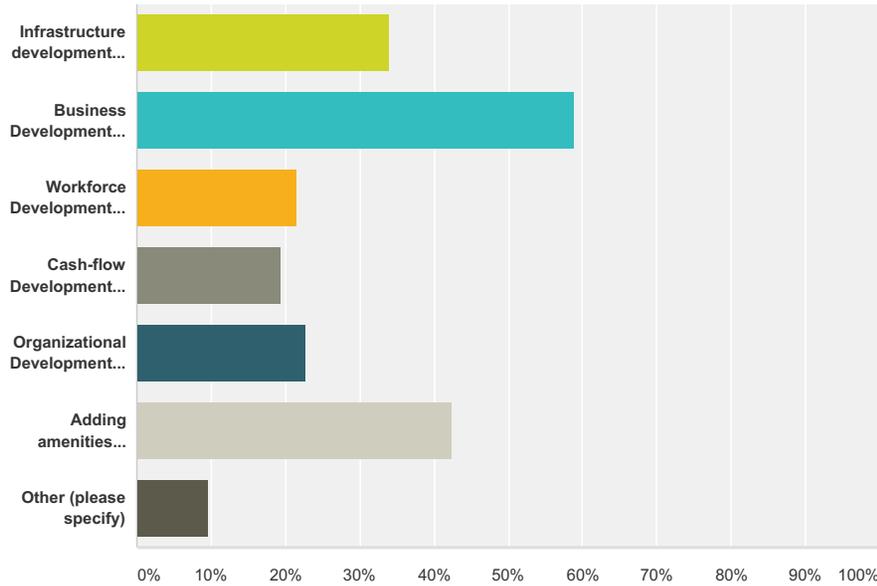
Answered: 241 Skipped: 20



Answer Choices	% Responses	No. Responses
More technology and innovation	53.53	129
High-end restaurants, hotels, hospitality services	41.08	99
Evening entertainment venues	25.31	61
Healthcare facilities	19.92	48
Retail	17.01	41
Manufacturing	13.28	32
Corporate headquarters	35.68	86
Recreational venues	20.75	50
Assisted living facilities	9.96	24
Financial institutions	7.47	18
Other (specify)	7.88	19
Total Responses		241

Q4 What should the City of Peachtree Corners focus on to support your business? (choose up to 3)

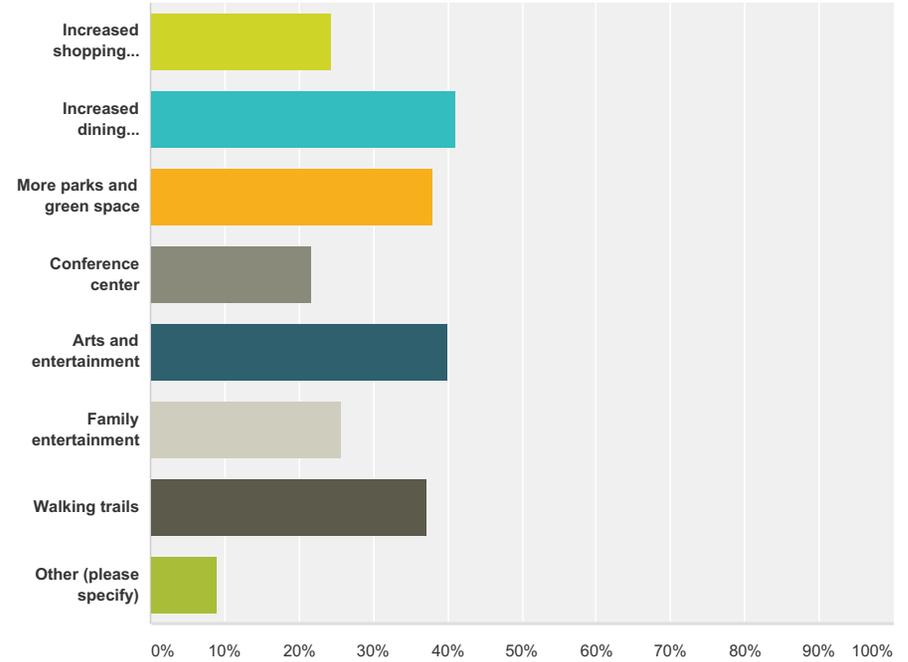
Answered: 238 Skipped: 23



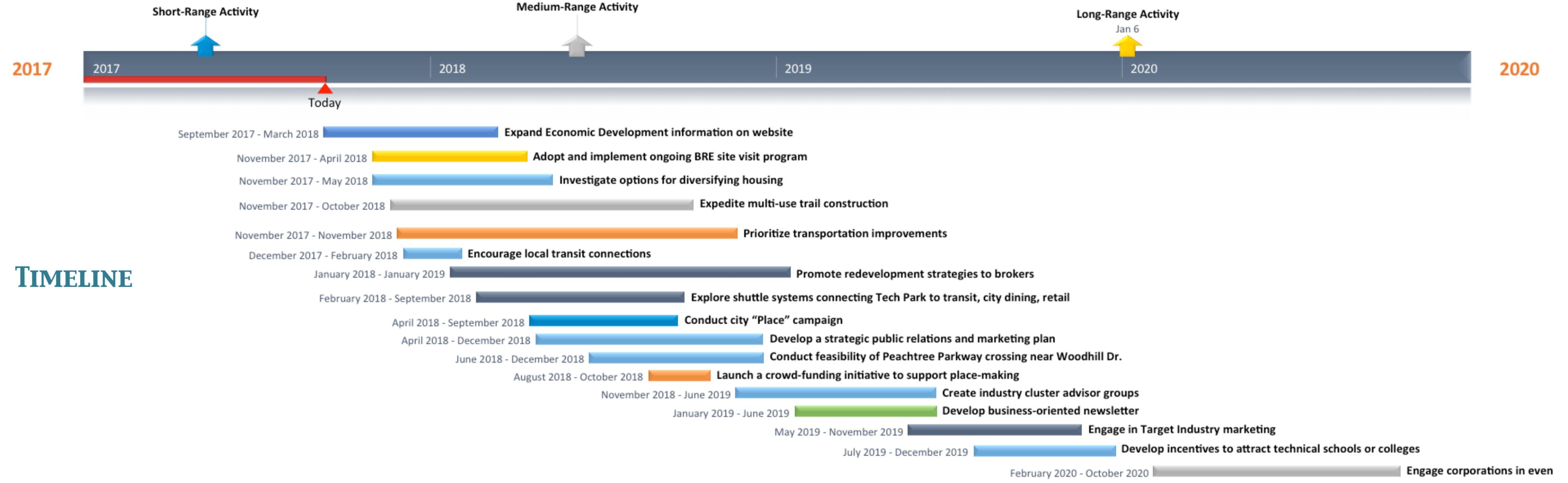
Answer Choices	% Resp.	No. Resp.
Infrastructure development (water, sewer, gas, transportation)	34.03	81
Business development (retention, expansion, attraction, entrepreneurial development)	58.82	140
Workforce development (job training, skill enhancement)	21.43	51
Cash flow development (brining in new dollars, tourism, expanding markets)	19.33	46
Organizational development (conducting analysis of current conditions, strategic planning, setting goals and objectives)	22.69	54
Adding amenities (parks, trails, entertainment venues)	42.44	101
Other (specify)	9.66	23
Total Responses		238

Q5 What amenities would benefit you and/or your company? (choose up to 3)

Answered: 234 Skipped: 27



Answer Choices	% Resp.	No. Resp.
Increased shopping opportunities	24.36	57
Increased dining opportunities	41.03	96
More parks and green space	38.03	89
Conference center	21.79	51
Arts and entertainment	40.17	94
Family entertainment	25.64	60
Walking trails	37.18	87
Other (specify)	8.97	21
Total Responses		238



TIMELINE



CITY OF
Peachtree
CORNERS
Innovative & Remarkable